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1989 Countach 25th Anniversary Edition

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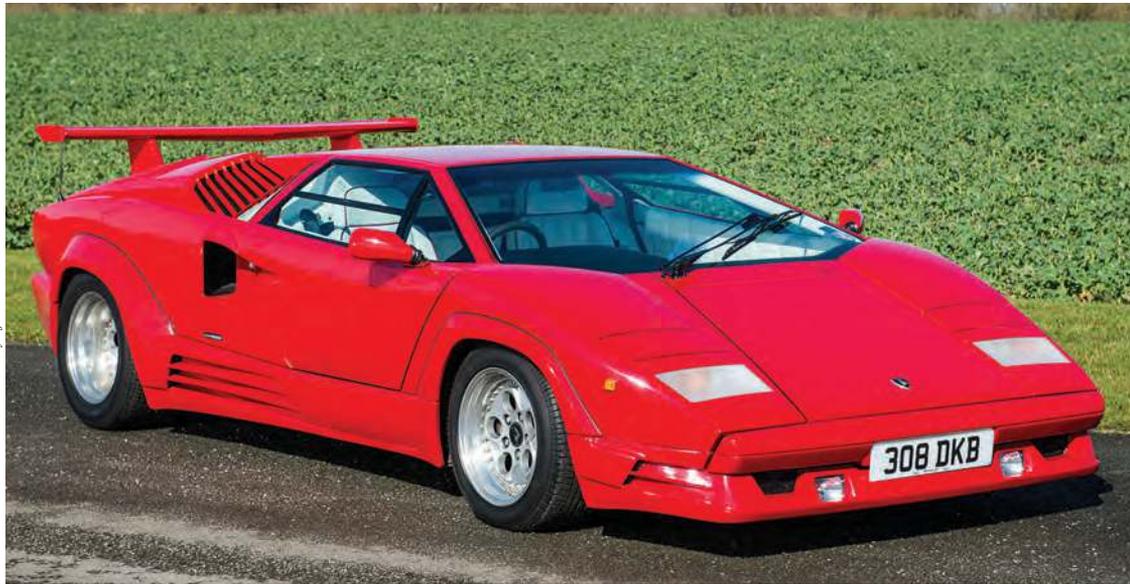
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1989 Lamborghini Countach 25th Anniversary

A radical rule-breaker rides pure style — and 1980s memories — up the value curve

by Philip Richter



Courtesy of Silverstone Auctions

Chassis number: ZA9C005AOKLA12681

Engine number: 12681

In 1989, to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Lamborghini Automobili S.p.A., the company owners at that time — the Chrysler Corporation — drafted in no less than Horatio Paganini to restyle and relaunch the amazing Countach for the final time.

Featuring carbon and Kevlar panels, bespoke wheel-larch extensions, extended air-intake ducts and a new rear engine cover design, the car now looked amazing. Power was lifted to 455 bhp from the 4-valve QV engine, offering 369 ft-lbs of torque. The car hit 0–60 mph in 4.7 seconds and went on to a top speed of 185 mph.

Having covered only 13,000 km from new (just over 8,000 miles) with a Lamborghini main dealer service history up until 2004, when the car entered long-term storage, this car is offered to the market for the first time in 16 years.

SCM Analysis This car, Lot 344, sold for \$352,378, including buyer's premium, at Silverstone's The May Sale on May 20, 2016, at the Silverstone Circuit, Northamptonshire, U.K.

To drive the Countach is to hate it, but to look at it is to love it. It's claustrophobic, hot, ergonomically impossible and handles poorly.

But with its raked, muscular, cab-forward form, the

Countach is among the most iconic and recognizable car designs of all time — and that fact has driven its parabolic rise in value. The 1989–90 25th Anniversary edition is riding the wave of a sharp increase in price of the 1974–76 Countach Periscopio cars, which have skyrocketed in the past few years.

In 2014, the LP400 Periscopio appreciated more than any other collector car.

That year, an early example crossed the block at over \$1 million for the first time. Other examples followed, selling near the \$2 million mark. The 25th Anniversary Countach has also sharply appreciated, although it started at a much lower baseline.

Long considered less desirable than its earlier, purer and far more rare wingless sibling, the Anniversary Edition is firmly moving into collector-car status. Five years ago, these cars could be bought for under \$100,000. Now they're selling for between \$300,000 and \$500,000. Ultra-low-mileage examples have reportedly traded in the private market for even more.

These valuations are emotionally driven. Despite its quirks when it comes to comfortably driving the car, there's a reason the Countach's image adorned the walls of so many teenagers' bedrooms and undergraduate dorm rooms across America — right alongside posters of

Details

Year produced: 1989
 Number produced: 657
 Original list price: \$145,000 MSRP
 Current SCM Valuation: Median price to date, \$358,900; high sale, \$451,000
 Tune-up: \$2,000–\$3,000
 Chassis # location: Stamped on frame in engine bay
 Engine # location: Between cylinder heads
 Club: Lamborghini Club of America
 Web: www.lamborghiniclubamerica.com
 Alternatives: 1987–91 Ferrari Testarossa, 1978–80 BMW M1, 2005 Ford GT
 SCM Investment Grade: B

Comps



1989 Lamborghini Countach 25th Anniversary
 Lot 125, s/n ZA9C0050KLA12923
 Condition 1-
 Not sold at \$380,000
 Bonhams, Amelia Island, FL, 3/10/16
 SCM# 271232



1989 Lamborghini Countach 25th Anniversary
 Lot 2102, s/n ZA9CAA05A8KLA12709
 Condition 1-
 Sold at \$360,250
 Auctions America, Santa Monica, CA, 7/18/15
 SCM# 266447



1989 Lamborghini Countach 25th Anniversary
 Lot 9, s/n ZAC005AOKLA12589
 Condition 2
 Sold at \$311,035
 Artcurial, Paris, FRA, 6/22/15
 SCM# 265839



Heather Thomas and Christie Brinkley.

Aesthetically, the Countach is the essence of supercar. The name Countach, from the northern Italian Piedmontese dialect, is an exclamation of desire.

According to folklore, Italian designer Giuseppe Bertone said, “Countach!” when he saw an early prototype of Marcello Gandini’s groundbreaking, bold design. The car’s styling is full of contradictions: It’s angular and curvy, sumptuous and stark, masculine and feminine. And yet these seemingly disparate elements come together to form a perfect visual union.

The boys who coveted the Countach in the 1970s and 1980s are now of the age and means to pay up in the collector market.

The 25th Anniversary edition is laden with flamboyant style add-ons that reflect the excess of the 1980s. But this version of the car does have better build quality than its earlier siblings.

In 1987, Chrysler purchased Lamborghini and infused much-needed cash. The final edition of the Countach has upgrades overseen by legendary race driver Sandro Munari, including power windows, wider power seats, semi-functional air conditioning, liberal use of new composite materials, larger Pirelli P Zero tires, and new OZ rims. It reaches 0–60 mph in 4.3 seconds and tops out at 185 miles per hour. The car also has bodywork enhancements that many consider overdone: “ground-effects,” larger vents and intakes — and the optional gaudy and functionless wing.

Overall, the Countach has three qualities that will continue to drive its emotional value on the collector market: It’s rare, it’s recognizable, and it’s a rule-breaker.

It’s rare enough

Just about 2,000 Countaches were built from 1974 to 1990. The car went through several iterations during its production, and each series is unique. Only about 110 LP400 Periscopios were made, while 657 25th Anniversary cars were produced. The 25th Anniversary car’s numbers push it into the not-as-rare category, but it’s still rare enough to be highly collectible.

It’s instantly recognizable

The Countach’s iconic shape and cab-forward design make it instantly recognizable. There’s no other car like it. The radical, raked hood line continues straight into the windshield. The windows lean steeply into the roof.

The sharp front bumper and slim nose have an almost feminine air, while the muscular, tall, and massive rear end screams masculinity. The forward-facing rear wheelwell gives the car an aggressive and downward stance. A beautiful, sculpted door line and gaping NACA air-intake duct unite the lean hood line and brawny haunches. And the Countach sports those infinitely cool scissor doors. In the history of cars, only the Model T and the VW Beetle are as universally familiar. But unlike those two cars, the Countach makes a statement of power, sexuality and extravagance.

It’s a rule-breaker

The Countach throws Louis Sullivan’s form-follows-function rule out the window. The car is a purely aesthetic creation. I’ve never read one single positive driving review of the Countach.

To start, it’s a herculean effort to vault over the massive doorsills and into the car. Then there are the seats, which combine the worst qualities of a bucket and a bear trap.

The car has zero rearward visibility; you can’t back it up with any confidence unless you hang out the open scissor door or install an after-market back-up camera. Get out on the road, and the ride is jarring, the steering unresponsive, and the handling unremarkable.

The only impressive feature of this supercar’s performance is its straight-line acceleration. This is not a car to drive and enjoy. It’s a car to worship and admire. The V12 doesn’t need to run to get your motor running; it doesn’t need to move to move you. When you buy a Countach, you’re buying a style icon.

A green future

The swansong edition of the Countach is the most well built and advanced of all Countach models. While the market prefers the clean and pure shape of the original wingless and narrow-tire LP400 over the bloated and cluttered “Gordon Gekko” look of the Anniversary edition, the final version of the car still maintains its unmistakable character.

Although Anniversary Countaches could take a pause here — or even decline for a period of time with the broader market — the future appreciation prospects for the Anniversary cars are strong, and looking out 10 or 20 years, I see only green.

At least two 25th Anniversary cars are scheduled to sell at auctions on the Monterey Peninsula this August. Despite the general cooling off of the collector car market, I expect the bidding to be strong for these cars. ♦

(Introductory description courtesy of Silverstone Auctions.)

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