

# Dual personality performance

New generation is lighter and quicker and loaded with tech.

BY SUE MEAD

There are a passel of autos that are endowed with a swoopy appearance, big wheels and a sports performance badge. The 2018 Audi RS 5 is one. However, this Audi sports coupe is a standout in the crowd for its split personality and best-in-class top speed. Developed on the track and for the track, the RS 5 has been injected with Audi's performance DNA that spans decades of motorsports history. And, at the same time, it has a temperament and persona that makes it a quiet grocery-getter, should that be your mission. It makes sense that this German automaker's "rat-pack" of high-end, highly-calibrated RS models has attracted attention from an American audience, as following the introduction of Audi Sport, they saw a 72 percent sales increase in RS/R models.

Unveiled a year ago at the 2017 Geneva Motor Show, the 2018 Audi RS5 Coupe is a smooth, quiet, comfortable grand tourer that has been worth the wait. It is the top-of-the-line model in the A5

family and has the chops and style to turn heads and make hearts race with its all-new exterior design and a newly-developed 2.9-liter V6 bi-turbo engine that pulses with 444 hp and 443 lb-ft of torque and a 0-to-60 mph time of 3.7 seconds. On sale soon, it will start at \$69,900; a Sportback version will follow.

Its all-new looks are powerful from every angle. In front it's been penned with a strong, wide stance beset with Audi's honeycomb singleframe grille and massive air intakes. The side profile flows with a wave-design shoulder line, flared fenders housing 19-inch forged alloy wheels shod with 265/35 XL summer performance tires—or available 20-inch with 275/30—and widened doorsills trimmed with matte aluminum-optic around the side windows and side mirror housings. Punctuating the back are an RS-specific rear diffuser blade, a trunk-mounted rear lip spoiler and large dual-oval exhaust outlets.

Although it's 2.9 inches longer, it weighs 132 lb

less than the previous model; 33 lb of its weight savings comes from extensive use of aluminum stampings, extrusions and body castings.

Slipping into the car after an overnight at a swanky Scottsdale locale, I found a stunning and clean interior with a wing-design wraparound dash, standard stitched leather seats with front massage, soft-sheen aluminum and carbon-fiber trim; optional are contrast stitching and red stripes. Appealing is Audi's three-spoke multifunction flat-bottom steering wheel with RS badging and shift paddles, as well as stainless-steel pedals.

As a tester who enjoys safe speed, I appreciated the configurable "virtual cockpit" digital instrumentation pack and the new RS-specific heads-up display that displays engine oil temperature, lap time and shift lights, in addition to speed and navigation information. I was ready for a day of driving that took our collective through the Fountain Hills area, as we headed to the Roosevelt Lake for our picturesque lunch stop.

The powerful engine is shifted through a new eight-speed automatic transmission that replaces the seven-speed dual-clutch version used previously and improves fuel economy. Audi's quattro system delivers 60 percent of the torque to the back under normal conditions, although 85 percent can move to the front, if needed. Torque can be sent to each of the rear wheels to enhance traction; each wheel is braked when needed to help cornering stability. Audi drive select has four modes—Comfort, Auto, Dynamic and Individual—that adjust gear shift points, steering, throttle response, damper control and adaptive cruise control (depending on vehicle options) for the mode selected. Performance is boosted with the RS-fixed suspension and available Dynamic Ride Control. A delightful mix of highway driving, as well as a collection of twisty two-lanes, gave us ample opportunity to assess performance and handling.

The RS 5 rides 0.3 inch lower than the S5 with Dynamic Ride Control; a Dynamic Pack brings red brake calipers and RS sport exhaust with black tips. My ride was set up with the Dynamic Plus

Pack that bundles a tire temperature and pressure display function, and a carbon-fiber engine cover—it can reach a top speed of 174 mph and stops efficiently with the 15.7-in. carbon ceramic brakes that are included in the package.

Of note was the comfort of both the front seats and the rear seats. Despite its coupe lines, a slight stretch in its wheelbase gives rear-seat passengers almost an inch more kneeroom.

Standard are Audi's advanced key, with keyless start, stop and entry and hands-free trunk release; rain and light sensors for automatic windshield wipers and headlights; rear view camera; Audi side assist with pre-sense rear, rear cross traffic assist, and vehicle exit assist; pre-sense city with pedestrian and vehicle collision warning and braking; and an automatic parking system for both parallel and perpendicular spaces.

Also of note are Apple CarPlay and Google Android Auto integration; Audi's optional MMI touch with handwriting recognition; and the Bang & Olufsen audio system. The four-seater has 11.6 cubic feet of luggage space in the trunk. ■

## SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	.....2.9L TFSI biturbo intercooled V6
HP/TORQUE	.....444 hp / 443 lb-ft
	<i>prior gen: 450 hp / 317 lb-ft</i>
TRANSMISSION	.....8-speed Tiptronic
	<i>prior gen: 7-spd DCT w auto-shift</i>
DRIVETRAIN	.....quattro AWD: 40/60 front/rear
	torque normal; front 85 max, rear 70 max
0-TO-60 MPH	.....3.7 sec / <i>prior gen: 4.5 sec</i>
SUSPENSION	.....F: new lightweight five-link
	w optimized steering-rack placement
	direct at wheel centers. Standard RS sport
	suspension sits 7 mm lower than S5 Coupe.
	• Available RS Sport Suspension Plus w
	Dynamic Ride Control w steel springs &
	adjustable dampers connected via diagonal
	oil lines and central valve increases sup-
	port & reduces pitch & roll movements.
BRAKES	.....Standard: RS steel brakes w
	cross-drilled discs & 6-piston front calipers
	in black or optional red, both w RS logo.
	Optional: carbon ceramic front brakes (w
	Dynamic plus pkg); F/R calipers on carbon-
	ceramic brakes are grey w RS logo
WHEELS / TIRES	.....19-in / 265/35 summer perf;
	available 20-in 275/30
WEIGHT	.....3990 lb / <i>prior gen: 4009 lb</i>
MPG	.....18/26/21 (city/hwy/comb)
	<i>prior gen: 16/23/18 city/hwy/comb</i>
BASE PRICE	.....\$69,900
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....\$975

