



350 GT: the V12 that laid the foundations for Lamborghini's DNA

In the year of the V12, the story of the first: from its origins to the Aventador Ultimae, the last pure aspirated V12 from the House of Sant'Agata

Sant'Agata Bolognese, 18th of May 2022 - For Lamborghini, 2022 is the year of the V12, its legendary 12-cylinder engine that has powered iconic models for almost 60 years of history and became a symbol of technological innovation, vision, and engineering expertise: the foundations of Lamborghini's DNA.

Before entering the hybridization phase in 2023 with the advent of the first series-production model, Lamborghini is paying tribute to its most memorable engine in a retrospective account of the cars that have featured it. The first ever Lamborghini to leave the Sant'Agata Bolognese factory in 1964 was the 350 GT, more recently taken to the historic center of Bologna for an epic encounter with the latest V12 in the brand's history, the Aventador Ultimae¹.

The genius Giotto Bizzarrini and the story of a contract 'with a bonus for every 10 extra horsepower'

To design the engine, Ferruccio Lamborghini chose an exceptional external consultant, the engineer Giotto Bizzarrini, born in Quercianella (province of Livorno) in 1926, still today considered one of the best engine designers who ever lived. Bizzarrini was a huge fan of racing and dreamed of building an engine for Formula One.

The agreement with Lamborghini was simple and created the basis for something absolutely extraordinary: 12 V-cylinders, displacement of 3.5 liters, and lots and lots of horsepower: at least 350.

As an incentive for Bizzarrini, Lamborghini included in the contract a bonus for every additional 10 horsepower. When the engine ran on the test bench for the first time in July 1963, the readings were spectacular, with 360 HP at 9000 rpm. Ferruccio Lamborghini paid what he owed, including the bonus for the extra horsepower, but he realized he was in trouble. In fact, Bizzarrini had designed a Formula One engine that was unsuitable for road use and mass production.

¹ Aventador LP780 Ultimae Coupé and Ultimae Roadster Fuel consumption combined: 18.0 l/100km ; CO₂-emissions combined: 442 g/km (WLTP)



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The arrival of Paolo Stanzani: the engine was rationalized and reached over 250 km/h

It was then Paolo Stanzani, one of the most highly regarded engineers in the history of Lamborghini, who was entrusted with the job of “civilizing” this engine. His work, though capable of maintaining the engine’s exceptional performance and making it pleasantly drivable even at medium and low revs, did not alter the basic technical specs, which in many points would become a first for a series-produced car. Its maximum power output of 280 HP at 6500 rpm was enough to propel the 350 GT, the first production Lamborghini model debuting in 1964, to a top speed of over 250 km/h.

The first customer launches the brand’s popularity in the entertainment world

The first 350 GT was delivered to Livorno-native drummer Giampiero Giusti, who was at the height of his success with the band “I 5 di Lucca”, which later became the “Quartetto di Lucca”, considered one of the most important jazz ensembles in Italy. Formed in the late 1950s, the group stood out not only for its jazz credentials but also for its pop music spirit, which led to its participation in the Sanremo Music Festival; to record covers of songs by the Beach Boys and Bruno Martino; and to collaborate with Enzo Jannacci.

This marked the beginning of a close relationship between Lamborghini and the entertainment world in which many actors and musical performers became passionate customers of the company.

The same car, now the oldest production Lamborghini in existence, perfectly restored and certified by Polo Storico, won Best in Show at the Lamborghini & Design competition held in Trieste and organized in 2019 by Lamborghini Polo Storico.

Paul McCartney and his red 400 GT

Paul McCartney, a true living legend both as bass player and vocalist for the Beatles and as a solo artist, has been a loyal Lamborghini customer for many years, with several cars of different models in his collection. His red 1968 400 GT, chassis #1141 was the car that appeared in the video filmed on 30 January 1969 on the occasion of the band’s famous last concert on the roof of their building at 3 Savile Row in London, as well as in numerous Beatles documentaries. McCartney kept the 400 GT for ten years.

From music to movies

The starring cinematic role for a 350 GT was in the 1967 Columbia Pictures film Kill Me Quick, I'm Cold directed by Francesco Maselli, where it was used as a means of transport for the leading couple, the celebrated Monica Vitti and Jean Sorel.



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A benchmark up to the 1990s

From its debut in 1964, the Lamborghini V12 became a benchmark for its torque, elasticity, reliability and durability. The same unit, with only minimal modifications, would remain in production until the 1990s, growing to 7 liters of displacement with power over 500 HP before subsequently receiving more substantial structural modifications.

Photos and videos: media.lamborghini.com

Information on Automobili Lamborghini: www.lamborghini.com



Automobili Lamborghini S.p.A. Headquarters

Head of Communication
Tim Bravo
T +39 051 9597611
tim.bravo@lamborghini.com

Brand & Corporate Communication
Clara Magnanini
T +39 051 9597611
clara.magnanini@lamborghini.com

Product & Brand Extension Communication
Rita Passerini
T +39 051 9597611
rita.passerini@lamborghini.com

Motorsport Communication
Francesco Colla
T +39 051 2156850
extern.francesco.colla@lamborghini.com

Polo Storico & Heritage
Massimo Delbo
T +39 3331619942
massimo@delbo.us

Regional Offices

Europe, Middle East & Africa
Emanuele Camerini
T +39 342 567 5842
emanuele.camerini@lamborghini.com

Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong & Macau
Ma Weichao (Ms.) 马唯超
T +86 138 1009 5399
weichao.ma@lamborghini.com

North & South America
Jory Wood Syed
T +1 332 220 5217
jory.syed@lamborghini.us

United Kingdom
Juliet Jarvis
T +44 (0) 7733 224774
juliet@jjc.uk.com

Japan
Yasuki Yamagishi
T +81 801 1343 7756
yasuki.yamagishi@lamborghini.com

South-East Asia & Pacific
Alethea Tan
T +658711 1329
alethea.tan@lamborghini.com

Asia Pacific
Tricia Tan
T +65 9073 3031
tricia.tan@lamborghini.com