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# Audi 5000S Turbo Diesel

*Downhill racer, somewhat mightier than before.*



LOCATION: HICKLEBERRY RAILROAD, FLINT, MICHIGAN

• Truths about the new Audi 5000S Turbo Diesel are a lot like children: they're everywhere you turn, but they're mostly underfoot. Feel free to take this literally. Everywhere you need to turn the steering wheel, the 5000S Turbo Diesel artfully crafts its way into the corners, and you know you have found truth in engineering. And every time you take a healthy poke at the old fuel

pedal, you know you have discovered why it is reasonably nice to have a turbocharger underfoot in your diesel.

Still, all in motoring life, as elsewhere, is a compromise. Our question is, *Where does the compromise end for a diesel and the life begin?* We know that the normally aspirated, gas-propelled versions of Audi's 5000 are tingly enough to qualify as Testers' Choice, and the 5000

Turbo, sweet nutcracker that it is, can be put right at the top of the Marital Aid, Heavy Breathing category—but can Audi's heretofore semi-lethargic diesel be resuscitated with a turbo? Its one real normally aspirated attribute has been its ability to deliver econoboxlike fuel economy in a much roomier and more refined package than smaller containers can provide, but Audi's oil burner to date has had all the titillation potential of dead batteries.

That in itself was enough to bring it at last (and notably long after the gasoline-engined 5000) to Ferdinand Piëch's attention, never mind the fact that he thinks turbochargers can be successfully applied to anything down to and including Hula-Hoops and Roto-Rooters. As Audi's most entrepreneurial idea man, Piëch has brought us first the gas-combusted 5000 Turbo and then the dashing, four-wheel-drive, *kompessorized* Quattro. Welcome to Act III.

Alas, no getting around it, the 5000 Turbo Diesel is not fast, nor is it even quick. After a day at the test track, the best results we could get were a 0-to-60-mph time of 15.9 seconds, a quarter-mile elapsed time of 20.4 seconds at 68 mph, and a level-ground maximum velocity of 92 mph. So you're not writing home for a down payment yet, right?

Have just a little patience. It eventually pays off with this car. It's a little like life with the children we mentioned back in the beginning: when you come to understand just what you've got underfoot, you get a lot more out of it. When you watch children grow up, over the years turning from free-form little rug rats into real and clever little people, you realize it's worth the wait. And that's just the way it is when you ask Audi's diesel turbo to gather itself up for a launch from a standing start into the rest of its life. At first not much happens, then there's some activity, then all at once it barrels right on off, proud as punch. After you understand the fun that lies beyond the crossover point, you can arrange your motoring so the sweet side of that speed curve is usually at hand.

Also fun is the Turbo Diesel's almost total abhorrence of fuel stops, given its 19.8-gallon fuel tank, 28 mpg through the confines of the EPA's prototypical city, and 24 mpg in C/D's own hard-charging environment. Audi has introduced an interesting way to improve the Turbo Diesel's around-town mpg results: its floor-mounted, T-bar shifter includes a position marked "E," which allows the engine to freewheel when you lift off the accelerator pedal, thus reducing fuel-consuming drag on the engine at idle or when decelerating around town. Of course, selecting "E" rather than "D" for country use might

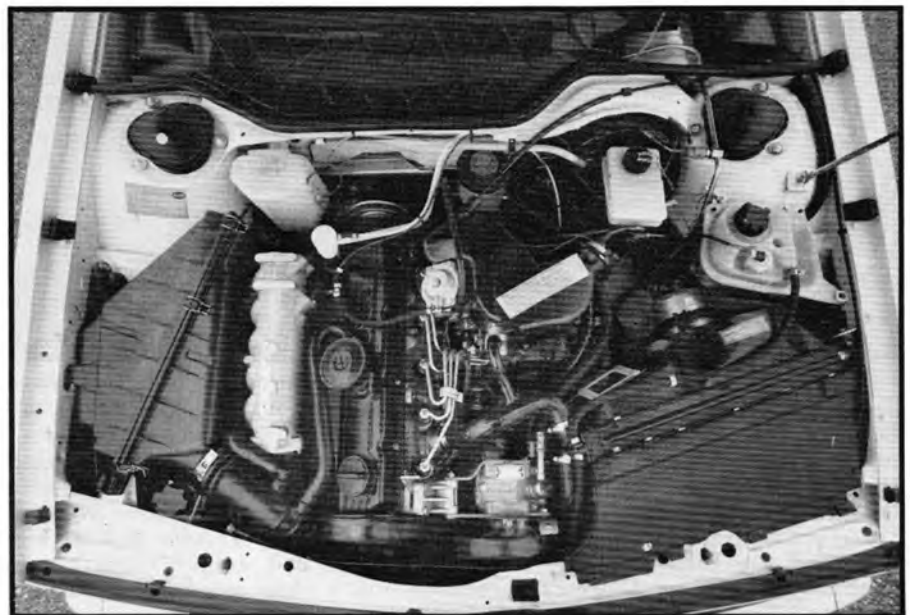


also be expected to yield some gains in economy, but they would normally be proportionately less since steady-state cruising conditions are more prevalent on the open road. Moreover, the sensation of having no engine braking when you release the accelerator pedal is initially a bit disconcerting in traffic or at higher speeds on back roads.

In the "E" mode, the transmission disengages a forward-gear clutch in the transmission when it senses major deceleration. Then a distracting lurch accompanies re-engagement when you step back into the accelerator. In all shift positions other than "E," the transmission works as you would expect any automatic to work.

Even beyond "E," though, this automatic transaxle likes to let you know it's around. Full-throttle upshifts are a touch muscular, and equally firm kick-downs are prone to somewhat vague delays. Our biggest suggestion to Audi is to take a look at what General Motors is doing with its automatics in its front-wheel-drive, V-6 diesel A-cars. We recently tested an Oldsmobile Ciera (C/D, August) that was a prime example of the pleasant mating of automatic transmission and diesel engine, its 4.3-liter, normally aspirated powerplant tuned for high torque at low rpm and a relatively flat curve from there up, while the transmission was a three-speed unit with a torque converter designed to allow the engine to rev very quickly to its maximum-torque rpm, and then to lock up in fully mechanical direct drive after shifting into third gear, effectively creating a fourth-speed ratio and extremely long-legged cruising. Efficient and completely undistracting in use, the system allowed the roomier and equally heavy Ciera to outaccelerate Audi's Turbo Diesel while matching its EPA city rating.

Not to say that the Audi doesn't out-



do the Olds in several other areas, particularly in construction quality and even more dramatically in simply having under its skin quite a refined chassis. This wonderful quality of the Audi is a tangible thing. It is obvious in the car's every major control, in its subjective feel, and in its almost unearthly abilities to boost your over-the-road confidence substantially, without ever indicating that this accomplishment is any big deal. The Audi 5000 chassis is about as well sorted as any we've ever encountered in a sedan, better able to deal with the physical pleasures and disasters of today's roads than anything else we've had in a good long while. The steering is light but full of good wishes and fine detail. The suspension is receptive to anything you have in mind or the road holds in store. Despite a fair amount of body roll, the suspension never goes wishy-washy at trying moments, and the directional stability is placid testimony to zero-offset steering geometry and proper suspension design and development. This chassis holds no nasty surprises for its driver (though less spongy brakes would be nice), and it sets standards others could well strive for.

Would that the seats were as good as the mechanicals. They are massive and firmly padded and adjustable nine ways (literally) to Sunday, but their lower cushions are short and they lack something several of the rudest Japanese sedans offer without a second thought: lumbar-support adjustments. A number of your *C/D* drivers stepped out of the Audi singing its behavioral praises but aching from stem to stern and casting colorful aspersions upon the black-leather thrones. The optional power sunroof loomed into available headroom, grumbled towering testers, but more diminutive drivers (well, say, six feet or under) spoke of the expansive hole in the roof and how nice its air and sunshine were. The windows and mirrors are also power units, and the back seat is blessed (if you can call it that) with *two* cigarette lighters, one in each door alongside small courtesy and reading lights. These lights failed to function in our test car, as did the main interior light unless its switch was flipped to the well-known, battery-draining, on-no-matter-what position.

The cruise-control switches on a steering-column stalk are hidden by a spoke of the wheel and are somewhat difficult to use. Moreover, the control unit itself has a tough time coming to grips with long uphill grades, steep or otherwise, and exhibits a certain absent-mindedness in eventually misplacing about 2 mph if your selected speed is moderately above the national limit, even when the terrain is level. And if you ask the Turbo Diesel for consistent



## Dr. Turbo Speaks

• Fritz Indra knows turbochargers. As Alpina's engine man, he developed some of the most sophisticated aftermarket turbo kits ever seen. And now as the chief of engine development for Audi, Indra is responsible for the five-cylinder Quattro turbomotor in both road and rally versions.

Yet Indra doesn't believe turbochargers are magic. Indeed, he thinks that most engineers need to review the first principles of turbocharging in order to rationalize the turbo's development. In his office at the Audi Research Center in Ingolstadt, he candidly told *C/D* why.

Too often turbocharging is used as a toy, Indra suggests. "You can begin with turbocharging only *after* you cannot get more engine displacement instead, either because of too much weight or not enough space. Also, one needs many extra experimental parts to make a turbocharged engine. Such technology is not appropriate for an economy engine, only a performance engine."

As Indra sees it, most turbomotors at present are crude experiments. Only the Audi Quattro and Porsche 924 Turbo point the way to the future. Such engines, he says, will have a compression ratio of at least 8.5:1 for good throttle response. Detonation will be held in check by both ignition and boost controls. (Indra has doubts about boost-only controls like Saab's APC unit: "It can come too late, after the engine has already been affected.") An intercooler will maximize power above 6000 rpm.

Most of all, Indra asserts, a second-generation turbocharged engine will have camshaft profiles optimized to produce maximum torque at low rpm. "A turbocharger *cannot* compensate for lack of torque. If you wait for boost to build torque, it will always come too late. Even if the delay is less than three-tenths of a second [most current turbos have a throttle lag of five-tenths of a second at best, while a normally aspirated engine has a throttle lag of one-tenth of a second], the driver will feel it. You must make standard torque without boost. That way a small turbo is not necessary—so a large one for more horsepower can be used."

Indra admits that he is amused by attempts to portray the idiosyncrasies of turbocharging as the consequences of "high performance." The goal of Audi's turbo research, he says, is to re-create the linear power and response of a normally aspirated engine. He's convinced that Audi will reach this goal before its competitors because the longitudinal front-engine configuration of its cars forces the engineers to use turbocharging in order to avoid additional weight. "To get 30 hp more in our front-wheel-drive car where a bigger engine is not possible, turbocharging is the best answer," he says flatly.

Fritz Indra clearly believes that Audi will lead the way in turbo technology. There are many reasons, but the main thing is that Audi's engineers are as interested in asking the right questions as in finding the right answers.

—Michael Jordan

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hotfooting in speedometer-peg territory, the request must come directly from your foot.

Audi's air-conditioning, heating, and vent systems are very strong and their controls are simple (if garishly splashed with blue and red), and the dash-wide array of vents allows great precision of adjustment. While the heater is plenty hot, the space for back-seat feet is less so. Audi has for some reason chosen to breed power seats whose component-occupied underbellies hang almost to the floor, effectively taking an important chunk out of what is otherwise a very commodious rear cabin, offering space for three abreast and full shoulder harnesses for the two outboard passengers. Those in the back seat of our test car



were more likely to spot a few aesthetic oversights such as the door frames and seat tracks in body-color white, which clashed strongly with the black interior trim. Some A-pillar trim was misaligned, but the rest of the interior (with the major exception of a depressing plastic headliner) was neat and attractive, an aesthetically okay locale for taking the tunes with Audi's Panasonic auto-reverse, electronic AM/FM/cassette multifeature stereo, which seems to produce better sound in the 5000 body enclosure than it does in the Quattro.

Just don't race any Quattros. And save all your competitions for downhill cuts and thrusts, back-hill boondoggling, and clever nippings through town. If that puts too tight a limit on your fun, bypass the Turbo Diesel and go directly to the rousingly energetic, gasoline-burning 5000 Turbo. That's a car you can put to quick use anywhere, not just downhill, and you'll never, ever forget that the truth about it lies almost entirely underfoot. —Larry Griffin



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## COUNTERPOINT

• Audi is one of the long-ball hitters in the automotive marketplace. It's been swinging for the fences ever since Ferdinand Piëch joined the team. With few exceptions, every Audi of recent memory has been exceptional: the Quattro, the Coupe, the 5000 Turbo, even the 4000 are all solid shots into the center-field bleachers.

This time, I'm afraid, mighty Casey has struck out. The 5000 Turbo Diesel fails not only to advance the art, but also to even measure up to the better cars in the diesel class. It struggles away from stoplights when the air conditioner is on. Ugh. A mid-priced, normally aspirated Olds Cutlass Ciera is far more sprightly around town. The Mercedes Turbo Diesel proves you need not suffer with the lethargy.

If the notion of a 5000 Turbo Diesel tickles you, I suggest checking back in a year or so, after this car has been through the inevitable refinement process. You see, that's the other thing about Audi. Like all champions, it doesn't make the same mistake for long. —*Rich Ceppos*

The Audi 5000 is a nice, contemporary car for rich, young professionals with a need for a back seat. It's a great touring car (though the ride is a tad on the soft side), its cabin is luxurious, and its styling is among the most modern in the luxury-sedan class. But a diesel-engined 5000, turbocharged or otherwise, is not for me, thanks.

Turbocharging may help to overcome the 5000's diesel slowness in the midrange, but around town the car is a real slug. I was also surprised to find that this Audi makes enough noise to wake the dead. To add to all

that irritation, Audi adds an "E" gear, which drops the engine revs to idle when the accelerator isn't being depressed. But instead of subtly kicking back in with the throttle, the engine sags, then goes, when you hit the gas. The "E" gear may be a good idea and may help fuel economy, but the execution is poor. I hated it.

If you're sure you must own a diesel, then turbocharge it. And if you have \$20,000 to make the experience less painful, wait for the Volvo 760 Turbo Diesel. —*Jean Lindamood*

An Audi 5000 can't be bad. I'll admit that. But I don't understand this deal about turbo-dieseling. Every time I punch the equation into my calculator, the microchips melt.

First you pay extra for a diesel engine. This is to make the car more economical, right? All you have to do is drive 80,000 miles to break even. Then you pay more for a turbocharger. That's to make the car less slow than an ordinary diesel—but it can also make it less economical. In return for all this extra dough, you get a car that's still pretty slow and only pretty economical.

This kind of double-talk puts turbo-diesels in the same category as dash-mounted earthquake detectors, as far as I'm concerned. In short, they're gimmicks. And the Audi's "E" gear, which seems designed solely to trick the EPA's chassis dyno into delivering inflated fuel-economy numbers, heightens my skepticism about this car.

Some might say that every diesel deserves a turbo, especially when the base smoker is as slow as an Audi 5000 Diesel. But if you're still going to get a slow car, why pay more? —*Michael Jordan*



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# AUDI TURBO DIESEL



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

Price as tested: \$20,680

Options on test car: base Audi 5000 Turbo Diesel, \$17,480; leather interior, \$1205; electric sunroof, \$805; AM/FM-stereo radio/cassette, \$690; power seats, \$500.

Sound system: AM/FM-stereo radio/cassette, 4 speakers

## ENGINE

Type ..... turbocharged diesel 5-in-line, iron block and aluminum head  
 Bore x stroke ..... 3.01 x 3.40 in, 76.5 x 86.4mm  
 Displacement ..... 121 cu in, 1986cc  
 Compression ratio ..... 23.0:1  
 Fuel system ..... Bosch VE mechanical fuel injection  
 Emissions controls ..... none  
 Turbocharger ..... KKK  
 Waste gate ..... KKK  
 Maximum boost pressure ..... 10.3 psi  
 Valve gear ..... belt-driven single overhead cam  
 Power (SAE net) ..... 84 bhp @ 4500 rpm  
 Torque (SAE net) ..... 127 lbs-ft @ 2800 rpm  
 Redline ..... 4500 rpm

## DRIVETRAIN

Transmission ..... 3-speed automatic  
 Final-drive ratio ..... 3.08:1  

Gear	Ratio	Mph/1000 rpm	Max. test speed
I	2.55	8.9	51 mph (4500 rpm)
II	1.45	15.8	71 mph (4500 rpm)
III	1.00	22.9	92 mph (4000 rpm)

## DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase ..... 105.5 in  
 Track, F/R ..... 57.9/56.9 in  
 Length ..... 188.9 in  
 Width ..... 69.6 in  
 Height ..... 54.7 in

Ground clearance ..... 3.9 in  
 Curb weight ..... 3060 lbs  
 Weight distribution, F/R ..... 64.7/35.3%  
 Fuel capacity ..... 19.8 gal  
 Water capacity ..... 8.5 qt

## CHASSIS/BODY

Type ..... unit construction  
 Body material ..... welded steel stampings

## INTERIOR

SAE volume, front seat ..... 51 cu ft  
 rear seat ..... 39 cu ft  
 trunk space ..... 15 cu ft  
 Front seats ..... bucket  
 Recliner type ..... infinitely adjustable  
 General comfort ..... poor fair good excellent  
 Fore-and-aft support ..... poor fair good excellent  
 Lateral support ..... poor fair good excellent

## SUSPENSION

F: ..... ind, MacPherson strut, coil springs, anti-sway bar  
 R: ..... rigid axle integral with 2 trailing arms, Panhard rod, coil springs

## STEERING

Type ..... rack-and-pinion, power-assisted  
 Turns lock-to-lock ..... 3.5  
 Turning circle curb-to-curb ..... 33.8 ft

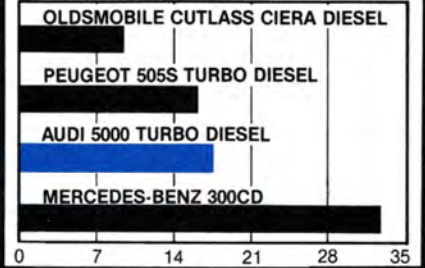
## BRAKES

F: ..... 10.2 x 0.9-in vented disc  
 R: ..... 9.1 x 1.6-in cast-iron drum  
 Power assist ..... vacuum

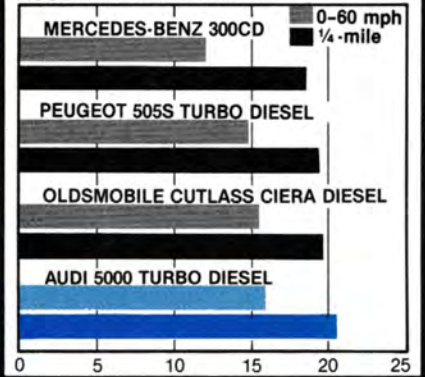
## WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size ..... 6.0 x 14 in  
 Wheel type ..... cast aluminum  
 Tire make and size ..... Goodyear Grand Prix S70, 185/70SR-14  
 Test inflation pressures, F/R ..... 30/30 psi

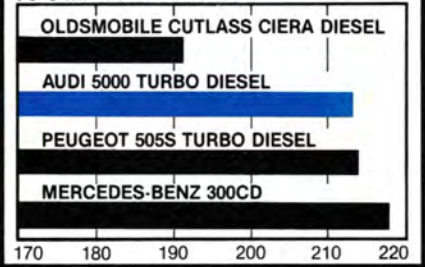
## CURRENT BASE PRICE dollars x 1000



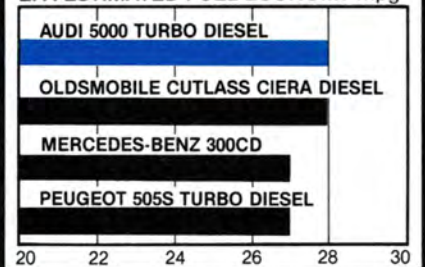
## ACCELERATION seconds



## 70-0 MPH BRAKING feet



## EPA ESTIMATED FUEL ECONOMY mpg



## CAR AND DRIVER TEST RESULTS

### ACCELERATION

Speed	Seconds
Zero to 30 mph	4.5
40 mph	7.0
50 mph	11.1
60 mph	15.9
70 mph	22.0
80 mph	34.3
90 mph	54.0
Top-gear passing time, 30-50 mph	6.8
50-70 mph	10.8
Standing 1/4-mile	20.4 sec @ 68 mph
Top speed	92 mph

### HANDLING

Roadholding, 282-ft-dia skidpad ..... 0.72 g  
 Understeer ..... minimal moderate excessive

### BRAKING

70-0 mph @ impending lockup ..... 213 ft

Modulation ..... poor fair good excellent  
 Fade ..... none moderate heavy  
 Front-rear balance ..... poor fair good

### COAST-DOWN MEASUREMENTS

Road horsepower @ 50 mph ..... 15.0 hp  
 Friction and tire losses @ 50 mph ..... 6.5 hp  
 Aerodynamic drag @ 50 mph ..... 8.5 hp

### FUEL ECONOMY

EPA city driving ..... 28 mpg  
 EPA highway driving ..... 36 mpg  
 EPA combined driving ..... 31 mpg  
 C/D observed fuel economy ..... 24 mpg

### INTERIOR SOUND LEVEL

Idle ..... 48 dBA  
 Full-throttle acceleration ..... 75 dBA  
 70-mph cruising ..... 72 dBA  
 70-mph coasting ..... 70 dBA

## INTERIOR SOUND LEVEL dBA

