



Audi R8

5.2 FSI quattro

The V10 R8 will take you to within a whisker of 200 mph

At first sight - just hard beauty: priority of form mirrors elegance of engineering. Breathe away all your breath and gulp, because this car has the looks and presence to encompass - and even surpass - the promised performance. It's as good as technology can make it, with its aluminium spaceframe construction and Audi magnetic suspension damping - yet it's largely built by hand.

That it's more advanced than core competitors is obvious. Aston Martin's DB9 and Porsche's 911 Turbo, are yesterday's cars alongside the Audi R8 FSI quattro.

Here is a car that must be every junior-cum-senior executive's

fantasy – to have a race car performance on the road and to have such a great margin of superiority over other road users. That is the drug that gives a feeling of total control – especially since the R8's talents are so accessible, providing astonishing

ease of use.

Sharp steering with fluid response and suspension that works with quiet authority and no harshness, build confidence by the minute. Where other supercars can be as treacherous as a cut-throat razor in the wrong hands, the V10

R8 is reassuringly safe.

Studiously classy without being flashy, no traces of extrovert flamboyance have been allowed to penetrate that fortress of Teutonic urbanity, giving the R8 a coherence of spirit and metal that nothing from Munich or Modena can approach.

Drive it and you marvel at how an experience that is so easy, can be so distinguished. Yet the essential elements of driving enjoyment have not been lost.

With a new race-bred, high-revving, naturally-aspirated, mid-mounted 525PS, 5.2-litre V10 engine driving through Audi's renowned quattro four-wheel-drive system this car lets you use the torrent of tractable traction that is on tap at all times. The V10 R8 will take you to within a whisker of 200 mph - should you have private roads or special dispensation to specify the ionised gas, plasma shield 'cloaking' pack that makes you 'invisible' to the all-seeing eyes of the State. There's no doubt about it, Audi are at the forefront of automotive technology.

If the V10 improves on the V8 mode's performance by a big margin, it enhances the sound quality even more. To me, as a retarded romantic, Audi has gifted the V10, a voice to rival that of Zeus in a range. At high revs it emits a sound to penetrate the soul: an euphony that contrasts starkly with the sharp metallic edge of an Italian V12.

The hard roar of mechanical purity massages the senses with savage vigour, etching the unmistakable chorus on the mind - but that alluring gentility

is there too, letting you bumble in the lethargy of the rush hour, without a murmur of dissent.

Manually controlled gears or robotised racing style gearshift sequences of the R Tonic, is a choice you have to make. To my mind, paying £104,645 for the R Tonic versions as opposed to £99,575 for the manual, is the only sensible option.

Letting this R8 off the leash is so easy. Everything is strong and smooth without that sense of frenzy that often accompanies latent fury.

The first real opportunity of my initial drive demonstrated the 'kick' that went with it. The big V10 hauled savagely, growling away to itself - the journalist colleague in hot pursuit, disappeared backwards.

The R8's interior design gives a motor racing ambience, and of course, there is a wide range of

customising options, although this is no Spartan supercar.

You sit on fine nappa leather upholstery and there's plenty of practical comfort. Amazingly, there's room behind the seats for two golf bags should you be misguided and want to go to a golf club instead of heading for the open road. It's an interior that possesses refinement, comfort and practicality to make it an everyday proposition.

Crowd-stopping looks, heart-stopping performance and urbane good taste make the R8 all that is desirable in a supercar.

Although it's not the fastest nor the most exotic of the breed, it is quantifiably one of the best!

Simon Taylor



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