

Understated



Into the realms of RS4 performance
— without all the expense

THE arrival of the RS4 overshadowed the S4 which, until then, had been the highest performing variant of the A4. In the RS4, the output of the 2.7-litre biturbo engine was stretched to 380bhp (280kW), with maximum torque of 325lb.ft. (440Nm) between 2500 and 6000rpm. In comparison, the standard S4 engine,

developed a more modest, but still substantial, 265bhp (195kW) at 5800rpm with maximum torque of 296lb.ft. (400Nm) from 1850–3600rpm.

Even before the RS4 arrived on the scene, tuning houses knew that the 2.7 biturbo engine offered tremendous potential. Shortly after its launch, we spoke to Roland Mayer, boss of MTM, who confidently predicted up to 400bhp in road-going form and it has not been difficult

achieve more than 300bhp by simply reprogramming the ECU.

Abt Sportsline, based in Kempton in Bavaria, has been tuning Audis for decades, the whole Abt family involved in one aspect or another, and the company has become the biggest Audi tuning house in the world.

Abt Sportsline is now firmly established in Britain, the headquarters, at Congleton in Cheshire, marketing a



Abt S4 comes close to RS4 performance, while maintaining good ride quality.

range of models including the unique wide-bodied TTs.

We've been testing an Abt modified S4 Avant, the output of the engine increased purely by reprogramming. Without any other modifications, this engine now develops 310bhp (228kW), maximum torque increased to 374lb.ft. (505Nm) at 3100rpm. Not only are both power and torque increased by substantial amounts (17 and 26 per cent respectively), but the maximum power is developed at an even lower engine speed than the standard S4.

The increase in output would be of little value if the smooth characteristics of the biturbo engine were lost, but the Abt S4 is as smooth as silk. At around 3500rpm, the power comes in with a tremendous surge and, if you change down to third or

even fourth gear, you can rocket past virtually anything else on the road. Just as significant, the response in sixth gear, when cruising at motorway speeds, is very powerful, thrusting the Abt S4 ahead of other traffic.

Take a look at the performance comparison table. Up to 60mph, the Abt S4 is not significantly slower than the RS4, although the more powerful car begins to show its heels at higher speeds. Significantly, the Abt S4 pulls very strongly when held in a particular gear and, because of the balance of engine characteristics and gear ratios, it actually proved to be faster than an RS4 from 50–70mph in fifth gear. The reason for this is easy to see. Compare the 505Nm of torque of the Abt S4 engine with that of the RS4: 440 Nm. With 15 per cent

more torque, it is little wonder that the Abt S4 pulls so strongly in the gears.

Aside from the engine conversion, this S4 was virtually unmodified apart from a set of 18in. Abt wheels. This five-spoke design has become almost an Abt trademark and, in recent independent tests carried out in Germany, Abt wheels were highly rated for their quality. These were shod with 225/40 ZR Continental ContiSport tyres which we know, from experience, offer a fine combination of wet and dry grip, comfort and low noise levels.

The ride quality seemed hardly affected by the change from a 45 to a 40 profile and was much better than that of the RS4. If you are in the back seat of an RS4 being driven quickly, you won't be having the most enjoy-



18in. Abt wheels are renowned for quality.



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able of journeys. During this test, rear seat passengers did point out that the seat cushions are on the thin side and that sound from the exhaust was particularly noticeable, seeming to emanate from beneath the seat, but these are factors which affect all S4 Avants; the general consensus was that the overall level of comfort was very acceptable for a high performance estate car.

Handling differs little from other S4 Avants: not nearly as taut as the RS4 and with more body roll, but good enough to allow the Abt performance to be exploited on winding roads. The brakes are fully up to normal fast road use, but frequent heavy applications from very high cruising speeds or a few laps on a race circuit would show up a few limitations.

The remarkable thing about this conversion is the way in which so much extra power and torque can be extracted from the S4 engine just by changing the parameters of the engine control unit. Even more remarkable is the fact that the response of the engine is just as smooth as the standard power plant.

There is no doubt that the RS4 is an outstanding car, both visually and dynamically. This S4, on the other hand, has a more modest appearance, despite its attractive alloy wheels. It won't get as much attention as an RS4, but to some that would be a distinct advantage. What the Abt S4 offers is performance not far short of that of the RS4, for considerably less money and without its attention-seeking flamboyance.

And, of course, the conversion is just as applicable to the S4 Saloon as the Avant. 🇩🇪

PERFORMANCE COMPARISONS

	ABT SPORTSLINE S4 AVANT QUATTRO	S4 AVANT QUATTRO	RS4 AVANT QUATTRO	SCOTT MOTOTUNE S4 QUATTRO
DISPLACEMENT, CC	2671	2671	2671	2671
POWER OUTPUT, BHP/KW @ RPM	310/228 5200	265/195 5800	380/280 6100-7000	313/232 5000
MAXIMUM TORQUE, LB.FT./NM @ RPM	374/505 3100	294/400 1850-3600	325/440 2500-6000	373/504 3500-3800
MAXIMUM SPEED, MPH	170	155	156	174
0-50MPH, SEC	3.9	4.0	3.6	3.8
0-60MPH, SEC	5.1	5.3	4.8	5.1
0-70MPH, SEC	6.9	7.2	6.0	6.8
0-80MPH, SEC	8.9	9.3	7.9	8.5
30-50MPH (3RD), SEC	3.5	3.2	3.5	3.3
30-50MPH (4TH), SEC	4.5	4.3	5.0	4.2
50-70MPH (3RD), SEC	3.3	3.4	3.1	2.8
50-70MPH (4TH), SEC	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.5
50-70MPH (5TH), SEC	4.5	4.7	5.1	4.5
FUEL CONS, MPG / L/100KM	19.0/14.9	22.0/12.8	21.2/13.3	17.1/16.5
UNLADEN WEIGHT, LB	3396	3396	3572	3330
POWER/WEIGHT RATIO, BHP/TON	205	175	238	211
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