

AUDI S3 quattro

By Jim Mc Cauley

Audi's current top performer in its A3 line-up is the S3 quattro, adding spice to an already tantalising compact range. Heart of the matter is the company's 2.0 litre turbo-petrol engine tempting the right

foot with a 300 PS output from 5,500 rpm.

Despite having the same displacement as its predecessor, the engine is in fact all-new, weighting 5 Kg less.

Adding security to the available performance, drive is channelled through a 6-speed manual gearbox to all four wheels in the latest development of Audi's famed 'quattro' system. The power package is good for a 0-62 mph time of 5.2 seconds and a limited top speed of 155 mph. Despite its potential, power delivery is extremely smooth and the car is beautiful to manage at lower speeds. On the open road, the short throw gear-change quickly paces the car to the maximum speed limits, accompanied by a sonorous exhaust note. Sharp, precise steering

and flat stance through corners permits fluid progress while firm and supportive suspension relays the sporting feel without being unduly uncomfortable. With the security of all-wheel drive, the overall package inspires great confidence. Even at night, the car's performance can be fully accessed with superb lights providing excellent forward vision.

And while the standard default settings seem perfect for the character of the car, the driver has the choice of altering the driving dynamics with the 'Audi Drive Select' system. This provides a range of settings to alter the characteristics of the electronic throttle pedal and progressive steering weighting with the 'Efficiency' setting also optimising climate control and cruise control settings for best fuel efficiency. If chosen, the optional electromagnetic damper control system can also be included in the 'Audi Drive Select' system.

The cabin confirms the sporting nature of the car with a flat bottomed, leather trimmed steering wheel, two-tone leather sports seats



and charcoal roof lining. Instruments are typical twin analogue Audi with a digital information panel between them while a central pop-up screen provides the infotainment information. Detailing is picked out in simple aluminium and chrome highlights giving the cabin an overall tasteful practicality.

Detail highlights include superbrite LEDs for reading lights and the comfort of knowing that there is an emergency spare under the boot floor as opposed to the restrictive emergency repair kit.



Sitting at the top of the range, equipment levels are high on the S3 quattro and include model specific front and rear bumper panels, panoramic glass roof, privacy glass, xenon-plus headlights and heated front seats in addition to the special drive and chassis modifications.

The car is priced at £30,440 with the 6-speed manual gearbox, and with the optional S-tronic transmission is listed at £31,920. Among the available extras is 'Audi Connect' which allows internet access including email and surfing facilities as well as Google Earth and flight and train information.

On the economy and environmental fronts, the S3 quattro has a combined fuel consumption of 40.4 mpg which can be closely approached in every day driving while a CO2 emissions of 162 gms/km puts it in Band G for annual car tax of £165. The car has a 5-star EuroNCAP safety rating and comes with a standard 3-year / 60,000 mile warranty which can be extended to four or five years from £245.