

AUDI A8 3.0 TDI

By Jim Mc Cauley



It's the pin-up car of the glossy magazines, the chauffeur driven limousine that delivers stars and celebrities to all the must-be-seen-at functions. Now it's my turn to do the driving and the size and quality finish of the car initially intimidate you into not upsetting an imaginary passenger in the rear seat. Audi's A8 can be many things from an exclusive family car to further spoil the offspring to an executive limousine for those captains of industry who feel the need to permanently work and can

afford a chauffeur in preference to affording the time to do their own driving.



The car is at the top of Audi's 4-door family A-range of saloons, A3, A4, A6, A8 and there is no mistaking the family heritage. It is big at 5.3 metres in length with a grille that looks like it could swallow the competition, yet there is a tameness in its overall appearance, belying the fact that it can move aggressively if need be when the 3.0 litre V6 is excited. The latest development of Audi's flagship model made its UK debut in January of this year with modifications to its lightweight aluminium space frame body and a raft of technological advances including forward lighting and EU6-compliant engines. Body modifications are slight but subtle with a resculpted bonnet and revised

light and bumper units.

With a choice of two petrol and two diesel engines in the standard range, the test car was equipped with the smaller 3.0 litre turbo V6 diesel, driving all four wheels through an 8-speed tiptronic transmission. This latest development sees a modest increase in horsepower from 250PS to 258 PS while the 8-speed automatic 'box competently copes with the 580Nm of torque.

On road, and a single push of the starter button stirs the car into life, and as the throttle is depressed there is little sound intrusion to disturb the leathered ambience of the cabin. Smoothness and refinement never progress to anything harsher and the car asserts its deserved entitlement to its Chauffeur Car of the Year award.

Ride complements the smoothness of the power delivery and while it is satisfying to drive it so as not to ruffle the imaginary rear seat

passenger, it must be remembered that this is also a performance saloon that can cross 62 mph from rest in just 6.1 seconds and stretch its legs to a governed top speed of 155 mph.

When proper passengers are added there is non stop praise for the cabin equipment and the overall comfort of the car, in particular from the front seat occupant who can share the driver's pleasure on the high-spec seats which can be cooled or heated as well as having them offer a massage from a menu list of options.



But the extras are an embellishment on a car that already offers quality and refinement that exceeds the excellent provision in the S-Class and 7-Series from the other members of the top German trio. While the standard equipment list is what you expect in a car of this calibre, it is the high-tec range of options that further elevate its desirability – and price. Although listed at £57,980, the range of extra equipment on the test vehicle left it rolling out of the showroom with a £73,505 price tag. Included in this are the 'comfort front seats with memory function' at £1,175 plus seat ventilation and massage at £1,635, head-up display at £1,340 and power door closing at £460.

However, the most fascinating aspect was the parking system with top view at £900. This supplements the standard rear view camera and parking sensors to show the surrounding road detailing from above and also assists parking by automatically identifying the correct size of a parking space and operating the steering to safely manoeuvre the car in.

Overall, the Audi A8 is much more than an exceptional driving experience. Loaded with just some of the additional technology available, the test car was a journey into the future where state of the art electronics and computer control includes intelligent lighting distribution linked to satellite navigation input for the

multi-LED headlights, the ability to read road signs and night vision assistance which helps to recognise pedestrians and larger animals initially out of sight on dark roads.

But despite its performance and equipment levels, the 3.0 litre A8 returns surprisingly acceptable fuel consumption with an official combined figure of 47.1 mpg, dropping to 37.7 mpg in town. With a CO2 emissions of 155 gms/km, the 3.0 litre TDI is in Band G for annual road tax and is covered by Audi's comprehensive 3-year / 60,000 mile warranty and 12 years' corrosion cover.