

CLASSIC DRIVER

From gravel to tarmac: this Audi V8 DTM racer continued the Quattro's legacy

Lead

Think of outrageously fast Audis, it's more than likely your mind will go straight to the five-cylinder howl of the rally-ready Quattro. In the decade that followed Group B's demise, DTM became the focus of Audi's dominance, with this historic example heading to RM Sotheby's upcoming sale.



Just what is it that we all love so much about touring cars? For us, it's the visual simplicity these racing machines possess, dressed in finely tailored suits and reinforced safety equipment, and yet, remaining instantly recognisable as the car you'd parallel park outside the shops. While the 1990s was a decade of innovative and intense development in the world of motorsport, leading to some of the world's most famed race cars, it is the humble Touring Car that stand out to us. Of them all, none shone quite as bright as the Audi V8 Quattro, a car that picked up where the Group B rally monster of the mid-1980s left off, seeking to establish complete dominance in its discipline.

By the dawn of the new decade, Audi was a little slow to the wide-arched, homologation special party, while BMW and Mercedes-Benz were all primed and ready to do battle in the Deutsche Tourenwagen Meisterchaft, a grueling 12-round series featuring double-header weekends, giving the ever-growing mass of spectators even more action to get involved with from the grandstands. The racing was fierce — touring cars are renowned for paint-trading and mirror-smashing, after all — with BMW and Mercedes-Benz fighting all season long in 1990. However, it was a single factory-supported, Schmidt Motorsport-run Audi V8 quattro that attracted the greatest attention as the Ingolstadt brand embarked on an official DTM campaign for the first time in its history. Thankfully, they had a true heavy-hitter behind the wheel, former World Sports Car Champion Hans-Joachim Stuck, winning seven of a possible 22 races to secure the title.



By 1991, eyebrows were raised amongst the BMW and Mercedes mechanics. Sure, the Audi was fast, hell, it was faster than any of its rivals, but it handled corners with such ease, producing so much grip where others would oversteer. It was almost as if it had assistance, an aid allowing all four wheels to be used as its power output, resulting in an even spread of performance and grip. Of course, this is exactly what Audi did, and their Quattro system was innovation at its best. Naturally, however, it was one rival of the V8 couldn't agree on, many of whom demanded a rule change to ban Audi from using it. Those demands fell on deaf ears, though, and the 1991 season was to include two factory-backed Audi outfits, with 22-year-old karting prodigy Hubert Haupt joining Stuck in the team.



The car, much to the dismay of BMW and Mercedes-Benz, was also treated to a wealth of upgrades, as can be seen in this fine example from 1991 which was piloted by Stuck himself for the season. Updated to "Evolution" specification, the V8 quattro's 3.5-litre engine now produced almost 500 horsepower, with an all-new front splitter and adjustable-height rear wing offering significant aerodynamic advances. Despite these upgrades, it was BMW who left the starting block of the 1991 season with haste, winning the four opening rounds. In the end, though, the Audi's consistency proved impenetrable, allowing Franks Biela to secure the title, and Audi to claim back-to-back Championship wins from 1990 and 1991, an achievement DTM had never witnessed before. By the 1992 season, and the car's dominance was still proving to be a bitter pill for its rivals to swallow, with BMW and Mercedes successfully targetting the Audi's illegal crankshaft, Audi would withdraw their entry just days before their home race in Nuremberg, saying enough was enough, and pulled out of DTM on the spot.



Looking at the car, it's easy to see why it was such a high achiever. Despite looking somewhat similar to Audi's executive saloon seen parked in many law firm car parks, its high-revving naturally aspirated V8 was the source of the car's greatness. That, and its outrageously low weight; an advantage rival teams were quick to spot, imposing a minimum weight of 1,300kgs on the Audis. Even so, this four-door saloon could be hurtled around a racetrack with more agility than a car half its size. Despite the low weight,

the Audi's most surprising feature can be found inside the cabin, where, in-keeping with the Group A regulations of the time, it retained the wood-veneer dashboard, bringing a touch of sophistication to the bare-metal surroundings!

After the season, Audi kept hold of this 1991-raced machine within their museum until 2014, when in a wonderful turn of events it was snapped up by the car's former driver, Hupert Haupt, who promptly entrusted it to Imgrund Motorsport of Hüttenhausen, Germany for complete restoration to 1991 specification, sporting the now iconic 1991 Audi Sport livery. Now boasting a 4.2-litre engine, offering superior torque and slightly lower maximum revs, this terrific Touring Car isn't ready to hang up its slick tyres just yet. It is being sold alongside an extensive spares package including its original race engine, two spare sets of wheels, a wiring harness, a complete braking system, and a period-correct laptop for data download purposes. Its next custodian will have everything they need to go racing once more, as this fine machine boasts a FIA Historical Technical Passport and will undoubtedly be granted entry into the numerous historic and Youngtimer touring car events for which it is eligible.



Think of fast Audis of a by-gone era, and your mind is sure to head straight to the gravel tracks of the Ur Quattro, but Audi dabbled in so many disciplines of motorsport during this era, hell-bent on proving to the world they were a force to be reckoned with. Sadly for DTM, Audi withdrew entirely from the championship in 2020, with DTM still proving a popular race series today, albeit with cars specified to GT3 regulations, meaning it's unlikely we'll see a 1,300kg, fire-spitting V8-powered A6 Saloon out on the circuit anytime soon. This only adds to the affection so many of us share for these by-gone racers; it's a car that looks ready to do battle, whether it be on the world's toughest racetracks, or navigating the supermarket car park. This incredible piece of Audi's motorsport legacy will head to [RM Sotheby's upcoming Monaco sale, which takes place on May 11th](#).

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