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DRIVE TIME
THE CAR IN FRONT IS FASTER THAN YOURS

#4

Audi's power and glory

FIND YOUR LIMITS, THEN BLITHELY SURPASS THEM AT THE WHEEL OF THE FABULOUS NEW RS4



Audi RS4
 Engine: V8, 4163cc
 Power: 414bhp@5,500rpm
 Torque: 317lb-ft@5,500rpm
 Max revs: 9,250rpm
 Top speed: 155mph, limited
 0-62mph: 4.8secs
 Price: From £49,800 DTR

MONKEY SEE, monkey do. Having been blasted around Goodwood in the Audi quattro S1 rally car (see p.26), and also a hair-raisingly quick jaunt with 2003 Le Mans winner Guy Smith in its spiritual heir the new RS4, it would seem churlish to do anything other than cane the thing when allowed out on my own in Audi's M3-beater.

The current advertising portrays the RS4 as a predatory spider, catching and shredding lesser cars in its web. It's a good analogy. The variable power-distribution means that more or less of the power can be flowing through various wheels at various times, depending on how good traction is on any given corner of the car. On

any given corner. So around 105bhp is, on average, routed through each 19" wheel; less than the two-wheel drive M3 or indeed most 911s, and all of the AMGs. Which is a good thing - it means power is linked to control. Because, as we all know, the one is useless without the other.

And, as an average-to-terrible driver, it's good news for me as I sit in the thing looking for the button to move the seat backwards. Silly me; it's a manual lever. Apparently most drivers prefer that. Whatever. Seat adjusted, 'Start' button pressed, engine gurgling purposefully into life, tunes selected; here we go. Then I stall it. Which is classy, with sundry Audi technicians

and half of Britain's motoring press looking on. So my MO became 'plenty of right foot', and from that epiphany onwards the RS4 and I became very close indeed. Pressing the 'Sport' button made us closer than ever - it activates a series of technical advances indistinguishable from magic that makes the seat hug you a bit tighter, makes the engine even more throaty, and generally gets the beast ready to pounce.

Under the bonnet, for those of you who care, there's a 4.2 litre lump with direct fuel injection technology that delivers a massive amount of torque in almost all gears at all speeds; the high-revving engine is responsive and has

the slightly nervy, excitable aspect of a thoroughbred racehorse. It's great.

Should you hit 110mph down an empty and straight country road, you would (I can only imagine, m'lud) find the steering and handling lightning-quick and easy to control. Should you stop on said country lane and blast the thing to 60 as fast as you could, you would only need two gears and have to watch you don't hit the rev limiter up in the mid-to-high 8000s and you would be able to count to about five before you get there. Should you wish to roar around wide, sweeping curves at a considerable clip and with majestic ease and control, you will be rewarded for doing so in the RS4. And you can do so with a co-pilot and two others, plus a boot full of luggage. The six-speed manual is smooth and precise; it's easy to drive and you never forget the potential under your right foot.

In short, the RS4 takes Audi's perfectly respectable and solid A4 and makes it thrilling. It's £50k worth of car, but the joy is that it's not £50k of identikit sportster or souped-up compromise. It's a family car with fabulous power and supreme control. It's a performance car with space and flexibility. It's a re-engineered classic, like the original quattro was a quarter of a century ago; and that rally heritage, from the engine tone to the uncompromising performance, shines through. You'll just have to stop your partner yelling, '100 right three flat!' or something similar every minute. MG

#5

Club Class

PETER TAYLOR IS A MEMBER OF THE P1 PRESTIGE AND PERFORMANCE CAR CLUB. ONE WEEKEND, HE DECIDED TO FLIP UP THROUGH THE GEARS AND SPIN A MURCIÉLAGO AROUND THE STREETS OF MONACO

IN A WHOLE year of visiting P1 to pick up and drop off cars, one had eluded me. It almost seemed mythical, its powers whispered of while never actually being sighted.

So eventually I decided to book it... arguably P1's most flamboyant attraction, a Lamborghini Murciélago. It deserved more than a sluggish bank holiday crawl through town... but what? "How about a trip to Monaco?" said my girlfriend, half joking. Decision made. I wasn't really prepared for what

I found when I finally saw the car. How was I going to manoeuvre this thing? It seemed ten feet wide yet only three feet tall. My fears were unfounded; intimidating from the outside, once you've ducked under those glorious scissor doors and got a hang of the controls, it's remarkably easy to drive and flattering of even imperfect driving styles.

Saturday morning we scooted down to the Eurotunnel and only just squeezed the rear track between the

train's guide rails. Out the other side we darted through France and Belgium and headed for the obvious attractions of the Autobahn. Eyes peeled for the de-restricted signs, the short spurts of speed proved the car's pedigree, but all too soon the 130km/h signs were back in place. Through Switzerland; nothing to report. Finally, Italy. The border police encouraged us to scream away from their barrier, with waving arms and shouts of "Go! Go! Go!" and we knew we'd returned the Murciélago to

its spiritual home. I'd heard stories that the Miura in the opening scenes of the original Italian Job was piloted over an Alpine pass called the Passo de Stelvio. If it was done in the Sixties in a Miura, surely it would be no match for a four-wheel drive modern day supercar? Wrong. Between us we managed to knife and fork our way round the 50 or so snow-covered hairpins, my partner Louise calling the left-handers from her window and me keeping an eye on the drop from mine. >>



The following morning, it was down hill all the way to Monaco, but first we stopped off in Milan. The dual carriageway down from

Milan to Genova is twisty, cambered and barriered the whole way. Think Playstation, and add a liberal sprinkling of mad Punto drivers.

We arrived in Monaco on Sunday morning. First thing was a few slow laps of the F1 circuit. They even went to the trouble of decking it out in full F1 regalia (or was that for the GP the weekend before?). Up to the casino and park. The car is swamped.

The trip home was supposed to be uneventful. But taking what we thought to be the most direct route to Grenoble meant linked tunnels that stretched for miles and miles. The sound is still booming in my head, and I must have been thinking too much of the exhaust note, because before we knew it we had two guns pointed at us and an accusation of 'Not respecting the white line' repeated over and over. Handing over a £90 fine and giving a

guided tour of the engine bay seemed to smooth things out.

Back in England sitting in spray doing 60mph on the M25 gave us time to reflect on the weekend. The sights, the speed, the reactions. It may have cost me a third of my annual mileage allowance, but what a way to go. **PT**

In addition to the Murciélago, Peter experienced 16 other cars as a member of P1 including the Aston Martin Vanquish, Ferrari 360 Spider, Lamborghini Gallardo and Bentley Continental GT. The club's fleet also now includes amongst others the Ferrari F430, Aston Martin V8 Vantage and a Ford GT.

For more info: plinternational.com

#6 The jump

BUD EKINS ON PULLING OFF ONE OF THE GREATEST STUNTS IN HOLLYWOOD'S HISTORY

BUD EKINS, stunt double for Steve McQueen in *The Great Escape* and *Bullitt*, tells *Square Mile* what it was like to perform one of the most epic stunts ever, as well as befriending one of Hollywood's great.

His friendship with McQueen began at Ekins's motorcycle dealership in Hollywood, as he recalls:

I was riding for Triumph, and sponsored by them, when I heard one of the managing directors say that a motorcycle shop was closing. And it just dawned on me, so I said, 'Can I have that dealership?' I didn't think much of it, but I was a full time motorcycle dealer at just 25 years old. At the time I never thought about it, but many years later I realised what a big deal it was. And I had that dealership for 18 years.

At that time it was kind of a fad that if you were a movie actor you had to have a motorcycle. And if you had a motorcycle it had to be a Triumph, and you had to buy it from me. It was just something that happened. Paul Newman, Clint Eastwood, you name them; all these actors were customers of mine.

Steve asked me if I wanted to come to Germany and be his stunt double. I said, 'Sure.' I never thought more of it, just assuming it would never come to anything.

The day before we shot the jump, Steve, Tim Gibbs, and I all went out to the location. I'd take a run at jumping the fence and jump maybe two feet off the ground. Then we would take a shovel and dig this natural ramp, changing the angles on it. And then I'd jump four feet, six feet, eight feet, and then when we reached ten feet we said, 'That's it - we've got the ramp and the speed.'

Nobody knew we were up there. So when it came to the actual shoot, nobody knew we'd already done it. Finally, when I went ahead and did it, we did it in one take. It seemed I was up in the air forever - ten or twelve feet high and a 120 foot distance jumped. When I was in the air, it was dead silent.

I taught Steve to race motorcycles. He had a motorcycle and rode it on the street, and then he got interested in what I was doing, so I took him out to the desert and built him up a race bike. He was a very, very good rider. Out of three or four hundred riders, he would come in one of the first ten places. The thing was, when he was working he wasn't allowed to race. He would sometimes sneak out to race even though he wasn't supposed to. He broke his foot one time racing, and he told them it was because there was oil on the back of his pickup truck and he had slipped. Anyway, they had to fake it. He had a cast on his leg, so that limited the director on what he could do.

He was very quick, very athletic, and



TWELVE FEET HIGH AND A 120 FOOT DISTANCE JUMPED. WHEN I WAS IN THE AIR, IT WAS DEAD SILENT

very competitive. He was competitive about everything. Even if you were throwing coins up against the wall, he'd be competitive about that. He'd jump right in and give you the best he could.

There are very few stunt men who are all rounders - they specialise. My specialties were cars and motorcycles, the other stuff I didn't do. You couldn't get me anywhere near to jumping out of a window or something.

Steve and I were friends, drinking buddies - we only did two full films together, *Bullitt* and *The Great Escape*.

We'd go to each other's houses all the time though... then he got interested in what I was interested in - antique motorcycles - and I had 130 of them and he didn't have any. All of a sudden he had 112 of them. It took me 30 years to get what I had. He'd just buy stuff when I was scrounging all the time. **KAV**

The Great Escape DVD is released on 22 May 2006 for £15.99 and contains a host of extra material, courtesy of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, sonypictures.com