

CLASSIC DRIVER

Meet the man who tripled the mileage of his Lamborghini Countach in one year

Lead

Mario Escudero grew up around VW Beetles in Peru. Now he drives the only Arancio Miura Lamborghini Countach 25th Anniversary ever made. We met this true Classic Driver for a cruise around Central London.



A few weeks ago, I found myself standing in a parking lot in the middle of Hyde Park listening, not looking, for a very special car. Among the usual greyscale, hybrid-powered London traffic, I knew the howl of an Italian V12 would stick out like a sore thumb, or in this case, the only Arancio Miura [Lamborghini](#) Countach 25th Anniversary ever made. The [Countach's](#) scissor doors lift and out climbs the man I'm here to meet: Mario Escudero. He's wearing a pair of large, perfectly appropriate Italian shades, an orange set of [Café Leather driving gloves](#), a Swatch colour-matched to his ride, and a huge grin. After all, how could you not smile when driving such an incredible machine?



We head along the Serpentine to the first shoot location of the day as Mario tells me about the origins of his passion for cars: "I grew up in Peru where the most common cars were VW Bugs and locally-built Toyota Coronas. It was a sea of sameness, but then when I was 5 or 6, I started to notice there were some special cars — BMW 316is and Mercedes 190 Es — that sparked my curiosity. Were those the best cars in the world, or was there something even better?"



After university, Mario worked for a local company that was quickly acquired by an American multi-national, which led him to 23 years of travelling around the world. "I spent most of my life selling toilet paper and diapers. It's quite challenging to get people to choose your product in these commoditised categories," Mario tells me. After Peru, he worked in Venezuela, the United States, and then travelled to Moscow in Russia. "That was an awesome experience, even though the days were short and the weather was really cold. Then I travelled to Kazakhstan, which was even further out of my comfort zone, but I ended up loving it — I met amazing people and I had my greatest business successes there." Following his time in Kazakhstan, Mario was promoted to the company's General Manager of Italy, which is when he bought his first serious cars.



"My first Lancia was a Delta S4 Stradale, and my first Ferrari was a 458 Italia. I spent 4 years in Italy and loved it, but in 2019 the company asked me to move to London, and after 5 more years, it was time to leave the company and start something new. I wanted to spend more time with friends and family and explore my passions — photography, cars, and helping people grow. I now run a small startup that aims to democratise access to quality marketing through AI." As I found out, Mario's collection also now houses a stunning 1961 Maserati 3500 GT and an equally-gorgeous Tailor Made Ferrari FF, which he naturally found on the Classic Driver Market. "I spend an unholy amount of time on Classic Driver," Mario admits with a chuckle.



With the first batch of photos complete, I folded myself into the Countach — acquiring a mild concussion courtesy of the ultra-low roofline — and asked what drew Mario to this car in particular. “My car is a 1990 Countach 25th Anniversary; it was one of the last cars ever made as production ended in November that year. Most people love the Periscopio, which is a beautiful design, but most of my childhood was in the 1980s and 1990s, so the 25th Anniversary — being wider, more powerful, and more aggressive — spoke more to me. I also believe buying the last of the line is always good for driving dynamics and reliability. After 20 years, they sorted out most of the issues, and anything they didn’t fix wasn’t fixable — it’s just part of the DNA.”



Surprisingly, Mario had never intended to own a Countach, but after a mysterious call from our friends at [Girardo & Co.](#) notifying him of a Lamborghini in a very special colour, his interest was piqued. “With Lamborghini, that can mean anything — like toxic green with yellow polka dots — but then I saw it. Arancio Miura was last used in the 1970s and it has this creamy, peachy texture that is gorgeous. Most importantly, the combination with the light caramel interior was perfect. Life is too short for black interiors and I just love it. I couldn’t sleep afterwards; it wasn’t cheap, but I knew I had to buy it. Somehow I managed to align the stars financially.”



As we stop briefly on Exhibition Road, I'm finally able to appreciate just how breathtaking Arancio Miura is — in the shade it's a deep, rich orange, while in direct sunlight it appears more peachy-beige — but there's a few other things that make Mario's Countach extra-special. All 25th Anniversary models used the 5.2-litre, 4 valve per cylinder V12 from the LP5000 QV, but most of the cars destined for the USA used fuel injection and lacked power. Mario's car is a "Downdraft" model, meaning it features carburetors mounted above the engine, giving it the full-fat 455 horsepower.



Then there's the originality. Mario bought the car with around 7,500 km on the clock and tells me it still wears its original paint and interior. The only modification is a period-correct ANSA exhaust. Its incredible originality secured Mario a place at the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este this year, where he first met with the Classic Driver team. The car really is in excellent condition, but there are signs of the 13,000 km he's covered during his 18 months of ownership. The most obvious and interesting are the white dots flecked across the engine cover — a result of high temperatures causing solvents in the composite panel to bubble up. "This was a time when Lamborghini was experimenting with kevlar and nobody knew how it would last" says Mario, "But that shows it's living, it's being driven."



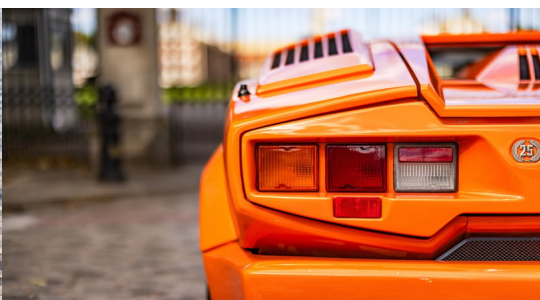
On that note, we can only commend Mario on just how much he has driven his pride and joy, which he has lovingly nicknamed Mr. Orange. "I joined the Countach Tour and drove it from London to the factory in Sant'Agata, Italy. I drove it to the northernmost point in Scotland with a friend, and I've taken it to Wales. I try to drive it as much as I can, at least once a week in London." Considering just how often he uses it, I had to ask how he finds piloting such an iconic poster car around the UK's capital. "It's amazing! Every time it's a memorable experience, and if you can say that about anything in life, it's time well spent. Driving through London, the car can be a bit tricky to manage; the controls are unassisted and the gear lever can be stiff when cold, so it's a little hard to operate at slow speeds. Ferruccio Lamborghini started out building tractors and that DNA is still present, but that's compensated by the amazing sound of the engine, the sense of occasion, the drama and theatre of the car, and the smiles of people looking at you."



This was another of the big surprises for me — while a modern Lamborghini Aventador or Revuelto tends not to meet the approval of London's residents, I couldn't believe how positive the reception to Mario's Countach was. Crowds formed to take photos whenever we stopped, and one or two older enthusiasts even paused to thank Mario for bringing a little Arancio Miura-hued joy to their day.



Having had my fair share of old Italian car-related trauma this year, I ask Mario if the Countach has given him any trouble during his ownership as we drive to our final stop. "It never overheats and it has never let me down. 13,000 km through rain, wind, sun, hot, cold, it's never missed a beat. It really comes alive on the motorway, though: at 100km/h, it starts to show what it was designed to be, and above 150km/h, it's really on point, on cam. It surprisingly feels super stable, there's almost no lift thanks to the front spoiler. That's where all these Horacio Pagani-designed aerodynamic appendages that have been so maligned start to work really well. The lateral air intakes and exhaust above the radiators really do a good job keeping the car cool. It doesn't significantly increase the drag coefficient and the engine sings at high revs. It reminds me of 1960s Formula One car!"



While driving this Countach clearly brings Mario an immense sense of satisfaction, one has to wonder if he worries about adding miles to such a rare vehicle. "My perspective is that everybody should do what makes them happy. I'm more into the experience of driving, of using things as they were intended. I'm not worried about the value: 20,000 km for a 34 year old car isn't that much. If it gets above 2,000 km per year I might start to worry, but that's far away. In certain cars, and this is one of them, the more you drive them the better they become. The engine now revs freer, it gives me better gas mileage, and it's because I'm using it."



So there's the lesson of the day, folks: get out and drive your cars. If Mario can triple the mileage of his Countach, you shouldn't be afraid to take your pride and joy on the open road. If anything, your car will reward you for it!

Photos by Mikey Snelgar

Gallery

