



Author Gautam Sen has turned his attention to Lamborghini to examine the legendary Italian marque's design pedigree. Car Design News spoke to him about what readers can expect from this extensive tome

Lamborghini: At the Cutting Edge of Design by Gautam Sen, Branko Radovinovic and Kaare Byberg promises an in-depth, and not uncritical look, at the legendary Italian brand, uncovering unlaunched concept cars, iconic designs and featuring interviews with the design directors. Car Design News spoke to Sen about the book.

There have been many books written about Lamborghini – what sets this one apart?

Yes, there have been many books on Lamborghini, and most have been very good, with extensive coverage of the marque's storied history, or that of some of their more famous models. Yet, none focused on the single most important aspect, which has made Lamborghini so famous: its amazing design history. Although legendary test driver Valentino Balboni has been quoted as saying that Lamborghini mainly made engines and the designer's job was simply creating a cover for that engine, what everyone sees and is attracted (or repulsed) by, are those extraordinary shapes and forms that have always covered these awesome powerpacks. This book is about those astounding designs and the intrepid designers behind those designs.

How has the Lamborghini evolved since its launch in 1963?

Unlike most other automotive marques, Lamborghini has been the one carmaker which has not really evolved... in the way that most carmakers evolve, but has had a series of “explosive revolutions” in launching models which were dramatically new and different than the ones it replaced. Almost each new model was an innovation, and/or cutting-edge representation of avant-garde design and engineering concepts. It has always been the one carmaker that has done things differently than others.

Were there any surprises you found during your research?

Many! As they say, for every one design that you see, there are at least two others that never see the light of day... several of those unseen and unpublished designs and concepts were real surprises. But then you need to see and read the book to know more about them.

There have been remarkably few design directors associated with Lamborghini over the years – why is that?

What Lamborghini did was to retain the same designer who had designed the more successful models in the first place. If the Miura was Lamborghini’s first truly successful design, the carmaker retained that car’s designer Marcello Gandini for its subsequent designs.

And how has that informed the design DNA of the brand?

With an individual – who was also the designer – left alone to define the brand’s design DNA (and not a committee, nor the management), Lamborghinis had the benefit of inputs of a truly “purist” nature, unsullied by marketing or commercial considerations.

It has many fans, but also more than a few detractors – what is it that provokes such strong emotions?

Gradual evolutions are easier to accept – if the newer models are better or improved iterations of a successful design then it is easier for the enthusiasts to appreciate. Whereas design revolutions and cutting-edge forms and concepts are, most often than not, controversial – people either hate them, or love them. And that’s how it has been for most Lamborghinis.



Lamborghini: At the Cutting Edge of Design

The book references contemporary press reports when models were launched – were there models that we now have a very different opinion of?

Oh yes! This was one of the many surprises: of how models were judged at the time when they were launched, as compared to the reputation they have today. The other striking aspect was the country-to-country variation on how a model was considered/judged. Also, it was interesting to note how certain mags or journalists were consistent Lambo fans, as much as those who couldn't stand the cars from Sant'Agata.

And finally, what can readers expect? Is this a celebration of the brand or a critical reader?

A bit of both! The world would be that much poorer if we didn't have Lamborghini... yet many of the cars – and their design, engineering, and finish – left a lot to be desired...



