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Audi Q2 1.0 TFSI – Road Test

Published: May 3, 2018

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Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/audi-q2-1-0-tfsi-road-test/>



Kieron Fennelly assesses Audi's compact SUV, in three cylinder 1.0 litre form...

It has become almost impossible to keep up with the range of Audis now available - the company currently offers no fewer than 53 models in Britain and says it will launch 21 new models in the next couple of years. A much faster rate, it claims that its rivals at Mercedes and BMW. It has also gone from 0.5% of the UK market in 1991 to almost 7% today, a figure equal to its German competitors. "The future is Audi's", announced an entirely straightfaced spokesman recently. Such confidence is combined with a clear emphasis on power and performance. Indeed you have to look quite hard into Audi's catalogue to find cars with fewer than 250 horsepower (and price tags to match.) But of course Audi is a generalist

manufacturer which has always relied on its smaller, volume models. One such, a new derivation of an existing theme, is its Q2.



Launched in 2016, the Q2 is the most recent addition to Audi's Q range, hitherto larger SUV models designed to compete with BMW's X3 and X5. Now Audi has turned to the other end of the range and applied the same SUV treatment to its long established A3, creating the Q2. This is a junior high rider competing not only with the likes of the trendy Nissan Juke and Mini Paceman, but also cars such as the Opel Mokka, Suzuki's Vitara or the newly introduced Kia Stonic. Despite certain manufacturers' focus on their prestige offerings, the real competition is here in the £20-30,000 market. The Q2 comes with several engine options - a three cylinder 1.0, a four cylinder 1.4, and a two litre which is available as a



4×4. There are also 1.6 and two litre diesel versions and four levels of trim.

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The Q2 sampled here is the base 1.0 litre TFSi. It is stylish in the modern idiom with sharp lines, its SUV credentials asserted by the black plastic around the wheelhouses which emphasises the high waistline. The silver grey of the 'C' pillar is perhaps a styling detail too far and while some may also feel the large corporate grille is slightly overdone, as the company's PR shows, Audi is not given to understatement these days. For its class the cabin is reasonably spacious and if rear seat passengers are unlikely to complain about legroom, the dark interior and high waistline mean it can feel a little claustrophobic. Cabin materials are correct, though the plastics around the doors and seat bases look a little cheap compared with Audi's usual standard. Entry and exit are easy and the high stance also means forward vision is good, and the driving position commanding; parking sensors are a standard fitting even on this base model. Other equipment is optional and at around £1300 for the sports front seats, £900 for the 'sound and comfort pack' and £500 for air conditioning, none of these items is cheap.

There was a time when buyers tended to shy away from manufacturers' bottom of the range, smallest capacity models, perceived as crude and sluggish but technology has wrought huge improvements with little engines and the Q2's 999cc 3-cylinder is truly impressive. Assisted by turbocharging (as are the vast majority of petrol engines today) it produces 116 horsepower, enough says Audi to exceed 120 mph. While this is of somewhat theoretical interest, it does mean that there is more than enough power to propel the 1,200 kg (2,657 lb) Q2 in most traffic situations. The three-cylinder is remarkably refined, emitting a characteristic though restrained three-pot bark under brisk acceleration. A drawback of turbocharging is lag, delay before the turbine effect is felt: with an engine of such modest capacity, it does mean that when taking off from a roundabout or junction at low revs in second gear, the car will momentarily bog down and the only remedy is a little old-fashioned double declutching to engage first gear. On the open road the driver also has to be prepared to change gear more often than with a larger engine, especially if carrying a full load or



encountering a gradient, but this is no hardship. The six-speed manual (the only possibility with this engine) has an easy intuitive movement and combined with well-chosen ratios and a light clutch, make for an agreeable driving experience. This is enhanced by precise steering which, if lacking in feel, allows accurate positioning of the car, and a chassis which keeps the body under firm control. Despite significantly higher centres of gravity manufacturers are now able to make their small SUVs handle almost as well as their hatchbacks and the Q2 is no exception; its firm suspension and damping endow it with surprisingly agility making it feel unexpectedly sporty without compromising the ride quality for passengers.

VERDICT

The Q2 is well designed and engineered. It offers a wide range of engines and equipment and appealing styling. With its Audi pedigree, it is likely to do well in what is a new niche for a company hitherto better known for its medium and large cars. The 1.4 TFSi is predicted to be the biggest seller, but terms of value for money, the plain 1.0 might be the best option.



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Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Audi Q2 1.0 TFSI

Five door SUV

CO2: 117g/km

Combined mpg: 55.4



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Engine: Three cylinder 999 cc direct injection turbocharged petrol

Transmission: Six speed manual, front wheel drive

Max power & torque: 116 bhp @ 5,000-5,500 rpm, 200 Nm/14lb/ft @ 1,500-4,000 rpm

Performance: 0-62mph: 10.1secs; top speed: 122 mph

Dimensions: 4,191 x 1,794 mm (13.75 x 5.89 ft); boot: 405 litres/14.30 ft/37.08 cu.ft)
(1050 litres rear seat folded) kerb weight: 1205 kg (2,657 lb)

UK pricing: from £20,000