

BAVARIAN BEAUTY

The Rake falls for the sharpened, sporty seductions of Audi's flagship roadster, the muscled up TTS.

by tom norton



Cast your mind back to when the Audi TT first emerged on to the automobile circuit almost two decades ago, with all of its cool, curvy and coupe'd charms. Being of German manufacturing descent, of course, you knew it was reliable – borne of the finest, most hard wearing components to ensure maximum longevity. It was diminutive, stylish and decidedly nippy. But try as we might, we couldn't shift the unshakeable preconception that it was perhaps more a roadster for the ladies, than for us menfolk. Sure, it might smoke your neighbour's hulking Land Rover off the lights, but you'd always have the nagging feeling you were being sniggered at by your friends driving round the town centre with the top down. Unwittingly, and perhaps unfairly, the TT had veered dangerously close to the grossly unwanted status of being – to use the modern petrolhead lexicon – “a hairdresser's car”.

Then in 2006, Audi released the next generation TT – and overnight we were converted. Taut and muscular, here was an athletic new beast with some real hair on its chest.

Fast forward to the present, and Audi's third generation of its flagship sports car has peaked in consummate style with the TTS, a hybrid of Bavarian brawn and beauty with brains to boot. Along the lines of the original, but trimmed down and put on performance enhancers. Here, Audi's designers delivered a contemporary interpretation that harnessed the best bits of the

original TT, compounded with modern day trimmings, and all the requisite high-tech bells and whistles.

The drivers control display inside the sporty – but eminently refined – interior has been deliberately positioned as a personal, intuitive cockpit. And, unlike numerous other vehicles that offer a similar level of intelligence, the TTS' interface is blissfully simple. All the virtual assists, from switching the driving modes (comfort, auto, dynamic and individual) to the wondrous full screen navigation map, are laid out clear as day on a digital instrument cluster and MMI monitor, all grouped around the driving seat. And should you want a change from idly listening to the gentle pop 'n' roar of the 292 horse-power turbocharged engine, a 12-speaker strong Bang & Olufsen sound system offers a prime medium for your road trip playlist.

Housing the Audi Quattro all-wheel drive system, the TTS handles that bolstered speed and muscle with ease, rendering any concerns surrounding potential over or understeer redundant, in case you plan on unleashing it on the winding undulations of Jebel Jais.

Serving as a steely slap in the face to those supercar sticklers who think that an adrenaline rush is only available at a price surpassing AED1million, the TTS hails back to the glory days of coupe driving. Masculine, unashamedly attractive and unequivocally enjoyable.