



Audi A7

Photos by Michael Cooney

2012 Audi A7 3.0 and A5 2.0

Can Cars So Stylish Carve Corners Too?

Audi's A7 is a new luxury sport model, with four doors and a power hatchback. You'll find loads of storage, especially if you fold the rear seats forward. Its exterior styling is sleek and understated, with a fastback roof and, on this one, optional 20-



inch wheels with 265-width sticky tires that looked just right.

Inside you'll find the gorgeous interiors Audis are known for. Wood and leather meld in subtle, tasteful elegance. The horizontal dash line visually adds spaciousness. Perforated leather seats let you blow warm or cool air through them. And they're comfortable, with great support. Rear legroom is good in this four seater.

The A7 comes with a 3.0L 310 horsepower supercharged V6, 8-speed Tiptronic automatic and Quattro AWD. It's smooth and powerful, and under full throttle a nice raspy snarl emanates. On freeways this is a quiet car, with little tire or wind noise intruding.

Whether on highways or winding roads, the A7 feels rock solid, with steering, brakes

and suspension all set up just right for those who love to drive. In tight curves the A7's handling abilities are remarkable thanks to those summer tires, AWD and suspension perfection. It's commendable that a car so comfortable in "normal" driving can handle so brilliantly. It dug in to sharp corners and stuck like glue. This brought out my only nit to pick—I wished for deeper side bolsters to hold me in place while exploring the A7's cornering limits. The upcoming S7 should solve that.

Along with the R8, Audi's A5 and S5 coupes are in my opinion the most beautiful Audis. They appear both aggressive and elegant, exemplifying true design talent. While I loved the acceleration and V8 rumble of the 354-hp S5 I reviewed last year, I'm most

intrigued by this A5—the 2.0L 4-cylinder turbo with 211 horsepower, 6-speed stick and Quattro AWD. This is my favorite setup for the A5—a real driver's car. It has enough power to feel satisfying (Audi says 0–60 in 6.4 seconds), and the stick shift provides the man-machine involvement I like. Its handling feels "livelier" than the S5's—the benefit of being roughly 250 pounds lighter. Plus it sips gas sparingly. An 8-speed Tiptronic auto is available. A5s come as convertibles too, most with Quattro.

Inside this four-seater, you'll find another beautiful interior. Tasteful, refined, of high quality. As in the A7, the seats are truly comfortable and this is a quiet, nice-riding car.

Throw in some winding roads, though, and the fun really begins. With power sent to all four wheels, Quattro AWD allows you to push harder with greater confidence and is a benefit to any driver who is not a track star. This had the sport suspension, giving even more responsive handling and cornering ability. Even so, the ride was never harsh and felt just right. Truly a fun car to drive hard.

Audi's A7 is EPA-rated at 18-city, 28-highway mpg, and I averaged 23. Pricing begins just under \$60,000, and this loaded example totaled \$68,630 with destination fees. This A5 was EPA-rated at 21-city, 31-highway mpg and I got 27.7 mpg overall. A5s start at \$37,100 and mine totaled \$45,555.

Both the A7 and A5 provide a combination of comfort, stylish luxury, driving pleasure and handling performance that's hard to beat. As one who has driven over 50 performance cars around Willow Springs Raceway, you can put me down as "highly impressed" with these two. Find more at audi.com.

Mike Cooney is a lifelong auto enthusiast living and writing in Southern California. Comments are welcome at Michael@GlobalBrand.com.



Audi A5