SOFTWARE & TECH

Stihl 028 Av Super

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Introduction: Why the Stihl 028 Av Super Remains a Legend

For decades, Stihl has been synonymous with reliable, high-performance chainsaws. Among the most revered models in the company's long history is the **Stihl 028 Av Super**. Introduced in the late 1970s and produced through the 1990s, this mid-sized chainsaw quickly earned a loyal following among homeowners, farmers, and even professional arborists. Today, the Stihl 028 Av Super is more than just a vintage tool; it is a testament to an era when durability and simplicity went hand in hand. Whether you are a collector, a landowner looking for a dependable backup saw, or simply curious about classic outdoor power equipment, understanding the 028 Av Super reveals why it still holds a special place in the hearts of many. In this article, we'll explore its history, standout features, real-world performance, maintenance needs, and how it compares to modern Stihl chainsaws.

A Brief History of the Stihl 028 Av Super

Stihl launched the 028 series in the late 1970s as a successor to the earlier 041 and 045 models. The "AV" designation stands for **Anti-Vibration**, a system that isolates the handles from the engine to reduce operator fatigue. The "Super" suffix indicated a higher-performance version with a larger displacement and improved power output compared to the standard 028. The 028 Av Super was positioned as a professional-grade saw that could handle demanding tasks like felling medium-sized trees, bucking firewood, and limbing. It quickly became one of Stihl's best-selling models because it balanced power and weight perfectly. Production continued into the early 1990s, and millions of units were sold worldwide. Even today, you'll find well-maintained examples still running on job sites and homesteads.

The Anti-Vibration (AV) System

One of the defining features of the Stihl 028 Av Super is its sophisticated anti-vibration system. Unlike earlier saws that transferred engine vibrations directly to the user's hands, the 028 used rubber buffers between the engine and the handle assembly. This innovation made long hours of cutting far more comfortable and reduced the risk of Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS). The AV system on the 028 remains highly regarded by those who use vintage saws today, as it still offers a smoother experience than many entry-level modern chainsaws.

Key Features of the Stihl 028 Av Super

What made the Stihl 028 Av Super stand out during its production run, and what keeps it relevant? Let's break down the specifications and design choices that define this classic saw.

Engine Displacement and Power Output

The 028 Av Super is powered by a 46.6 cc (or 47 cc, depending on the variant) two-stroke engine. In its stock form, it produces roughly 3.5 to 3.8 horsepower. That may not sound like much by today's standards, but the engine delivers strong torque, especially in the mid-range. The power-to-weight ratio was excellent for its time, allowing the saw to pull a 16- to 20-inch bar with authority. Experienced users often note that the 028 Av Super "pulls like a bigger saw" thanks to its well-tuned intake and exhaust ports.

Durable Construction

Stihl built the 028 Av Super using a magnesium crankcase and a steel cylinder with a chrome-plated bore. This construction is far more robust than the plastic-heavy saws produced today. The metal chassis can withstand years of abuse in muddy, dusty, or wet conditions. The ignition system, a points-based setup on early models and a later electronic module, is simple to diagnose and repair. Many users appreciate that parts like the carburetor (often a Walbro or Tillotson) are standard, making rebuilds straightforward.

Weight and Ergonomics

Weighing approximately 12.5 to 13 pounds (without bar and chain), the 028 Av Super is considered light for its displacement class. The balanced design places the center of gravity close to the front handle, reducing fatigue during limbing and overhead cuts. The rear handle is well-shaped with a comfortable grip that allows for controlled one-handed operation (though we always recommend both hands on the saw). Combined with the AV system, this saw can be used all day with minimal strain.

Performance and Applications

The Stihl 028 Av Super is not a race saw; it is a workhorse. Its performance characteristics make it ideal for a range of tasks around a property or in a small logging operation.

Firewood Cutting and Property Maintenance

For someone who cuts a few cords of firewood each year, the 028 Av Super is almost perfect. It handles 12- to 16-inch hardwood logs with ease, and the torque lets you keep the chain engaged without bogging down. The saw also excels at limbing because it is light enough to maneuver with one hand on the front handle while the other steadies the branch. Owners who have used modern homeowner saws often remark that the 028 feels more substantial and cuts faster, even with a standard chain.

Light Professional Use

Many tree care professionals used the 028 Av Super as a climbing saw or for light removals. Its reliable starting and consistent idle made it a favorite among arborists who needed a saw that would run all day without hiccups. While it lacks the power of modern pro saws like the Stihl MS 261, the 028 Av Super can still be a capable backup or second saw for someone who appreciates the simplicity of older machines.

Comparison to Modern Stihl Chainsaws

How does the Stihl 028 Av Super stack up against newer models? The most direct modern equivalent in Stihl's lineup is the MS 271 or MS 291. While the MS 271 is lighter and has a slightly higher power output, it also features plastic crankcases, fewer serviceable parts, and a more complex carburetor system. The 028 Av Super, in contrast, has a magnesium case that absorbs vibration better and can be rebuilt almost indefinitely. However, modern saws offer better fuel efficiency, reduced emissions, and easier starting. For a user who values repairability and longevity over cutting-edge efficiency, the 028 remains a strong choice.

Maintenance and Parts Availability

One of the most common questions from those considering a Stihl 028 Av Super is: *Can I still get parts?*The answer is a resounding yes. Because the 028 was produced for so long and in such large numbers, aftermarket and OEM parts remain widely available. Chainsaw specialty shops and online retailers stock everything from pistons and cylinders to fuel lines, carburetor kits, and spark plugs. Even the AV buffers can be replaced with aftermarket versions. Rebuilding a 028 Av Super is a straightforward project for someone with basic mechanical skills, and many enthusiasts enjoy keeping these saws running.

Common Maintenance Tasks

- Air filter cleaning: The 028 uses a felt or foam element that should be cleaned after every few hours of use.
- Carburetor adjustment: The saw has high-speed, low-speed, and idle mixture screws that may need tweaking as the engine wears.
- Fuel line replacement: The ethanol in modern fuel can degrade old rubber lines; replacing them annually is recommended.
- Chain tension: The side-access chain tensioner is simple to adjust, requiring no tools beyond the bar nut wrench.
- Spark arrestor cleaning: Removing carbon buildup from the muffler screen helps maintain power.

Upgrades for the 028 Av Super

Some owners choose to modernize their 028 Av Super with aftermarket parts. A common upgrade is installing a dual-port muffler cover to improve exhaust flow and increase power slightly. Others swap the standard chain for a low-kickback or chisel-style chain for faster cutting. While these modifications are not necessary, they can enhance an already capable saw. The robust design of the 028 handles minor performance upgrades without risking reliability.

Why the Stihl 028 Av Super Is Still Sought After

In an age of disposable consumer goods, the Stihl 028 Av Super stands as a counterexample. It was built to be repaired, not replaced. The saw's reputation for starting easily even after years of storage, the rumble of its engine, and the satisfaction of completing a big pile of firewood with a single tank of fuel all contribute to its cult following. Collectors look for clean examples with original paint and decals, while practical users seek out running saws that need only a carburetor kit to fire up. The 028 Av Super also has a strong resale value; a well-maintained unit can sell for several hundred dollars, often more than many new budget chainsaws.

Is It Right for You?

If you are a homeowner who cuts a couple of trees a year, a modern homeowner saw might be simpler and lighter. But if you are someone who values craftsmanship, the ability to fix your own equipment, and a saw that feels solid in your hands, the Stihl 028 Av Super is hard to beat. It is also an excellent saw for learning chainsaw repair because of its simple, open design and abundant parts support. For those who already own one, the question is rarely "should I replace it?" but rather "how can I keep it going another 20 years?"

Conclusion

The **Stihl 028 Av Super** is more than just a vintage chainsaw; it is a piece of engineering history that still performs admirably in the modern world. Its robust construction, effective anti-vibration system, and ample power for medium-duty tasks have earned it a permanent spot in the pantheon of great outdoor power equipment. Whether you are restoring one as a hobby or using it as your primary cutting tool, the 028 Av Super delivers the reliability and performance that made Stihl a household name. By understanding its features, maintaining it regularly, and sourcing quality parts, you can keep this classic saw running for decades to come. In an era of planned obsolescence, the Stihl 028 Av Super proves that sometimes they really did build them to last.

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