EXPERIENCING THE THRILL OF MAKING HISTORY: TESTING AND DEVELOPING THE BUGATTI VEYRON



In the history of the automobile, some creations are defined by figures and performance statistics, while others are remembered for the way they transform an era. Belonging to an even rarer category — an entirely new segment — the Bugatti Veyron was the first hypercar to exist; a masterpiece that fundamentally redefined what was thought possible, while forging an emotional connection that endures long after its first record-breaking runs. For Loris Bicocchi, Bugatti's high-speed

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expert at the time, testing the Veyron represented a deeply personal journey shaped by awe, responsibility and a lasting sense of privilege.

Two decades on, the Bugatti Veyron remains a defining moment in automotive history. For the man entrusted with exploring its limits from the very first prototypes, the experience is as vivid today as it was at the beginning of the project. For Loris Bicocchi, the Veyron was an encounter with something entirely new — a machine that could not be measured against anything that came before it.
But the Veyron was not the first time he collaborated with the inimitable marque. Joining the testing program for the sensationally fast EB110 GT and EB110 SS from 1990 through to 1995, the Italian speed specialist was well accustomed to the remarkable heights of performance that four-wheel-drive Bugatti supercars could reach.

But when he received a call in 2001 asking if he was available to work on a new Bugatti project, he did not yet know what awaited him. Unofficially, however, the automotive world was already effervescent with excitement.

> "All car enthusiasts had heard rumors about the Veyron. 1,001 horsepower, more than 400 kilometers per hour, sixteen cylinders — sixteen. Can you imagine? Even today, when I say that, I still get goosebumps."
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> LORIS BICOCCHI
> EXPERT IN HIGH-SPEED TESTING FOR THE BUGATTI VEYRON

His debut run in the car took place at the Michelin test track in Ladoux, Clermont-Ferrand, behind the wheel of a red and black prototype. Anticipation quickly turned into emotion. "I was so excited that I couldn't even wait for the official tests on Monday morning," Bicocchi remembers. "I went on Sunday when the car was delivered and sat in the car. When the engineers arrived the next day, I was laser-focused on relaying my first impressions. Simply put, we all were amazed by what the car was already showing."

At that moment in time, the Veyron delivered twice the power of any other production car. Even for a driver with experience across the most advanced supercars, there was no reference point. "I didn't know what to expect," Bicocchi explains. "I didn't dare to go full throttle. It was so impressive — crazy, almost inexplicable. You immediately understood what this car stood for."

Testing the Veyron meant stepping into unknown territory. With speeds exceeding 400 km/h, the rules governing aerodynamics, stability and braking changed entirely.

> ''From 300 or 320 kilometers per hour onwards, everything changes. Especially aerodynamics. Every single detail counts. I had to reset all the references I had built during my career, because the Veyron was simply incomparable to anything I had driven before.''
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Beyond the technical challenge lay another defining ambition, with the Veyron conceived as a hypercar that could be driven by recreational drivers, safely and confidently, under any conditions. ''This was a huge responsibility, both for me and the marque,'' Bicocchi reflects. ''We had to create an incredible car, yes, but one that could be driven by anyone, not only by professional drivers. It was real teamwork — a 360-degree strike force of experts — and we all learned together as we set about making history. That was incredible.''

For Bicocchi, the emotional weight of the project was inseparable from Bugatti's history. The Veyron represented the rebirth of a marque unlike any other; during long periods of travel between test locations around the world, he immersed himself again in the story of Ettore Bugatti — taking the time to nurture a deep understanding of the brand, Ettore's vision in 1909, and what makes its legacy so inimitably rich.

One moment, in particular, remains etched in his memory — undertaking high-speed testing at Ehra-Lessien. ''I remember being asked to fully accelerate and then apply full braking at more than 400 kilometres per hour,'' Bicocchi recalls. ''It was incredibly stressful and exciting at the same time. When you achieve your goal and the whole team comes to you, you really feel that you are part of a family — and part of history.''

Today, more than 20 years later, the emotion has not faded. With such a step taken for the automotive world, the thrill of taking part in a legendary milestone in the automobile's history stayed with Bicocchi and the whole team behind the Veyron. For Bicocchi, the Veyron's enduring relevance poignantly lies in a defining Bugatti quality: timelessness. ''A Bugatti car is and should remain timeless,'' he concludes. ''When you look at the design, the lines and the emotion they create, you realize they are not linked to a single era. That is what makes Bugatti so special.''

As Bugatti continues to shape the future of the hypercar, the Veyron stands as a singular achievement — a moment when the impossible became reality, and a car that remains incomparable; both for its performance, and for the profound emotion it continues to conjure all over the world.

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[1] Veyron: