

CLASSIC DRIVER

The Audi RS2 is Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde's long lost brother

Lead

The Audi RS2 occupies hallowed ground among car fans — the respect garnered from enthusiasts is universal, and the unicorn status of these cars is remarkable. To better understand this mythical beast, we climbed behind the wheel of one of the best examples around...

The numbers don't lie



It would be remiss to discuss the RS2 without some mention of the statistical sorcery that placed the unassuming estate into Top Trumps territory at the hands of *Autocar* magazine in 1995. In an automotive landscape not littered with fast family cars like today, the 0-62mph time of 4.8 seconds and an electronically limited top speed of 162.6 was an earthquake, but it was the 0-30 time that had jaws on the floor and hands in wallets — 1.5 seconds. Faster than that of the goliath McLaren F1, the RS2 was the rocket to launch Audi into the stratosphere, but this was not achieved without some help from another German giant.

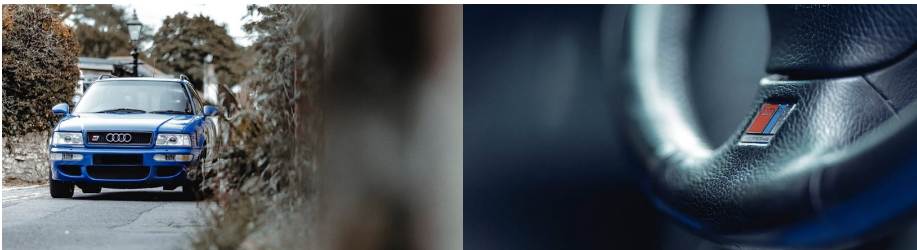
Power couple





Similar to the Mercedes-Benz 500E, Audi co-developed the RS2 with Porsche, using the 80 Avant as a base for a curious concoction of practicality and performance. Arguably the most aesthetically satisfying result of this Stuttgart makeover are those red brake callipers emblazoned with 'Porsche' script, which peek out from behind the re-badged Porsche cup wheels — also the most enjoyable thing to point out to several puzzled passers-by asking “Why are you photographing this? Is it something special?” during our time with the car.

Details, details, details



These, coupled with that piercing Nogaro Blue paint, are your most in-your-face indicators of the latent aggression lurking beneath the family wagon exterior, with the 964 Turbo-style wing mirrors and sporty bumper treatment slipping purposefully under the radar of most. A look under the bonnet will likely blow the cover of the driver trying to hide the RS2's racing credentials from the suspecting policeman/significant other, however. With 'Powered by Porsche' stamped on top of the 2.2-litre, 315 PS, five-cylinder engine and the bringer of buoyant boost, the turbo, proudly on show towards the rear of the engine bay, there's no hiding the potential of this super-estate.

Instilled with greatness



Once inside, there's no question of the era from which this car was born. Despite Porsche's involvement, the interior possesses that unique scent and feel that only Audis of this era do — a combination of the smell of the mile-thick plastics used and anticipation. White dials, another glorious '90s throwback, embellish the otherwise stock interior with a trio of performance indicators hidden from prying eyes. Although full leather variants of the Recaro seats were available, how you could live without the suede inserts of our immaculately restored example, or dare to specify the wood insert option over the blue weave carbon fibre?

Triple threat



Often turbo cars of this era, with the Delta Integrale as a prime example, have split personalities: sedate and considered off-boost and a bouncing, spooling delight when kept in turbo territory. With the RS2, though, there is a

third notch above these levels, a hidden savagery that takes a bit of chasing, but when you find it, you know about it. There's a screaming passion to the top end when pushed that is so hard to find in a car with such all-round capabilities — an electric feeling coursing through the wheel to your fingertips throughout. That quintessential Quattro stickiness is as unshakable and inimitable as in later iterations of the RS line, and although the steering may not have the most feel, its directness, coupled with that enabler up front that compresses air into mischief, urges you on and on.

More than just a feat of engineering, the RS2 is far from lacking in character. Whether you were fortunate in seeing these glorious creations on forecourts next to mere mortal motors, or unfortunate in not taking advantage of the staggering period where RS2s couldn't be given away, the answer is still yes. Yes, the Audi RS2 should be on your list; yes, you shouldn't wait much longer to hunt down a tarmac terror of your own; and yes, you should meet your heroes...

Photos: Peter Aylward for Classic Driver © 2017

Gallery

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