



Audi TT



TT: THE ISLE OF MAN, SPORTY NSU PRINZES of the sixties – it's all evocative stuff to set the backcloth for the emergence of Audi's first real sports coupé in a long time.

The body styling is certainly avant-garde and unique in the company's current line-up. Even the S range of performance-enhanced derivatives of the 3- and 4-Series reveals its origins on even cursory inspection, but when you first encounter the TT quattro, you really feel there's nothing else like it.

That's important because this is a car most people will buy because of right-brain activity – an emotive choice, in fact. This presents us with a problem, because you don't need us to tell you whether it looks good, and grinding on about the absence of rear passenger space is also beside the point: there isn't much, by the way – only enough for pre-teens.

Let's write instead about how it goes. In a phrase, moderately well, but our 180bhp turbocharged four-cylinder left us feeling that the TT isn't particularly fast or refined. (In fairness, there's also a 225bhp version we couldn't sample.) The (reliable) maker's performance figures tell a different tale, so one has to conclude that the TT is modest in the way it delivers its power.

The quattro concept may have a lot to do with it – it's the latest in an honourable line of four-wheel-drivers from Audi and, armed with the latest computer control, will ensure that only the wheels that still have grip will handle the power. At one time, it was the thing to say that the Audi normally had a 50/50 front-to-rear torque split – nowadays, it's much more variable.

Anyway, we enjoyed ourselves diving around the open bends up in the Yorkshire Dales and although the ride is definitely on the firm side, the coupé body feels taut and nothing rattles or frets.

There's only a shade over four metres of body length to worry about, but over-the-shoulder vision can still be problematic, although the rear side glasses (added since we first saw the prototype) do help. In fact, the door window sills are very high, although thanks to various adjustments, it's not a problem looking forwards over the facia/screen rail.

Styling affectations abound both inside and out – lots of polished aluminium on view and a sombre headlining – but all the creature comforts are there, too, and we like the rotary volume control of air from each face-level vent. Air-con, airbags and all the other accoutrements of modern motoring life are all standard – only people and luggage space are rationed.

VERDICT

The TT's appeal is a visual thing – plus the image it has the power to generate in modern metropolitan culture. Somehow it lacks the dynamic excitement of an Alfa Romeo or even the Ford Puma. Perhaps it's

too Teutonic and thoroughly well sorted to leave anything to chance, in the manner of its sporting forebears. Too much certainty can extinguish excitement.

FACTS AND FIGURES

BODY

Style	three-door fixed-head coupé
Length x width	404 x 177cm (186 with mirrors)
Trim levels	one only

ENGINES

Type and size	transverse four in line; 1781cc
Power (bhp/rpm)	180/5500 or 225/5900
Torque (lb ft/rpm)	173/from 1950 206/from 2200
Valves	twin overhead camshafts actuating five valves per cylinder via hydraulic tappets
Fuel system	electronic petrol injection with turbocharger and intercooler (two on 225bhp version); 62-litre fuel tank

TRANSMISSION

Type	permanent four-wheel drive with computer-controlled hydraulic apportionment; five-speed manual (or six speeds on 225bhp version)
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CHASSIS

Suspension	front: MacPherson damper/struts with integral coil springs and an anti-roll bar rear: independent coil springs with trailing and transverse links and an anti-roll bar
Steering	rack and pinion with hydraulic power assistance
Wheels	alloy 205/55R16 tyres on 180bhp version alloy 225/45R17 on 225bhp version
Brakes	ventilated discs front, solid discs rear with vacuum servo; electronic anti-lock (ABS) and brake force distribution (EBD) both standard

