

THE AUDI R8 SPYDER RUNS ON
ULTRAC VORTI R235/35 R19 (FRONT)
295/30 R19 (REAR)

GROUND CONTROL

What a company says about its own product is one thing, but objective analysis from an independent expert is another. We took an Audi R8 Spyder to MIRA in search of the latter...

For once, there was nothing the weather could do to get in the way of things. In an ideal world, dry and sunny beats grey and wet, but a day testing tyres at MIRA – the UK's leading automotive test and development centre – was never going to be cancelled because of a bit of rain. Especially if you were assessing the wet-weather performance of Vredestein's latest tyre – the Ultrac Vorti R. It was a prospect that put a smile on Ray Collier's face, too, the independent tyre tester for the day. Ultrac Vorti R is the latest high-performance product from Vredestein. It has been painstakingly developed to maximise the grip of cars like the Audi R8, something else that pleased Collier. "Oh good, an R8. I like these," he enthused while attaching thousands of pounds worth of measuring equipment to it.

The tests were to analyse a series of key Vorti R characteristics: how the tyres behave in an aquaplaning situation; wet braking from 62mph and how they handle in the wet. As with any test of this type, there was also a subjective element – no other tyres were being assessed and the Ultrac Vorti R's weren't being fitted to any other car. It was all about these tyres on this Audi.

LONGITUDINAL AQUAPLANING Driven onto a surface with 8mm of standing water at carefully monitored entry speed, the tyres performed well. "For such a wide-section tyre, on such a powerful car, everything was very controlled with minimum steering corrections required. The tread pattern cleared the water very effectively," reported Ray. So far, so good.

WET BRAKING An average stopping time of 3.6 seconds in just 52.6 metres was also good, but it was the stopping force of just 0.75g that really impressed. "This

shows the tyre has a nicely balanced construction," explained Collier, "and that inspires confidence in braking from high speeds. Crucial in a car like this."

WET HANDLING And it was the same story with the handling. On a variety of surfaces, the tread compound coped well with all low-grip situations, maintaining high levels of lateral forces (impressive cornering performance, in layman's language). In summary, it seems that the Ultrac Vorti R is exceptionally well-matched to a car such as the Audi R8.

"On a car like this, you're looking for outstanding driver feedback from the tyres," concluded Collier. "On the handling track, the transition from grip to slip – with all traction systems turned off – was very progressive. All in all, the tyre has all the required sporting characteristics and a margin of safety.

Impressive enough stuff if it was just Vredestein who were saying it, but coming from a man who tests tyres for a living, that's real cause for confidence.



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RUBBER SOUL

Ray Collier has permits to test at some of the world's leading proving grounds, including MIRA in the UK, Nardo (now owned by Porsche) in Italy and is a member of the Nürburgring Nordschleife Industry Pool. Collier gained a degree in automotive engineering and began his career as a chassis engineer with Bentley Motors before establishing his own independent tyre-testing and vehicle-development business. He is one of a small number of freelance engineers providing subjective and objective tyre-testing analysis.



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