

From Heaven to Green Hell

TEXT: Boris Ziefle

He is the boldest conqueror of new worlds. Felix Baumgartner, the man who jumped to Earth from space. His latest adventure is yet another extraordinary challenge. From space to race. Without a parachute. A 24-hour race at the Nürburgring. In an Audi R8 LMS ultra.



RESTLESS

Car mechanic. Soldier. Boxer. Stratospheric skydiver. The path taken by Felix Baumgartner is not a straightforward one, but instead has been marked by many changes in direction. This isn't because he can't finish things. On the contrary, it's because he is so irresistibly drawn to challenges. Because he is addicted to them. And then he will move heaven and earth to complete them. Once he has reached his goal, he concludes that chapter of his life and seeks out completely new terrain. That's not without risk, since he is continuously exposing himself to the possibility of failure. But he is persistent. And this is how Felix Baumgartner lives his life. If he decides to tackle something, he's all in. Then he plans it down to the smallest detail in order to reduce the risk of failure to a minimum. And now comes Audi. Baumgartner and Audi – a perfect match from the first moment. Meticulous planning, unbridled forethought. This is the world of Felix Baumgartner. His latest project takes him to the Nürburgring and into the cockpit of an Audi R8 LMS ultra. He swaps his space suit for a race suit so he can drive with the Audi race experience in the legendary 24-hour race on the "Nordschleife."


A PILOT PROJECT

When Felix Baumgartner heard about the offer from the Audi race experience, he agreed to it immediately. He sees becoming a race driver as the next logical step in his life. He has practically no experience with racing, and all he knows about the Nürburgring is what he has seen on television. Only the gutsiest drivers dare to take on the "Green Hell," as the track is known.

Jackie Stewart, who coined the term, once called it "a many-armed monster." In comparison, it makes a jungle expedition seem like a walk in the park. When Baumgartner first met with the engineers from Audi, there was a sense of harmony based on perfectionism. "I find the diligence with which Audi approaches projects fascinating. We're completely on the same wavelength here." The string of successes proves it. In the last few years, the Audi R8 LMS ultra alone has won a spot on the winner's podium 550 times out of 800 starts. Now Baumgartner will be taking the wheel. He is certainly one of the most prominent drivers who has taken part in the Audi race experience, but every customer essentially has a chance to be part of the Audi customer racing team – as long as they have the required qualification and a racing license. Baumgartner is now a proud member of this team. "The professionalism of the Audi race experience is impressive. The people here simply know that, in this kind of sport, every detail counts."

PREPARATION IS EVERYTHING

For this reason, Baumgartner is training just as obsessively as he did for his stratospheric jump from space and his first professional boxing match. For him, nothing could be worse than feeling he did not get the most out of himself and his Audi when it is all over. He knows that he has a strong partner in this race car and a strong team behind him, and that the rest is up to him. It's a massive challenge. Just the way he loves them.

 You can find further information on the project and follow Felix Baumgartner's preparations on the Audi motorsport website: www.audi-motorsport.com



PHOTOS: Bernhard Spöttel

**"THE R8 LMS ULTRA
INSPIRES ME
AGAIN AND AGAIN.
SO MUCH POWER
AND CONTROL
IN ONE CAR – IT'S
JUST INCREDIBLE."**

Felix Baumgartner

