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Q&A

We interview the big players in the tuning industry to find out what they do, and what's new in the Audi scene...

AudiTuner meets Steve Pound, MD of Milltek Sport



Tell us a bit about what you do at Milltek...

I'm the MD, so technically I'm in charge, but in reality, I have a great team so have a really good handle on what's going on. As well as steering the ship, I also get to choose and evaluate our new development and demo cars, research new markets, develop and nurture dealers and analyse where we're going as a company. As a petrolhead, it's a dream job, really!

How long does it take to develop a performance exhaust system for a new car?

Typical development time is 6 weeks in total, and this includes around 2 weeks on the initial design and testing at our R&D facility in Ilkeston – where we also manufacture all of our systems. Then it's a period of real world road and track testing and final design review before being productionised and released to the market.

Although we use all of the latest CNC and CAD manufacturing techniques, we still like to finish our systems by hand, so it can take a little longer. That said, we always want to be the first to market at the highest possible quality. That's why we always have each new Audi model on order the day it is released. You can't develop a new design unless you have the car to test it on!

What Audi development cars do you run?

Audi is an essential brand for us, so we currently run a fairly extensive fleet. That includes a 2014 Audi RS7 4.0 TFSI V8, 2015 Audi RSQ3 2.5 TFSI, 2015 Audi A3 1.8 TFSI Saloon, 2015 Audi SQ5 3.0 Bi-TDI and a 2013 Audi TTS Mk2 2.0 TFSI. Our Milltek Classic range is rapidly gaining global popularity, so our 1989 Audi UR quattro 10V is also a prized possession – as is my old Mk2 GTI. Not an Audi, I know, but I think many Audi fans started in VWs!

Which is your biggest Audi market?

It has to be the USA. North America really is a great market for us at the moment. With the addition of a new distributor in this region, ECS Tuning, we have seen our sales go from strength to strength there and it's a clientele that really knows what it likes. It's also a sales area where we really

need to stay sharp with regard to product quality – which suits us greatly. We are constantly working with design engineers to meet legislative targets like the CARB (California Air Research Board) and EC certification and constantly pushing to improve our quality means we are raising our game across our entire product range. This has to be good news all round.

What new products/applications do you have in the pipeline?

We have systems in development for the RSQ3, Mk3 TTS and new RS3. Again, we're really trying to push what's possible with these cars. Exhausts are no longer a bolt on pipe. These latest systems along with our new Valvesonic V2 technology, that will be released in the coming months, that now features full MMI integration and real-world enhancements to programmability of the sound of the exhaust system. They fully interface with the OEM controls, so for example, in Dynamic mode, or cold start, the exhaust will actually work and behave differently from Comfort mode. There's an awful lot more involved in one of our designs these days!

What's your current favourite Audi and why?

I have two; first it has to be RS7. The brutal power and noise of this car in Stage 2 trim with our new 76mm downpipes and 100 cell high flow cats, combined with Revo software makes this car a real weapon that can eat the miles on the longer journeys we regularly do across Europe.

The second is the SQ5... it's simply awesome. Having a number of development vehicles and a couple of race cars on fleet means I need to tow lots of cars, and the SQ5 handles this like no other car we have owned. And, once the trailer is off it surprises a lot of people how quick an SUV can be!

You always have a strong presence at shows; what do you think of the UK Audi/VW scene?

The Audi/VW show scene has been important to us as a brand and we enjoy



getting to take our fleet out to show people what we do. We have tried a different approach this year as we felt that some shows had become a little stagnant, but overall have been pleased to see attendance numbers growing and some new shows emerging like your VAG Tuner Expo, that we will be attending later in the year at our "home" circuit, Donington Park. We have also worked with our distributors around the world to increase our presence at shows like Worthersee in Austria and Waterfest in the USA.

We will also be making our way over to New Orleans in October to attend the new NOLA Speed and Style event (The Forge Action Day of the USA). Milltek's attendance to VW/Audi focused shows will certainly continue but we will also be stepping our game up with more of the bigger non-marque specific shows like Goodwood Festival of Speed and some different shows like the Classic Motor Show to help promote our Milltek Classic range.

Talk us through your average day...

It's maybe a cliché, but no two days are ever the same, really. I try to pack a lot in, so I start early, and you'll find me doing everything from answering the phone to planning our race programme. Perhaps liaising with our motorsport ambassador and test driver Tom Onslow-Cole, or, if I'm lucky and we have the time, joining him on track to monitor an R&D session. We still only sign off each system after a 'ten-tenths' track test by TOC. Visiting dealers and global distributors is a big part of my working life, so I travel a lot, but I think I'm still happiest when I'm visiting the factory just down the road in Ilkeston, Derbyshire.

We're so proud that we still make our entire range here in the UK and it's always good to see real craftsmanship in action, rolling the stainless steel and hand-finishing the welds. It makes me very proud to be responsible for our brand.

www.millteksport.com

