

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## Supercar Estate:



**Drift along in the Audi RS 6 quattro Avant and the average passer-by won't spare you a second glance. But when those-in-the-know spot the subtle prompts: the trademark oval exhaust pipes, the powerful wheelarches, the spoiler, diffuser and expanded front air-intakes - then even before they see the RS branding, they'll recognise that you're behind the wheel of one of the most remarkable road cars in the world.**

This is an estate car, with all the practicality and comfort that conveys, but the power and torque figures are nothing short of astronomical. With its twin-turbocharged 5.0-litre V10, the RS 6 has 572bhp and 650Nm of torque. Think about it: that's more power than the Audi R8 sports-racers which won Le Mans outright in 2004 and 2005.

This is not only the most powerful car that Audi has ever built for the road, and the most powerful production estate in the world, it also joins a highly select group of cars of *any* sort which can boast that many horses. We're talking Ferrari 599 and Pagani Zonda F, Bentley GT Speed and Lamborghini Murciélago, Mercedes-Benz SLR and, of course, Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG (and its CL and SL cousins). Only AMG Mercedes can touch Audi for 'subtle and restrained' supercar status; but the most powerful AMG estate is more than 60bhp down on the RS 6.



Enough of the schoolboy power-figure comparisons. The numbers mean nothing until the car has proved what it can do; and here, of course, Audi nails its colours to four-wheel drive. We took to the South of France, to the roads around the Paul Ricard circuit and Le Castellet, to see what the RS 6 could deliver.

Once on the open road, pulverising acceleration overrides all other sensations. The surge of speed when the throttle is squeezed is not unexpected, but the sheer, silky immediacy of its delivery is startling, with no kick-in-the-back turbo thrust - just a continuous wedge of ever-building power. It doesn't start to drop off till 6700rpm; while maximum torque is there from, gulp, 1500-6250rpm.

Yet while you might expect a 572bhp estate car to feel leery at times, it never does. The estate's ability to change direction at speed, despite its 2025kg weight, is breathtaking. Sure, if you really push hard you can

feel the car move around, the tyres sliding ever-so slightly – but to get dramatic slip between rubber and Tarmac would require bare-faced lunacy. The traction, grip and security are with you, even in fast, undulating S-bends. Perhaps the key to this is that the RS 6 was engineered from the outset as a four-wheel drive; it has not been adapted from front-wheel drive, with a slice of torque sent to the rear when things start to get tricky. Far from it: the standard torque bias is 60% to the rear (and variable between 85% and 35%).



The RS 6's dual-clutch auto box has such a rich mine of power and torque to draw on that it scarcely hesitates; even the fully auto mode propels you forward with seemingly instant gusto. Choose Sport on the auto gearshift and the car anticipates what you want, holding onto the lower gears for just that bit longer, belting up through the revs with that bit more zest. When you shift between the three driver-selected suspension settings (comfort, dynamic and sport), there really is a very noticeable difference in the way the dampers respond. Comfort is... er... very comfortable and, while Sport gives the ultimate support to hard driving, it would be unbearable on rough roads.





This is not a raw sports machine for occasional driving but a true, everyday supercar. The cabin is relatively quiet, that awesome engine a deep, distant growl, although a colleague, driving behind in an A3 Cabriolet, said the noise of our RS 6 in kickdown was overwhelming. Meanwhile, in-car comfort is exceptional, with heated leather RS sports seats (the rear seats are heated, too), paddleshift gear selection and all the mod-cons you'd expect in a leading-edge luxury supercar. If you're heading home long-distance after an exhausting week's work, the RS 6 will cosset and comfort. But when you reach a stretch of open road, horns will no doubt sprout, and this supercar-estate will take you seamlessly to another level of driving pleasure.

At over two tonnes, the RS 6 is no featherweight and, under acceleration, its 0-62mph in 4.6 seconds is identical to the E63 AMG. The Audi, however, wins on fuel consumption (20.2mph combined) and emissions (333g/km); and now other superlatives come crashing in, thick and fast. This is not only the world's most powerful and torquiest production estate car, it is also the most economical in its class, with the lowest CO2 emissions.





Volumes for the UK are low, promising strong residual values. Just 600 cars are planned for 2008, plus 500 for 2009 and 200 for 2010. With prices starting at £77,730 OTR, it's little wonder that there are already 700 firm orders, so, even if you get straight on the phone to your Audi dealer, it's going to mean a year's wait.

### **Tech Specs**

Engine: 5.0-litre V10 TFSI  
Power: 572bhp @ 6250-6700rpm  
Torque: 650Nm @ 1500-6250rpm  
Transmission: 6-speed dual-clutch auto, four-wheel drive  
Brakes: Dual circuit with diagonal split and 6-piston calipers  
Wheels and tyres: 20 x 9.5J; 275/35 R20  
Dimensions: 4928mm (L), 1889mm (W), 1460mm (H)  
Boot capacity: 565-1660 litres  
Unladen weight: 2025kg  
Fuel consumption: 20.2mpg (combined)  
Top speed: 155mph or 175mph (electronically limited)  
0-62mph: 4.6sec  
Price: From £77,730 OTR  
Available to order: Now

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