

# ALUMINUM DREAM MACHINE

## BRISTLING WITH CRAFTSMANSHIP AND CREATIVE EXECUTION

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PHOTOS: RICHARD TRUESDELL

▶ Although it's been on the scene for more than a half decade, the Audi TT, now coming to the end of its first generation production run, remains distinctive with its Bauhaus-inspired design. While loosely based on the last generation VW Golf, it is a much more upscale package, due partly from the clever use of aluminum trim throughout the interior.

In his orange metallic 2000 Audi TT quattro, Edsel Labao, a well-known fixture in the Southern California tuner car scene, planned right from the start to incorporate this motif in the design and execution of the ultra-performance McIntosh/Boston Acoustics ICE system. "When I got my Audi TT a few years back," relates Labao, "I knew that I wanted to do something really different, especially as far as the audio system was concerned. One of the

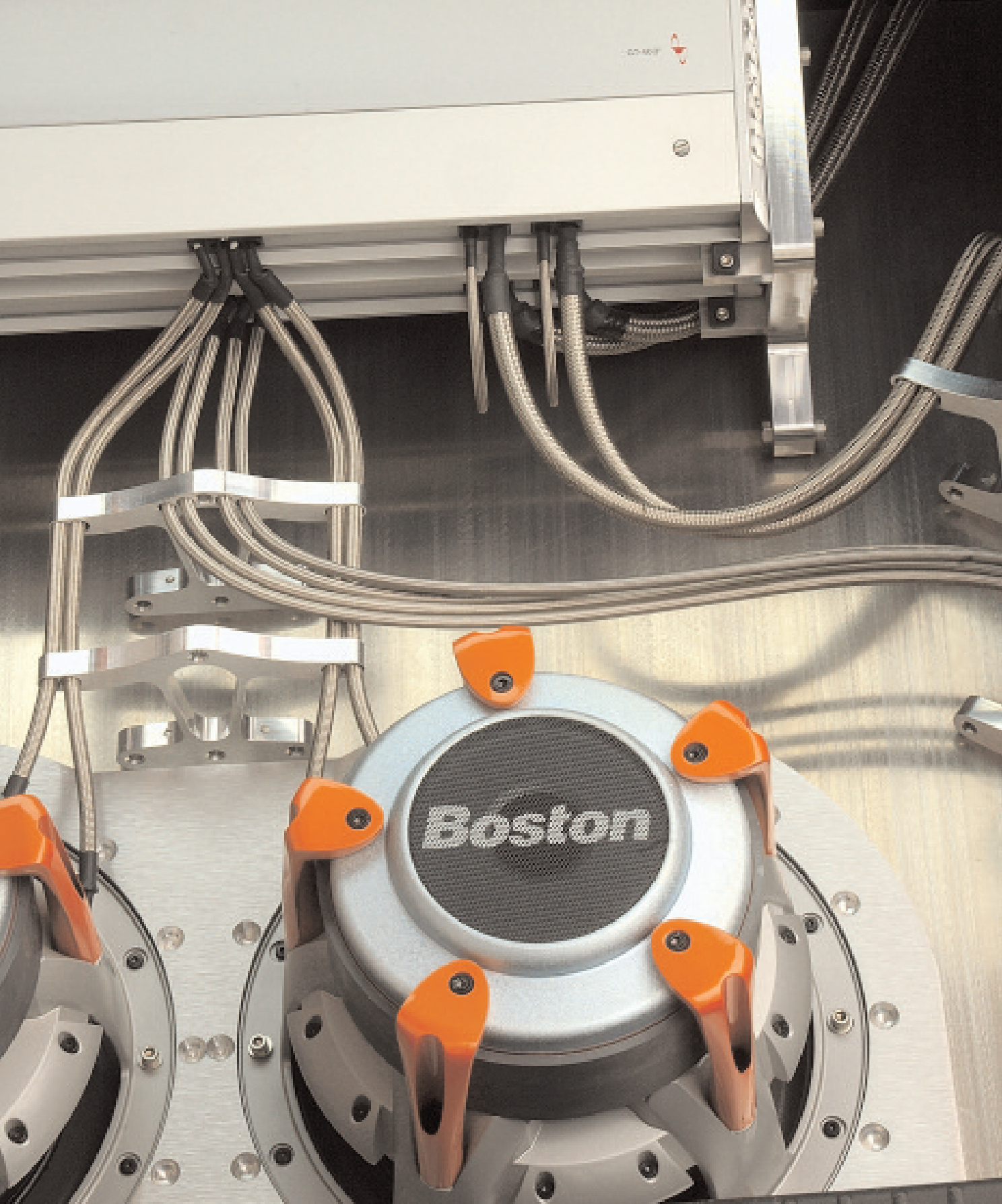
distinctive features on the Audi TT is the liberal use of aluminum trim, especially in the interior, and I knew that wanted to carry this theme into the installation of my system."

To help plan the system, Labao turned to Sandy Lirag of Boston Acoustics. "He's built a number of their show cars and he was tremendous help to me in planning the system for my Audi," Labao states.

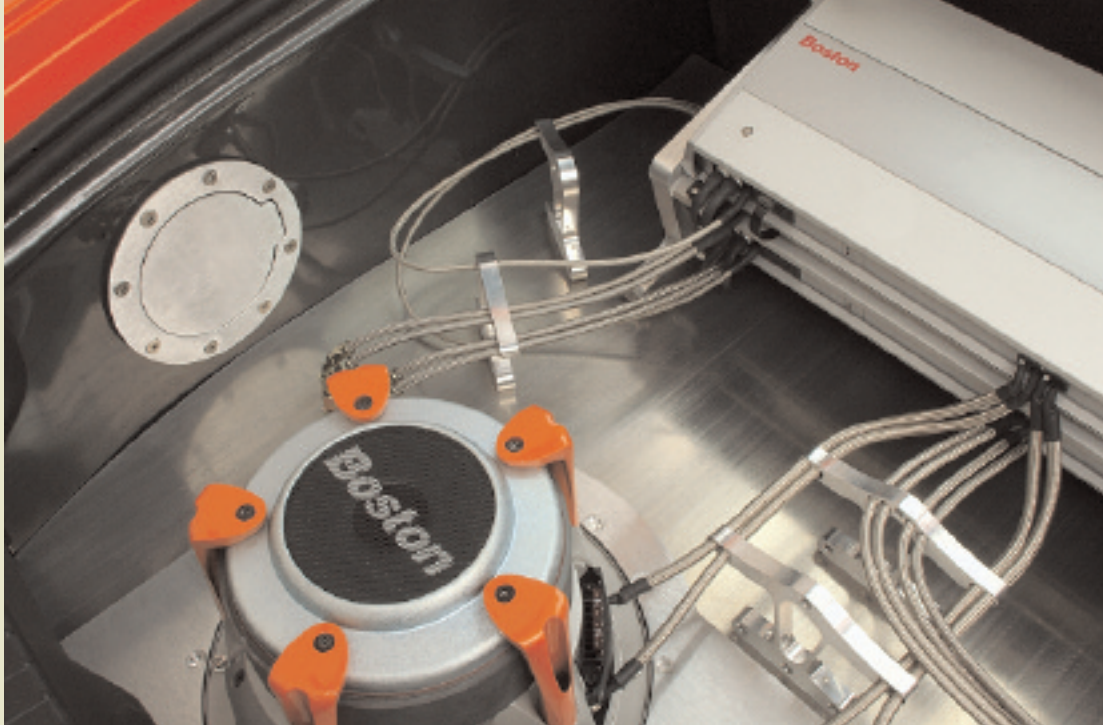


INSTALLATION | 2000 AUDI TT QUATTRO





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Beneath the install's cohesive theme, Dynamat provides a little sound damping. For an unusual touch, Goodridge stainless steel brake lines serve as insulation for the Monster Cable M-series wires.

They decided to build the vehicle as if they were Audi designing the ultimate show car. Given the TT's "astounding use of aluminum accents ... from the fuel cap all the way through to the interior trim pieces," Labao and Lirag wanted to keep the theme. "Trying to find a guy that can work on metal and knows car audio is like trying to walk into your local welding shop then asking them to build you a wooden cabinet," explains Labao. The man they found to pull it off was Femi Adegoke, a one-time contributor to *Car Audio*. "While Sandy helped me design the system," Labao says, "it was Femi Adegoke who executed the plan, for the amplifier rack especially, to perfection."

Adegoke started with the floor, employing 1/4" thick sheet aluminum as his foundation. Labao then turned to the expertise of Joe Weitz and Geoff Curtis at J&G Customs in Fountain Valley, CA, who fabricated a fiberglass mold for the spare tire well. (Weitz and Curtis are no strangers to the pages of CA&E. Their Pontiac GTO system installed in last year's Boston Acoustics show car was featured in the August 2005 issue.) Later in the installation, the fiberglass elements would be combined with the aluminum floor to create the enclosure for the two 10" Boston G5 subwoofers, providing the



Femi Adegoke's perfectly executed amprack holds one Boston Acoustics GT-28 amplifier for the Boston Acoustics G5 10" subs and another for the front stage.



system with a “kick in the gut” foundation. The subs’ inverted baskets perfectly complement the overall theme of the components installed below the rear hatch.

But that’s not all. Adegoke fabricated custom subwoofer accents following the same theme employed by Audi for the dashboard jewelry, particularly the A/C vent trim rings. Working from sheet stock, Adegoke milled these one-of-a-kind trim pieces that give the subwoofers a rugged and classy look at the same time. Using the same fabrication technique, Adegoke fabricated aluminum brackets for mounting two Boston Acoustics GT-28 amplifiers. Really setting off the amplifier installation, Adegoke insulated the amplifier and speaker wires, using the appropriate brake line connectors to the floor. Overall, these touches take what would have been an ordinary installation and elevate it to a work of the installer’s art.

After the completion of the aluminum and fiberglass work, Weitz and Curtis installed the McIntosh MX4000 head unit. For maximum system purity, they needed to install a fiber-optic cable to the out-board McIntosh MDA4000 digital/analog converter. The next link in the signal chain is the massively flexible Audio Control DQX audio processor, which splits the signal to two Boston Acoustics GT-28 amplifiers. Monster Cable M1001 cables complete the connections to their respective speakers. These include a set of Boston Acoustics Pro60’s in each door with Boston Acoustics NEO Type-M tweeters on the A-pillars (which improves system imaging by

**On the inside, you’ll find an Auto Aesthetics billet shift knob and shifter plate trim. The twin Sparco Sienna sport seats provide a comfortable place to rest your butt and owner Edsel Labao had the rear seat reupholstered to match, giving the interior a perfectly integrated look. The crowning touch is a MOMO Trek R steering wheel. Overall, the look replicates the less-is-more philosophy of the rest of the car.**

**McIntosh’s MX4000 receiver heads the system from the dash. A McIntosh MDA4000 high-resolution digital converter and an Audio Control DQX equalizer back it up.**

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a measurable margin), and Boston G5 subwoofers in the rear compartment.

One final change came just before completion. While Weitz and Curtis had the doors apart, the decision was made to trick out the speakers with the same kind of aluminum trim the subwoofers sport. There was only one minor problem: Since Adegoke lived two hours away, it wasn't really practical for him to add this final touch. Weitz and Curtis got around this issue by making the trim pieces themselves. "But since they [did] not have a CNC mill available at that time," relates Labao, "they fabricated by hand the necessary aluminum trim using a handheld router. Talk about precision and determination."

When everything was up and running, Labao turned to Al Patel, another SoCal car audio competitor, to lend his ear and tune the system. Patel, who once served as the Southern California Boston Acoustics rep (and also spent time at the legendary Competition Soundworks in Cerritos, CA), massaged the system settings to create the best audio experience you can get out on the road. Having listened to the system on several occasions, I can only say that Patel deserves his reputation for having a sharp ear. In spite of the very basic system architecture, its accuracy on well-known test tracks as well as on popular material is nothing short of amazing. It illustrates that, more often than not, less is truly more, at least as far as system performance is concerned.

When you've installed, listened to and reviewed thousands



of systems over the years, it's really rare when a system jumps out and grabs your attention in the way that this system does. When you combine a well-executed theme, high-quality components, flawless installation and someone who knows how to tune for the most accurate sound quality, you end up with a system that, in subtle ways, outperforms systems with a far greater component count. Kudos to all concerned with this outstanding system—it shows the rest of us how it's done.



**Set off by hand-routed aluminum trim, the Boston Pro60 component speakers match the aluminum-heavy theme. For imaging, the Boston Acoustic Neo Type-M tweeters sound from the A-pillars.**

## DRIVER PROFILE

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**Beyond the extensive ICE system, the exterior visuals are enhanced by the orange metallic paint, interior and underhood paintwork administered by Joe Delio at Wet Works Garage, another Southern California tuner car institution. Modifications include the Dietrich Rear Wing, GT2 shaved front body kit and modified rear bumper. Wet Works took care of the rear defuser and custom grilles.**

## TECH:

### Engine

- \* Neuspeed Audi TT 225 exhaust system
- \* Neuspeed short shifter kit
- \* Neuspeed 240 HP K04 turbo kit
- \* Ignition Solutions plasma coil packs
- \* Neuspeed P-Flo air intake
- \* Centerforce II clutch
- \* Forge 007 diverter valve

### Suspension

- \* Neuspeed 22mm front sway bar
- \* Neuspeed 19mm rear sway bar
- \* Neuspeed sports springs
- \* Koni Super Sports front and rear adjustable shocks
- \* Miltek adjustable tie arms

### Brakes / Wheels

- \* HRE 441R 19" wheels
- \* Michelin Pilot Sport 2 tires, 235/25/19 front, 265/30/19 rear
- \* Wilwood 6-piston/13.1" 2-piece rotor front big brakes
- \* Wilwood 4-piston/11.5" 2-piece rotor rear big brakes
- \* Goodridge brake lines

