

# Audi Allroad 2.7T Quattro

Stuck without a sport-ute in its showy starting lineup, Audi improvises with an impressive switch-hitter.

BY FRANK MARKUS

As automakers continue to roll out new products that blur the line between sport-utility vehicles and station wagons, we're struck by the need for some sort of Kinsey scale to position these new dual-personality vehicles. You remember Alfred C. Kinsey? His Institute for Sex Research interviewed some 11,000 men and women and concluded that a huge number of them couldn't be neatly categorized as purely hetero- or homosexual. So researchers devised a sliding scale from zero to six. Zeros are Ward Cleaver straights, sixes are Harvey Fierstein gays, and the Rock Hudsons and Olivia Newton-Johns of the world fall in between.

For our purposes, we'll stake truck-derived utes like Blazers, Explorers, and Durangos at zero (no offhanded editorializing intended) and all-wheel-drive wagons from Subaru and Audi at six. Fat tires on a hiked-up suspension bump the Subaru Outback wagon to five. A truckier profile, a taller seating position, and better approach and departure angles rate the Forester a four. Unit-body trucks such as the Jeep Grand Cherokee start at one; Nissan's soft, wagonish unibody Pathfinder gets a two. And so on. So where does Audi's new Allroad quasi-ute fit on our scale?

A passing glance suggests a five, at a minimum. *It's a freakin' A6 Outback fer-crynowoutloud!* But don't be too quick to judge. Yes, the A6 Avant genes (Avant is Audi-speak for "station wagon") are obvious, but in fact few exterior panels are shared between the base \$37,425 A6

Avant 2.8 Quattro wagon and this Allroad 2.7T Quattro, which is expected to start at about \$45,000. The Allroad has been given exaggerated wheel arches, bumper fascias, and a ribbed roof panel that all have a scratch-resistant matte finish for serious bushwhacking. Completing the Roughrider look are aluminum rub strips on the doors and "skid plates" (the thickness of a Platinum AmEx card) on the bumpers.

Beneath this macho costume lurk serious hardware upgrades that lend credibility to the Allroad. Chief among these is the high-rise air-spring suspension, which allows the Allroad's ride height to be altered by 2.6 inches. Four different positions can be selected automatically or via override switches on the dash.

Here's how it works: Left in the automatic mode, the system elevates to its second-highest position when parked to raise the seats to an easy slide-in height (unlike similarly suspended Range Rovers and Lexus LX470s that *kneel down* to disgorge passengers). This position affords 7.6 inches of ground clearance and a commanding view of the road. It also leaves enough airspace above the tires to inform passersby that this ain't no sissy wagon. Accelerate to more than 50 mph, and the body drops an inch; storm the freeways at 75 or more mph, and it drops another inch for optimal aerodynamics. For max profiling or—heaven forbid—*off-roading* at speeds below 20 mph, the body can be manually raised to an impressive 8.2 inches off the ground. The A6's basic suspension design is retained, but the track is increased 1.4





■ Two buttons on the dash raise or lower the Allroad's road height to tackle off-road conditions or to cruise freeways. Photos below demonstrate the 2.6-inch difference in the high and low settings. The high-tech wagon will also offer Tiptronic shifting buttons and radio controls on the steering wheel.

### THE VERDICT

**Highs:** Versatile and agile suspension, gorgeous and spacious interior, power and grip aplenty.

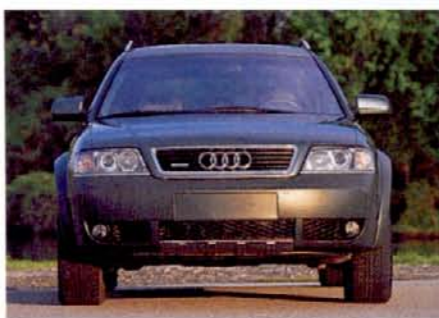
**Lows:** Big wheels and Allroad tires dull Audi's trademark steering accuracy and adroit handling somewhat.

**The Verdict:** Macho-truck drag and 8.2-inch ground clearance disguise a sweet-heart sports wagon for closet-case wagon lovers.

inches in front and 0.4 inch in back, and the geometry is revised to minimize camber change with the increased suspension travel.

We openly car-oriented types found ourselves manually lowering the suspension to its basement setting most of the time. We like our center of gravity to be as low as possible, which minimizes roll and pitch when storming our favorite twisty roads. A difference in handling is detectable between these height settings, although ride is largely unaffected. We confess to parking it at the highest setting, however, in a desperate attempt to pass as truckers.

But that setting's not just for posing. It affords the Allroad more ground clearance than can be claimed by 23 of the 44 base-model sport-utes you'll find in our most recent *Buyers Guide to Pickups, Sport-Utilities, and Vans*. Raising the suspension also greatly improves the approach and departure angles of this car from 15 and 19 degrees at the lowest setting to 20 and



23 in high-rise mode. It's no Rubicon Trail runner, but those are respectable numbers, given the Audi's long front and rear overhangs. We think the suspension bumps the Allroad to a solid four on our scale.

The Avant's Quattro system, with its torque-sensing Torsen center differential, carries over here, but with one important optional upgrade: a six-speed manual transmission is available for improved control. In Europe, six-speed Allroads are further enhanced by 1.54:1 low-range gearing. This option alone would slide the



Allroad another point down on our scale for sure, but the U.S. won't get it. Low range was deemed essential in Europe, where a 177-hp diesel is offered with a taller final-drive ratio to accommodate high speeds on the autobahns. But even with shorter gearing, a low range would allow much more sure-footed creeping off-road. Oh, well.

Augmenting the Torsen center diff is an electronic braking differential system that uses the ABS hardware to redirect torque away from a spinning wheel at

speeds below 60 mph, even when the standard Electronic Stability Program is switched off. It's a good system for light trailblazing that probably moves the Allroad to a 3.5 on our scale.

As a further aid to traction, Pirelli has cooked up a new Cinturato P6 Allroad tire specifically for this application, sized 225/55WR-17. The tread design is biased toward on-road grip (we measured a quite carlike 0.79 g on the skidpad), but a new high-silicate rubber affords exceptional grip in the wet and on grass and compacted

### COUNTERPOINT

No one doubts that Ferdinand Piëch, the Austrian aristocrat from clan Porsche who turned the reeling Volkswagen empire into a cash cow, is an auto mogul of immense stature and achievement. But being a European, he missed cashing in on the SUV craze in America. Luxury-maker Audi still doesn't offer one. In Europe, see, the SUV has all the stature of a cash pig. So Audi's marketing guys crank out this guy, the Allroad. It's a terrific station wagon if your trust-fund income just tripled, and it will set you back perhaps a paltry eight large over a nice A6 Avant. But it will, guaranteed, take those nasty supermarket speed bumps with real style. —Steve Spence

This magazine has often said that if you want more room inside, station wagons are better than overweight and sloppy-handling SUVs. Curiously, the sales numbers seem to spit in our face, and virtually every manufacturer who doesn't have an SUV is scrambling to make one. Thankfully, a few companies are making their station wagons more macho rather than creating an SUV from scratch or making an existing SUV more carlike. This Allroad is the best example yet—like a larger, quicker, more refined Subaru Outback. It has everything good about the A6, only it's tougher. With new engines in the A6, the TT, and now the Allroad, Audi is on a roll. —Brad Nevin

Audi has created the perfect urban-assault vehicle in both appearance and color. Our Highland Green Metallic Allroad Quattro, with its matte black front and rear bumper covers and roof, oversize wheel arches, and bulging tires, adds up to an almost military-looking vehicle. Sort of a downsized, posh mini-Hummer. The extra ground clearance afforded by the air suspension makes hopping over curbs a breeze without scraping the lovely sheetmetal. With 250 horsepower under the hood, it's also plenty brawny. I can't imagine why anyone would rather drive your average clunky truck-like SUV when there is a vastly more refined and swift alternative such as the Allroad Quattro. —André Ildzikowski

dirt. However, these tires lack the deep lugs needed for serious mud bogging. Ours were mounted on a set of optional double-spoke aluminum wheels that are fussy to clean and appear likely to collect mud. The spare is a 205/70-16 tire that must be inflated using a portable compressor (it's provided) that plugs into a cargo-area power point. The spare is bigger and better than a mini-donut, but it's not ideal for rough running.

To tow the extra weight of the fancy suspension, bodywork, and big wheels and tires, Audi will equip all U.S.-bound Allroads with the 250-hp, 2.7-liter twin-turbo V-6 found in the S4 and A6 2.7T sedans. It does an admirable job, even in our Euro test car with its taller 3.09:1 axle ratio and Tiptronic automatic transmission. We hit 60 mph in 7.7 seconds, just as Audi predicts for European Allroads. If its guesses at performance for the lighter U.S. version are as trustworthy, that will drop to 7.3 seconds with Tiptronic and 6.8 seconds with the six-speed. Those figures shame the 9.6 seconds our last A6 2.8 Avant Quattro spent ambling to 60 mph.

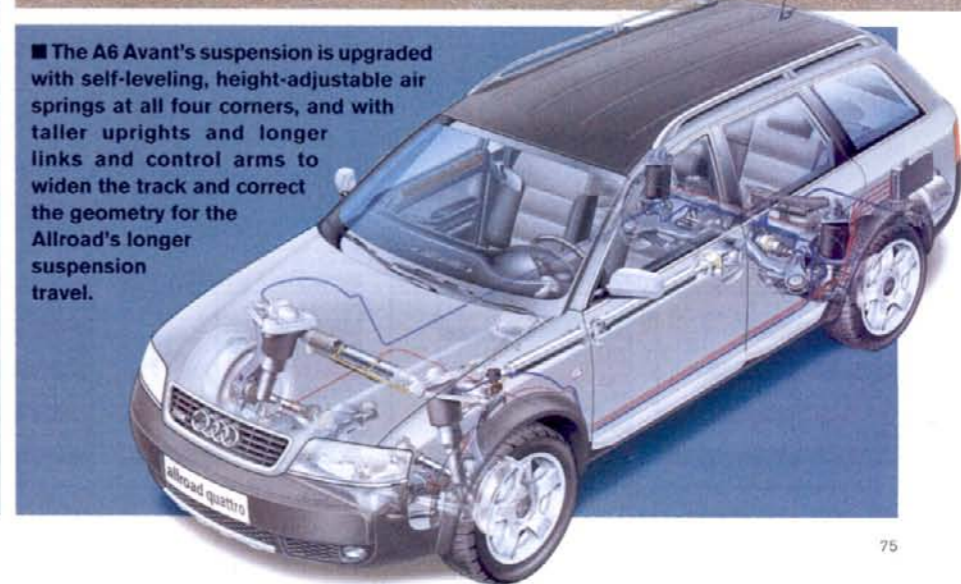
There is, however, a bit of turbo lag just off the line, which is compounded by transmission lag in quick stop-and-go maneuvers. The truckier Allroad manages to outrake its sister wagon by two feet, at 178 feet from 70 mph. Credit goes to the two-piston, four-pad front calipers also found on S4, A6 2.7T, and A8 sedans.

The big motor also scores the Allroad some SUV points by upping its trailer-towing capacity to 3300 pounds—the Avant can only pull 2000 pounds. The cargo hold, which is essentially unchanged from the Avant's, can swallow 73 cubic feet of stuff, and there are four tie-down hooks, a cargo net, and a retractable dog net with which to restrain it. The roof rails are standard, but the crossbars required to carry anything are sold as dealer accessories (\$247). Even a rear-facing bench seat for two kids is available. Let's give the Allroad another half-point for general utility and call it a fence-straddling 3.0—a perfect "bi-truckual."

That's probably the ideal turf for Audi to stake out. The Allroad manages to be fun to drive on both dirt and pavement. On



■ The A6 Avant's suspension is upgraded with self-leveling, height-adjustable air springs at all four corners, and with taller uprights and longer links and control arms to widen the track and correct the geometry for the Allroad's longer suspension travel.



loose gravel roads with the ESP switched off, a bit of late braking can bring the tail out, after which some full-throttle turbo boost can power the car through, rocks jingling off the shielded undercarriage. On snaky pavement, the big wheels and tires dull the usually brilliant Audi steering just a bit, and they shake the wheel rim slightly during bumpy cornering, but the car hunkers down and hangs on tight. The ride is firmer than in an Avant, but its body-motion control tops virtually anything else that could rank a three or lower on our scale. The wagon seating position, in new buckets with more lateral support, imparts a feeling of control that's missing even in high-zoot utes like the Benz ML55 AMG and the BMW X5, which we'd probably rate a two and a three, respectively.

Icing on the cake is the phenomenal Audi interior. Swathed in walnut veneer and two-tone leather, the Allroad has a suedelike Alcantara headliner, standard side-curtain airbags for front and rear head protection, and optional rear-seat-mounted torso airbags. Hello, gorgeous!

We may never openly embrace SUVs, but this AC/DC Allroad offers a diversity we're eager to celebrate.



#### AUDI ALLROAD 2.7T QUATTRO

**Vehicle type:** front-engine, 4-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 5-door wagon

**Estimated price as tested:** \$50,500 (estimated base price: \$45,000)

**Options on test car:** Luxury package (consists of heated front and rear seats, memory seats, integrated garage-door opener, xenon headlamps, Bose sound system), Guidance package (consists of navigation and parking-assistance systems), Warm-Weather package (consists of solar-panel sunroof and rear-window sunshades), two-piece wheels, CD changer, rear-seat side airbags

**Major standard accessories:** power steering, windows, seats, locks, and sunroof; A/C, cruise control; tilting steering wheel; rear defroster and wiper

**Sound system:** Audi Bose AM/FM-stereo radio/cassette/CD changer, 8 speakers

#### ENGINE

Type .....twin-turbocharged and intercooled V-6, iron block and aluminum heads  
 Bore x stroke .....3.19 x 3.40 in, 81.0 x 86.4mm  
 Displacement .....163 cu in, 267 lcc  
 Compression ratio .....9.3:1  
 Engine-control system .....Bosch Motronic ME7.0 with port fuel injection  
 Emissions controls .....3-way catalytic converter, feedback air-fuel-ratio control, auxiliary air pump  
 Turbochargers, 2 .....KKK K03  
 Waste gates .....integral  
 Maximum boost pressure .....16.0 psi  
 Valve gear .....belt-driven double overhead cams, 5 valves per cylinder, hydraulic lifters, variable intake-valve timing  
 Power (SAE net) .....250 bhp @ 5800 rpm  
 Torque (SAE net) .....258 lb-ft @ 1850 rpm  
 Redline .....6500 rpm

#### DRIVETRAIN

Transmission .....5-speed automatic with lockup torque converter  
 Final-drive ratio .....3.09:1, electronic limited slip  
 Transfer-gear ratio .....1.42:1  

Gear	Ratio	Mph/1000 rpm	Max. test speed
I	3.67	4.8	30 mph (6200 rpm)
II	2.00	8.8	57 mph (6500 rpm)
III	1.41	12.5	81 mph (6500 rpm)
IV	1.00	17.5	114 mph (6500 rpm)
V	0.74	23.6	139 mph (5900 rpm)

#### DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase .....108.5 in  
 Track, F/R .....62.0/62.4 in  
 Length .....189.4 in

Width .....72.9 in  
 Height .....60.1-62.7 in  
 Frontal area .....24.8 sq ft  
 Ground clearance .....5.6-8.2 in  
 Curb weight .....4219 lb  
 Weight distribution, F/R .....57.4/42.6%  
 Fuel capacity .....18.5 gal  
 Oil capacity .....6.3 qt  
 Water capacity .....6.3 qt

#### CHASSIS/BODY

Type .....unit construction with 2 rubber-isolated subframes  
 Body material .....welded steel and aluminum stampings

#### INTERIOR

SAE volume, front seat .....51 cu ft  
 rear seat .....46 cu ft  
 cargo volume, seats in/out .....36/73 cu ft  
 Practical cargo room, length of pipe .....134.0 in  
 largest sheet of plywood .....41.0 x 75.0 in  
 no. of 10 x 10 x 16-in boxes, seats in/out .....16/30  
 Front seats .....bucket  
 Seal adjustments .....fore and aft, seatback angle, front height, rear height, lumbar support  
 Restraint systems, front .....manual 3-point belts; driver and passenger front, side, and head airbags  
 rear .....manual 3-point belts; side and head airbags  
 General comfort .....poor fair good **excellent**  
 Fore-and-aft support .....poor fair good **excellent**  
 Lateral support .....poor fair good **excellent**

#### SUSPENSION

F: .....and; 2 diagonal links and 2 lateral links per side; 4-position cockpit-adjustable, automatically leveling air springs; anti-roll bar  
 R: .....and; unequal-length control arms and a toe-control link; 4-position cockpit-adjustable, automatically leveling air springs; anti-roll bar

#### STEERING

Type .....rack-and-pinion, power-assisted  
 Turns lock-to-lock .....2.8  
 Turning circle curb-to-curb .....38.3 ft

#### BRAKES

F: .....12.6 x 1.2-in vented disc  
 R: .....10.1 x 0.4-in disc  
 Power assist .....vacuum with anti-lock control

#### WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size .....7.5 x 17 in  
 Wheel type .....2-piece cast aluminum  
 Tires .....Pirelli Cinturato P6 Allroad, 225/55WR-17  
 Test inflation pressures, F/R .....32/32 psi

## C/D TEST RESULTS

### ACCELERATION

	Seconds
Zero to 30 mph	2.6
40 mph	4.0
50 mph	5.6
60 mph	7.7
70 mph	10.1
80 mph	13.0
90 mph	17.1
100 mph	21.4
110 mph	27.2
120 mph	38.1
Street start, 5-60 mph	8.3
Top-gear acceleration, 30-50 mph	3.7
50-70 mph	4.9
Standing 1/4-mile	16.0 sec @ 87 mph
Top speed (drag limited)	139 mph

### BRAKING

70-0 mph @ impending lockup .....178 ft  
 Fade .....none light moderate heavy

### HANDLING

Roadholding, 300-ft-dia skidpad .....0.79 g  
 Understeer .....minimal moderate excessive

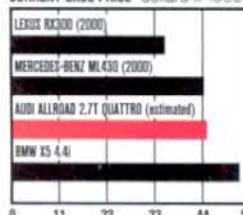
### PROJECTED FUEL ECONOMY

EPA city driving .....17 mpg  
 EPA highway driving .....22 mpg  
 C/D-observed fuel economy .....16 mpg

### INTERIOR SOUND LEVEL

Idle .....43 dBA  
 Full-throttle acceleration .....70 dBA  
 70-mph cruising .....68 dBA  
 70-mph coasting .....67 dBA

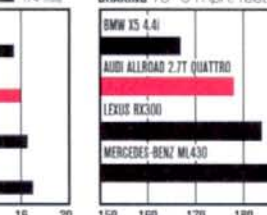
#### CURRENT BASE PRICE\* dollars x 1000



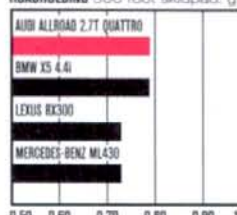
#### ACCELERATION seconds



#### BRAKING 70-0 mph, feet



#### ROADHOLDING 300-foot skidpad, g



#### EPA CITY FUEL ECONOMY mpg



\*Base price includes freight, any performance options, and all applicable luxury and gas-guzzler taxes.