



## FANCY A RUN DOWN TO BRIGHTON, DARLING?

A pleasant **weekend** with your **loved one** – a **picnic**, a breath of **sea air** and a **stroll** along the **prom**. Or, rather, a ton-plus **blast** down it in a deranged **Audi RS2**. Pack your trunks, it's the **Brighton Speed Trials** 



Recent visitors to Brighton may be gently perplexed at the presence of an arrow-straight, palm-width black line running for exactly 440 yards down the middle of that timeless seafront promenade, Madeira Drive.

This is not, as you might suspect, the work of some beret-clad, avant-garde artist aiming, with the aid of a poorly executed beard, a four-inch Harris paintbrush and minimal imagination, to stiff the Tate Gallery out of a quick £200,000. It is, in fact, the work of the appropriately named Derek Furlong, who created this kinetic masterpiece armed

with nothing more than a Suzuki GSX-R1100 Turbo and a pair of testicles the proportions of which would even put a certain swagger into the stride of an African bull elephant.

For it is here, on one day of every year since 1905 (with minor lapses accredited to bureaucratic whinging) that aimlessly wandering couples with ears glowing red from the biting summer breeze, sharing a bag of scalding hot grease containing salt, vinegar and the occasional chip, and sporting a pair of green-hued, rock-ingesting children expressing their avowed intent to be violently sick at any

moment, are brushed unceremoniously aside. Black bin liners adorn the 30mph signs and a bewildering array of two- and four-wheeled machinery, from the laughable to the lethal, assembles. Today, the Brighton and Hove Motor Club plays host to the Brighton Speed Trials; the oldest competition in the British motor sport calendar. And we're there to leave our own black lines on Madeira Drive.

It all started innocently enough. Get birded-up, bung the luggage, the picnic hamper and the dog into the back of the Audi shooting brake, and tool off to the south coast for a long and, with luck,





Just the job for giving the vinaigrette a gentle shake, the Audi RS2 will take you, your beloved, your large, hairy dog, two passengers and all the cucumber sandwiches and chilled champers you could possibly need, anywhere you like at speeds of up to 163mph. It doesn't look exactly pastoral in screaming mental blue, but it wouldn't have the same scary effect if it came in Barbour jacket green







gently smutty weekend. All, however, is not what it seems. Firstly, it's not really my dog; secondly, this is no ordinary Audi and thirdly (but don't tell the missus) this is no ordinary weekend.

Schizophrenia, the dictionary tells us, is 'behaviour that appears to be motivated by contradictory or conflicting principles'. In which case, the Audi RS2 should seek out some serious psychiatric help immediately. On the one hand, it's a genuine estate car. Furthermore, permanent four-wheel drive is just the ticket if one wishes to avoid the embarrassment of bogging down, right in front of that frightful Mrs Ponsonby-Sorbet whilst collecting the young ladies from the season's soggier gymkhanas.

The interior is beautifully finished and the standard specification includes air conditioning, a six-speaker stereo radio/cassette with CD autochanger and electric everything.

On the other hand... Well, the RS2 goes just about as quickly as anything with four wheels that you're likely to come across on the road and it stops, wet roads or dry, as abruptly as a fly on the windscreen. It's not that the RS2 isn't entirely happy trundling about at school run speeds but, rather, I defy anyone to climb into its kidney-hugging Recaro sports seats, finished, like the rest of the interior, in leather and retina-numbing blue Alcantara to match the exterior, cast their eyes over the neatly laid out dashboard with its swanky white dials, switch on, and not go like an absolute loon at all times, all over the place.

It is so incredibly easy to drive quickly, that no driver alive could possibly be entirely happy in this car unless hunting through the six speed box in search of the requisite revs to extract maximum boost from the KKK turbocharger, with the sort of monotonous regularity more usually associated with the daily consumption of 'Alpen' breakfast cereal. My only concern was whether the RS2 would behave in a similar manner to its Quattro cousins in giving little indication of the approaching limits to its, albeit phenomenal, grip until I had transcended them, and was in the hedge.

The best thing about this car, though, was that the missus loved it. So secure did she feel that the thorough dissection of all other traffic as we headed south towards the coast was accompanied by wholesome giggling rather than the more usual gritted-teeth cacophony of 'please slow down' noises.

The weekend began, as weekends should, with a quiet picnic in the country. These days, searching for a genuinely secluded picnic spot in the South of England can take fractionally longer than the entire allocation of daylight hours available, even by RS2. Settle almost anywhere, and the instant you've unpacked all the goodies a badly maintained farmer will appear from nowhere toting a superbly maintained twelve-bore. You will be encouraged to "Git orf moi laand". You will acquiesce.

We are lucky, however, and quickly settle into the traditional English picnic pursuits of keeping the dog's hooter out of the hamper, ensuring that there is an even spread of ants over everything edible, and thrashing wildly at itinerant wasps with those pages of the newspaper that have not already been blown clear into the next county.

Picnic over, we retrieve the dog from the hamper

one last time and once more set about the traffic with a vengeance. Schizophrenia has set in again.

All too soon Brighton, pressed shivering against a grey, gale-swept Channel, hoves into view. The town is heaving. It's the start of the conference season. Even the wet bit is overcrowded. It's the World Windsurfing Championships, and the sea is littered with hundreds of 'Club 18 & Dirty' beefcakes, belting about on oversized cuttlefish bones at incomprehensible speeds.

Now is the time to come clean and explain to the long-suffering other half why she was persuaded to try Brighton for this particular weekend break rather than the Lyme Regis she had preferred. The lady is not entirely amused.

The headquarters of the venerable Brighton and Hove Motor Club comprise two arches set into the embankment at the extreme eastern end of Madeira Drive. Here we stumble across Tony Johnstone, the Clerk of the Course. After some serious, knees-bent, pleading behaviour, he kindly grants us a place in the following day's proceedings – the Speed Trials.

So. Food, and a night's lie down, then it's time to climb into some hastily-blagged racing overalls, get the car numbered and stickered up, fiddle the timing beam breaker-bar onto the Audi's nose and take on board sufficient quantities of coffee and fine fags to set me vibrating like a harp-string. Yep; prematch nerves. Big time.

By 8.30am, Madeira Drive is awash with nefarious machinery undergoing frantic last-minute tweakings. No such bothersome behaviour with the RS2, thouigh – Porsche prepared it earlier.

The names of Porsche and Audi have been linked before, most memorably when Ferdinand Porsche designed the all conquering Auto Union Silver Arrows. The RS2 is the result of the latest collaboration between the two.

It's based on the seriously rapid 230bhp Audi 80 Estate S2, which already has a 2,226cc five-cylinder turbocharged and intercooled engine, six-speed gearbox and four-wheel drive. But Porsche, handed this already potent unit, have indulged in some highly advanced fiddling about. The RS2 engine produces a whopping 315bhp at 6,500rpm and 302lb ft of torque at 3,000rpm, representing an absurd 37 per cent increase in power and a 17 per cent increase in torque over its 'sluggish' cousin.

To complement the RS2's blistering performance, Porsche has re-engineered its dampers and anti-roll bars, and added its own distinctive 17-inch alloys shod in 245/40 ZR17 tyres. The ruthlessly efficient, ABS-equipped brakes are Porsche-sourced, too. It's written on the cheeky red caliper housings peeking out from behind the five-spoke alloys. I caught one embarrassed admirer rummaging about between the rear wheel spokes: "Sorry," he muttered. "I thought you had an empty crisp packet wedged in there."

Audi quotes a top speed of 163mph and a 0-62mph time of 5.4secs, which is, let's face it, rather conservative of them.

In very limited time at the Millbrook test track, tarmac still soggy from a torrential thunderstorm, we posted a 0-60mph time of under five seconds. More remarkably, 0-30 took less than 1.5 seconds. This all added up to the potential of sub-14 second standing quarter mile times down Madeira Drive. I





















AUI	OIR S	5 2 L O C	N
Performance			
0-30mph	1.5 secs	0-40mph	2.8 secs
0-50mph	3.9 secs	0-60mph	5.1 secs
0-70mph	7.0 secs	0-80mph	8.8 secs
0-90mph	10.9 secs	0-100mph	14.0 secs
0-110mph	17.0 secs	0-120mph	21.8 secs
0-130mph	26.8 secs	max speed	159.3 mph
standing qtr	13.8 secs	terminal speed	99.3 mph
30-50 in 3rd	4.3 secs	50-70 in 5th	5.4 secs
30-70 thru grs	5.5 secs	Braking 70mph	-0 169ft
Costs		list price	£45,705
Test mpg	17.7	Euromix mpg	26.8
Service int. 10	,000 miles	Warranty 1 ye	ar unlimited

## What you get

Central locking, radio cassette, power steering, electric windows (front & rear), sunroof, alarm, immobiliser, alloy wheels, anti-lock brakes driver's airbag yes Radio CD option

## Technical

Engine 5cyl, 20v, DOHC Capacity 2,226cc 315bhp @ 6500rpm Max power Max torque 302lb ft @ 3000rpm Transmission 6 sp man Brakes vented discs MacP strut, lower wish, coil springs Front suspension Rear suspension Double wishbone, control arms Wheels 7Jx17, alloy Dimensions L: 157" W: 67" Dunlop Sport 245/40 ZR17 Tyres



Drivelly old captions here please, Chris Drivelly







hope. I park the Audi in our allotted slot between a bog-standard TVR 350i and a Mini Cooper wearing a set of slicks big enough to take a holiday on, and head off to Frosts' (purveyors of Vauxhalls, Jeeps and Vipers to the gentry and event sponsors) hospitality tent for more coffee and a quick tremble. The RS2 is to run in the Handicap Class; someone must have told them I would be driving. One practice run, one timed run, and that's your lot, pal.

My day is at once immeasurably brightened by the last-minute discovery that, with obligatory helmet on, I can't actually fit in the car. My efforts will all have to take place at 45 degrees to the comfortable.

As each car approaches the starting line for the quarter-mile dash, there's a good deal of rubber-burning, practice start behaviour going on. Not a good idea in an RS2, unless you want to acquire an involuntary collection of starting marshal bonnet mascots, for wheelspin is a rare and elusive option. So, trundle furtively up to the start line, turn off the air conditioning, find first gear, let the dog out and wait for a green light.

Why, on why, did I have a curry last night? Hang on, what's this? Some practical joker has introduced a small, hyperactive marsupial into my racing overalls. No, my mistake. It's just my heart.

Green light, here goes. Take the revs all the way to 7,250, a whisker below the limiter (the Audiapproved and Millbrook-tested way to the fastest starts), head back onto the headrest –'cos, one way or another, that's where it's going to end up – dump the clutch and floor it. A muffled bang from the back and the RS2 explodes off the line. No fuss. No drama. If there is any wheelspin, I can't feel it; this car is a bright blue battering-ram.

First gear is used up almost instantly. Watch the rev counter like a hawk to avoid hitting the limiter and yank it into second. Bang. Repeat the process into third. Tear your eyes from the rev counter and risk a quick peek through the windscreen to ensure that you're not fast becoming a threat to the windsurfers, then it's into fourth and across the line.

The Brighton Speed Trials used to be run over a half-mile course and was open to all comers. Sadly, last year, running in the class for racing cars over 2,000cc, Simon Law crossed the finish line at over 170mph in his 4.5-litre Rovercraft and then lost both control of the car and his life. Today, then, racing cars are restricted to two litres and the course is run over a third of a mile. This gives drivers a good two-thirds of a mile in which to slow down, if, that is, you can resist the unbearable urge to keep going flat out after the line.

Despite the best intentions of the driver, the RS2 still manages a highly creditable time; 14.12 seconds, with a terminal velocity of just over 100mph. 'Could do better if he tried,' a familiar phrase from my youth, springs to mind; and with a Millbrook time of 13.71 seconds already in the bag, it certainly applies here. However, it's still good enough to see off everything else in the class, with the exception of a gorgeous five-litre GTD40 (14.06) and a 3.5-litre turbocharged 911 (13.77).

Back in the paddock, I struggled off, head still listing gently to port, to find out what the other competitors had brought along to play with. Anything and everything is the answer. Next to a

curry-coloured Skoda Estelle, bought from a breakers yard for £60 and kitted out with a Ford 1,660cc cross-flow engine (16.12 seconds), squats an immaculate, scarlet 275 GTB Ferrari (14.68). Its owner, Bill Goodall, found it under a hedge, stored in several buckets, ten years ago. He rebuilt it himself but, happily, just can't bear to see such machinery sitting perpetually idle under dustsheets.

Further on, a pair of Ford RS200s (11.51, 128mph and a phenomenal racket) provide the bread to a Mini pickup sandwich. This is no ordinary Mini. Built in just four weeks by Ray Christopher, the man behind the GTD40, there isn't even room for a lunchbox in the back. It's entirely filled with a 302 cubic inch Ford V8, on loan from Mr. Christopher's own GTD40.

"This is its first outing with a fly-by-wire gearbox I'm working on. It should be good for about 200mph." says Ray. He is no stranger to such flights of fancy, having once installed a V8 in a milk float.

Hoping to be quicker than anything (on four wheels at least), is Les Edmunds, class record holder at 10.44 seconds in his lethal looking BRD TS001. His main competition will come from Richard and Amanda George in a Pilbeam MP62. Sadly, the Pilbeam's engine blows up in practice. "Yes," moans Amanda, "guess who we bought the engine from? Les Edmunds."

But now it's time for the run that counts. I manage to extract the best start I've ever had out of the Audi; no sign of bogging down, the revs stay up above 5,000 and the turbo is on full song. Slam into second. Perfect. Now third and – bugger. Somehow, the tachometer is reading a paltry 3,000rpm and I'm flagging. The RS2 rips back into the powerband bloody fast, but I know that the lapse will have cost me. With the vitriol-laden air in the cockpit now a perfect match for the upholstery, I brace myself for the news. 14.23 seconds.

The five-litre GTD40 has put in a slower run too; 14.73, so that just leaves the 911 Turbo: 13.87. Damn; the Audi could have done that with the missus, the picnic and the dog on board. Oh well, no point crying over smeared rubber.

The standing quarter may lack the finesse of circuit racing, but it's an absolute hoot, leaves you begging for more and makes a great spectator sport.

Particularly when John Harrison's 1968 Mercury Cougar is on the starting line. This bright yellow 351ci brute lacks nothing in power, but just cannot put it on the road. Emerging from the depths of a vast cloud of blue smoke, the car sets off down the course on a route that could have been mapped out by a kitten equipped with a giant ball of wool.

But it's the motorcycles at the end of the event which post the fastest times of all. Jeff Dowsett, who won the maximum grunt section on his 1,260cc Suzuki GSX, completed the course in a scant 9.94 seconds, crossing the line at a tidy 150mph. From the back, he looks like that little vanishing dot you get when switching off a telly.

After a night spent re-running the event in the bar of the Grand Hotel, now restored to its former glory since the night that the earth genuinely did move for Mrs. Thatcher, we oversleep horribly to discover that we only have two and a half hours to make a christening in Bath. Oh goody





Drivelly old captions here please, Chris Drivelly old captions here please, ChrisDrivelly old captions here please, ChrisDrivelly old captions here please, ChrisDrivelly old captions











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