

Audi R8 V10 Plus Coupé

Audi's new R8, the superstar of the Germanic marque's range, stirs up an intoxicating stew of sensations when you slide behind its wheel.

Not only does the alluring coupé look good enough to take a bite out of, it almost hypnotises you. It toys with your reasoning, enticing you to toss away your troubles and immerse yourself in its company.

You will experience glowing cheeks, a hammering heart and clammy hands when you first gun the Audi. And inside your body there'll be changes that confirm the God of desire's arrow has been fired.

In all truthfulness, the R8, especially in V10 Plus guise, as tested here, will cause your dopamine and serotonin levels to start bubbling over. Yes, what I'm declaring is that you'll fall in love, or certainly lust, with the two-door supercar.

It's a proper beauty; a work of automotive art and the new model has become even more staggering to look at, let alone drive. The front end now has an angular front grille and full LED headlights. While the LEDs are standard, laser lights are optional, with the power to illuminate the road up to 600m ahead. At the rear, things seem lower and broader than before and trapezoid pipes supersede the oval exhausts of old.

Inside, a virtual cockpit display can be controlled totally by push buttons on the flat-bottomed steering wheel, or by means of a dial on the console. Getting comfortable in the V10 Plus' bucket seats is easy and the R8 is surprisingly straightforward to drive.

That said, the snorting, visceral tone emitting from the powertrain, assembled behind the two front chairs, keeps you respectful of the Audi's capabilities at all times.

This V10 Plus sits at the pinnacle of a two-model outfit, supported by a less heady 'standard' V10. The engine is shared with the unbridled Lamborghini Huracán, churning out 602bhp. 0-62mph is done in a bullet-out-of-a-muzzle quick 3.2 seconds and you can press on to a top speed of 205mph. Gloriously insane? Of course.

A seven-speed S tronic gearbox is standard in all V10 models. The fast shifting dual-clutch transmission features an ingenious launch control function that provides the best possible traction when the car flexes its muscles and takes off.

The might of the engine's output momentarily thumps you back into your seat when the Audi's clout is unleashed via the Quattro all-wheel drive system. And the sound of the car is almost as seductive as its looks.

Even at moderate speed there's a deep, multi-layered, glorious rumble. But hit the R8's 'Sports Exhaust' button and you get a gratifying crackling and popping on the downshifts. The growl is animalistic, and intensely satisfying for any petrolhead's ears.

A car's ability to accelerate quickly and reach a searing top speed is, inherently, considered necessary. However, it's the handling dynamics, and talent to drive briskly through the bends, that make for a spine-tingling driving experience. And that's where the R8 V10 Plus delivers.

The new Audi will turn your mind to marmalade on the straights and it'll make your liver quiver on B roads. But what it does best is go around corners quickly with the ultimate stability – and that, of course, is what every auto aficionado hungers for.

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 205mph
- 0-62mph: 3.2 secs
- Combined mpg: 23.0
- Engine: 5204cc 10 cylinder 40 valve petrol
- Max. power (bhp): 602
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 413
- CO2: 287g/km
- Price: £134,500

*Tim Barnes-Clay,
Lincolnshire Life Magazine
Motoring Journalist
tweeting @carwriteups*

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