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**Faszination Series: Hummer/Modern Classic Cars/Porsche/Supercars (MotorVision/Inakustik/Music Video Distributors DVDs)**

Picture: B- (C+ **Hummer**) Sound: B- (C+ **Hummer**) Extras: C- Main Programs: B- (C+ **Hummer**)

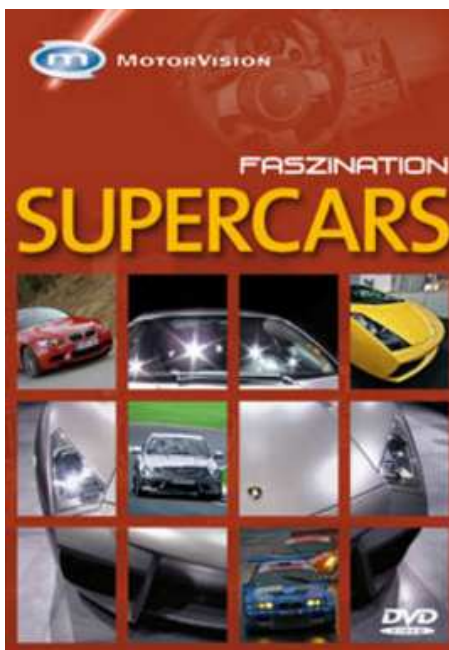
I have said often that sports are one of the biggest beneficiaries of the rise of High Definition, but little did I expect it to extend to sports, luxury and superexoticars. Though they have been the subject of TV shows for decades, there are been a sort of boom that has included much material for HDTV channels, earlier hits (**MotorWeek**, **Top Gear**) going HD very nicely, independent productions and new TV series. On German TV, **Faszination** has arrived as an all-HD car affair and four volumes of this impressive, near-excellent series that deserves to be a big hit worldwide.

Any serious fan is going to enjoy these and for those who like technology documentary programming, will be very impressed with the following:

**Hummer** is a surprise entry just by its choice, but the angle chosen to cover it is funny. You have a European show trying to understand why these vehicles are even being made for the public and as impractical as they are in the U.S., are even more so in Europe since they are too big for so many of their streets. Currently a subdivision of General Motors, they hoped the subdivision would be their way to compete with Chrysler's Jeep brand, but it instead helped cave in the company. Sold as "tough Americana", the fact that the Chinese may buy it adds to the irony of this installment.

**Modern Classic Cars** presumes that the autos it is covering are more enduring than I would, though its section on convertibles is the most inarguable. Other autos covered include the Datsun 240Z, Volkswagen Golf 1 GTi and Lancia Delta Integrale. The BMW 02 Series is also discussed as one is restored and a race between an Alpina BMW 3.0 CSi and Mercedes SLC AMG (both professionally upgraded versions of their models) is held.

**Porsche** does a decent job of looking at the marque as no one show could possibly cover it all, but the history side is one of the best with Ferdinand and son Ferry (even seen in archive footage) building the company and its rise to greatness. This includes several classic black and white (and a few color) filmed commercials (of German origin) pushing the models,



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examining the 911, comparing a Turbo and GT-3 model (both 911 based), Porsche on the racing track and their productions since the 1960s. To get more customers, the company teamed with Volkswagen to create the 914. The 916, 924, 944, 928 and 968 all followed as what is known as the transaxle cycle. Current and future models are also discussed.

**Supercars** look sat some of the many rare and expensive exotics that are rarely seen, few can buy and some that are independent productions from companies that don't always make it. The show opens with the all carbon-fibre Lamborghini Reventon, an amazing limited model that will impress all fans of Lambos (including Countach fans) as it races on an airway strip in Italy against a Tiger fighter plane. Then we see a BMW M3 vs. a Mercedes C63 AMG, a Ferrari Enzo, Pagani Zonda, distinct Carlsson CK65 Eau Rouge, Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale, Audi Quattro S1 with Stig Blomqvist, Lamborghini Gallardo Spyder, Audi R56 and "Supercar Junkyard" featuring a business built around recycling and salvaging parts of the most expensive cars in the world to fix others.

Besides more track racing and a general discussion of superexotics, we also get to see the KTM X-Bow (that is pronounced crossbow) in action. This is a car that is barely a car, with little shell to it that is something like combining a motorcycle, a dune buggy, a bumper car and a Marx Big Wheel toy (maybe even its more dangerous variant, the glorious Green Machines) into one street legal vehicle that may never make it to the U.S. legally. With that, it barely edges out the Porsche disc as my favorite here, but all four are terrific and we should hope this is only the very beginning of this series.

For serious fans, these are must-have programs!

The anamorphically enhanced 1.78 X 1 image on **Hummer** has some noise and Video Black limits because of all the location and rough condition shooting, but its better shots are closer to the really good shooting throughout the other volumes. Color and detail are consistent throughout, while motion blur is rarely a problem if it is there at all. All shot on what looks like 1080i HD video, these cars looks great and the result can compete with any automotive series today.

The Dolby Digital 5.1 mixes (in both its original German and dubbed English versions) are always better than the Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo in all cases, though the **Hummer** volume is more restrictive since it involves more rough location audio. Otherwise, the sound there is as good as expected. On the rest of the releases, the sound is as surprisingly good as the video with smart sound-design, excellent location audio (especially of the cars) and (along with some scoring) impressive sound fields worthy of the best in the **Victory By Design** DVD series (reviewed on this site; see below). If only this was also available in DTS 5.1 like the first six DVDs in that series. With that combination so good here, we can easily imagine Blu-ray versions being even better, but these DVDs are impressive considering we are in the HD era.

Extras include POV (point-of-view) ride footage on each DVD, with **Modern** having two. This is amusing, but I hoped for more in the only weak point of the collection.

For more sports car action, try these links:

**Victory By Design** series:

**Alfa Romeo**

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## **Top Gear – Season Ten**

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- Nicholas Sheffo