
Water, sand and ice

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One of the most lavish TV adverts in the history of the car manufacturer from Ingolstadt reached German screens on 5th November. The 40-second film entitled "Ultimate quattro" was shot in Iceland and Prague, with special effects added in Paris. "Never has a TV advert included such spectacular images," asserts Gerhard Kiefer, for around twelve years the man in charge of coordinating all film shoots for commercials at Audi.



It took a total of three months before initial preparatory work was turned into the finished film. The film was directed by one of the most in-demand commercial film directors, Frenchman Bruno Aveillan, while production was handled by Tempomedia in Hamburg und Quad in Paris.



As Hans-Christian Schwingen, Head of Marketing Communication at Audi, explains, "We have enabled a car to be seen as it has never been seen before. It's a film that makes you go 'wow' and not just 'aha'." He is referring to shots in which the viewer seems to be virtually sitting under water, under a sandy track or under ice, looks upwards and sees a car driving overhead – the "quattro perspective". The shots were captured during filming on location, using replica studio sets and by adding special effects.

The film starts with an Audi rally car racing along a sandy track, followed by a second racing car hurtling across a water-covered surface. Finally comes the race scene on, or rather under, the ice when the words "We invented quattro for our cars" appear on the screen. As the Q7 comes into shot, the camera breaks through the ice from below to give a clear view of the Q7 driving across the ice. Two further on-screen captions appear, first "Now we have invented a car for quattro" followed by "The Audi Q7. From the creator of quattro."



The decision to take three historic Audi racing cars - which are of inestimable intrinsic and monetary value - and expose them to the perils of a TV shoot in the Icelandic wilderness was a brave one to say the least. Starring alongside the Q7 there is a 550-bhp Audi 200 quattro TransAm (ice sequence), which sped Audi to victory in the American TransAm Series in its rookie year in 1988. Then there is the Audi Sport quattro S1 "Pikes Peak" (sand sequence) with an output of around 600 bhp in which Walter Röhrl set a record-breaking time for the legendary Pikes Peak Hill Climb in Colorado in 1987 which stood for many, many years. The third racer to be seen in the commercial is the 462-bhp Audi V8 quattro DTM (water sequence) which saw Hans-Joachim Stuck crowned DTM champion in 1990.



All the cars were piloted by former rally driver Harald Demuth during filming. "Driving a 550-bhp race car without traction control over ice is an art in itself," explains Kiefer. An ice rink measuring around two kilometres in length had been specially constructed on the second longest glacier in Europe, the Langjökull.



At a film studio in Prague, a week had been spent constructing sets in preparation for the special 'underwater' special effects. A whole six weeks previously, model maker Philippe Cail had started work on one-metre long models of the Audi racing cars. The miniature cars drove over a transparent plate measuring several metres long. The camera was positioned in a shaft beneath the plate where it filmed the cars from below. This plate was covered alternately with sand, water and a gelatinous substance which reproduced the effect of ice. In this way, it was possible to produce the shots of the vehicles as seen from below the surfaces.

The three racing cars as well as the Q7 were each hoisted up by a giant crane too. With the cars dangling at a height of four metres, vast quantities of water, sand and gravel were then blasted across the bottom of the vehicles to produce sensational close-up shots. Apart from the live filming, a great deal of work also went into the film's postproduction - even the penguins that appear in the commercial are entirely the work of the animators. The commercial made its debut on German TV on

5th November, and will also screen in Italy, Great Britain and the USA a short time later. It will be shown in both a 30-second and a 40-second version.



The theme of the track "Streets of Tomorrow" by Carla Vallet provides the musical backing for the clip. This song was created especially for the Q7 by Audi in association with Red Rock Production und Leslie Mandoki, and has been available in the shops since 21st October.



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