



**Official name:** Audi AG.

**Owned by:** Volkswagen.

**Current situation:** Audi (rhymes with *howdy*) is the medium-level luxury division of Volkswagen. Most Audi models are Volkswagens with different styling.

Audis and Volkswagens share much of their technology and are equally unreliable, even when new. They are also expensive to fix.

**Chances of survival:** Okay. Audi has a massive presence in Europe. However, luxury and semi-luxury carmakers always face tougher times when the world's economy falters •



# Audi

## a brief history



**A**UGUST HORCH was a skilled blacksmith who worked for Carl Benz, one of the pioneers of the car industry. Mr Benz went on to found Mercedes-Benz. Mr Horch went on to found his own car company.

For copyright reasons, August Horch was unable to sell cars under his own name. 'Horch' in German means 'hark' or 'listen' and the Latin translation is *Audi*, so this trademark was chosen for the new firm.

The Audi firm aimed upmarket, but with the collapse of Germany's economy following the end of World War I, the luxury market disappeared overnight, along with many German car companies.

As the German depression worsened, the State Bank of Saxony suggested the formation of a single large firm along the lines of General Motors. Thus, in 1932, Audi, DKW, Horch, and Wanderer were merged into *Auto Union*.





The new company logo was four interlinked rings (one for each company). These are still used on the Audi badge today.

Hitler's Nazi government provided massive support for the car industry. Thus, the Allies bombed Germany's car industry into rubble.

The surviving Auto Union leaders reformed the company in 1945, but it continued to struggle.

Volkswagen eventually bought Audi and used Audi technology to replace the ageing Volkswagen Beetle.



Volkswagen kept Audi's separate, upmarket identity, but the two organisations still worked closely together.

In 1977, a team from Audi developed a new four-wheel drive system for a VW offroader. Without their bosses' knowledge, they also tried fitting this four-wheel drive system to an Audi 80. The result was Audi's *Quattro* of 1980.



Before, it was almost unheard of for a passenger car to be fitted with four-wheel drive. However, the stunning success of the Audi Quattro meant that Audi began fitting this system into more and more of its vehicles. This system is still in use today.

In terms of sales, Audi has gone from strength to strength. However, the solid German quality that made Audis the envy of the world began to fade around about the time that Audi began fitting electronics to its vehicles.

Modern Audis generally look *über* cool, but suffer from the



usual German sin of excessive complication and don't age well. Audis and Volkswagens share much of their technology and are equally unreliable, even when new. They are also expensive to fix.

Buying an Audi is an expensive way of buying a tarted-up Volkswagen. While many Audis are hugely satisfying vehicles when working, they don't always work for very long. Many buyers have regretted their choice. Sorry •

