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Audi Q3 150TFSi S Line Mild Hybrid SUV – Road Test

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Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales) writes... Audi has a habit of putting its finger on precisely the right section of the market to make a point to rivals.

It has succeeded with sports cars, coupés, limousines and big SUVs, so the Q3 really deserves consideration in the compact SUV sector.

Essentially it is a taller and roomier vehicle with strong associations to the A3 Hatch and comes in a wide range of models.

Audi has a bewildering choice in the Q3 series, essentially with Sport and S Line names but added into the mix are various Launch or Edition models. The power ingredients comprise 1.4 or 1.5 petrol-hybrids and 2.0 petrol or diesel, with front or all wheel drive. In short, something for everyone with Sportback or SUV bodystyles to suit particular lifestyles or purposes.

Prices rise from £39,965 to £54,120 depending on model.

This is the third generation in a decade when over two million have been sold in the premium compact SUV sector.

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The new series has a revised suspension system, plug in hybrid technology along with the entry-level test car's self-charging mild hybrid system and benefits from the latest digital technology including micro-LED beams within the intelligent headlights.



It has really benefitted from technology first used on larger models finding its way into the Q3 to give a sophisticated look, feel and ability to challenge newcomers to the sector which don't have the same history as Audi.

The 150 PS four cylinder petrol engine cleverly uses mild electrical assistance to raise performance and economy so the petrol power is sparsely used when electric motor would be more economical. It certainly worked during our test and we saw over 51 mpg overall return shifting between the available four driving modes, and that was better than the official WLTP indicated.



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With a silken seven-speed automatic transmission easing us along without hesitation, in silence and a very responsive manner, long trips were as effortless as urban use.

Nicely weighted steering gave good feedback without kickback, was very progressive in action and had a good turning circle when parking. The footbrake needed only modest pressure to effect rapid deceleration and it would stop quickly and straight from speed while the parking brake incorporated a 'hold' function for ease of use in traffic and on slopes.

The new secondary controls stalk for the wipers/ washers front and rear, with main beam/ indicators was, however, very fiddly to use if you have chunky fingers and could set off more than one feature at once as a result. This, to me, seemed to be a case of design over distraction and development and was unnecessarily complicated, and I dread to think what would be the replacement cost if one element failed and needed a stalk replacement.

The right-hand stalk on the column was straightforward transmission selection, moving up or down with a gentle push to park.

The steering column also carried the familiar up and down paddles for manual changes of the gearbox along with a partly hidden lever for the intelligent cruise control and that worked very well.

A slim row of push switches was located below the central infotainment display and covered the driving modes along with heated seats and climate controls, which is a better idea than hiding them in the display as many



makers do.

The screen is curved for almost 13 inches and contains communications and driver aids, satnav and selectable driver preferences, well displayed and quickly responded to touch. This matched the near 12-inch instruments panel directly in front of the driver but some may struggle with the graphics of the information it showed, but it was good to see the mapping clearly showed up with minimal distraction for a driver.

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Heating and ventilation system worked very well throughout the car with plenty of chosen air pushed to all corners and backed up by powered windows and sunroof.

Oddments spaces were scattered throughout the cabin, some were on the slim side but there was a deep central cubby box between the front seats, numerous trays in front and back with seat back pockets, so you should be able to stow most items without trouble.

A knee-high boot floor hid a spacious well beneath and there were recesses either side behind the wheel arches, a good shaped floor and 40:20:40 split seatbacks which folded flat to triple total carrying volume.

Access was easy into the boot and cabin and the ability to slide back the rear bench was appreciated if long legs needed space. Legroom was not remarkable in the back or front but head and shoulder space was acceptable.



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Visibility was reasonably good all round, helped by cameras and sensors, with deep front wipers and strong wash action but the sightlines to the back were limited by the shallowness of the rear window and thick c-pillars to the sides.

The new very bright headlights gave excellent illumination at night, dipped quickly for traffic ahead and really brightened the sides and verges.

A double-glazed arrangement for the front side windows reduced incoming noise and with little generated by the powertrain the Audi Q3 was generally quiet on all roads, except for the rumbles from the big tyres, wheels and suspension movements over bad bits of road.

Our test car was the front wheel drive model and it showed good response and sharp handling, agility about town and utterly relaxed long-legged ability.

Although it was firm riding over bad bits, the overall ride quality was comfortable thanks to the very well shaped and supporting seats with their reasonable adjustment room and precise support to legs and back.

It was brisk from standstill to the legal maximum, very quiet cruising motorways and truly impressive sipping fuel with a total range over 550 miles.

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VERDICT

The latest Audi Q3 150 PS S Line is an excellent introduction to this popular range of refined mid-sized and versatile family cars. If you pick it, just beware of that multi-stalk.

For: Excellent performance and economy, sophisticated, stylish, good handling, well equipped, reasonable bootspace.

Against: Firm sometimes hard ride, limited legroom throughout, fiddly multi-stalk not suitable for large fingers.

FAST FACTS

Model: Audi Q3 S Line TFSi MHEV SUV

Price: £45,235

Mechanical: 150 PS 4 cyl 1498cc petrol-hybrid 7 speed auto front wheel drive

Max Speed: 130 mph

0 - 60 mph: 9.1 secs

Combined MPG: 51 mpg

Insurance Group: 22

C02 emissions: 143 g/km

Bik rating: 34%, £560FY, £640SRx5



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Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 4.54 m (14.90 ft), W 2.09 m (5.86 ft) , H 1.63 m (5,35 ft)

Bootspace: 488 to 1,386 litres (17.23 to 48.94 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,571 kg (3,463 lb)

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