

quattro[®] quarterly

Winter 2011



Paris Auto Salon
Audi Q5 Hybrid
A8 Teutonic Masterpiece
Frank Beddor Nationals

quattro quarterly

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Photo: Ken Dwinell

Scott Sanders' 2009 TTS

INSIDE

19

Paris Auto Salon

by Elaine Catton

24

Commentary on a Century
of Progress

by Anthony Hollbrook

26

Audi Q5 Hybrid

by Paul Rivera

29

A8 – Teutonic Masterpiece

by Giovanni Tomasi

35

Frank Beddor Nationals
at Quattrofest

by Bob Wilkening and Cheri Jagiello

41

Let's Do It Again — Frank
Beddor Nationals at Quattrofest

by Kevin Hodgson

44

TT RS

by Paul Rivera

46

Intel Report:
Audi R-Cars and the
Future of Mid-engine Supercars
at the VW Group

by George Achorn

50

Driving A5 Cabrio with
a Car Designer

by Andreas Dharmawan

54

Audi's New Green Frontier

by Melissa Knight

56

Vorsprung durch Technik —
Audi Driver Assistance Systems

by Paul Rivera

69

Oregon Coastline in the New
Audi A8

by Karen Chadwick

ON THE COVER



Photo: Audi Press

2010 Paris Motor Show



Giovanni Tomasi and Audi A8



Photo: Daniel Ardivinmeta

Driving A5 Cabrio



Photo: Ken Dwinell

Frank Beddor Nationals at Quattrofest

COLUMNS

From the President	8
by Mary Ayers	
Behind the Scenes	10
by Karen Chadwick	
Motoring <i>con brio!</i>	16
by Giovanni Tomasi	
Europoint	19
by Elaine Catton	
MotorSports News	58
by Mike Veglia	
Carousel's Corner	78
by Jim Benoit	
Ask Uncle John	80
by John Beckius	

DEPARTMENTS

Directory of Advertisers	13
Q Mart Ads	13
Audi Tradition	14
Q Forum	23
Member Photo Gallery	62
quattro Events	60
Audi Bits	70
Chapter News	74
Parts Discounts	81



Photos: Daniel Ardiwinata

DRIVING A5 CABRIO

with a Car Designer by Andreas Dharmawan

BEVERLY HILLS COP AND 90210 BROUGHT dramas to this seemingly orderly, quiet, and opulent small town. In this 70 degree Southern California weather, Abeng Halim, a senior car designer at VW/Audi Design Center California at Santa Monica, and I are driving around in a 2010 A5 2.0T Quattro Cabrio.

W. Sunset Boulevard and N. Beverly Drive

Our first stop is the historic Beverly Hills Hotel located in the intersection of W. Sunset Boulevard and N. Beverly Drive. Many people who have not visited this place may have seen the neighborhood in post cards and movies. Characterized by tall palm trees that line wide streets, well manicured gardens, and custom designed mansions, this neighborhood is the California dream.

Built in the early 1900s, Beverly Hills Hotel has seen the booms and busts of Hollywood industries. Many celebrities and foreign dignitaries stayed here, and some took residence at private bungalows surrounded by twelve acres of lush gardens and exotic

flowers. The exterior and interior of this hotel resemble Renaissance palaces and seaside villas in Italy. Hotel guests who are enjoying this Mediterranean Revival architecture feel that they too are celebrities during their stay.

We turn onto N. Beverly Drive heading towards the famous Rodeo Drive. It takes about 16 seconds for the Cabrio's roof to fold in an origami manner. Once the roof is tucked in, there is neither gaping holes nor protrusions that are usually found in other convertible cars. Despite the missing roof line, A5 Cabrio looks very sporty, thanks to curvy shoulder lines and slightly flared fenders.

In addition to the already famous front daytime driving LED lights, this A5 has LED taillights. The design of these LED taillights gives the distinctive look that eclipses the design of LED taillights from other car manufacturers. The laborious time spent on the design details by Audi designers set this car apart from other new convertibles.

Rodeo Drive

Coincidentally, the twice-a-year special *Affaire in the Gardens Art Show* is being

held this weekend at downtown Beverly Hills Park. The Cabrio allows us to soak up smells of foods, colorful sights of sculptures and paintings, and sounds of jazz ensembles as we drive slowly towards the iconic Beverly Hills City Hall and Police Station. Anyone who saw the *Beverly Hills Cop* movie will immediately recognize the Italian Renaissance tower featuring intricate carvings and mosaic dome. The golden crown above the dome shines brightly against a slightly cloudy sky.

The three block stretch of Rodeo Drive between Wilshire Boulevard and US 66/Santa Monica Boulevard glitters with high-end international brand shops: Bvlgari, Chanel, Ferragamo Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Porsche Design, and Versace, just to name a few. Not only locals and tourists come here, but also many movie and television stars visit this place regularly to shop and dine.

We decide to cruise this famous strip. Rodeo Drive is a large outdoor catwalk. Many people dress to be seen and they strut in and out of boutiques looking for the latest and greatest designs in fashion. This is where

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rarity is the norm. Most limited production cars can be seen driving by this strip. In a few minutes we are on the strip, we see several Aston Martins, Audi R8s, Bentleys, Ferraris, and Maseratis. To top that, we also see a very rare custom painted Bugatti Veyron.

Many world renowned designers want to showcase their best designs here. Surrounded by many masterpieces from great designers, I remember an email written to me by an Audi enthusiast from Africa. He was asking me about how to become a car designer. So, I ask Abeng the same question.

How to Become a Car Designer

Art Center College of Design in California, College for Creative Studies in Michigan, Hochschule Pforzheim in Germany, and Royal College of Art in England are world famous design schools from which many leading car manufacturers are recruiting talents.

Creativity is not the only ingredient needed to become a successful car designer. Four-year intense training in not only design studies but also associated disciplines and activities related to realizing a design from concept to reality separates a car designer from a car illustrator.

Typically in the first year students learn drawing basics, principles, tools, car design techniques and processes. In the second year, basic car design in 3D form is taught. Students are required to make their first

half clay model in 1/4 scale. To view the complete car, the half clay model must be viewed using a mirror. Computer design program is introduced in the second year as well. Presentation skills are developed through many design review sessions and exhibitions.

In the third year, students create their first complete 1/4 scale clay model and utilize digital modeling. They also learn to paint the model. Usually, car companies will sponsor third year students on various design projects and competitions. Car companies will provide requirements, design parameters, and manufacturing limitations. The best design will be selected based on aesthetics, functionality, practicality, and manufacturability.

Many design schools provide placement programs to students who want to get internships at global car manufacturers. Students take advantage of the internship programs to gain real world work experiences, usually in their third year. Abeng was fortunate enough to be recruited as an intern by Toyota Motor Corporation in Toyota City, Japan.

In the last year of study, schools teach advanced transportation design. Students look at how transportation will change in the next 25 years. Based on projected population growths in cities and suburbs around the globe and ecological impacts of current transportation technologies to our environment, they must develop ideas and concepts that address the



DRIVING A5 CABRIO *with a Car Designer*

challenges of mobility in the future and be friendly to the environment.

Again, many car companies will sponsor projects on future *green* transportation studies. In addition to the main curriculum above, students must pick their area of concentration to differentiate themselves from the crowd. There are many aspects of car design: exterior, interior, color and trim, user Interface and electronics. Furthermore, transportation design covers not only car but also train, motorcycle, boat, and plane. Usually by the first part of the fourth year, students will gravitate towards what they are passionate about.

Every year, about two to three thousand students graduate with a Transportation Design degree. But there are only about two hundred job openings yearly at core car design studios globally. To be noticed, one must not only have the talent but also the determination to enter the best design school. Once admitted, he must study and work diligently so his designs will win competitions. Augmented by relevant internship experiences, he will be in a favorable position to be recruited by a car manufacturer.

Pacific Coast Highway and Tuna Canyon Road

This trip will not be complete without taking this A5 Cabrio to Pacific Coast Highway. So, we head west towards Santa Monica Pier, where the historic Route 66 officially ends. The colorfully lit Ferris wheel welcomes visitors from far away. It offers a variety of entertainment, dining, and shopping experiences. Street performers and decorative vendor carts keep visitors engaged as they stroll the plank. For fitness addicts, Muscle Beach, south of the pier, offers abundant choices of outdoor workout equipment.

Heading north on Pacific Coast Highway, the view of vast Pacific Ocean fills our windshield as we see Santa Monica Pier disappearing from our rearview mirror. A few brave surfers are seen far from the beach floating and waiting for an adrenaline rush. To satisfy our craving for adrenaline, we rely on the 2.0T engine that produces 258 lb-ft and 211 hp. Mated to a six-speed automatic gearbox, this car zooms from 0 to 60 mph in about 6.4 seconds. The ventilated and heated leather seats allow us to drive briskly with top and windows down despite the chilly ocean breeze.

The paddle shifters on the steering wheel allow us to maintain our firm grip on the steering wheel during gear shifts. This feature comes in handy when we reach Tuna Canyon Road off Pacific Coast Highway. This narrow road is probably the best road to enjoy a sports car in Santa Monica Mountains region. It is secluded and features sharp turns, zigzags, and hairpins. Turn after turn come at us in crescendo. No time to even look at the speedometer. At lower elevation, the lush vegetation creates canopies. As we go higher, the sight of sheer cliffs reminds us to watch our speed.

By moving the engine farther toward the firewall, Audi engineers are able to improve front-to-rear weight distribution. The combination of 52.9/47.1 front and rear weight distribution, rear biased quattro system, new reinforced steel construction, and Dynamic mode of Audi Drive Select gives us a sport-car driving experience. Audi Drive Select enables its driver to select different programs that govern a car's adaptive suspension, dynamic steering, transmission shift characteristics and engine response.

To top off our exhilarating drive, the turbo blow off valve and the sporty tuned exhaust resonator produce a very addictive soundtrack when the car is driven spiritedly on this hilly extremely twisty road; perfecting the enjoyment of Audi driving.

Weekend traffic in LA

It is already dusk, and it is time for us to head home. Traffic on Sunset Boulevard is crawling. On a long straight stretch, we see a line of traffic lights trying desperately to orchestrate a smooth flow of traffic. Temperature drops rapidly and dark clouds above us shed some of their water vapor. With a touch of a button, we put the roof up while we are crawling at 15 mph.

The special insulation material used in the soft top eliminates traffic noises. The car's climate control automatically adjusts air flow to get ambient temperature to the pre-set level. Bang & Olufsen audio system automatically adjusts radio volume so Lady Gaga will not hurt our ears. With the roof closed, the interior of A5 Cabrio turns into a spa-lounge-like environment. We felt relaxed despite bumper-to-bumper traffic. Switching to a jazz radio station, we turned the chore of driving in a horrendous traffic into an opportunity to take refuge from the hectic life outside.

The light weight of 2.0T engine, the 258 lb-ft flat torque available at 1500 rpm, and the precise steering system give a noticeable agility. In LA, every driver seems to be in a rush despite the fact that six lanes of highway in each direction are completely filled with cars all going at a turtle's pace. When we have to get to an exit ramp right after two four-lane highways merge, we have to make several rapid lane changes. A lane change in LA traffic involves swift direction changes, quick acceleration, followed by rapid deceleration, and a lot of bravery. This is necessary as no one seems to yield even after you have your turn signal on for over five minutes. A5 2.0T makes navigating through thick LA traffic child's play.

A5 2.0T quattro Cabrio is the perfect car for people who live in the Los Angeles area. On a nice day, with the roof down, the car allows us to enjoy the best California weather. It wakes up our inner child when it is driven on Pacific Coast Highway. The same car gives us an oasis during our long and challenging commute in traffic so we can arrive at our destination with a smile. And, the elegant and sporty design of A5 makes us feel like celebrities when we arrive at a red carpet party. andreas@driving-vacation.com

