

tunit[®] diesel performance

AUDI Q7 V6 3.0TDI

by Tunit



Audi is flying high. According to research done by Auto Motor und Sport in Germany, Audi's reliability profile is now higher than that of BMW and Mercedes. Confidence must have been boosted further by the knowledge that Audi launched the Q7 at a time when sales of large SUVs had peaked and were on their way south – some pretty rapidly. (The only exception being the Range Rover Sport which, as a relative newcomer, is still on the way up.)

Even so, given the undercurrent of antipathy towards large, gas-guzzling 4x4s, there must still have been a slight quiver of trepidation in

the Audi camp when the time came to launch the Q7 in the UK.

After all, here is a vehicle that's longer and wider than its four major competitors (Porsche Cayenne, Volvo XC90, BMW X5 and Mercedes ML) and whose 4.2-litre petrol-engined model manages just 14.5mpg around town and averages 20.8mpg. The better news is that the 3-litre, 233PS, V6 diesel returns 19.4 on the Urban cycle and 26.9mpg Combined.

Where the Q7 scores, of course, is that Audi had plenty of time to check out the opposition, and make sure that it could top it.

The first big plus is seven seats as standard across the range, with those in the middle row (split 40:20:40) individually adjustable. Leg-room is claimed to be best-in-class. Moreover, both rows of rear seats fold flat to provide a load area of over 2,000 litres without the need to remove them. When used as a 5-seater, the load capacity is still 775 litres – again unmatched in this class. (The Q7 can be ordered without the third row as a no-cost option.)

Next, as you'd expect, the Q7 is

equipped with the latest-generation quattro permanent four-wheel drive technology.

With its chassis weight significantly reduced through the use of numerous aluminium components, and control maximised by a combination of electronically-controlled damping and a dynamic roll stabilisation system, the Q7 drive belies its size. Ride comfort, both on- and off-road, is excellent, thanks to the standard variable height adaptive air suspension, and while an excursion into the rough stuff on the UK Press launch was relatively unchallenging, traction in the mud was fine. Ground clearance can be varied up to 240mm.

Not for the first time though, we found ourselves preferring diesel power. It lacks the acceleration and top speed of its petrol sibling (9.1 seconds and 134mph plays 7.4 and 154), but the vastly superior torque of the TDI V6 (368 lb ft available from 1,750-2,750rpm) made for unstressed, refined, and quiet progress. And we're clearly not alone in reaching that conclusion. Some 90 per cent of Q7 sales have been, and continue to be, diesel.

One such buyer is Carl Johns from South Wales. A self-confessed motoring enthusiast (he also owns a Porsche 911 Turbo) Carl bought the Q7 at the back end of last year, having finally lost



Tunit soon had the Q7 showing a shaper set of heels.



patience, he said, with an unreliable Range Rover. Also, despite its 275bhp and 472 lb ft of torque, the Range Rover was underpowered so far as Carl was concerned. A visit to his local Tunit branch saw him happy on that score, and there was an added bonus in terms of overall economy: 22-23mpg became 26-27mpg. There was a financial bonus, too, when he changed vehicles. The Tunit could be taken off the Range Rover in a matter of minutes and then fitted to the Q7. All it took was a conversion kit (£89 + VAT) to ensure compatibility. If he'd had the Range Rover 'chipped' when looking to up performance, instead of taking it to Tunit, Carl would have had to start again from scratch. Having opted to switch the Tunit to the Q7, he decided he might as well go for the Tunit lap-top treatment at the same time.

This was to prove interesting. Aware that he'd be looking to make comparisons, Carl paid particular attention to the way the Q7 performed on the run up to Chorley from South Wales. He also noted that it returned 28mpg. According to Audi's published data, the V6 3.0TDI Q7 develops 233PS (230bhp) at 4,000rpm and maximum torque of 368 lb ft is available all the way from 1,750 to 2,750rpm. That wasn't actually the case, when the Q7 was put on the dynamometer. Maximum bhp was 242 at 4,000rpm and peak torque of 377 lb f. came at 2,700rpm and the torque curve is pretty steep both ways. In terms of the bhp-to-weight ratio, that's well down on the Range Rover, and the torque figures put the larger-engined Range Rover even further ahead.

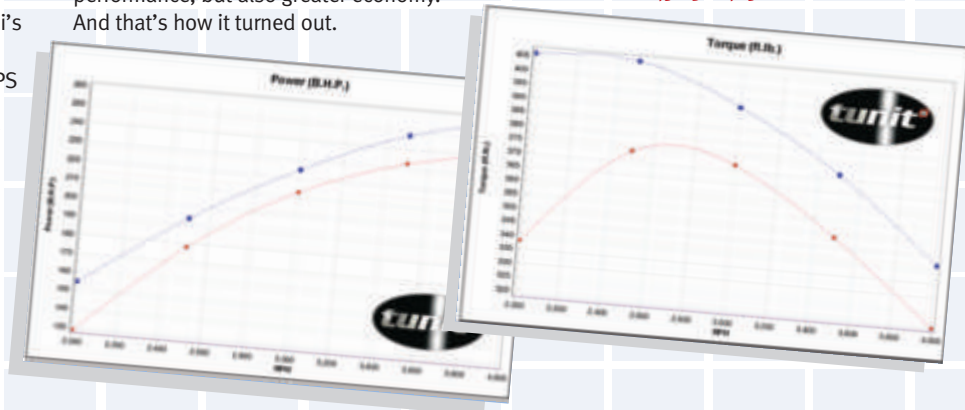
After the Tunit treatment was applied, the figures changed dramatically for the Q7. Right across the rev range, the bhp graphs almost track each other, but with the tweaked figures anything between 13 and 25bhp better, peaking at 260bhp @ 4,000rpm. The real story is the torque. Whereas, as mentioned above, the original line was a well



Curbing a gas guzzler's thirst: fuel economy was boosted by a fifth while performance improved.

defined hump, peaking at 2,700rpm, the new peak of 406 lb ft – an increase of nearly eight per cent – arrived as early as 2,000rpm. Given that fact, we expected not only improved performance, but also greater economy. And that's how it turned out.

THE Q7 TUNIT CONVERSION – AND SIMILAR ONES FOR A WIDE RANGE OF DIESELS – COSTS £400 PLUS VAT. FULL DETAILS OF THE TUNIT RANGE AND THE TUNIT NATIONWIDE NETWORK OF DISTRIBUTORS ARE AVAILABLE FROM TUNIT ON 0845 8381405 OR AT WWW.TUNIT.COM



We called Mr Jones to get his longer-term view. "Delighted," was the response. The Q7, he said, felt smoother, and quicker, and the increase in torque was quite noticeable. Moreover, on the run home from Chorley it had returned 34mpg – a massive 21 per cent improvement over the outward journey. So, a non-gas-guzzling gas-guzzler.



You can almost see the fuel gauge move!



The guzzler's hungry maw...

Tunit is among the foremost of Britain's diesel electronic tuning specialists. Full details of the Tunit range are at www.tunit.co.uk, or you can call and speak to one of Tunit's specialist technical advisers on 01257 274100. This conversion, like most others, costs £400 plus VAT and is available direct from Tunit for DIY fitting, or can be fitted for you at one of Tunit's experienced nationwide network of distributors.

