

CLASSIC DRIVER

Featherweight Fighter



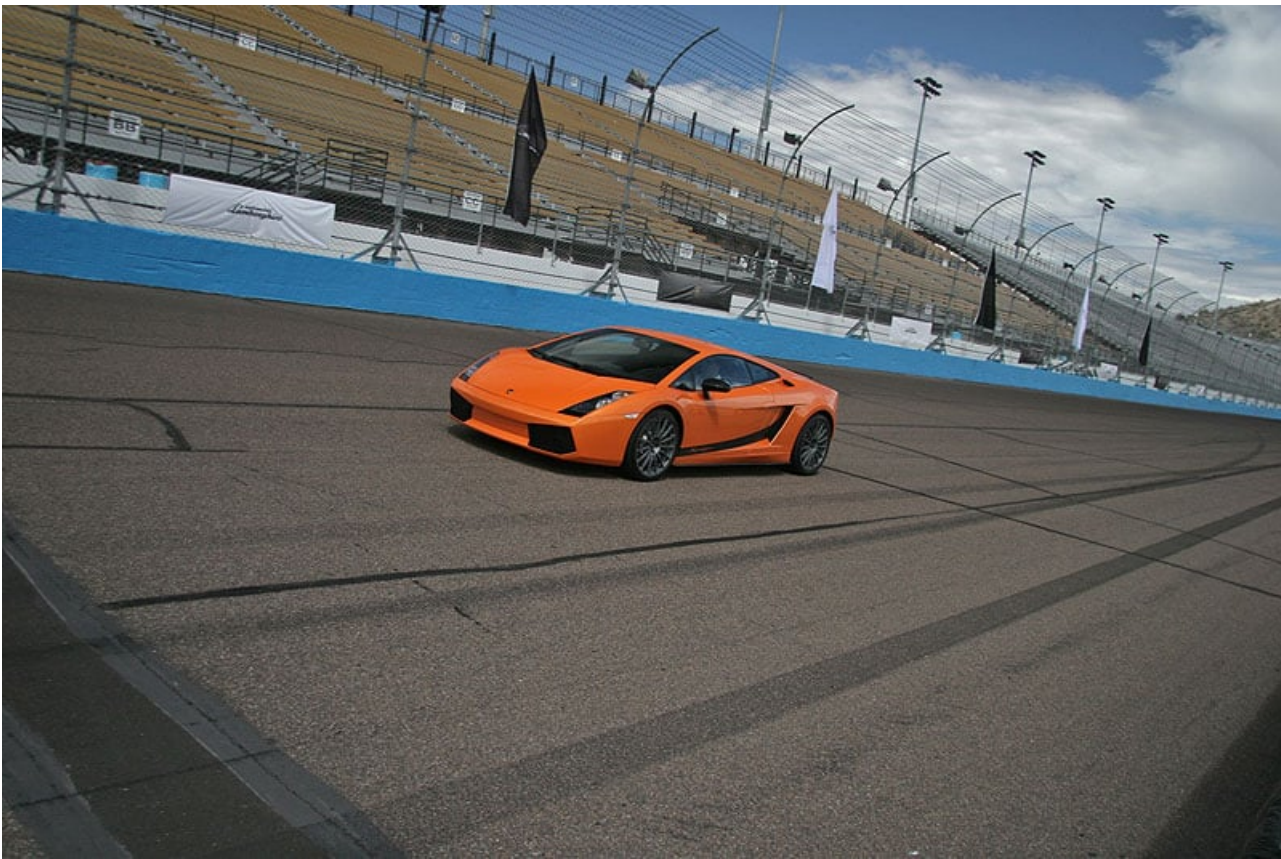
Lamborghini has sent a new lightweight fighter into the ring. In its Superleggera guise, the Gallardo has shed 100kg and now, at just 1330kg, it promises to be an even more agile performer than its heavier sibling. We took the 530HP newcomer to the Phoenix International Raceway in Arizona to put it to the test.

Video:

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It was not yet April but over the cracked bitumen of the Phoenix International Raceway in the American desert state of Arizona, the air shimmered. The thermometer registered 92 degrees Fahrenheit – over 33 degrees Celsius – and there was no shade to be found. In such conditions, heat exhaustion is a real possibility unless you take the correct precautions: such as sheltering in the air-conditioned interior of the Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera. This new version of successful 10-cylinder fighter from Sant'Agata saves weight by the extensive use of carbonfibre, visible in the rear-view mirrors, spoilers, engine covers, as well as the door linings, seats and dashboard. The rear side windows and rear windscreen are made of polycarbonate, again to save weight. The new model is also identified by the black stripe with its 'Superleggera' signature.



Most sportscar manufacturers have waved the weight-reduction flag. Lotus is known for its choice of lightweight equipment and spartan fittings; Porsche has its 415HP, 1375kg 911 GT3 RS – and Ferrari set new standards back in 2003 with its 1290kg sports version of the F360 Modena, christened 'Challenge Stradale'. A similar evolution of the current Ferrari F430 is expected later this year. With its lightweight version of the 5-litre, V10 Gallardo supercar, Lamborghini promises the hardest punch in its class: just 3.8 seconds for the 0-62mph sprint – a whole 0.2 seconds faster than the standard Gallardo and 0.4 seconds quicker than the Porsche 911 GT3.



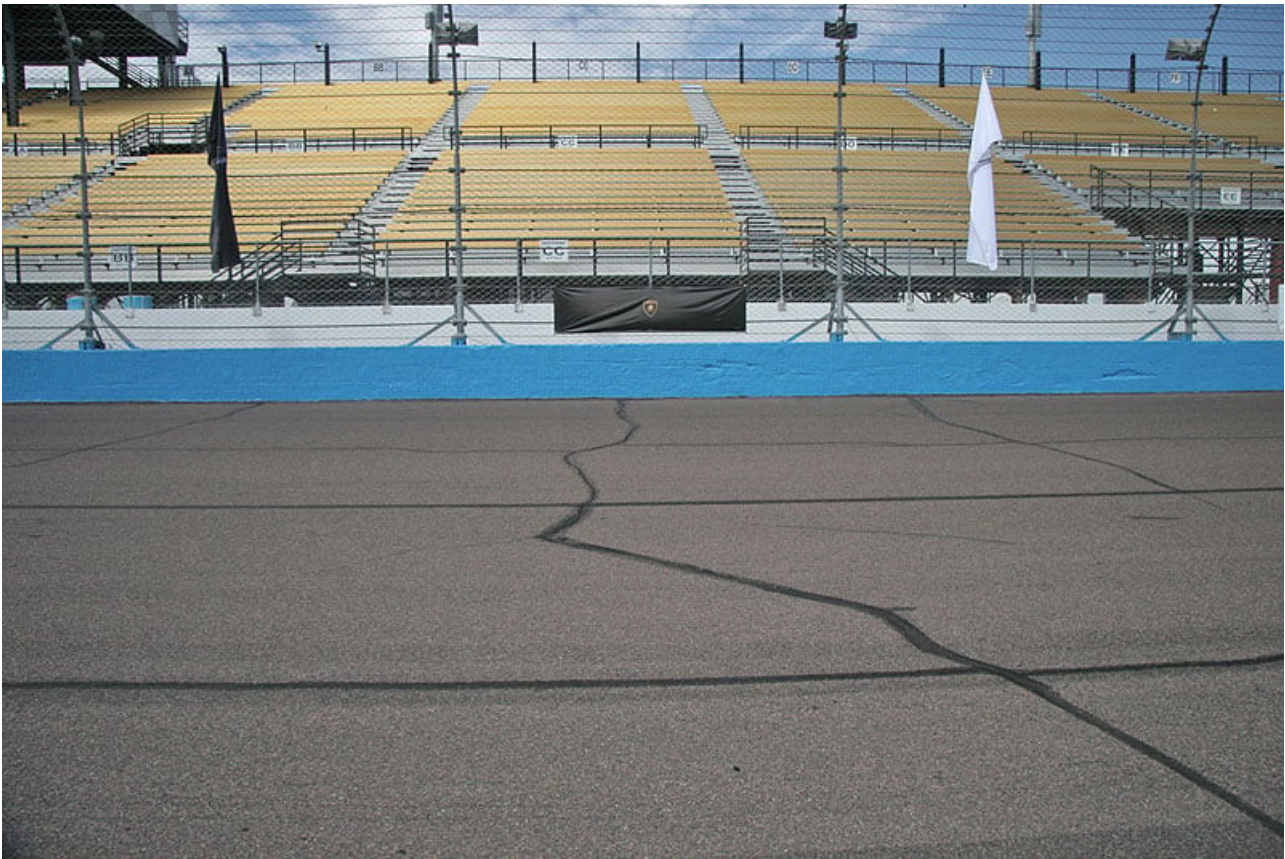
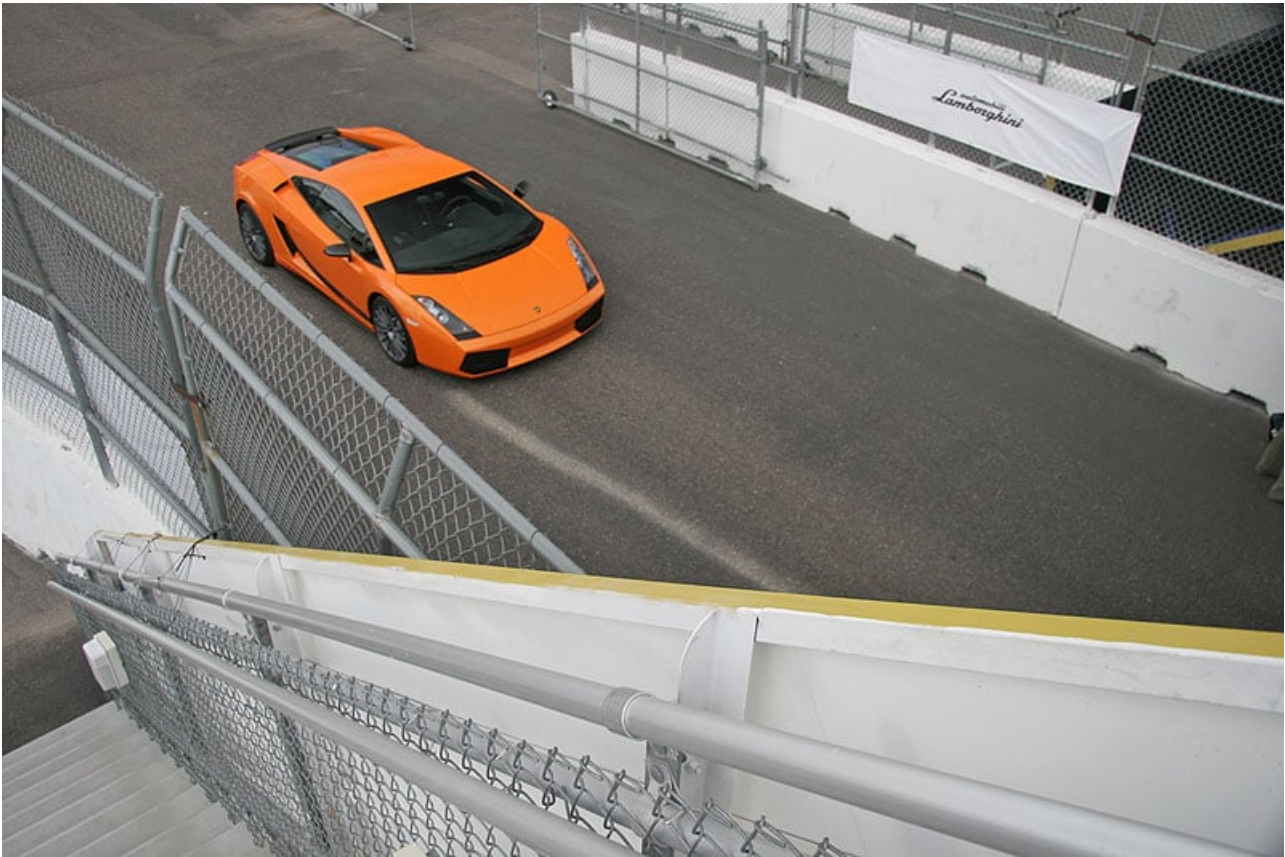
By the time we reach the first corner, the Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera has shown its true colours – the steering, the agility, the throttle response are noticeably better than the standard model. The car's cleverly balanced dynamics take us through the curves with delicate precision and then, back in a straight line, I am catapulted forward with unexpected strength. We switch into third gear and fly – until the braking point, where the (optional) ceramic brake discs glow and the engine roars as we shift down. The four-point harness presses me hard into the carbonfibre seat, my fingers are tight on the leather steering wheel and the air-conditioning system blows a polar wind in my face. Outside, the Pirellis cling stickily to the track.



It was the legendary Carrozzeria Touring who came up with the 'superleggera' construction back in the 1950s, although build methods have come on a long way since then. This new Lamborghini has a bonded aluminium structure, with lightweight components used wherever possible. The colour range, too, is pure 2007. The buyer will need to choose from the four Superleggera colours of Arrancio Borealis (orange), Giallo Midas (yellow), Grigio Telesio (grey) and Nero Noctis (black). The lightweight Gallardo can also be specified with DVD navigation – a useful addition when you're close to the 196mph top speed.



After two dozen laps of the Raceway, I drive the Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera out into the desert to 'cool down'. When I lower the window, the dry heat of the desert air pushes itself into the cockpit and the dusty expanses of prairie stretch out into the distance, a free and open Arizona landscape. North America, unsurprisingly, is the largest market for Lamborghini – and it will be interesting to see how buyers react to the choice of Gallardo Superleggera and Ferrari F430 Challenge Stradale, later this year. Not to mention a lightweight Lamborghini Murciélago LP640 in 2008?













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