



Audi
Vorsprung durch Technik



100er Jahre



NL **XV-BR-05**

#88

Audi A3 (Typ 8L)

**1.8 5V T
(1999)**

**Minichamps
430 015100**

Period: 1996-2003

Built: c. 913,000

Engine: 1.8-l 4-cylinder

Power: 150 PS

Top speed: 217 km/h

Price: fl. 60,450 / £ 27,431

Predecessor:

none

Successor:

Audi A3 (Typ 8P)

Date acquisition:

19/02/1999 (#88)

Approx. first plate Approx. last plate

PL-SX-79

21-LT-LD



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A4 and A8 emulated BMW and Mercedes models; A3 set the class template.

Audi was on a bit of a roll in the mid-1990s. The introduction of its new naming strategy of A-numbered cars heralded a new era for Audi. Thanks to an innovative product strategy and further perfection of core brand strengths (such as interior sophistication and understated exterior design appeal) consumers finally credited Audi with the premium allure it had been pursuing for decades. After first introducing the A8 as its phenomenal flagship and the A4 as a much more credible alternative for the BMW 3-series than the Audi 80 had ever been, the A3 was perhaps its most clever move. The A3 set the template for the premium C-segment hatchback. BMW had had the 3-series Compact since 1994, but the chunked-off 3-series design never really convinced, and it took BMW until 2004 to offer a more serious alternative to the A3 in the form of the 1-series. Mercedes-Benz overcomplicated things and launched the A-class in 1997 as a clever but awkward looking mini-SUV rather than conventional hatchback. Only in its third generation did it call defeat: the A-class became a regular hatchback.

Under the skin, the A3 was not much more than a Mk IV Golf, introduced a year later. Yet, the more “premium” interior ambiance, refined driving dynamics, and the Audi brand appeal proved more than sufficient to convince consumers to pay

the premium over a Golf. Subsequent generations of the A3 closely followed the template set by this first generation, even to such an extreme extent that Audi has been criticized for a lack of imagination in how its designs evolve.

The A3 was available as three-door hatchback only for the first few years. A five-door hatchback followed in 1999. Engines included modern four-cylinder petrols with five valves per cylinder as well as four-cylinder TDI diesel engines. Apart from the Golf IV, the Audi A3 platform was also shared by the Skoda Octavia, Seat Leon and Toledo, Audi TT, and the Volkswagen New Beetle and Bora.

To my eyes, the first-generation Audi A3 is perhaps the best looking. Particularly with the large and subtly concave wheels as shown on this model car, the A3 exudes a very solid stance. I especially like how the wide rear haunches are accentuated by the chunky rear light clusters (there’s a whiff of Golf Mk II about them). I also like the subtle front grille on this generation much more than the gaping holes that feature on later generations. The interior on this model car also nicely showcases how Audi was able to lift the interior ambiance through the use of dark chic colours that echo the exterior.



While BMW chopped off the rear of a 3-series to create the awkward looking Compact...



... and Mercedes-Benz overthought things with its odd high-rise A-class, Audi got it just right.