

The specialist's answer to a royal command

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King Khaled's Windhawk complete with royal crest

The specialist's answer to a royal command

TUCKED away in a tiny town on the shores of Lake Neuchâtel, Switzerland, is a specialist who enjoys royal patronage of the most exclusive kind.

He is Franco Sbarro, Italian-born car constructor whose company, Sbarro Automobili, is based in Les Tuileries-de-Grandson.

His royal customer? — King Khaled of Saudi Arabia, connoisseur of cars and hawk hunter.

It was the king's combination of interests that brought Sbarro and the Saudi Arabian royal family together.

The King wanted a hawk-hunting special to take some of the fatigue and hazard out of sport in the desert — and Sbarro was approached to build it. The vehicle had to have a level of comfort and sophistication not available "off the shelf".

What Sbarro came up with was a bright yellow, almost 20ft long, six wheel drive "gunship" based on Mercedes running gear called the Windhawk.

To power the giant he slipped in a 4.5 litre, V8 Mercedes engine coupled to a five speed gearbox which, with a two-speed transfer box, gives 10 gears!

Fully laden with 87 gallons of petrol and 35 gallons of water, the eight seater, which is built of fibre glass, weighs 3.5 tonnes.

Its multitude of features includes a large roll back roof, four platform-mounted luxury

seats which can be elevated to give the hunters a clearer view of their prey, two wash basins, a vast range of instruments including a compass, two-way radios and meteorological equipment.

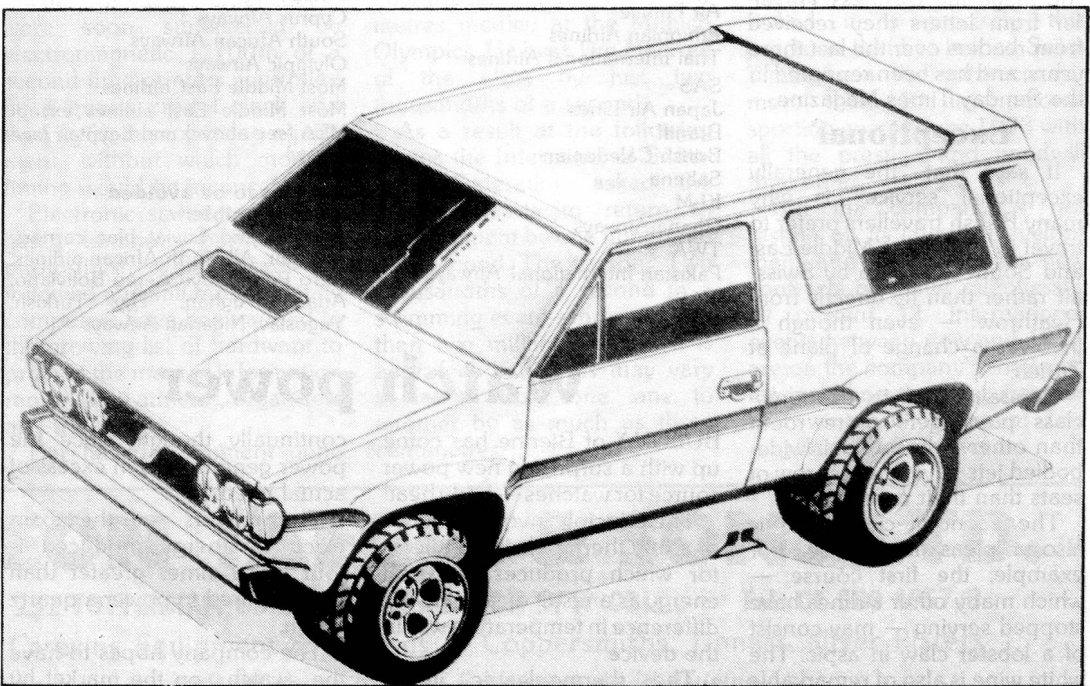
And to help out in difficult conditions the vehicle has a unique drive system. Normally power is transmitted to only four

of the driving wheels but when the vehicle gets stuck a system designed by Sbarro comes into play to drive the remaining wheels up to a speed of 10 mph.

What price this sophisticated hunting machine? Sbarro says between £60,000 and £70,000 and it is not frightening people off. Already another Windhawk is under construction in his

Tuileries workshops.

Sbarro also builds a smaller four wheel drive estate called the Windhound (price £20,500 upwards) and cars for children such as the Sbarro Baby BMW 328 (price £1,230 upwards) and the Sbarro Testa Rossa (price £5,100 upwards) all of which, says Sbarro, are in demand.



The Windhound, the less expensive stablemate of the Windhawk