

CLASSIC DRIVER

Audi's mid-engined GT revealed in Paris



The new Audi R8 makes its world public début at the 2006 Mondial de l'Automobile in Paris. It combines a classic mid-engine configuration with advanced all-aluminium Audi Space Frame (ASF) construction and quattro permanent four-wheel-drive. Powered by a 4.2-litre V8 FSI petrol engine delivering 420 HP, UK orders can be placed later this year.

Prices are expected to start from around £77,000, the new R8 will be built at the Audi facility in Neckarsulm, Germany – the centre of Audi aluminium construction expertise, and also the home of the brand's quattro GmbH high performance subsidiary. A total of 15 cars will be built per day, each element of the production process being controlled and subjected to intense scrutiny by small teams of specialists.

Mounted longitudinally directly behind the cockpit of the comparatively lightweight, 1,560-kilogramme aluminium-bodied Audi sports car is the high-revving V8 petrol engine delivering 420 HP, contributing to a power-to-weight ratio of 269 HP per tonne. Spinning freely to its 8,250rpm limit, the V8 will punch the R8 through the 62mph barrier in just 4.6 seconds and, in the right conditions, can carry it on to a top speed of 187mph.



Drivers can choose a six-speed manual transmission to channel the 430Nm of torque to the four driven wheels, but they may also be tempted by the racing-inspired R tronic sequential shift gearbox with joystick and paddle control, which uses 'shift-by-wire' technology.

By mounting the potent eight-cylinder unit as close as possible to the centre of the new R8, Audi engineers have achieved near perfect 44 per cent front / 56 per cent rear weight distribution for optimum handling balance. Dry sump engine lubrication - another racing-derived element – also furthers this aim by enabling the V8 to be mounted as close to the road as possible to lower the centre of gravity.



The car features optional magnetorheological fluid dampers that can be adjusted instantly to variations in driving patterns, and has the customary Audi 4wd 'Quattro' system as standard.

The lines of the 4.43-metre long, 1.90-metre wide and 1.25-metre high R8 are accentuated by its bi-colour paint finish, with 'side blades' in a contrasting shade and a choice of eight colour combinations. Beneath the skin is a two-seat cabin with more than a hint of racing car inspiration in its layout and appearance, and typical Audi luxury evident in its extensive Fine Nappa leather upholstery and trim and generous equipment. The 2.65-metre wheel base also makes provision for surprisingly accommodating luggage space behind the seats and also in the front compartment ahead of the cabin, which has a 100-litre capacity.



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