

and 61 per cent of the weight up front, it could hardly be otherwise. It is the Ford Sierra XR4x4's more even weight distribution and dominant rear drive that gives it arguably better handling balance, if not greater ability.

Early Quattros were prone to snap into unseemly oversteer if you cut the power when cornering on the limit. Not the latest one. Front toe-in changes have given the car much tamer, more progressive tuck-in characteristics. Not that you're normally aware of them as this is one of those cars that goes where it's pointed, like a slot racer. Whether accelerating or throttling back, braking even, there's normally no deviation from the chosen line, no loss of composure. Power assistance relieves you of strenuous steering exercise without totally depriving sensitive hands of communicative feedback. Not that you really need it in a car that points and turns so decisively and securely. Roll is negligible.

All this comes with anti-skid brakes as well, provided you don't lock either of the diffs and render the ABS system inoperative. So what do you do when driving hard on wet roads? Audi recommend locking the centre diff for better traction and improved 'normal' braking. There is increased resistance to skidding when there's a rigid link between front and rear wheels. But to deny yourself the benefits of the world's most sophisticated braking system when it's likely to be needed most seems to us pointless. On or off, the rubbery feel of the long-travel pedal doesn't indicate the presence of awesome brakes that you can stand on mid-bend and still steer clear of trouble. It is this ability to retain directional control, as much as to reduce stopping distances, that make ABS the greatest advance in car safety since the seat belt.

The with-or-without dilemma is not one that faces the driver of a Sierra XR4x4, of course. With its FF viscous coupling that locks automatically when front and rear wheels turn at significantly different speeds, there are no diff locks and therefore no need to cancel the anti-skid braking system.

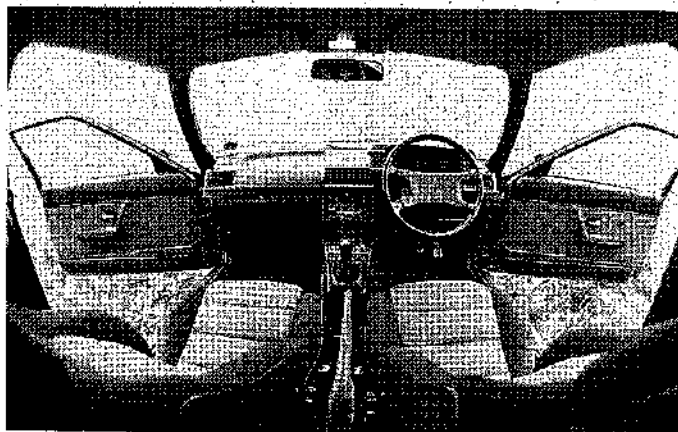
There is about the Quattro typical Teutonic build quality and solidity. Everything fits, everything works with crisp precision. Interior decor is characteristically dark and restrained, sombre even despite the seats' tweed upholstery. Only when you switch on does

the 'black-hole' electronic dash light up, check-out mode first, then running display in the dreary green hue of a fading pocket calculator. The big-digit speedo is easy to read (in metric or Imperial units if you can find the hidden changeover switch). After a while its continuous 'flashing' as the number changes, every two seconds or so, cease to be a peripheral distraction. What's left in the 20.2gal fuel tank is also indicated digitally, in whole gallons or litres. So are the various modes of the trip computer which will show average fuel consumption, average speed, elapsed time and remaining range - a figure invariably at variance with what the magic chip said was left in the tank and a fuel consumption that strayed little from the 20mpg mark.

Straight bar charts show boost pressure (of no practical value) and engine temperature, and a rising curved one the engine revs. Its two-blob LED pointer is not easy to read at a glance. As well as these rather cheerless, controversial instruments (all of which, speedo excepted, can be extinguished at night), there's the warning system's nagging female voice. Big Sister unfortunately cannot be silenced. Several times she told us to check things that were functioning properly. What's wrong with flashing tell-tales?

Apart from the crude height adjuster, the deeply contoured seats are superb, you can lean heavily against the bolstered backrests - and need to when cornering hard. There's also firm support for your lumbar regions and thighs. Seated so comfortably you can forgive the unresilient suspension (40 per cent stiffer than it used to be) for its hard ride. Low-speed joltiness is a constant reminder that spring and damper settings are biased heavily in favour of taut handling, not suppleness.

For all that, the Quattro is a cossetting car. Heating and ventilation work well enough, noise levels are modest except when the harsh engine is extended to high revs. Driven with restraint on smooth roads (coarse ones make the tyres rumble) this Audi is as peaceful as most luxury saloons. It is also as well equipped, with electric windows and mirrors, heated seats, central locking and respectable hi-fi. All that as well as four-wheel-drive, anti-lock brakes, turbocharged muscle and a heavy dependence on the silicon chip. What more could you want? Maybe Ferguson diffs and a V8 engine...



## PERFORMANCE

Test carried out at Millbrook Proving Ground, Bedfordshire. Maximum speed (lap of banked circuit) 131.6mph. Fastest 1/4-mile 132.4mph.

### Acceleration from rest:

0-30mph	2.0sec
0-40	3.5
0-50	5.2
0-60	7.4
0-70	10.1
0-80	13.2
0-90	16.9
0-100	21.9

Standing 1/4-mile 16.2/87mph

### Acceleration in single gear:

	5th	4th
20-40mph	15.4sec	8.9sec
30-50	14.3	7.2
40-60	12.2	6.0
50-70	9.7	5.7
60-80	9.2	5.8
70-90	10.7	6.5
80-100	12.3	8.6

## ECONOMY

Overall consumption	18.0mpg
Composite*	25.4mpg
Test distance	1,300 miles
Tank capacity	20.0 gallons
Range	350-500 miles

\*Based on government test figures (one half of urban figure plus one quarter of each of the steady-speed figures, 56/75mph)

## WEIGHT

Unladen (with fuel for 50 miles) 24.9cwt

## ENGINE

Sohc (driven by toothed belt), two valves per cylinder. Water-cooled, in-line five-cylinder, front-mounted, casted 27.5deg from vertical, 2,144cc (bore/stroke 79.5/86.4mm). Six main bearings. Compression ratio 7.0:1. Aluminium alloy cylinder head, cast iron block. Transistorised Bosch ignition. Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection. KKK 26 turbocharger with intercooler. Maximum power 200bhp/5,500rpm. Maximum torque 210lb ft/3,500rpm.

## TRANSMISSION

Permanent four-wheel drive with vacuum-operated centre and rear differential locks, torque split 50/50 front/rear. Five-speed all-synchromesh manual gearbox, 9.5in dia hydraulically-operated single-plate clutch.

### Internal ratios and mph/1,000rpm:

Top	0.778:1/23.1
Fourth	1.071:1/16.8
Third	1.458:1/12.3
Second	2.125:1/8.5
First	3.600:1/5.0
Final drive ratio	3.889:1

## BODY/STEERING/SUSPENSION

Steel monocoque body/chassis, plastic front and rear under bumper spoilers, tail spoiler, steel wheelarch extensions. Front and rear suspension independent by MacPherson struts with coil springs and lower wishbones, anti-roll bars. Power-assisted rack and pinion steering.

## TYRES/WHEELS/ BRAKES

Pirelli P7 Rally tyres, 215/70 VR 15, on aluminium alloy 8J rims. Brakes: servo-assisted discs (ventilated at front), 11.02in dia front/9.65in dia rear. Dual circuits split front/rear with ABS anti-lock system. Parking brake operates on rear discs.

## DIMENSIONS

Overall length 173.4in, width 67.8in, height 53.0in, front/rear track 55.9/57.4in, wheelbase 99.3in.

## ELECTRICAL

975W Alternator, 12V 63Ah battery, four rectangular halogen headlamps, 110/240W total, 19 fuses.

## AUDI COUPÉ QUATTRO

Maker: Audi NSU Auto Union AG. 8070 Ingostadt, West Germany. Importer: VAG (United Kingdom) Ltd, Yeomans Drive, Blakelands, Milton Keynes MK14 5AN. Tel: 0908 679121. Price: £18,153.00 basic plus £1,512.75 car tax and £2,949.86 VAT equals £22,615.61.

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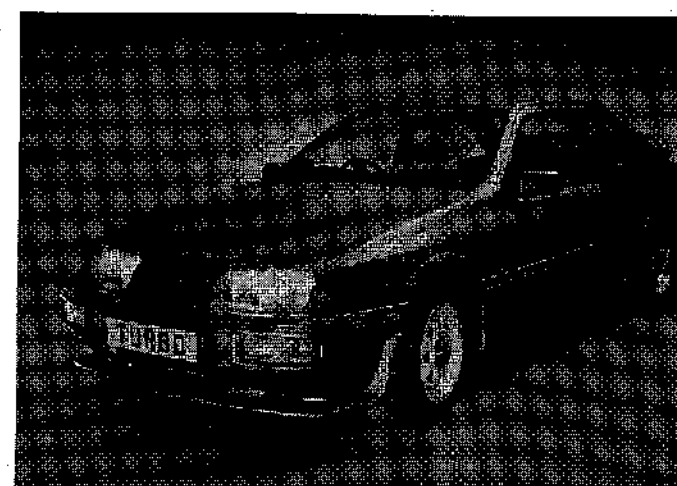
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