



PREVIOUS STORY  
AT&T and DirecTV to launch streaming TV service later this year

NEXT STORY  
Video games in 2016 would be unrecognizable to someone in 2006

TRANSPORTATION CARS GENEVA MOTOR SHOW THE HARPER SPIN

# The indefensible supercar

By Jason H. Harper on March 1, 2016 02:28 pm



Lamborghini's ultra-exclusive Centenario

Share on Facebook (1,278) Tweet Share (15) Pin (2)

## THE HARPER SPIN

This is *The Harper Spin*, a weekly column from seasoned auto critic Jason H. Harper. He's raced at Le Mans, crushed a car in a 50-ton tank, and now, he's bringing his unique style to *The Verge*.

Oh, you shameless, unrepentant hedonists. Baubles of billionaires, playthings of playboys. You are the supercar, and in this age of environmental calamities and have-everythings and have-nots, you are indefensible.

The best place to ask these questions may be the Geneva International Motor Show, the spiritual home of the exotic car. This show is awash in supercar spectacle, from the many historic Ferrari reveals such as the LaFerrari to the bizarre one-offs like Lamborghinis sprayed in gold and arrayed on 22-inch wheels.

What of outright speed, an exotic car's supposed *raison d'être*?

## ***HUMANITY HAS ALWAYS LIKED TO GO FAST***

Totally indefensible. Why would you ever, ever want to exceed the posted speed limit? How much faster could you arrive at a place, anyhow? Shouldn't a car only go as fast as the law permits? Say, 85 miles per hour. The speedometer should run out of numbers right after that. Anything over that is simply inciting transgressions. Aren't we a polite society?

Okay, perhaps I jest. Humanity has always liked to go fast, whether it's been astride a galloping horse or by strapping sticks to your feet and pushing yourself off a snow-covered mountain. But, "How much is too much?" is a valid question. Do we really need **the latest Bugatti Chiron**, which is electronically capped at 261 mph, but likely will do quintuple the general speed limit of 55 mph?



In truth, I'm not enamored by the Chiron, a cold kind of hypercar which chills the blood instead of superheating it. The world does not need **a car with diamonds in its speakers**. If you're looking for an example of the worst kind of supercar, all braggadocio and win-by-the-numbers methodology, the Chiron is it. A true car lover does not aspire to a modern Bugatti, trust me.

But this car's technical prowess does turn us to the more meritorious matter of engineering. If the Bugatti's windshield, powertrain, tires — and passengers — can potentially survive an incident at 250 mph, what safety lessons might trickle down to a VW Passat? (Both are owned by VW Group.) After all, if the NASA space program got us astronaut ice cream and robot arms, nearly unbreakable windshields and smarter aerodynamics are possibly worth the Bugatti's multi-million price tag. Especially if someone else is paying.

But in my own estimation, the best defense of supercars may be the visionaries behind them. One of the reveals this week was **the Lamborghini Centenario**, a carbon-fiber warbird with 770 horsepower. Only 20 coupes and 20 convertibles will be produced, and all have been accounted for. At a price of €1.75 million, many might say it is nothing more than a hypercar money grab, and those voices would not be entirely wrong.

But the namesake is interesting. The Centenario is a reference to the would-be 100th birthday of Ferruccio Lamborghini, the company's founder. A tractor manufacturer, Lamborghini created the supercar company to go head to head with that of another local car entrepreneur, Enzo Ferrari. Both men were self-starters who came from little, were based in small towns outside of Bologna, and yet somehow managed to change the world of cars. (Lamborghini sold off his share in the company in the 1970s and died in 1993.)

***A TRUE CAR LOVER  
DOES NOT ASPIRE TO A  
MODERN BUGATTI,  
TRUST ME***



It's simply astonishing that northern Italy's Emilia-Romagna region has proved such fertile grounds for visionary automakers. The Maserati brothers began making cars in the early 1900s and today the Maserati factory is just down the road from Ferrari. The superbike company Ducati is also nearby. The region isn't the center of anything except great cheese, balsamic vinegar, and supercars.

Without doubt, those carmakers inspired one another. And those days aren't over. Lamborghini may now be part of a major corporation (and Ferrari just went public), but one only has to look around the halls of Geneva to find the next generation of supercar visionaries.

That **serious looking fellow in the eyeglasses** is Horacio Pagani, an Argentinian who moved to Italy in the 1980s to work at Lamborghini. An engineer and designer, he started his own company, based, of course, in a small town in Emilia-Romagna. His first triumph was the Zonda supercar, which was built of carbon fiber. This year he's showing the latest evolution of the Huayra, which used active aerodynamics to literally change shape as it drives. Other carmakers like Ferrari and Porsche have followed suit with active aero, but none is quite as advanced as the Huayra.



You'll also find Sweden's Christian von Koenigsegg at the show. His **lurid, \$2-million Regera supercar** was first shown here last year. It's a plug-in hybrid with a gazillion horsepower (okay, 1,500-something) and its own active aero. This mad machine is exactly the kind of fervid fantasy that will inspire the next round of car designers.

And that next-gen car designer might be only five years old today. But he or she may very well become obsessed with the Regera or Huayra or Centenario, and 20 years from now, create a fossil-free flying car. Because like art and music, we all build on what has come before us. Visionaries like Horacio and Christian — and, yes Elon Musk — would not have appeared without an Enzo or Ferruccio. Supercars can be gross. But they can also inspire. And for that, they are more than the sum of their speed or their buyers. And that's actually pretty defensible after all.



## MORE FROM *THE VERGE*

[This is BMW's insane vision for the future of cars](#)

[Inside the Oculus, New York's insane-looking, \\$4 billion train station](#)

[First known OS X ransomware spotted in Mac torrenting app](#)

[Nashville Hot Chicken Is Fiery, Crispy, and Perhaps Addictive](#) | Powered By