



have fitted in with Audi's way up front and lengthways engine positioning. With the 200 quattro commanding a £23,043 price tag it's to be hoped that rumours about Audi forking out some cash to develop a similarly compact V8 are true.

For now, though, the 'five' is still Audi's top-line engine and like other manufacturers who haven't the right normally-aspirated engine for the job they've had to resort to turbocharging. A sophisticated inter-cooled turbo system, working with Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection, takes the power output of the sohc, 2,144cc motor up to 192bhp at 5,700rpm and torque to 181lb ft at 3,600rpm. These outputs are slightly down on those claimed for ostensibly the same engine in the Quattro coupé but according to certain Audi tuning specialists they are a good deal more accurate.

Certainly they're good enough to give the 200 quattro a superior top speed. Its finely honed aerodynamics help it to a maximum comfortably over 140mph, at least 10mph more than the Quattro quattro can manage. Despite a couple of extra cwt and vastly superior passenger and luggage space the 200q isn't far behind the Quattro in sprinting ability either.

With permanent four-wheel drive assigning a maximum of 45.5bhp to each 205/60 VR 15 tyre the 200q is capable of stand-

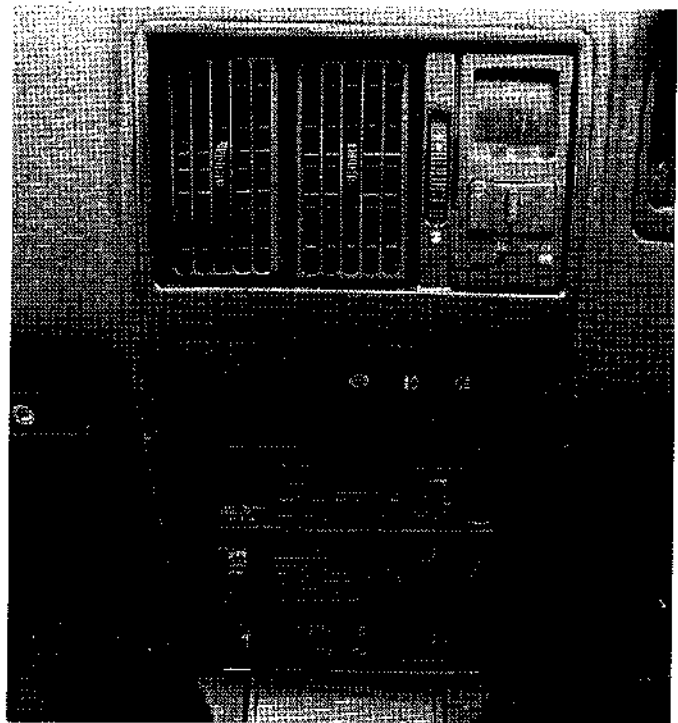
ing starts almost in the supercar class: 60mph can be reached in about 7.5sec and 100mph in just under 20. This is as quick, or quicker, than the flagship saloons from BMW, Jaguar and Mercedes despite the fact that the Audi can be relied on to return consistently better fuel consumption than any of these three.

Turbocharging does exact penalties in the way that performance is delivered, however. Even Audi's latest generation system can't avoid the inherent bugbears of lethargic response off boost and the sudden power surge when the turbo winds up to maximum boost.

Audi's transmission doesn't quite attain the finely engineered standards you expect from a £20,000 plus car, either. While there's no denying the extra margin of safety provided by permanent 4wd, especially in the slippery conditions that can seriously unsettle its powerful rear-wheel-drive rivals, there's also no mistaking the power on/off jerkiness or the rather notchy, rubbery gearchange.

The honourable exception is perhaps the seats which are sumptuously trimmed in Savile Row-quality cloth and leather, and electrically adjustable (with a three-position memory on the driver's side) for reach, rake, height and tilt.

Otherwise the 200q needs to be justified by its technical wizardry (turbo, 4wd, ABS and



so on) or desperately virtuous things such as excellent all-round visibility and cavernous accommodation - the 200q's sum of head, elbow, leg and luggage room is greater than in the lengthier 7-series BMW, S-class Mercedes or Jaguar saloon.

Both BMW and Mercedes can improve on Audi's dull-but-effective instrument display, however, and even if they don't fit as many standard goodies neither do they saddle their customers with an air conditioning system effectively only

adjustable for temperature which, once set, then decides, in a unilateral and alarmingly Teutonic manner, with how much air the defenceless occupants will be noisily blasted. Some element of manual override other than the rudimentary options provided would be an advantage.

It's tempting to suggest that the know-it-all air conditioning reflects the feel of the whole car: rather like a poor boy made good who's retained too much of his crude street-wise unbringing-

The 200 quattro is undeniably one of the most efficient means of transporting four or five people quickly and in considerably luxury but it lacks the soul and charm you might expect from a car costing £23,000. On the other hand if you're a high-powered executive who spends a significant portion of the year on ice and snow the 200q is perfect: 4wd, diff locks, and ABS will keep you going while rear-wheel-drive equipped boardroom rivals wait in vain for the tow truck to turn up.

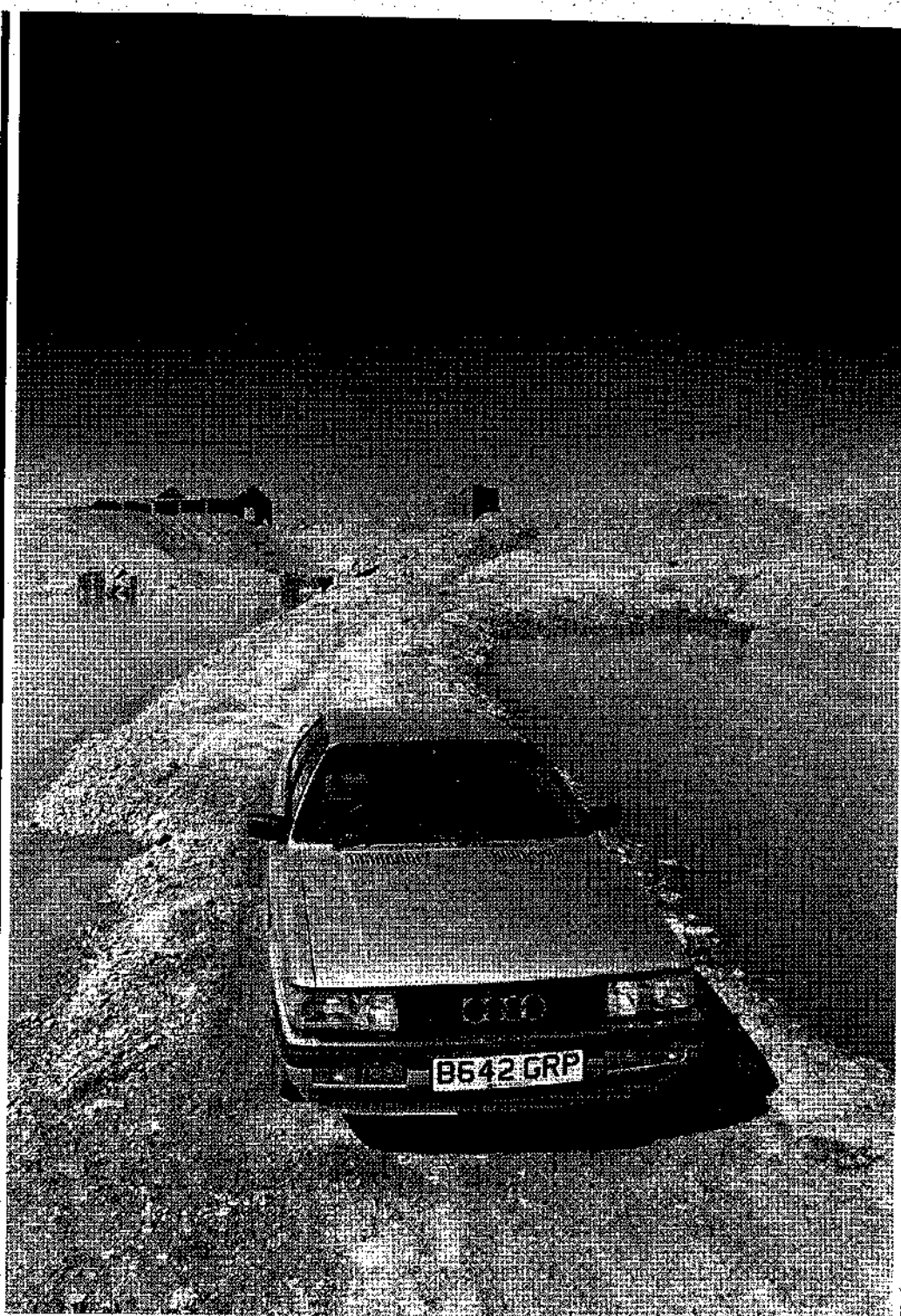
Cruising on motorways these foibles are much less obvious and the 200q gives little away to its more generously cylindered rivals. As long as the engine is kept out of the buzzy upper rev band, which isn't too difficult in the 23.5mph/1,000rpm fifth gear, mechanical noise is kept a minimum and, along with the low level of wind and road noise and the absorbent, well-damped ride, it makes the 200q an exceptionally relaxed and comfortable long distance/high speed cruiser.

The 200 quattro's MacPherson strut front/trapezoidal link rear suspension is the same as the other 100/200 quattros, as is the front-only anti-roll bar and the power-assisted rack and pinion steering.

While four-wheel drive has eradicated the undignified scabble as 182bhp tries to escape through the front wheels, it hasn't altered the fundamental handling balance; the 200q still feels like a front-wheel-drive car but one without the traction problems.

Together with its excellent wet and dry grip and sensibly-weighted, positive steering this makes the 200q less of a handful to drive quickly on all types of roads than its heavyweight rivals from BMW, Jaguar and Mercedes. Whenever power is required it can be applied earlier and more reliably in a quattro and also with less regard for the road surface. The drawback could be that this encourages a sense of invulnerability for which even the safety net of ABS can't compensate.

Sensibly Audi haven't tried to out-flash its better pedigreed rivals with lots of polished wood veneer and chrome inside, but something more obviously upmarket would undoubtedly be appreciated by their more socially self-conscious customers. As it stands the best they can do is point to an immaculately turned-out interior so understated that it doesn't really look or feel like part of a £23,000 car.



YOUR DAD would feel comfortable in one. So would the Hepworths-clad 'executive thruster' down the road - his young wife, too, come to that.

Even the most jaundiced of cynical bystanders would have to cede that the Audi Coupé is about as inoffensive and as socially acceptable a sportster imaginable. It has an attractive body, a willing and refined power unit, safe handling and room for four large people. Even with one's foot jamming the accelerator pedal down to the rather plush and nicely-fitting carpet much of the time, fuel consumption never drops below an energy conscious 25mpg.

Now consider the word

"quattro". An emotive five-letters guaranteed to bring an excited flush to the most resilient cheeks. All flying gravel, scabbling tyres and handbrake turns. Although now no longer the all-conquering rally weapon it was, the Quattro still has a strong competition connotation. That was always the marketing boys' plan, and it has worked a treat.

The trouble is, when the "quattro" bit is tagged on to the "Coupé" bit there is a conflict of imagery. Bland efficiency meets swashbuckling flair. This is rather unfortunate, since the Quattro side of the partnership dominates and gives a misleading impression of Audi's evolutionary middleweight, the

£13,930 Coupé quattro.

What is confusing is the fact that the Coupé quattro owes more to its front wheel drive sister, than its turbocharged brother. It's a coupé with four-wheel drive, rather than a Quattro without a turbo, a confusing but important distinction.

Its sleeker facelifted 1985 body shape is shared with the Coupé, and the more powerful Coupé GT. The front grille now slopes more aerodynamically, there are new headlamps, a deeper front spoiler, extended sills and a rear apron.

At the back the light clusters are tinted black, and the boot spoiler comes from the Quattro