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Audi A8 3.0 TDI Quattro Sport 262PS tiptronic Road Test

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Tom Scanlan tests a high specification Audi A8 limousine...
Listen, you have just had one of the most perfect cars of expect perfection, right?

Well, the headline is 'AUDI A8 IS LESS THAN PERFECT!'

I mean, I bumped my head getting into it without being warned to be careful, the rear door-shut sounded a bit metallic compared with the front door's sophisticated click, and a very slight shudder could be felt when the park brake released.

So do I go back to the dealer with my little list?

Being a mere scribe whose newest personally-owned car out of three well-worn vehicles is



now sixteen years old, I can't answer my own question.

Yes, it's a cop-out...

But what a car!

Audi's big limo (not its biggest, as it was not the long-wheelbase version) is a wonderful car to travel in, whether you are the driver or a passenger.



My test car was powered by Audi's 262 PS 3.0 litre diesel engine coupled with the tiptronic gearbox and with quattro drive. In three words: fast, easy, safe.

Kitted out as such cars are, it can take quite some time to become familiar with all the A8's



features and how to work them. I never quite worked out why the boot-lid twice refused to shut when the button was pressed; there was no obstruction in the way I had loaded up or in where I was standing; on the first occasion the ignition key was in the car and on the second occasion it was in my pocket. The automatic parking brake system also has you wondering why it sometimes appears to be totally automatic and at other times has to be released by pressing the button; this is not unique to the A8, or other Audi models, and can be a question raised in cars from other manufacturers. Study of the owner's handbook should not be necessary to find the answer...is it simply a case of a design being too clever by half?

The satellite navigation I found to be quite intuitive and user-friendly: easy, for example, to cancel voice instructions without having to go through the selection rigmarole found in some systems... Audi's MMI is now of course a well-proven and developed technology.

The driver's instruments are classically simple, easy to read day or night and the usual variations on that theme are available through the information system.



Driving the A8 was always something I looked forward to each day and I was always rewarded, especially on roads where it could show just how capable it is. The beefy diesel could waft the car up to 62 mph in less than six seconds, through a couple of those eight instant gears, with a suitably pleasing growl adding to the sensation.

The handling, too, was very impressive, particularly for a car of this size, with quite sharp bends requiring very little whitening of the knuckles on the steering wheel. The steering was precise and communicative here, but just a little 'dead-feeling' in straight ahead mode... a comment that can be made about plenty of big cars on low-profile tyres.

And the brakes proved to be as capable as they must be in quickly stopping a lot of weight with such aplomb.



The ride, too, was excellent, right up to expectation, so important in this sort of car; about the only tiny comment from me is that each time I settled into the driving seat I found it to be a little too firm under the thigh, although to be fair I ended up not really noticing this after a short distance.



Passengers in the back (once aboard, which requires just a little agility) are well catered-for with their own set of vent controls and a pull-down central arm-rest with storage cubbies.

The entire interior is very nicely-appointed, with a wide variety of materials and to the apparently exacting standards that Audi achieves.

In a week over a full range of traffic conditions from slow city traffic to motorway cruising (70 mph at 1450 rpm), the A8 indicated an overall fuel consumption of 35.5 mpg, with a best



of 45.0 mpg on a mainly motorway journey, starting with a cold engine. Expect a range from the 82 litre (18 gallon) tank, therefore, of 600-650 miles between fill-ups, dependent upon conditions.

Audi is well known for its optional extras adding large amounts to a car's basic price. The A8 test car had a relatively small list, amounting to £6,250, of which the most expensive item was the Night Vision Assistant with pedestrian and animal detection adding £1,535 and the Adaptive cruise control with Stop & Go function including Pre-sense for collision mitigation at £1,330; also fitted was Deluxe 4-zone climate control including rear comfort centre armrest for £1,100 and, yes, why not, let's have those shiny black piano-finish upper inlays (only £850, so not all that much in the scheme of things until you take a very close look and conclude, 'blimey is that all I get for £850?').

VERDICT

However, before I get too carried away, I have to say that my overall week behind the A8's wheel was super. The car was beautiful to drive – any chauffeur could do a lot worse, but please read the handbook.



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Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

AUDI A8 3.0 TDI quattro Sport 262 PS tiptronic

Engine: 2967cc V6 turbo diesel

Maximum power: 262 PS at 4000-4250 rpm

Maximum torque: 580 Nm at 1750-2500 rpm

Performance:



0-62 mph: 5.9 seconds

Top speed: 155 mph (governed)

Official Combined Fuel Consumption: 47.9 mpg (19- or 20-inch wheels)

Emissions and Taxation:

CO2 emissions 155 g/ km (19- or 20-inch wheels)

VED band G (£185)

BIK 31%

Insurance Group: 47E

Total price of test car incl. tax: £73,410