

THE NEW AUDI A3 2.0 TDI SPORT

MOTORING JOURNALIST TIM BARNES-CLAY TAKES THE A3 FOR A TEST DRIVE



Audi had made a breakthrough in premium compact hatchback quality and capability with the all-new A3.

Redesigned from the ground up following the principles of 'Audi ultra' lightweight construction, the German motor tips the scales an impressive 80 kg lighter on average than its forerunner. The same meticulous pursuit of progress is evident in the sophisticated cabin, which genuinely breaks new ground in the class with standards of materials, workmanship and ergonomics that indisputably push the boundaries at this level.

British Audi A3 models have launched with a choice of three specification options – SE, Sport and S line - all of which are extraordinarily well appointed. The Sport model, on test here, sits on beefy 17 inch alloy wheels and features the 'Audi drive select adaptive dynamics system'. This enables you to choose from five

modes which prescribe the car's driving characteristics – Comfort, Auto, Dynamic, Efficiency and Individual. They influence the weighting of the steering, the sensitivity of the accelerator pedal, the shift points of the S-tronic transmission, if fitted, and the parameters used by



the optional adaptive cruise control system. Additional Sport features include a revitalizing two-zone climate control, sports seats, sports steering wheel and aluminium detailing inside and out.

On the move, the A3 Sport

oil-burner, although perched on firm and athletic springs, is not uncomfortable and it sticks to some of England's more twisty roads like a limpet. There is plenty of room for you and your passenger in the front, although your friends in the rear seats might find it hard to stretch their legs out. That said, all the seats are supportive and the 2.0-litre 150 TDI lump allows you to accelerate from 0 to 62mph in 8.6 seconds. But the car doesn't stop there; where legal the needle will spin way up the dial to 134 mph.



The rapid acceleration is made all the more easy to achieve thanks to the all-new A3's slick six-speed

manual gearbox.

Not only is this first-class hatchback's turbo diesel engine quick, it is also highly fuel efficient. Engine start-stop technology and energy recuperation systems enable the A3 2.0 TDI Sport to achieve up to 68.9 mpg – and this is the selling point. Yes, the Audi is quick, comfortable and stylish – but, more importantly, it will keep you from frequently forking out at the pumps.

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 134 mph
- 0-62 mph: 8.6 secs
- Combined mpg: 68.9
- Engine: 1968cc 4 cylinder 16 valve turbo diesel
- Max. power (bhp): 148 at 3500-4000 rpm
- Price: £22,730 on the road

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PROS 'N' CONS

- ✓ Quick ✓ Well appointed ✓ Economical ✓ Stylish ✗ Rear legroom

CITROËN DS5 DSTYLE E-HDI 110 AIRDREAM

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In auto mode my DS5 demo was a bit like a rocking horse sliding downhill. It pitched forwards then backwards every time it went up or down a cog.

While I'm in gripe-mode, I have to say that if you want a vehicle with a bit of a bite, then don't bother with the e-HDi 110 model. It's so sluggish – 0-62mph comes in a slow 12 seconds. But grumbles out of the way, the DS5 is a looker. If you want a French fancy with lots of interior frills and features then the Citroën will work for you.

The driver-focused cockpit fuses the driving position of a coupé with the finesse of a Gran Turismo. Highlights include a wraparound dashboard and wide central console, whilst a tasteful analogue clock adds a touch of sophistication to the DS5's interior.

Driven carefully it'll return up to 64.2mpg. This is partly due to the Airdream model's Stop & Start micro-hybrid technology that



reduces CO2 emissions by up to 15% when driving in congested areas.

So, would I pay £24,900 for a fluffy hatchback? I suspect not, but my mind might change if I get the chance to drive the DS5 mated to a manual gearbox. For me, even though the car's slow on the uptake, the Citroën's EGS six-speed gearbox is the real fly in the ointment of an otherwise well-equipped, attractive motor.

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 119 mph
- 0-62 mph: 12.0 secs
- Combined mpg: 64.2
- Engine: 1560 cc 4 cylinder 16 valve turbo diesel
- Max. power (bhp): 110 at 3600 rpm
- Price: £24,900 on the road



LEXUS GS 450H LUXURY HYBRID AUTO

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The GS 450h does what it says on the tin well. It oozes opulence on the inside and has a heady mix of petrol and electric power underneath its skin.

The first clue that it's a hybrid is when you push the starter button. There's no engine noise – just a barely audible hum. You see, the

Lexus operates in electric-only mode as much as possible, the petrol engine kicking in when you get to 30mph or when extra power is needed.

But you don't need to drive the 450h like an eco-warrior. It's a beast when not tooting along at 'green' speeds. And so it should be with a 3.5 litre V6 lump under the bonnet. Developing 286bhp with 197bhp worth of electric assistance makes it rapid. It'll hit 0-62mph in under six seconds and the needle will rise to 155mph before the limiter says enough is

enough.

The Lexus is best for long distance motorway commutes. It can feel ungainly on twisty country roads but, with the help of its smooth auto gearbox, it glides effortlessly along the straights. Cabin contentment is assured with leather upholstery, climate control and electrically adjustable front seats. The steering wheel is electrically adjustable, too, and incorporates paddle shifts.

If I had a wallet fat enough to contain nearly £50k, then I might

well walk into a Lexus dealership and buy a GS 450h. It's less flashy than some of the German marques but it looks after you just as well - maybe even better.

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 155 mph
- 0-62 mph: 5.9 secs
- Combined mpg: 46.3
- Engine: 3456 cc V6 24 valve petrol/electric
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 254 at 4600 rpm
- Price: £44,995 on the road