

Free Spirit

Ian Lamming goes on a journey with one of the motor industry's free spirits

EVER been overtaken by a big Audi? Me too, several times a day in fact.

Why is that? Well, when you are behind the wheel of one the world seems to slow down, get in your way, clutter the place up.

A6 Allroad knows the problem all too well because it is a free spirit. On the open road it is unsurpassed, well actually, that's not quite correct because there is a whole range of ring bearing Audis which share the same trait.

In some cars the regular trip from North Yorkshire to the Lakes can seem a long way; it isn't, it's about an hour with a fair wind. In the A6 Allroad it seems to pass by in minutes for several reasons.

The 3.0 V6 bi-turbo diesel is stonking. It cruises with aplomb, it stretches reality when asked to overtake, which it does with the backing of such depths of torque it threatens to tow County Durham into Cumbria. But it only sips at the diesel.

The eight-speed automatic gearbox is the perfect companion, incredibly smooth and responsive, stupendously quick-changing; they just don't come any better.

Then there's the ride, which is soft and compliant when you are tired or firm and exhilarating when frisky. When the straights become turns then the extra control is beneficial to driver and passengers alike, especially if one is an eight-year-old prone to travel sickness.

Sharpness like this shrinks what is a very big and usefully accommodating 4x4 estate car into something very drivable, very accomplished, very dynamic. Quattro grips like a rock climber to the gritstone. The whole package is stunning, particularly that motor.

Finally, there are the distractions and now the pallid eight-year-old comes into his own clicking, dabbing and twisting his way through the infotainment centre.

When the shockingly good hi-fi goes all random and refuses to play the track I desire, having Bluetoothed to the music on my iPhone, my rantings and ravings rail against modern technology prompting this from the boy:

"Daddy, you really are going to have to sort out your anger management issues."

A dab, or was it a click, I don't notice as I'm driving, is enough to sort the problem out and a box that was ticked is unticked in seconds as the music system selects the right track.

Then he finds the DAB radio, the DVD player, the music jukebox with countless albums – some of which are even to my taste – and before you know it we are there, journey's end, safe, happy, relaxed and content.

So next time you are overtaken by a big Audi, and that will be very soon, understand the reasons why and make sure your emotions reflect fully the envy you should undoubtedly feel.

Fact File

- Audi A6 3.0 BITDI
- Engine: 3.0 six cylinders
- Power: 320PS
- 0-62mph: 5.5secs
- Top speed: 155mph
- Combined MPG: 43.5
- Transmission: eight-speed automatic
- CO2 g/km: 172

