

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Audi S4 quattro](#)

V8 Replaces V6

Text: Charis Whitcombe

Photos: Audi

First unveiled at the Paris Motor Show in September and aired again at the British Show in October, the potent new S4 quattro will be available as a saloon and an Avant (estate). Prices for the two cars, which swap their predecessors' V6 engine for the 4.2-litre, 344bhp eight-cylinder unit, have just been confirmed at £36,150 and £37,280, respectively. They are due to go on sale in the UK from April 2003.

The important thing about the new Audi S4 is, of course, that powerful V8 engine. It has been shoehorned into the engine bay of the A4, the length kept down to just 464mm by means of a chain drive for the camshafts and ancillaries on the engine output side. Meanwhile, the new engine's gross weight of just 195kg is the same as the previous generation's twin-turbo 2.7-litre V6 - a fact which will help with the S4 quattro's balance and handling characteristics, particularly since the Audi engine is placed so far forward in the chassis.

Using the A4's four-link front and trapezoidal link rear suspension as a foundation, the S4 quattro's lightweight aluminium set-up has been tuned for "maximum agility, precision and composure". Ride comfort is also likely to benefit from the low unsprung weight made possible by the aluminium components.

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S Versus M

According to Audi, their S-badged series of cars is characterised by exceptional power and understated styling. They might have put it more simply: the Audi S quattro is in direct competition with BMW's M series - the S4 being aimed squarely at the BMW M3. With 344bhp available from the S4's new V8 engine, it has precisely 1bhp more than the M3 - surely rather more than a coincidence?

The S4 is also a fair bit cheaper - UK on-the-road prices for the M3 start at £39,730 for the coupe. In fact, on paper the Audi S4 looks as though it might offer remarkably good value for money.

Power in the S4 quattro is transferred to the wheels via the latest generation 6-speed manual gearbox, noted for its closely spaced ratios and short, sports-style shift. Plus there's that proven quattro permanent four-wheel drive. These factors, combined with the 344bhp and a peak torque figure of 410Nm at 3,500 rpm, enable the eight-cylinder engine to push the S4 from rest to 62mph in 5.6 seconds, to 124mph in 20.6 seconds and then on to an electronically limited 155mph. Unless there is some totally unexpected disappointment in the driving experience, the S4 seems set to be an affordable car which is driveable, comfortable, and plenty of fun.

□ [Styling](#)

Styling

The bodies of the S4 quattro saloon and Avant, sporty in terms of their proportions and basic shape, differ only subtly from the other members of the A4 model range. As Audi puts it, the new S4 has "deliberately restrained appearance".

The S4 quattro is marked out from its A4 counterparts by such details as colour-coded bumpers with large air inlets in the nose, and xenon headlights with a contrasting titanium-coloured inner housing. There are large-diameter exhaust tailpipes, polished aluminium exterior mirrors and - on the saloon version - a discreet rear spoiler. From the outside, these are the only real indications that this is more than a standard Audi. Once inside the car, the S quattro series trademarks include grey instrument dials, electrically adjustable Recaro sports seats and a leather-rimmed sports steering wheel inlaid with the S emblem.

Looking to the future, the story is that Audi is planning more cars in the S series, from a V6 S3 right up to a W12 S8. All will be naturally aspirated, although additional turbo-charged RS models are a possibility.

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The Facts - Audi S4 quattro

Engine:	4.2-litre V8; chain-driven camshafts.
Power:	344bhp at 7,000rpm.
Torque:	410Nm at 3,500rpm.
Transmission:	6-speed manual gearbox with quattro permanent four-wheel drive.
Suspension:	Lightweight aluminium suspension based on the A4's four-link front and trapezoidal-link rear set-up.
Brakes:	Ventilated discs; 345mm front, 300mm rear, with ABS and EBD.
Steering:	Servotronic power-assisted.
Weight	1,660kg.
Official performance figures:	0-62mph: 5.6sec Top speed: 155mph (electronically limited).
Price & availability:	From £36,150 on the road in UK (and from £37,280 for the Avant). Due to go on sale in the UK April 2003.

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