

# North Star

Words Sam Preston

Photography Jape

*Boasting a showcase of the very finest parts from other Audi models, this once-unassuming B3 90 saloon now acts as one of the fastest ways to navigate Finland's impregnable terrain. Could this be the most savage four-door on Scandinavian soil?*





“It drives so nicely; the turbo spools up at around 4000rpm and pulls extremely hard all the way to the limiter,”

Right: B4 90 front arches



Above: S2 bumpers all-round. Below far right: Custom 2.2 20v turbocharged valve-cylinder engine

For years now, mutterings involving a mythical wild beast have been spreading around the social circles of a particularly forest-packed region of central Finland.

Many claim to have witnessed the sinister screams and bangs it's said to emit, but sightings have never amounted to anything more than the occasional brief red flash through the dense Birch trees.

You'll be pleased to learn that we've finally managed to crack the mystery of this elusive creature for good, and the truth is just as formidable as the rumours would have led you to believe...

We are of course talking about this Misano Red machine you see here before you. Following 15 years of extensive fettling from both the previous owner Pasi Nuutinen and more recently the current owner, Jape Tiitinen, it's the result of what you can achieve when you set out to create the fastest, most hilariously fun car to take on Finland's famously challenging terrain, and it all started with a humble B3 Audi 90 base. It's safe to say they've created a monster...

The more devoted readers to Performance Audi might already recognise Jape's name. A photographer by trade, his stunning imagery has been featured in the magazine many times in the past (unsurprisingly, it's him who shot his own personal car for this feature, too). As well as snapping by day, he's also well known for owning some of the craziest tuned VAG metal over the years, and this time it's certainly no different.



Enough chat, what exactly do we have here before us? With a spec list that's a mish-mash of countless other Audi models, it might take a while to get your head around the intricate complexities that make up this fine cocktail of a car, but stick with us as it's one story that's well worth hearing. The car began its life as a B3-shape 90 saloon – a relatively impressive 2.3E-powered variant at that, with the all-important Quattro four-wheel drive system and even a lockable rear differential ensuring it packed an abundance of grunt and practicality to make it the perfect sensible daily driver for any sensible Finnish resident when it was released back in the late Eighties.

That's exactly what a satisfied Pasi thought too when he took ownership of the standard car back in 2003. For the whole length of 12 months, that is... “Pasi's the sort of guy who can build anything himself,” Jape tells us,

beginning the eventful tale of the previous owner. “If there are parts he needs that aren't available, he'll simply make them.” With an ever-growing passion to bring the saloon's performance slightly more in-line with that of its flame-spitting Group B ancestors, his creative flair soon began to shine through on his latest project.

Beginning with the abrupt removal of the standard 140-odd bhp 2.3-litre engine, Pasi had soon shoehorned a much more impressive 2.2 20v version of the five-cylinder lump into its place. An AAN-coded unit starting life in either an original S4 or S6, this boosted motor offered up a much healthier 227bhp before Pasi had even began playing around with it. “He carried on using it as his daily driver in this state for years and years, slowly but surely tuning it up as time went on,” Jape continues the tale with a grin.

With plenty of reliable yet slightly unexciting





Right: 8x17in Fifteen52 TurboMac alloy wheels.



**DIALLING IT UP**

The careful selection of other Audi parts isn't reserved to the engine and bodywork. Inside the cabin, Pasi's handiwork continues to shine through with the clever incorporation of a semi-digital B5 A4 dash gauge conversion.

"It took him two weeks to get all the instruments working properly with the car," an impressed Jape tells us. "But everything works on the on-board computer now. He's even added a setting that allows for the speedo to accommodate for different wheel sizes!"



commutes to work performed without skipping a beat, it wasn't until 2012 that the story once again becomes interesting to us. "It got a full face-lift then," Jape curiously explains. Thinking he could freshen the ageing 90 up with some choice factory parts, Pasi began by converting bits like the front wings, headlights and bonnet to those of the sharper B4-era machines, topped off with bumpers both front and rear from the timelessly pretty S2 – all of which took years off the car whilst offering up a much sportier aesthetic in the process.

With ropey trim replaced with new stuff and a full re-spray from the darker Mars Red to the much fresher Misano Red (Pasi really doesn't do things by halves), as well as adapting some Bilstein coilovers to fit (there were no bespoke kits available for this model at the time), attentions were finally shifted back onto that highly tuneable swapped engine up front which had been waiting patiently for some performance work to be carried out on it.

Just like with most of the other aspects of the vehicle, Pasi's approach to heating up that fiery engine followed a satisfyingly old-school and mechanical mindset – perhaps the most reliable and proven way to help it tackle the ever-changing weather and terrain conditions his beautiful country offers. It's why he swapped up the turbocharger for the stock unit's bigger brother – a huge, hybrid KKK 26/27 affair that offers up its large dollop of clout with the satisfying, slightly laggy kick you'd expect it to.

The engine itself was bolstered with H-beam con rods and a re-worked head to ensure it would be good for the inevitable power gains it was bound to benefit from once that extra boost was running through it, with an exhaust manifold and air box taken from the



range-topping RS2 ensuring air flow in and out of the motor was up to the job. Pasi's mate Petri Airaksinen was then tasked with the job of modifying the ECU to allow the machine to run on RE85 ethanol-based fuel – something of a no-brainer for many Finnish residents where this magical bio liquid is readily available at the pumps and promises to offer up more power for less cash.

While it retains its Quattro four-wheel drive system, the original five-speed gearbox has been swapped up for a sturdier 01E unit derived from 1.9 TDI-powered Audis. A wise move it was, too, after seeing what performance figures the engine managed to achieve once dialled in at the local tuning garage, Erikoismoottori. "It's running 525bhp and 502lb ft of torque from around 2.2bar of boost now," Jape modestly reveals. Thinking it was also time to upgrade the braking system with big Mercedes calipers up front and S4 units on the rears, Pasi finally took to the road once again.

"I've been looking for a car like this for years, so when Pasi put it up for sale I didn't think twice," Jape



**Owner profile:**

**Name:** Jape Tiitinen  
**Age:** 44  
**First car:** An 800cc Suzuki Alto!  
**Dream car:** C7 RS6 in Misano Red  
**Favourite upgrade:** Power and the S2 looks  
**Are you member of any club:** Audi Club Finland, also my Instagram is @Jap3  
**Money-no-object project:** Fully-loaded C7 Audi RS6, lots of power, a mad loud exhaust and proper wheels and suspension

Left: RS2 exhaust manifold & 3in stainless steel exhaust system



AUDI 90



PERFORMANCE  
**AUDI**

AUDI 90  
Image: Jape Tiitinen





says as he explains how the car eventually switched into his ownership at the back end of 2017. Even in this relatively short time, he's already managed to put his signature stamp on the 90 with a raft of motorsport-inspired upgrades that also bring the car well into the 21st century.

First up was a set of BC Racing coilovers – with the popular firm finally offering up one of its sumptuous adjustable kits tailored towards B3 and B4 models by this stage. Allowing for a slightly lower ride height than was managed before, this move was complemented by a set of those rally-inspired Fifteen52 TurboMac alloys – re-sprayed in white and looking absolutely perfect here, especially when set off with those chunky studded snow tyres. “I’m about 15cm taller than Pasi, and I just didn’t fit in the car with the seats it came with!” he laughs, finding a solution in the form of some Sparco fixed-back bucket seats that further ooze rally-inspired goodness.

With that contemporary tyre writing (an onomatopoeic nod to the ‘BRAAAP’ noise the car now so often likes to emit), Jape’s successfully added a more youthful, motorsport-inspired twist while retaining everything that’s right about this saloon’s timeless design. Teamed with all that mechanical work, and it could well be the most competent B3-model Audi for many miles around.

“It drives so nicely; the turbo spools up at around 4000rpm and pulls extremely hard all the way to the limiter,” a proud Jape gives us the lowdown on the driving experience. “I’ve only really had the chance to drive it on the snow because I only bought it at the start of last winter, but it handles it well. It’s even more fun than my B5 RS4 which feels like a river boat in comparison!” We’re looking forward to seeing how the madness escalates as the car is introduced to some sticky Tarmac later in the year... ■

**Top:** racing through the snow with 525bhp and 502lb ft of torque @ 2.2bar of boost

## SPECIFICATION

### B3 Audi 90 Quattro

#### ENGINE

Custom 2.2 20v turbocharged five-cylinder engine (based on AAN-code unit from Ur-S4/Ur-S6), H-beam con rods, stiffened valve retainers, adjustable camshaft gears with steel pulleys, KKK 26/27 hybrid turbocharger, external wastegate and screamer pipe, RS2 exhaust manifold, 3in stainless steel exhaust system, enlarged front-mount intercooler, RS2 air box, 1.8T coil packs, tuned to run on RE85 ethanol-based fuel only

#### POWER

525bhp and 502lb ft of torque @ 2.2bar of boost

#### TRANSMISSION

01E six-speed manual gearbox, SRE clutch, lightened flywheel, B3 90 Quattro four-wheel drive with factory lockable rear differential

#### BRAKES

Mercedes S-Class four-pot calipers and Ur-S4 314mm discs (front), Ur-S4 calipers and 310mm discs (rear)

#### SUSPENSION

BC Racing adjustable coilovers

#### WHEELS & TYRES

8x17in Fifteen52 TurboMac alloy wheels, 215/45/17 Nokian Hakkapeliitta seven-stud snow tyres, 5x112 hubs

#### INTERIOR

Sparco Evo fixed-back bucket seats, 8L A3 rear bench, Audi CAC three-spoke leather steering wheel with 30mm spacer, B5 A4 dash dials with digital speedometer, centre console mounted gauges (VEMS wideband, boost and oil pressure), S2 door cards with carbon fibre trim inserts, B4 90 climate control with remote-controlled Webasto heater, electric sunroof, electric windows (all-round), cruise control

#### EXTERIOR

B4 90 front arches, bonnet and Xenon headlights, S2 bumpers all-round with rear arches adapted to fit, NOS door trims, rear light panel, red rear lights and fog lights

#### TUNING CONTACTS

Pasi Nuutinen, Sami Romppanen at STR-Solutions, Jukka Putkonen at JP Autotuning.fi, JTmedia.fi