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### ***The L147, from prototype to production ...***

The long awaited Lamborghini Diablo successor would be introduced during a special ceremony held at Sant'Agata in early September 2001, but the German Auto Motor und Sport magazine managed to get some early photo's of this very secret new supercar from Automobili Lamborghini SpA.

That car was still disguised but with the aid of computer editing, a decent look at the new Lamborghini could be presented, this design was created by a team of both German (Audi) and Italian (Lamborghini) designers under the supervision of Luc Donckerwolke. It still looked closely related to then current Diablo, but this had been the intention from the start, when Mr Piech decided to stop the Canto development by Zagato.

As you know, the Diablo successor had a very impressive evolution, the initial development started back when Automobili Lamborghini SpA was still owned by Indonesians, who asked Zagato to design their new Lamborghini flagship, however, when Audi AG took over the company in July 1999, this 'Canto' design was rejected and the development started again from a blank sheet of paper.

Note however that a rumored total of five Canto's had been built, although some sources state the same chassis was used for several of these prototype's, it is therefore believed that only three new chassis were built for the various Canto's. One of these very unique cars, a black finished one that was made drivable was actually shipped to Japan and is now located in a private collection according to some sources, and recently an orange Canto was seen in a collection.

But the Canto was halted and a first attempt at redesigning the front and rear part for the new Lamborghini was created by long time Lamborghini designer Bertone, but Audi AG didn't really like these initial results so they moved the design in-house, which led to the car that was presented in September 2001.

As usual with prototypes, the first designs weren't practical or weren't what the upper management expected, so Mr Donckerwolcke reworked everything until it was just right.

After this several prototypes were made, some in a 1:1 scale mock up, others were actually really drivable, but a lot of work still needed to be done, both by Donckerwolcke and the engineers at Sant'Agata, as usual one of the main problems was keeping the engine cool, but they worked something out, a really impressive system of adjustable air intakes on the shoulders next to the engine cover.

When Valentino Balboni first saw the finished production prototype he actually said : *'for the first time, I think Ferruccio Lamborghini is happy in his grave.'*

A statement which shows how close the L147 actually comes to being a perfect GT, the car is easy to drive and actually grows around you once you get used to driving it, something the late Ferruccio wanted to create from the start, a perfect all-round Gran Turismo.

The basic technologies of the new Lamborghini were well known in advance, the famous 60 degree, 48 valves V12 engine was to have a displacement of 6.0 liter or more, and would deliver between 570 hp and 590 hp, later more powerful versions would be introduced producing above 600 Bhp. But first the four wheel drive version was to be presented with a 570 Bhp engine, coupled to a sequential six speed gearbox that should have been available right from the start, it didn't become an option later on as the e-Gear actually.

This new Lamborghini would first be introduced as a coupé, but a Roadster version was also being designed from the start, with more powerful SV and GT version being considered at that time.

According to CEO Guiseppe Greco there would no longer be a 'model year' policy, but different versions should be introduced each year, first the VT model, than the Roadster in 2002, an SV or GT edition in 2003 and so on ..., after the introduction of the L147 on the September Frankfurt Auto Show, Greco intended to sell a total of 60 to 80 units in 2001. The new Lamborghini would be introduced on the US market during the 2002 Detroit Auto Show in January, after which the production figures should become around 2 cars each day, resulting in a production of 450 L147's each year.

Still using a mid engine layout, the L147 used a steel tube space frame chassis with the steel roof welded on, the doors are still aluminum while most of the other bodyparts would be made of Carbon Fiber.

The L147 remained close to the then current Diablo layout, with the gearbox in front of the engine, it was very nice to see the engine cover seen on some early photo's looked a lot like the one used on the legendary Miura, while later photo's showed a revolutionary new design with round air exhausts, but this was camouflage apparently and the production Murciélago had a magnificent, Miura style engine cover.

The L147 would receive a computer controlled suspension setup which controlled the firmness and ride height depending on the speed of the car, this new model would also use a wide front track like the Diablo GTR and a front mounted oil cooler, because the front overhang became a little longer, the luggage space the L147 offers is larger than the current Diablo VT 6L one.

As we could see on the limited edition Diablo SE 6.0, the interior of the successor would be subject to the highest standards both in ergonomics and finishing, only the best materials would be used from the top suppliers available and the overall finishing would be at a very high level, note that the interior was also redesigned by a team from IngolStadt headed by Luc Donckerwolke.

The new Lamborghini would again be named after a fighting bull, Automobili Lamborghini SpA tried eight different names for the car, but much to their surprise, all these names were already taken by the competitors, so a new name had to be found while the fifth prototype was already performing final test runs.

AutoWeek proudly published in their August issue that the L147 would be called 'Murciélago', the Spanish for 'bat' and one of two names Automobili Lamborghini SpA registered over the last two months.

When this all new Lamborghini would become available to the public it should be listed in Europe for about US \$ 200,000, but the MSRP for the US would be higher, probably closer to \$250,000. However Automobili Lamborghini stated that the final price of the L147 would only be a little over the list price for the Diablo VT 6.0 because new techniques from Audi AG that were to be used for the production and the lower part costs were able to keep the price reasonable.

The car would still remain rather exclusive because only 450 would be built each year, so waiting lists would become rather long for this new exotic, hence a very healthy 'second hand' market started to grow once the Murciélago became available.