

“Drive a Prinz and you’re a king” – the NSU Prinz

- **The NSU Prinz: the first post-war car made in Neckarsulm**
- **150 years of NSU: Audi Tradition launches its ten-part series with classics and one-offs from NSU’s diverse model range.**

Neckarsulm/Ingolstadt, March 30, 2023 – The traditional NSU brand, celebrating its **150th anniversary** in 2023, represents transformation. This is best exemplified in the 1950s by the compact NSU Prinz. In 1955, NSU was the largest employer in the Neckarsulm region and the industry leader as the world’s largest manufacturer of two-wheeled vehicles. But demand for motorcycles was in decline: As prosperity grew, so did people’s desire for a “roof over their heads” – they wanted to drive cars. So NSU reinvented itself, launching a successful comeback as a car manufacturer with the NSU Prinz in 1958. In this first episode of the history of NSU, Audi Tradition presents “the Prince”.

It is the time of the Miracle on the Rhine: After the devastation of World War II, the 1950s see Germany’s economy pick up again. Incomes are rising, and more and more people can afford a car. At NSU, however, the transition from two to four wheels was not immediate; initially, the development division experimented with a three-wheeler called the Max Kabine. The name was derived from an NSU motorcycle, the NSU Max. But the Max Kabine prototype’s performance in test drives was not promising and so, at the end of 1955, NSU management instead gave the green light for the compact car project.

Expanding a two-wheeler factory into an automobile plant is quite a feat – in organizational as well as financial terms. But thanks to a bank loan of around 30 million marks at the time and a guarantee, granted by the state of Baden-Württemberg, NSU was able to complete the plant as planned. All the while, a development team was working on the new car project. As early as mid-1956, the first three prototypes of the new NSU car took to the road for testing and were ready for series production just one year later. In the summer of 1957, the Neckarsulm-based company unveiled the NSU Prinz, initially called the NSU Lido, in pre-series production. The NSU Prinz was a modern two-door sedan with a self-supporting all-steel body. The car’s brochure states: “The Prinz offers everything that is expected of a car in its class today: pleasing proportions, enough space for four adults, excellent engine power, top driving characteristics, and good driving comfort.” NSU opted for a rear-engine design with a 20 hp two-cylinder motor and offered two models. The Prinz I was a trimmed-down basic version, which only came in light green, while the Prinz II was the so-called export version, with chrome stabilizer bars front and rear, Prinz lettering on the side, a dashboard instrument cluster, and wind-down windows. The Prinz II was available in a wide range of colors: Calla white, indigo blue, cedar green, lava gray, and Sahara beige, to name a few. At launch, the basic NSU Prinz cost 3,645 marks, while the Prinz II was available ex works for 3,985 marks.

Anticipated economic success for later Prinz family members

The first NSU Prinz rolled off the assembly line in March 1958. The 6,500 NSU employees at the time had high hopes for this small car. However, sales success was not immediate: During its production period (1958 to 1960), only 1,648 of the Prinz I models were sold; customers clearly preferred the more luxurious Prinz II, which sold 62,587 units during its three-year production period. In 1959, the company launched another version, the NSU Sport Prinz, with a unique body shape inspired by the Italian design trends of the time. First unveiled in 1961, the company's new slogan boasted: "Drive a Prinz and you're a king." ("Fahre Prinz und du bist König.") After the NSU Prinz III (of which 30,332 were built between 1960 and 1962), it was the newly developed successor, the Prinz 4, that began to win over most drivers from 1961 onwards. Up to 1973, a total of 576,619 Prinz 4 cars were made. Following the domination of the small car segment by the Prinz 4, NSU ventured to establish a more upmarket position in 1964, when the Neckarsulm-based company entered the lower mid-size class with the Prinz 1000.

To this day, the little Prinz has a loyal – and not insignificant – fan base that regularly organizes rides, club meetings, and even racing series.

Each month from March to December, Audi Tradition is presenting a different NSU model, including brand classics on two and four wheels, prototypes, and one-off models. Each episode of the ten-part series focuses on an individual model of the NSU brand. If you want to delve deeper into NSU's complex product history, we recommend the Audi Tradition Edition book "NSU-Automobile. Typen – Technik – Modelle", written by Klaus Arth and published by Delius Klasing Verlag.

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The Audi logo consisting of the four rings symbolizes the Audi, DKW, Horch, and Wanderer brands, which were merged into Auto Union in 1932. Auto Union and NSU merged in 1969 and played a major role in shaping the development of the automobile. Finally, in 1985, Audi NSU Auto Union AG became AUDI AG. Since 1998, Audi Tradition/Auto Union GmbH, together with NSU GmbH, has been maintaining and presenting Audi's extensive and wide-ranging history. The Audi museum mobile at the Audi Forum Ingolstadt is open from Monday to Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and on Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The August Horch Museum Zwickau is open Tuesday through Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. AUDI AG and the city of Zwickau each hold a 50 percent stake in August Horch Museum Zwickau gGmbH. www.audi.de/tradition

Audi Tradition supports the work of Audi Club International e.V. (ACI). The umbrella organization officially recognized by AUDI AG represents all of the Audi brand clubs as well as the clubs of the predecessor brands of today's AUDI AG. For more information, please visit www.audi-club-international.de

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In 2022, the Audi Group delivered 1.61 million Audi vehicles, 15,174 Bentley vehicles, 9,233 Lamborghini vehicles, and 61,562 Ducati motorcycles to customers. In the 2022 fiscal year, AUDI Group achieved a total revenue of €61.8 billion and an operating profit of €7.6 billion. Worldwide, more than 87,000 people worked for the Audi Group in 2022, over 54,000 of them at AUDI AG in Germany. With its attractive brands, new models, innovative mobility offerings and groundbreaking services, the group is systematically pursuing its path toward becoming a provider of sustainable, individual, premium mobility.
