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## Lamborghini Uracco and Espada

### Bull Fight

**These cars are so much fun to drive. They drive like they're on rails. When you tackle a corner, they just swallow it up.**  
**Words Julian Roche Photos Michael Drabikowski**

There was a time when Lamborghini couldn't sell their Uracco if they tried. But Dominic Quattrochi couldn't care less. Accepting his fate early in life, he knew he was going to own a Lamborghini the moment he laid eyes on a Uracco at the age of 17. Fast forward to the year 2008 and Dominic doesn't know which one to show me first. Eventually I'm directed to the nearest car – but it's not one of his Uraccos. When Dominic's daughter was born, he needed something apart from a two-seater Uracco GT for family transport. The simple solution was to find an Espada – a Lamborghini 'supercar' with roomy rear seats.

**Attention grabber**  
 The Espada name is derived from the Italian word for 'sword'. First released in 1968, it arrived with a 350bhp, 4.0-litre quad cam V12 engine. Top speed was claimed at over 150mph, and it offered the man with a burgeoning family everything he could ever want in an Italian supercar. It was a formula that made the impressive Espada Lamborghini's most successful model during its production period. Visually, the Espada demands attention. Dominic's Series 3 version seems a contradiction. At certain angles, it's an attractive car with clean flowing lines. The frontal treatment has quad



headlights and is simply elegant, but somehow the rear of the Espada looks pregnant.

Perhaps Lamborghini wasn't fully at ease with the notion that the macho driver of the Italian motorway might have a family on board his car. The roofline is almost as horizontal and of similar proportions to a Ford GT40. The Sant'Agata factory attempted to keep the car as low as the Ford, but its rear doesn't quite taper off as elegantly as the sloping rooflines of its GT rivals.

### V12 cruising

The Italians sold approximately 1,217 Espadas. I imagine that once an owner slunk into the plush leather seats and worked out how to operate the numerous dials and switches of the cockpit, he'd find it difficult to climb out, as Dominic does. It's just so comfortable. Dominic's Espada arrived in Australia after spending time in South Africa. He has owned it just over four years and has found it a joy. "I bought it off a QC. It was collecting dust in his stable but I haven't had to give it anything more than a regular service."

Though he isn't too impressed with the V12's sluggish performance driving around town, the open road brings a satisfied grin to Dominic's face. "Once it's out on the highway, it just cruises. It's beautiful." This Espada is a rare right-hand drive automatic. "They were only produced near the end of the production run. Espadas were known for their heavy clutch so these were an alternative. It has a Chrysler box in it and it suits the big engine."

### More bulls in the pen

As I marvel at the acres of hide inside, I realise that Dominic can rattle off statistics and the names of prominent company personalities at will. The Raging Bull is now a part of life. Dominic and his wife Marcela are active members of the Victorian chapter of the Australian Lamborghini Club. Marcela currently runs the chapter and she even produces the club magazine.

Raising another garage door, my dazzled eyes pass over more Italian sports cars. Before me stand two very pretty 1976 Uraccos, one silver and the other yellow. Dominic has also stashed away two more to complete his collection. "They still amaze me," he enthuses. "People are always asking me to tell them what they are."

### Answering Enzo

These small cars were Lamborghini's answer to Enzo's Dino and maybe even the Porsche. Unfortunately, despite their best efforts, Ferrari's cars out-performed their Lamborghini challengers in almost every comparison. Tests at the time found the Ferrari was a better car overall. Uracco is pronounced oo-RAH-koh, and in Spanish means 'fighting bull', or sometimes 'little bull'. What is clear is that Lambo tried to outpoint Ferrari in nearly every respect. Where the Dino had six cylinders, the Uracco had eight. The Dino was a Pininfarina beauty, while talented [Marcello Gandini](#) at Carrozzeria [Bertone](#) penned the Lambo's body.

The small Lamborghini is an exquisite machine but Marcello may have been a little ambitious to expect even a pint-sized person to fit in the rear 'plus two' seats. "Unlike the Espada, you might be able to put kids in the back but they won't be comfortable."

### Production tangles

Released in 1972, the Uracco had a 2.5-litre overhead cam V8 slotted in the rear. By 1973, the oil crisis had virtually killed the car off. To compound matters, the release of the car was two years



overdue because of teething problems – and everybody knew about it. With the US's emissions restrictions imposed on the new car, its power shrank. It's no surprise that orders were rescinded and production trickled to a stop by 1979.

One story describes an Australian businessman visiting the Sant'Agata factory where he spotted two dozen of them sitting unwanted in a corner. When he made a ridiculously low offer for them, the management simply said, "Take them". Aiming to revive the big sales they had originally projected, Lamborghini added two more engines. One was a 2.0-litre local Italian tax-avoiding initiative and the other, a desirable 3.0-litre twin cam engine. Lamborghini were committed to producing the car, although it nearly sent them broke.

### A warm welcome

Dominic, however, was so enthused about his first Lamborghini, a Uracco P250 he had owned in the '80s, that he visited the Italian factory. He smiles in disbelief as he recalls this experience. "It felt as though you could just knock on the door and say, 'Hello, I'm from Australia and I own one your cars'. The response was simply, 'Come in and help yourself. Have a look around'."

You might expect a supercar manufacturer to keep all its developments under wraps until, say, the Detroit Motor Show, but Dominic couldn't believe the Italian attitude. "They would test these at the front of the factory by driving them up and down the main road. One joke went around about how much development time was put into upgrading the Uracco to a 3.0-litre. The answer: "We just drove it around the block."

### Subtle differences

Dominic discusses one car, then flips to another. It's a little disorientating. Finally he settles on his little yellow bull in front of me. "I've had it back to bare metal and I now use it for shows. My mechanic is so possessive he gets upset if I drive it, especially if I don't ask his permission." The re-spray is excellent and Dominic squats down enthusiastically to show me the exhaust. "You can see some finishing touches inside the exhaust. It's black from the exhaust smoke now of course."

### From the driver's seat of each car

I am educated in the subtleties differentiating the 2.5-litre from the 3.0-litre. "This silver car is the most original that I could find. It's had one owner. I believe that when he originally ordered it, the car was listed as a 2.5-litre. But the cars were so long in production that the specs changed in the meantime, and it came out a 3.0-litre car." During the transition period, the two models shared some trim items until all 2.5-litre trim was used up and eventually the 3.0-litres arrived with the correct parts on them.

### Italian go-kart

The V8 is a great-sounding car and, according to Dominic, it handles like a go-cart. "These cars are so much fun to drive. They drive like they're on rails. When you tackle a corner, the car just swallows it up." The Uracco is not without faults. "Lamborghini could have made many more improvements, but lacked development time. They wanted to introduce it to the public too early." Fortunately, Dominic's cars haven't suffered the tin worm too badly, considering that at the time, Italy was buying a lot of low quality steel from Russia. "They suffer in areas where the water can't escape," he says, pointing these areas out, which seem to comprise most of the car. "They had design faults."

I notice that the compartment under the small hood at the front is useless for storing anything. When I opened it, I found a space for the car's plumbing and a spare tyre. However, behind the engine is a surprisingly roomy boot. "You wouldn't put your wife's makeup in there because it would melt. The engine gives off plenty of heat," Dominic advises.



### Sharing the passion

Life has caught up with the 17-year-old boy. "These days, I only drive the Lamborghinis in club events, due to being so busy with work." Dominic and Marcela are keen to improve the awareness of the club as well as promote its activities. "The cars themselves become a side issue. It's more about meeting with people who share the passion." Dominic has since returned to Sant'Agata and noticed a change. After Ferruccio Lamborghini retired and returned to farming to become a wine producer, various owners came and fell by the wayside. In the '90s, Chrysler kick-started the company toward a genuine recovery and now Audi has taken over.

"Since Audi purchased the company, the improved quality control and efficiency of the place means they're churning out better cars. You now have to wait until someone serves you. Italian-speaking Germans are running the show at the front while the Italians are out the back putting the cars together. It's German efficiency as we know it!" Is Dominic's plight a case of too many cars, and not enough time to drive them? "I couldn't stop at one but I don't think I'll be buying any more Uraccos. For that young bloke who was wishing for something, it's amazing how life has turned out."

### Specs

	Uracco	Espada
Production Approx	791	1217
Engine	2996cc, V8 4OHC	3929 cc 60° <a href="#">V12</a>
Transmission	5-speed + reverse, all-synchromesh	3-speed Chrysler TorqueFlite
Suspension	Independent, coil springs and telescopic shock absorbers	Independent front and rear, coil springs, telescopic Koni dampers and anti-roll bars
Braking	Girling ventilated discs	Girling ventilated discs
Wheels	Campagnolo cast magnesium 7.5 x 14J	Campagnolo cast magnesium alloy 7Jj x 15"
Power	265bhp / 198kW	350bhp / 261kW
Torque	195 ft/lbs @ 5,750rpm	290 ft/lbs @ 5,500rpm
Weight	1100 kg / 2420 lb	1635 kg / 3605 lb
Length	4250 mm / 165.8 in	4730 mm / 186.2 in
Width	1760 mm / 68.6 in	1860 mm / 73.2 in
Height	1160 mm / 45.2 in	1185 mm / 46.6 in
Speed	250 km/h / 155 mph	250 km/h / 155 mph



