

An absolute

Ian Lamming test drives the Audi A1 TFSI Sline

Smash

IT IS with heavy heart and teary eye that this review starts its tale of woe.

Things started so well with the Audi A1, so well in fact it headed straight to the top of the replacement list for my beloved Abarth – yes it is that good.

What should, on paper, be no more than a small five-door hatchback very soon adopts the persona of a TT; A1 TFSI is just so sporty, so sharp, so engaging.

Driver and car enjoy the conditions that a holiday in the Lake District brings until the windscreen suddenly fills with a silver saloon.

Highways officials must scratch their collective public sectors heads at yet another incident on a notorious bend. What more can they do?

As I enter the sharp right hander I pay careful heed to the yellow warning rumble strips on the road, the chevrons that scream to those who read them 'acute bend', the 25mph advisory speed sign and the solid white lines – I'm old fashioned like that.

Sadly the Saudi Arabian tourist misses all the clues and the bend, cutting across the A1 like a rapier.

Not even the lightning fast responses of the A1 steering or the powerful brakes can save the day, mainly because the hire car's trajectory cuts off any possible escape route. So it is down to the brakes, the EBD, the ABS, which grinds away through the pedal. They almost make it and for a second I think the incident will be written off as a close run thing; but no, the Audi clashes head on with its

treacherous cousin, a VW Passat.

But the impact is minimal, so slight in fact that no airbags are deployed in the making of this road test showing the final impact is mercifully slow. Believe me that is quite an achievement given the possibly disastrous circumstances of a head-on.

The damage to the A1 is minimal too; a cracked number plate, scuffed bumper and little else. The way the Audi withstands the impact is impressive indeed.

After details are exchanged and the journey continues there is little if nothing to say the Audi has been in a fight at all.

The 1.4 turbocharged engine remains just as smooth and responsive, the steering just as sharp.

Handling is still equally impressive being controlled and compliant. Occupants remain safe and sound and free from injury.

In fact, if I'm not mistaken, the A1 is even perkier having given a tourist a bloody nose (metaphorically of course – no tourists were injured in the making of this road test), like a terrier which has seen off the advances of an Alsatian before skipping off with its ears cocked, head held high and tail in the air.

A1 TFSI is a stunning car, remarkable for its looks, its interior, its performance and economy (don't forget its cylinder-on-demand technology that drops four pots to two when cruising). So perhaps the tear is not because of the assault on its senses and sensibilities but the fact that Audi has to take it away.

Fact File

- Audi A1 TFSI Sline
- Engine: 1.4 litre
- Power: 150PS
- 0-62mph: 7.8 secs
- Top speed: 134mph
- Combined miles per gallon: 58.9
- Transmission: seven-speed auto
- CO2 g/km: 111

