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Audi R8 Coupe V10 Plus First Impressions

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Who says supercars have to be Italian? Certainly not Audi – who keep on improving their head-turning R8 Coupe.

Author: Chris Adamson (who also photographed the blue car driven for this article).

The second generation R8 is even more dynamic and go-getting than its predecessor, being faster, lighter and more responsive; it's also laden to the rooftop with goodies.

Visually the V10 example can be distinguished by the retractable spoiler, and Audi no longer insists on the contrasting rear panel section that, while distinctive, was a distraction on the



eye away from a magnificently styled piece of engineering.

Home for lucky owners is a cabin that features digital instrumentation with a choice of presentation layouts as part of a virtual cockpit package viewed via a 12.3 inch display screen that's trying to look analogue, very techie and perfectly in keeping with the R8's overall cutting edge ambience.



Practicalities have never been of major concern for supercars so its no surprise the luggage space is a picnic hamper sized 112 litres (3.95 cu.ft) with a bit more thrown in behind the front seats.



On the Road

Between seats and boot, nestling just a few inches behind the occupants, is a high-revving naturally-aspirated, mid-mounted 90 degree V10 unit that, in 'normal' configuration bangs out 540 PS, or in tuned form on the Plus version (as tested), piles on another 70 PS for good measure.

Just reading the figures on paper tells you what to expect; performance, performance and then more performance as those ten cylinders whirr along in perfect harmony as you hurtle ever closer to a speeding ticket.

Let loose on Britain's highly sped-restricted roads is never going to see the R8 break sweat, which is such a shame as the strident bark from the exhaust is something you are going to want to listen to time and time again.

That sound isn't entirely the creation of the power house but also encouraged by the Sports exhaust system (an optional £1,800) - it's almost enough of a sound track to dispense with the audio system.

Audi promises that the latest R8 has been improved when it comes to fuel economy (if you are that way inclined) thanks to indirect fuel injection that features, for the first time, Cylinder on Demand which shuts off one of the two cylinder banks when not required.

In a mixed road and traffic situation I managed to average an indicated 21 mpg which, despite the pedal flooring I gave it when the opportunity arose, isn't too far off the 23 mpg quoted by Audi.

Not helping to conserve fuel is a wonderfully forgiving seven-speed automatic transmission, with sports mode and paddle shifts for manual selection, that delivers almost instantaneous and seamless transition, thanks to the use of twin electro-hydraulically controlled multi-plate clutches.



Pilots are presented with a Drive Select system to vary the performance depending on driving conditions or just the whim of the operator.

I have to blame my age but I found the comfort setting more than acceptable, it has a blend of refined power delivery with a surprisingly supple ride quality

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

For the occasions when life gets a little boring you can, of course, opt for the dynamic setting that is predisposition to the Sport setting for gear changes, firms up the ride quality and goes into dynamic steering mode, all without getting overtly harsh.

If this isn't capable enough, a turn of the select knob moves onto an individual setting that can be varied to respond to the prevailing conditions, although this is best pre-set before starting out.

Finally, Automatic mode does the job for you and adapts the R8 to the prevailing conditions.

Power is delivered to all four wheels - this is Audi remember and, as such, we are in the reassuring company of its quattro all-wheel drive system.

This translates into not unexpected kart-like handling with the wide and flat stance of the R8 riding on all round aluminium double wishbone suspension.

At the same time a lot of Britain's road surface imperfections are eradicated thanks to Audi's optional magnetic ride shock absorbers.

Overall, the latest R8 has shed some 50 kilograms (110 lbs) weight (not that it was a bloater before), thanks to the aluminium and carbon fibre space frame construction, so it settles and turns with just the merest of encouragement on the steering wheel.

This pin-sharp response comes from the electromechanical steering (Audi boffins promise it



is more responsive than ever) delivering instant response from the steering – which is probably the best feature of the R8.

Verdict

To put the latest R8 V10 on your driveway is going to set you back the thick end of £135,000 and that's before you pencil in those little must-haves, such as the stitched diamond design Alcantara headlining for £2,400 – you always knew you needed that.

With this in mind the Napa leather package that covers many of the other surfaces including the snug body contouring electric sports seats seems a bargain at £2,750.

Throw in £2,950 for the gloss carbon engine bay trim; £3,000 for the LED headlights; cruise control (£275); and a top of the range 500 watt Bang and Loosen sound system with Audi phone box (combined at £2,250) it's not hard to see how the final bill can head north of £150,000 without too much encouragement.

For this you get a total driving experience that may lack outright charm, Italian flair and that quirky character of supercars from the past, but has sheer driving pleasure by the Germanic bucketful.

The R8 is one of the easiest performance machines to live with. A sure-footed hooligan when the opportunity arises, it can also be a docile shopper if need be or just a daily run-around..... but then again this was built for speed – just find a stretch of open road to really enjoy (responsibly, of course...).





Wheels-Alive Tech Spec. in Brief:

Vehicle: Audi R8 V10 Plus

Engine: 5204cc V10 petrol

Transmission: Seven-speed S tronic

Power: 610 PS at 8,250 rpm

Torque: 560 Nm at 6,500 rpm

Performance:

0-62mph: 3.2 seconds

Top Speed: 205 mph

Fuel Consumption (Official Figures):

Urban: 16.1mpg

Extra-Urban: 30.4mpg

Combined: 23mpg



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CO2 Emissions: 287 g/km

Price (On the Road): £132,715 / As tested £154,245