



Auto EXPRESS FIRST PICTURES



Silver dream MACHINE

EXCLUSIVE: We're first in the world to reveal secret supercar that shows the way ahead for Audi

By Tom Barnard

It must be the most exciting appetiser for a car ever: Audi fans visiting an exhibition in Germany are being given the ultimate in 'sneak previews' — a first glimpse of the company's top-secret sixteen-cylinder supercar! Set for production within two years, the firm's answer to the Mercedes SLR and McLaren F1 is the highlight of the Audi

display at the new AutoStadt 'theme park' next to the company's HQ in Wolfsburg. As part of the bizarre AutoStadt experience, members of the public are strapped into Recaro seats in a darkened room before the stunning car appears from inside a huge gift-wrapped box.

You're only given a teasing taster, though, as the alloy-bodied beauty disappears after 16 seconds. Cameras are banned as the commentary

tells the audience to keep the experience 'our little secret', and that it is 'Audi's gift to you'. But we've smuggled out these shots to give you an exclusive peek at the TT's big brother and Audi's new corporate look.

And it's not the only secret we can reveal about the supercoupé. Audi is determined to keep the details under wraps to attract visitors to the show, but insiders have revealed that the car is set for limited production, with

no more than 500 built. Finding buyers prepared to part with the estimated £250,000 cost will be no problem, though, as the ultra-exclusive machine packs the W16 motor first seen in the Bentley Hunaudières. This 623bhp 8.0-litre monster is essentially two 4.0 V8s 'merged' together, giving huge power and refinement combined with compact dimensions

Wheels and wheelarch design shared with successful TT Coupé





New Audi will face up to supercar rivals including awesome British-built Mercedes SLR and retro-styled BMW Z8



to be the biggest talking point. Marking a huge departure from the current range's anonymous black-slatted rectangle, the egg-shaped 'mouth' harks back to Audi's sister Auto Union grand prix cars of the Thirties. The grille is in the new model shares with the Porsche-designed, mid-engined racers which ruled pre-war GPs. Both feature a long, rib-like cover behind the driver, hiding mid-mounted 16-cylinder motors.

The Auto Unions C-Type's 520bhp is safely beaten by the new model, but the old-timer's awesome 853Nm of torque remains unchallenged, with the W16 producing a claimed 761Nm. And remember that the C-Type pounded race tracks at up to 211mph before traction control, ABS or even radial tyres were invented! This Supercoupé should be capable of at least that speed, but is sure to be safer and more comfortable. The aerodynamic

shape and engine-cooling requirements have ruled out any form of rear window, but the driver can still check behind by viewing through two roof-mounted cameras.

Yet for all its visual potency and drama, Audi's supercar faces some of the most formidable opposition imaginable. Just as the Auto Union C-Type met arch rival Mercedes on the track, the new Supercoupé will battle with the soul-stirring SLR. This two-seat coupé is to be built by McLaren at its Woking HQ in Surrey. And, judging by initial impressions on our exclusive first drive of the concept in February, the three-pointed star will not relent to the four-ringed wonder without a bitter battle...

Styled to mimic the classic 300SL, as well as today's McLaren F1 racer, the SLR will feature a supercharged 5.5-litre AMG-prepared V8 developing a mighty 557bhp – sufficient to ensure

200mph potential, given the lightweight carbon fibre and aluminium construction. Just don't expect much change from £200,000 when it rolls out at a rate of 500 units per year.

Quite who Audi will ask to turn its supercar into reality remains to be seen, but it's likely that Cosworth Technology will sort the powertrain and quattro GmbH will build it. Both have overseen the development of the RS4, an ultra-high-performance spin-off from the dated A4 range.

On the other side of the fence sits BMW. Already reaping the benefits in terms of positive publicity over its seductive Z8 roadster, the Bavarian firm has been rumoured to go one step further, although details are sketchy. Still recovering from burnt fingers following its Rover fiasco, the company is believed to be working on an ultra-exclusive motorsport spin-off which follows in the footsteps of the legendary M1 supercar. Making the most of its return to Formula One, the maker's 'M' division is said to be responsible for much of the handiwork...

Thirties Auto Unions shared mid-engine layout and grille

THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY...



The Supercoupé isn't Audi's first attempt at building a supercar. The Avus wowed crowds at the 1992 Tokyo Motor Show with its revolutionary 6.0-litre W12 that could take it to 210mph. A production version of the engine is due to debut on the next big Audis and VW

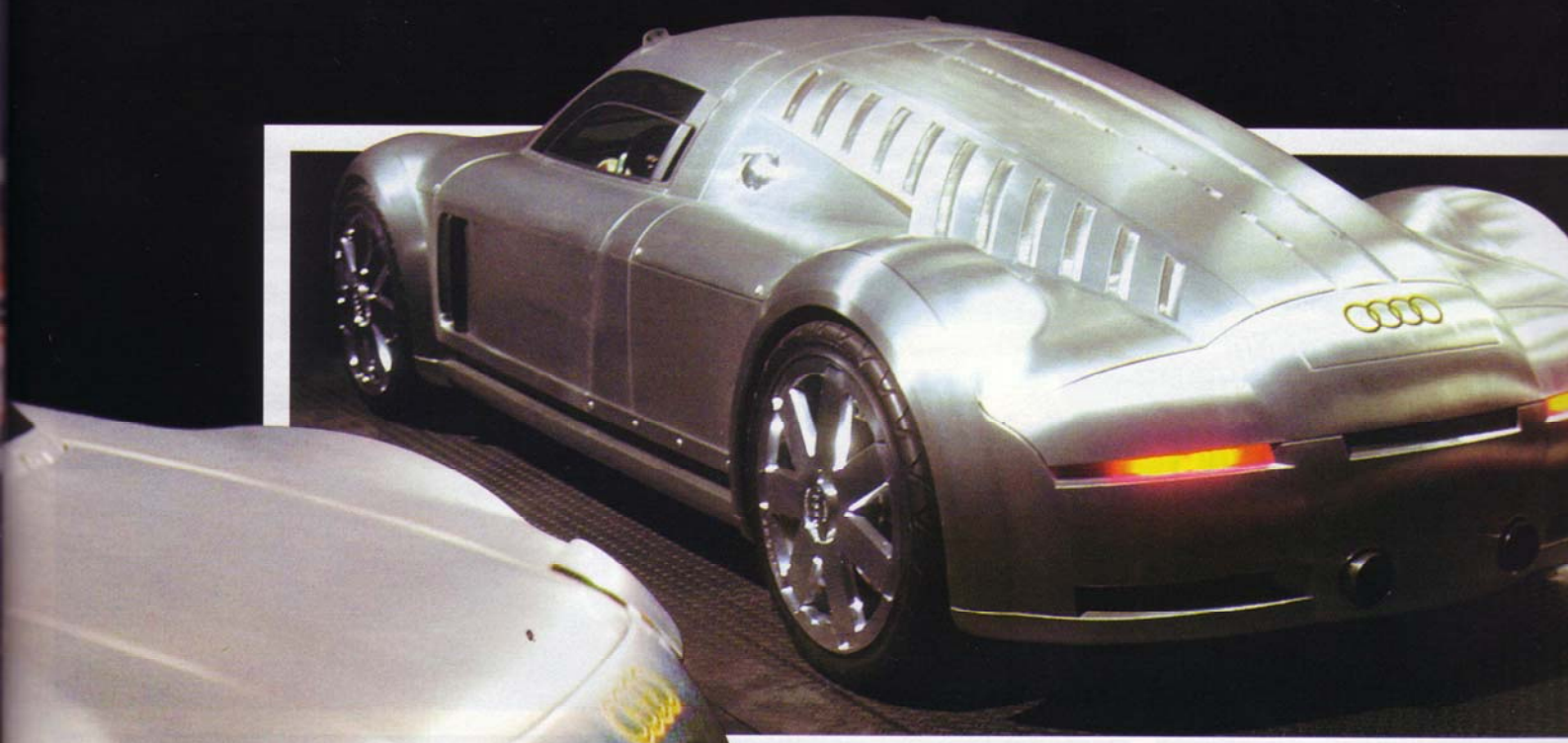


The Quattro Spyder was unveiled at the Frankfurt Motor Show in 1991, using a mid-mounted 2.8-litre V6, four-wheel drive and alloy bodywork. But the marketing department decided it was too impractical to fit in with Audi's image, and the project was scrapped.

SUPERCOUPE AT A GLANCE

- Alloy-bodied Supercoupé set for limited production of 500 units
- Powered by 8.0-litre W16 engine producing 623bhp borrowed from Bentley Hunaudières concept
- Styling based on Thirties Auto Union grand prix racers
- On show for only 16 second bursts at VW's Autostadt theme park

Audi's revamped A3 p14



Coupé is designed to show how classic design can be merged with modern styling to stunning effect. Rib-like air ducts feed mid-mounted engine. Bodyshell panels are made up of unpainted aluminium.

Supercoupé set to be Audi's flagship



By James Mills

Audi is preparing its primary line of luxury cars to challenge Mercedes SLR and Ferrari Enzo. The Supercoupé is the latest in a line of cars designed to show how classic design can be merged with modern styling to stunning effect.

The Supercoupé is a two-seater, mid-engine sports car. It is designed to be a flagship model for Audi, showing the company's commitment to high-performance vehicles. The car is built using unpainted aluminium, which is a traditional Audi design choice.

The Supercoupé is expected to be launched in 2001. It will be the most expensive car in Audi's lineup, with a price tag of around \$150,000. The car is designed to compete with the Mercedes SLR and the Ferrari Enzo, which are currently the most expensive cars in the world.

The Supercoupé is a true sports car. It has a powerful V8 engine, a six-speed manual transmission, and a top speed of over 200 mph. The car is also equipped with a range of advanced safety features, including airbags and a stability control system.

The Supercoupé is a testament to Audi's commitment to innovation and excellence. It is a car that is designed to be a flagship model for the company, showing the world that Audi is still a leader in the automotive industry.



Design director Peter Schreyer says the Supercoupé will be Audi's most expensive car.



Auto Express broke news of Audi's plans to challenge Mercedes SLR supercoupé back in March 1



and comparatively low emissions. Quattro four-wheel drive and a sophisticated electronic stability device also feature. The concept is said to use a Lamborghini Diablo VT chassis — as with the Hunaudières — but production versions will use a hand-built aluminium spaceframe.

The jaw-dropping styling is the work of design director Peter Schreyer and his team, and combines the best elements of Audi's classic and contemporary looks. Schreyer said: "We must look very carefully at the way we approach the flagship

sports car market. It must be a machine that takes Audi forward rather than backwards. Given our values, we don't want to build something like BMW's Z8, which in some ways takes its maker a step back."

It looks as though he has succeeded. The links with Audi's racing TT Coupé are clear in the wheel arches, trademark seven-spoke alloy wheels and shape of the headlights. The front lights are hidden behind protective 'eyelids' which slide back when the lamps are illuminated. But it is the grille which is sur-