



AUDI'S LAMBORGHINI V-10 POWERED LUXURY SEDANS

By Bill Schaffer

Audi S6



Audi S8

Gather a bunch of automotive writers; send them out for a drive in the country in the latest Audi "S" cars and you'll get some great discussions about the vehicles' attributes later over drinks and dinner.

There is no argument about acceleration and handling of Audi's new larger luxury performance sedans and a near reverence for the sounds that are piped out through the quad tailpipe outlets. The only arguments advanced were whether the extra power was even necessary, given the impressive A6 V-8, and the V-8 and W-12 powered A8 sedans.

There was also no argument about the exterior and interior styling or the well-designed controls. The beautiful sport seats are form-fitting, with adjustments to tailor the fit to nearly any driver. There's also an upgraded Bose® audio system, navigation system and upscale leather package to round out the deal. S8 buyers with audiophile sensibilities can put down another \$6,300 for a Bang & Olufsen® advanced sound system, complete with tweeters that rise out of the corners of the dash when the system is turned on and descend when it goes off.

Which brings us to the reason a shop-



per might want to spend \$72,000 or \$92,000 for the S6 and S8 plus options, destination charge and gas-guzzler tax. The biggest reason has to be the new Lamborghini-derived Audi 5.2-liter V-10 engines, which weigh in at 435 horsepower in the S6 and 450 hp in the S8.

Both cars are equipped with Audi's wonderful six-speed Tiptronic automatic quattro all-wheel drive with its 40/60 front/rear torque split. There are also 19- and 20-inch wheels and tires on the S6

and S8 respectively.

Of the two, the S8 is more luxurious and more outrageous. The car is dynamic, with its aluminum-intensive platform and body. It hints at being a bit more rigid than the rock-solid S6, but it's more forgiving on the bumps. Both cars have very tight suspensions to provide no-compromise handling.

Powertrains like these demand top-performing brakes with massive discs at all wheels, along with all the latest generation anti-lock, brake assist and stability

control. We were more than satisfied with the quick, controlled stopping power during a couple of high-speed tests.

The V-10 power provides instant gratification when the throttle is stomped to the floor. There's none of that showy burning rubber. The quattro all-wheel drive and wide rubber assure there is no slippage and then propel the car forward like one of the gravity-enhancing rides at an amusement park. The net result is 0-to-60-mph times of 4.7 seconds for the S8 and 5.1 seconds for the S6. During hard acceleration, any loose skin on your face slides back just like there was a plastic surgeon in the back seat demonstrating what you'll look like when he is done with surgery.

The best way to identify the S6 is to stand in front of one as it approaches, or on those rare occasions it might be in your rearview mirror before blowing by you. Designers have marked the front of the S6 with five LED daytime running lights on each side of lower grill inlets. The two horizontal rows of bright lights are designed to subtly mark the Audi as a 10-cylinder model. It's one of the best branding signatures we've ever seen. The larger A8 also gets five LED driving lights, but they



are in a circle near the headlights, and appear more like traditional driving lights.

We've never been a fan of 10-cylinder engines because, until now, they have never sounded quite as good as a V-8 engine, in our estimation. This engine has one of the best sounding exhaust tones we've ever heard, from the deep rumble as the car cruises by in a parking lot or city street, to a powerful blast during full-throttle acceleration.

Back to the auto writers' debate on the merits of the S8 and S6 versus versions of

the A8 and A6. Most of us loved the S models, especially their acceleration, sounds and the daytime running lights on the S6. However, if it came to deal or no deal time, most would opt for an A6 or A8 because they offer all the Audi attributes, a little less performance but a more forgiving ride for less money.

Nevertheless about 2,000 lucky Audi enthusiasts annually will get the rare opportunity to own one of the world's most impressive and exclusive luxury performance sedans. ■



