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Limited Edition: Audi RS 6 Avant

Tony Meredith test drives Audi's supercar estate and a rather pretty A3 cabriolet

There is something pleasurable about owning a limited edition whether it's a painting, statue or even a car. But you have to be quick if you want to bag your prize. And that goes for the latest in Audi's range as the company launches its supercar estate, the RS 6 Avant.

With only 1400 RS 6's being released into the UK (including the saloon model which won't be available until later this year) between now and 2010, you are going to have to get your skates on and roll down to your dealer pretty sharpish if you want one. You'll also need to be carrying £77,730 in loose change too.

Fitted with a twin turbo system

this estate packs a whopping 580PS and 650Nm of torque and is capable of getting you – and 1660 litres of luggage – from stand still to 62mph in just 4.6s. The RS 6 Avant is limited to 155mph top speed but, for an extra £1350, you can have this reset to 175mph.

It's not that hard to believe that this is Audi's most powerful production once you've experienced the power of the force it's capable of. Yet, it will still give you a (fairly) reasonable 20.2mpg and only throws out 333g/km of pollution thanks to the car's FSI direct petrol injection system.

The RS 6 Avant is an attractive car. It has the distinctive Audi face

and a profile that really stands out with a rearward sloping roof and front and rear 'crease' lines over the wheel arches. Riding on 20-in alloys there is a serious amount of rubber between the tarmac and the RS 6 Avant which is just as well when you consider just how much power the V10 engine is capable of bellowing out. Luckily, the car's electronic system divides all this power in a neat 40:60 front to rear torque split while a new version of the Dynamic Ride Control (DRC) system makes sure that the Audi's road performance is impeccable.

Additionally, a three-stage selectable control is fitted as standard to UK-spec RS 6's which

offers the driver a choice of comfort, dynamic and sport damper settings depending on his preference and/or the driving conditions. For those safety-minded individuals out there Audi has reconfigured a special version of its Electronic Stability Programme for the RS 6 Avant which is set to intervene as late as possible to help maximise the driving pleasure while maintaining ultimate safety.

Once you're out on the open road the power of this car really hits you. Flatten the right pedal to the floor and there is a surge of acceleration that sucks you back into the driver's seat. But you never feel like the car is running away with you. The control is always with you and it behaves how you want it to. Smooth cornering is not difficult in the RS 6 and, unless you are pushing the car to the absolute limit, it's extremely unlikely that you will need to even think about the ESP system. You could always switch it off of course, which does make things a tiny bit more exciting!

With the RS 6 Avant, Audi has produced a supercar in the form of an estate; it's a car like no other on the roads today. And long may that continue.



“ Audi's slick little A3 Cabriolet will certainly turn a few heads this summer ”



Seconds away: Audi A3 Cabriolet

You could be less than 10 seconds away from some serious sunshine driving this summer. At least you could be if you're driving the new Audi A3 Cabriolet because it comes with a fast retractable roof.

The Sport and S line models of Audi's first compact Cabriolet are fitted with a fully acoustic hood and wind deflector that can be raised or lowered at speeds of up to 19mph in just nine seconds.

Available with a choice of 1.8 TFSI and 2.0 TFSI petrol or 1.9 TDi and 2.0 TDI diesel, the A3 Cabriolet is on sale now for just £20,750 for the Standard specification model which features a semi-automatic hood. All models feature a six-speed manual gearbox except the 1.9 TDI which has a five speed and Audi's S tronic twin-clutch automatic transmission is

available as an option for £1400 (on all models except the 1.9 TDI).

You have to step up to the Sport model – another £1850 – to get the fully automatic hood and you also get larger alloys, sports suspension and sports seats. Add another £1550 and the S line model brings in leather trimmed seats, multifunction steering wheel and paddle shifters (where automatic transmission is specified).

Audi is hoping to compete with BMW's 1 Series Convertible which it sees as its main competition; although others rivals include the Volkswagen Eos, Astra Twin Top or Ford Focus CC. The A3's biggest advantage is the quickness of its folding roof which outshines the competition by some way.

But whether that will be enough to help the German manufacturer in what is a difficult market will not become clear for a while. The A3 is certainly well built and performs sublimely on the road showing no signs of a lack of performance on its roofed kin.

Audi's slick little A3 Cabriolet will certainly turn a few heads this summer but the best place to be must be in the driver's seat where the sunshine is just seconds away.

Audi A3 Cabriolet
Folding operations of the soft top

