Audi A3 Cabriolet and New S3 Saloon

Published: April 23, 2014

Author: Kim Henson

Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/audi-a3-cabriolet-and-new-s3-saloon/

Kim Henson drives two significant new Audis…

However, in other respects the newcomer – built in Hungary – has changed considerably, compared with its predecessor.

Neat, understated styling is a hallmark of the new Audi A3 Cabriolet.

For a start the car – which is derived from the saloon version, rather than the hatchback – is longer (with an extended wheelbase too), wider and lower. Importantly as well, it's lighter by 30 kilograms, thanks largely to the extensive use of aluminium and high strength plastic, as well as the adoption of special, ultra high strength steel in key areas. (Interestingly, the front wings on the Cabriolet and saloon are made from steel, while those on the hatchback are aluminium).

Attention has been paid to aerodynamic efficiency, including purpose-designed underbody shields that reduce overall drag by 12 per cent. This reduction aids performance, mpg and

emissions.
Further, very significant, savings in fuel consumption and emissions arise in the 140 PS 1.4 litre TFSI petrol version incorporating 'Cylinder on Demand' ('CoD') technology. Through the use of an innovative valve operation system, this results in the valves on two cylinders 'shutting down' in situations where power demands on the engine are low. It is claimed by Audi that the cutting-in and cutting-out of the system (involving electromagnetic actuation) is imperceptible when driving. This technology is important since it is said to improve fuel consumption by up to 20 per cent, and emissions by 26 per cent…

A new 'base' 1.4 litre model (lacking the CoD system), developing 125 PS, is soon to be launched (at the time of writing, in the spring of 2014).

A third TFSI engine offered to A3 Cabriolet customers is the 1.8 litre unit, producing 150 PS.

All the petrol units referred to above incorporate turbocharging plus direct fuel injection. All are 'Euro 6' emissions-compliant.

For those preferring diesel power, a 2.0 litre TDI model is available, providing 150 PS and 340 Nm (250 lb.ft) of torque, between 1,750 and 3,000 rpm.

Audi expects that some 40 per cent of A3 Cabriolet sales will be to top line 'S' specification.

Personalisation is important to Audi buyers, and (for example) the new car can accommodate 19 inch wheel rims, if required.

Residual values forecasts predict that after three years, the Residual Value of the new Cabriolets (from 1.4 to 2.0 litre versions) will be 40 per cent of the cars' original prices.

Needless to say all A3 Cabriolets come as standard with a host of factory-fitted safety, convenience and 'comfort' equipment, while for those who prefer to customise their cars, a wide range of extra-cost options is available.

Under the bonnet of the A3 Cabriolet I sampled nestles the 1.4 litre TFSi engine, which delivers power a-plenty AND, partly by means of its 'Cylinder on Demand' technology, frugal fuel consumption plus low emissions.

Sharply sculptured lines highlight the body's front corners.

Neat, unostentatious functional dash design comes as standard.

The boot's not huge, but is still capable of accommodating a reasonable amount of luggage.

ON THE ROAD

I sampled the 1.4 TFSI Sport version, with the 'Cylinder on Demand' system. This model, costing £26,370 before any options are added, produces 140 PS at 5,000 rpm from 1,395cc, plus 250 Nm (184 lb.ft) of torque, all the way from 1,500 to 3,500 rpm. The front wheels are driven, via a six speed manual gearbox.

On the road the car felt lively and purposeful with sprightly acceleration and quiet, refined cruising. At 60 mph, the engine was turning at a relaxing and fuel-sipping 2,200 rpm.

For the record, the top speed capability of this version is 135 mph, having scooted from rest to 62 mph on the way, in just 9.1 seconds.

There was no indication whatsoever of the changes from all four cylinders operating to just two, and back again. The system did indeed perform seamlessly and imperceptibly, as claimed.

The Sport and S Line variants provide Audi's Drive Select dynamic driving system, allowing the driver to choose his or her preferred parameters in terms of 'comfort', 'automatic', dynamic' and 'efficiency' modes.

In 'automatic' mode I found that the ride quality was supple and accommodating, while a quick change to the more sporty 'dynamic' setting brought about an immediate change of character to the vehicle, imparting a more 'involving' drive.

Fuel consumption figures promise to be very good. The official 'Combined' figure is 56.5 mpg for the 1.4 TFSI version, as driven.

VERDICT

Smart, solid and good to drive.

Hood down, side windows raised, equals draught-free open top motoring.

WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF

AUDI A3 CABRIOLET 1.4 TFSI SPORT

Engine: 1395cc four cylinder, 16 valve, twin overhead camshaft, turbocharged, direct injection petrol (with ‘Cylinder on Demand’ technology)

Power: 140 PS @ 5,000 rpm

Torque: 250 Nm (184.4 lb.ft) @ 1,500 to 3,500 rpm

0-62 mph: 9.1 sec

Top speed: 135 mph

Fuel consumption:

('Urban'): 46.3 mpg

('Extra Urban'): 65.7 mpg

('Combined'): 56.5 mpg
CO2 emissions: 114 g/km

'On the road' price: £26,370

BRIEF IMPRESSIONS

NEW AUDI S3 SALOON

A purposeful stance hints at the S3 saloon's potential. The test car I drove delivered scintillating dynamic performance, courtesy of its 2.0 TFSI engine and Audi's quattro four wheel drive system.

Fresh to the 'compact executive car;' sector is Audi's smart new S3 four door saloon. Featuring a wider track than the S3 hatchback, the new, comprehensively-equipped but deliberately light in weight model is powered by a turbocharged four cylinder 2.0 TFSI petrol engine; this unit develops 300 PS (151 PS per litre, or 210 PS per tonne!).

The engines in the latest TT, A3 and S3 models have all been revised compared with previous units, and are all EU6 emissions-compliant.

For the S3, the turbo boost has been increased to 200 Bar (from 150 Bar).

The new S3 saloon is offered with a choice of a six speed manual gearbox, or a six speed, twin clutch S tronic transmission (faster then the 'normal' manual version!), both in conjunction with quattro four wheel drive.

Progressive steering and Audi's Drive Select system (providing a choice of 'efficiency', 'comfort', 'auto', 'dynamic' and 'individual' settings) come as standard.

I spent an hour on the road with the latest version, fitted with the S tronic transmission. This latest S3 can be transformed from a docile pussycat to a beast just begging to be driven, at the turn of a switch. With the 'dynamic' setting activated, the suspension firms up and the car feels far more responsive – although even in less sporty modes, it is very comfortable, pleasant enough to drive – and fun.

It's easy to drive too, and quite happy to be pootling along in town at sub-30 mph speeds when required. That being said, it's out on the open road where this vehicle really excels, with worthy and predictable performance, handling and roadholding characteristics to satisfy demanding drivers.

Yet it's reasonably economical on fuel too, especially considering its performance potential. The official 'Combined' mpg figure is a commendable 40.9, although if the most is made of the available performance, figures in the low thirties, per gallon, can be expected.

Audi predictions indicate that approximately 60 per cent of S3 sales are expected to be of the S tronic version, and that 60 per cent of the cars will find homes with retail customers. Insurance groups are said to be lower than for rival models, as the S3 is perceived to be relatively easy and inexpensive to repair.

VERDICT

A very satisfying, sporty car, providing family-friendly four door saloon practicality and

comfort,

The asking price before options? £34,720 for the S tronic variant (or £33,240 for the six speed manual transmission model).

WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF

AUDI S3 SALOON, 2.0 TFSI quattro

Engine: 1984cc four cylinder, 16 valve, twin overhead camshaft, turbocharged, direct injection petrol
Power: 300 PS @ 5,500 to 6,200 rpm
Torque: 380 Nm (280.3 lb.ft) @ 1,800 to 5,500 rpm
0-62 mph: 4.9 sec
Top speed: 155 mph (governed)
Fuel consumption (S tronic transmission):

('Urban'): 32.1 mpg

('Extra Urban'): 47.9 mpg

('Combined'): 40.9 mpg
CO2 emissions: 159 g/km

'On the road' price: £33,900