Audi Q7: The return of the nimble hulk

S MURALIDHAR

The erstwhile flagship comes back into Audi's India portfolio with a petrol engine, more equipment and an upgraded cabin

Audi's relative absence from some segments of the luxury car market had its impact on its numbers over the last few years. I call it relative absence because many of its models were simply in abeyance awaiting emission-relevant powertrains. Of course, they are all coming right back into the India portfolio with new engines, new designs and added features.

The latest to join the pack is the Q7, leaving behind a curvy design and diesel power, in favour of sharper angles, a crispier design and a clean running petrol engine.

Design

The Q7's forte was always size and presence. The 2022 model continues that momentum starting with a more angular front design. Its size, at about 5 metres, is still an easy reminder even if you are a bit confused by design resemblances with the Q8 above and the Q5 below it in the model hierarchy.

The intro to the new Q7 is still the huge octagonal grille, which in the new model is both larger and sharper, filled out by vertical slats. In fact, the rear of the front also features more straight lines and angular edges. The bigger, higher air-inlets, for example, in the front fender And the multi-light Matrix LED light signature that turns the array on and off in sequence every time the Q7 is turned on or off.

The Q7's three-row seating size and the longer rear section is just a tad bit less obvious, thanks to the sharper character lines that cut across and the more angular surfaces. It gets new 19-inch alloys, but its side design is still pretty simplistic.

TEST DRIVE

The rear features a slimmer tail-lamp duo with LED lights. The tailgate is less curvy and a tighter surfaces also make it look flatter.

Chrome garnishes one that runs across from one tail-lamp to the other and another in the rear fender accentuate the sense of width and size when the Q7 is viewed at from the rear.

Cabin

The luxury car market has changed quite dramatically during the last few years, and the leading customer demands have all revolved around adding more tech to the cabin, including (annoyingly for me) adding more touchscreens and eliminating physical buttons. The new Q7 does deliver on this front with two touchscreens taking up prime real estate on the dashboard.

There is also a third digital screen – the virtual cockpit behind the wheel – that replaces the conventional instrument cluster. While the infotainment system and the virtual cockpit are welcome, touch controls for the auto aircon are quite unintuitive while driving in Indian traffic conditions.

The 10.1-inch colour touchscreen infotainment display includes controls for most vehicle and cabin functions. The screens haptic feedback for inputs may take some getting used to. The virtual cockpit display and the option to throw the navigation map wide across the screen is always comforting to see. Depending on the variant, the cabin also gets other trim differences. My test mule sported a glossy black dashboard fascia, with the Audi signature aluminium highlights. The cabin also sported a panoramic sunroof and a 30-colour ambient lighting package. The 19-speaker, 730W B&O Premium 3D sound system, creates a concert-like atmosphere in the Q7.

The vehicle also comes prefitted with provisions for optional rear entertainment screens that are already synced with the music system. The Q7's seats are large and comfy; come shod with what Audi calls "genuine cricket leather" upholstery. Front seats are powered, the second row seats can be manually adjusted for fore and aft positions, and the backrest can also be reclined. The third row set of two seats are, like in many other 7-seaters, relatively cramped and can at best accommodate children. The raised seating position means that there is very little under-thigh support, and as such long trips can be tiresome for adults in these two seats. All occupants should feel comfortable though with 4-zone airconditioning with an air-ioniser being part of the fitment.

Some of the features that I've talked about are available only in the top trim Technology variant. The other slightly lower priced variant is the Premium Plus. The new Q7 also gets a clutch of driver assistance features, including lane departure warning, steering and park assist and the 360-degree camera. Space in the cabin is really good for second row passengers. The boot is still quite narrow with all seven seats in use, but opens up over 860-litres of space if the third row is folded.

Performance

The old diesel engine of the Q7 is gone and the new, similarly sized, turbocharged 3-litre, TFSI V6 petrol engine has taken its slot in the bonnet. The engine delivers a brand typical level of refinement and quiet performance. It delivers 340hp of peak power and 500Nm of peak torque. Audi says that the new Q7 takes only 5.9 seconds to reach 100kmph from standstill. But on the road it does feel like the engine delivers a somewhat unhurried pace. But that's when I was behind the wheel while negotiating city traffic.

Get to the highway and let some of that urgency travel down to your right foot and the Q7 behaves quite differently. The 8-speed gearbox, however, continues to behave like it has seen it all, and its shifting character doesn't get harried even with your heavy foot. But the hulk does heave forward with such ease as to leave you wondering how much more go does this Q7 have. While the refinement of petrol does come through at higher revs, and is likely a big reason for an even quieter cabin, it still can not match the tractability of the previous diesel V6.

The new petrol engine's mileage, though, will remain in the single digits in most driving conditions, despite the addition of the 48-volt mild hybrid system. The system cuts off the engine while coasting.

One can choose from Audi Drive Select for sportier or more economical drive mode. But the change in powertrain character doesn't get too dramatic. For customers who might want the capability, the Q7's top trim gets other aids like Adaptive air suspension and Quattro all-wheel drive.

Safety equipment includes 8 airbags, all-wheel drive related and other electronic stability aids. Ride quality is excellent with it being almost a bit wallowy in comfort setting. But it still takes turns with a lot of weight at the wheel and enough road grip from the new tyres.

Bottomline

The new Q7 is an upgraded, more complete package now. There is still going to be only a small subset of buyers that will want the third row, but the size and presence of the Q7 has its own appeal.

The 2022 model gets more equipment, a more modern cabin and a refined petrol engine. The new Q7 Premium Plus has been priced at ₹80 lakh and the higher Technology trim variant has been priced at ₹88.33 lakh (both ex-showroom).

The 10.1-inch colour touchscreen infotainment display includes controls for most vehicle and cabin functions S MURALIDHAR

NEWS

Govt Securities: Last weekly auction of FY22 sails through

According to experts, govt may borrow next month if there is a delay in LIC IPO

OUR BUREAU
Mumbai, February 25

The last weekly auction of Government Securities (G-Sec), as per the issuance calendar for FY22, sailed through on Friday, amid speculation in the debt market that the government may hold one or two more G-Sec auctions next month, in case there is a delay in the IPO of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC).

The government raised ₹23,000 crore by auctioning three G-Secs – Floating Rate Bond 2028 (₹4,000 crore); 6.54 per cent 2032 G-Sec/ GS (₹13,000 crore); and 6.95 per cent GS 2061 (₹6,000 crore).

The RBI, which is the banker and debt manager to the government, had cancelled the previous two weekly auctions on a review of the government's cash balance position. "As per the issuance calendar, today's auction is the last one. The last two weekly auctions were cancelled. So, the demand came in today and the auction got fully subscribed," said Marzban Irani, CIO-Fixed Income, LIC Mutual Fund.

The price of the benchmark 10-year G-Sec (coupon rate: 6.54 per cent) rose about 7 paise to close at ₹98.50 (previous close: 98.425). Yield of this paper edged down by about a basis point to close at 6.7491 per cent (6.7596 per cent).

Price of the widely traded G-Sec (coupon rate: 6.10 per cent) jumped about 17 paise to close at ₹95.405 (previous close: 95.2375). Yield of this paper declined about two basis points to close at 6.7687 per cent (6.7935 per cent).

Rupee gains

Meanwhile, the rupee closed 31 paise stronger as equity markets bounced back after yesterday's steep fall in the backdrop of US stock markets closing in the positive territory overnight.

The unit closed at 75.29 to the dollar against the previous close of 75.60. Amit Pabari, MD, CR Forex Advisors, observed that investors' focus now shifts to assessing the monetary policy impact and the Fed's action on the rising inflation. He underscored that the Russia-Ukraine tensions have changed the economic picture for Fed and the pace at which it could raise rates.

Russia-Ukraine war: Experts fear IT infrastructure may come under attack

KV KURMANATH
Hyderabad, February 25

As the Russia-Ukraine war begins, cybersecurity experts fear the crisis may spill over to cyber space. They have cautioned organisations to prepare a plan to thwart attacks on critical infrastructure.

Some of the cyber attacks that Ukraine suffered in the last few weeks could be launched against other governments and organisations that are working with Ukraine. The list includes DDoS, wiper attacks and malware that defaces websites.

"Over the past nine days, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has escalated substantially, including significant increases in cyberattacks. Beginning on February 15, a series of distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks commenced," said Unit 42, an arm of cybersecurity solutions company, Palo Alto Networks. "These attacks have continued over the past week, impacting both the Ukrainian government and banking institutions. On February 23, a new variant of wiper malware named HermeticWiper was discovered in Ukraine. Shortly after, a new round of website defacement attacks were also observed, impacting Ukrainian government organisations," points out a report prepared by Unit 42 on the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

Recommendations

Several Western governments have issued recommendations to prepare for cyberattacks that could disrupt, disable or destroy critical infrastructure.

"Future attacks may target US and Western European organisations in retaliation for increased sanctions or other political measures against the Russian government," it cautioned. Cyber Security and Infrastructure Security Agency of the US said it recommends organisations, regardless of size, to adopt "a heightened posture" when it comes to cybersecurity and protecting their critical assets.

It wants them to reduce the likelihood of a damaging cyber intrusion and validate that all remote access to the organisation's network.

Besides disabling all ports and protocols that are not essential for business purposes, it wants the IT teams to review and implement strong controls outlined in CISA's guidance.

"If working with Ukrainian organisations, take extra care to monitor, inspect, and isolate traffic from those organisations," it cautioned.

"As the situation in Ukraine unfolds, the prospect of serious cyber attacks has captured the attention of cyber intelligence professionals," said Sandra Joyce, Executive Vice-President and Head of Global Intelligence of Mandiant.

HFCs may grow 13% in FY23: Ind-Ra

OUR BUREAU
Mumbai, February 25

Housing finance companies could grow at 13 per cent year-on-year in 2022-23, against 11 per cent growth this fiscal, said India Ratings and Research on Friday.

In its outlook for the sector for 2022-23, the agency noted that low interest rates, along with stable property prices and low impact of the pandemic on job losses and wage growth in the salaried segment, have led to improved affordability for borrowers.

"This accompanied with the need for a bigger housing space during the pandemic bodes well for financiers to drive the overall assets under management (AUM) growth higher, despite high competition from banks," it said.

Affordable housing finance companies could witness strong loan growth due to increasing geographic penetration and a possible increase in ticket size, and lead to higher loan growth in 2022-23, it added.

Stable rating

India Ratings and Research has maintained a neutral sector outlook and a stable rating outlook for housing finance companies for 2022-23.

"The industry has navigated the Covid pandemic with moderate disruptions in collection efficiency and a build-up in asset quality, partially also led by the implementation of the circular on NPA classification," it further said.

For 2022-23, the agency has said that gross stage 3 numbers of HFCs could increase to 3.3 per cent from 2.8 per cent in the third quarter of the fiscal, and an estimated 2.9 per cent for the whole of the current fiscal.

This would be largely due to slippages from the restructured book.

"Additionally, 2 per cent of AUM is supported by lending under Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme, which could also see slippages," it said.

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NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

The Tata Power Company Limited invites **Expression of Interest (EOI)** from eligible vendors for the following packages for their Mumbai Distribution Division:

A. Outline Agreement for Bill Printing activity for Tata Power Mumbai (Package Reference. CC22VKD041)
B. Outline Agreement for Single Phase Meter (Package Reference. CC22VKD042)
C. Outline Agreement for Supply, Installation & Commissioning of FRTU (Package Reference. CC22VKD043)
D. Corrigendum to Expression of Interest issued vide advertisement dated 14th Feb 2022 Outline Agreement (OLA) / Rate Contract for Cable Patrolling, Posting and Safeguarding for three (3) years in Mumbai Distribution area (Package Reference: CC22VJS036)

For detailed amendment and updated tender documents, please visit Tender section on website **https://www.tatapower.com**. Further details for participating in tender is given in the tender document.

Interested bidders to submit Tender Participation Fee and Authorization Letter through email before (For Packages **A to C**) **9th March 2022, 1500 Hrs** & (For Package **D**) **7th March 2022, 1500 Hrs.**, after which link from Tata Power e-Tender shall be shared. All future communication regarding the tender, bid submission, bid submission date extension etc. will be done with participating bidders only, through Tata Power E-Tender system.

MCF
Mangalore Chemicals & Fertilizers Limited

Registered Office: Level 11, UB Tower, UB City, 24, Vittal Mallya Road, Bengaluru - 560 001.
Phone: 080-45855599, Fax: 080-45855588
CIN: L24123KA1966PLC002036
E-mail: shares.mcfl@adventz.com,
Website: www.mangalorechemicals.com

NOTICE OF POSTAL BALLOT

NOTICE is hereby given that pursuant to Section 110 and other applicable provisions, if any, of the Companies Act, 2013 ("Act"), Rule 20 and Rule 22 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014 (including any amendment(s), statutory modifications or reenactment thereof for the time being in force), read with the General Circular No.14/2020 dated April 8, 2020, General Circular No. 17/2020 dated April 13, 2020, General Circular No. 22/2020 dated June 15, 2020, General Circular No. 33/2020 dated September 28, 2020, General Circular No. 39/2020 dated December 31, 2020, General Circular No. 10/2021 dated June 23, 2021 and General Circular No. 20/2021 dated December 08, 2021 issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs ("**MCA Circulars**"), SEBI (LODR) Regulations, 2015 (including any statutory modification(s) or re-enactment(s) thereof for the time being in force, and as amended from time to time), Secretarial Standard – 2 on General Meetings (SS-2) and pursuant to other applicable laws and regulations, if any, that the Company is seeking approval of the members through Postal Ballot by remote e–voting process ("e-voting") to pass the Resolutions as set out in the Postal Ballot Notice dated February 01, 2022.

In pursuance of MCA Circulars, Notice of the Postal Ballot have been mailed electronically on February 25, 2022, to those members whose e-mail addresses are registered with the Company or the depositories / depository participants / Cameo Corporate Services Limited (STA) and whose names appear on the Register of Members / List of Beneficial Owners as received from the Depositories viz., National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) and Central Depository Services (India) Limited (CDSL) as on the closure of business hours on February 18, 2022. In compliance with the requirements of the MCA Circulars, hard copies of Postal Ballot Notice along with Postal Ballot Forms and pre-paid business envelope will not be sent to the members. The shareholders are requested to carefully read the instructions indicated in the Postal Ballot Notice and communicate their assent (for) or dissent (against) through e-voting only.

The Notice of the Postal Ballot is also available on the Company's website at www.mangalorechemicals.com and on the websites of the Stock Exchanges i.e. National Stock Exchange of India Ltd and BSE Limited at www.nseindia.com and www.bseindia.com respectively. A copy of the same is also available on the website of Central Depository Services (India) Limited ("CDSL") at www.evotingindia.com.

The Company has engaged the services of CDSL to provide the e-voting facility. The instructions for e-voting are given in the Postal Ballot Notice.

Mr. Sudhir V Hulyalkar, Practicing Company Secretary (Membership No. FCS 6040 and CP No. 6137) has been appointed as Scrutinizer by the Board of Directors of the Company for conducting the Postal Ballot process in a fair and transparent manner.

The details pursuant to the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 and the said Rules are given here under:

1. Date of completion of dispatch of notice by email: February 25, 2022.
2. Date and time of commencement of e-voting: February 28, 2022 (10.00 A.M.)(IST)
3. Date and time of end of e-voting: March 29, 2022 (5.00 P.M.)(IST)
4. All members, whose names appear in the Register of Members / Beneficial owners as on the cut-off date i.e. February 18, 2022 are eligible for availing the e-voting facility. Any person who is not a member as on the cut-off date should treat this notice for information purpose only.
5. After the voting period, the e-voting module shall be disabled by CDSL and accordingly voting shall not be allowed. Once the vote is casted by the Member, he/she shall not be allowed to change it subsequently.
6. The resolutions, if passed by requisite majority, shall be deemed to have been passed on March 29, 2022 i.e. last day of the e-voting period
7. The results of the voting by Postal Ballot will be announced on March 30, 2022 by 5.00 P.M. (IST) at the Registered Office of the Company and the same shall be displayed on the Notice Board at the Registered Office and on the website of the Company at www.mangalorechemicals.com. The results shall also be communicated to the Stock Exchanges.
8. In case you have any queries or issues regarding e-voting, you may refer to Frequently Asked Questions ("FAQs") and e-voting manual available at www.evotingindia.com under "Help" section or e-mail to helpdesk.evoting@cdslindia.com the e-voting Helpdesk, addressing Mr. Rakesh Dalvi, Sr. Manager, Central Depository Services (India) Limited, A Wing, 25th Floor, Marathon Futurex, Mafatlal Mill Compounds, N M Joshi Marg, Lower Parel (East), Mumbai – 400013 or call on 022-23058542/43.

Registration of email addresses: The members of the Company, who have not yet registered or updated their correct email address, are requested to register / update the email address immediately for receiving electronic copies of the Postal Ballot Notice.

Members with Physical Holding: A signed scanned copy of request letter mentioning the folio no, email id, Mobile No., PAN (self attested copy) that is to be registered may be sent to the Company's e-mail Id : shares.mcfl@adventz.com and / or to the Company's RTA, Cameo Corporate Services Limited at investor@cameoindia.com.

Members with Demat Holding: Register email address in the demat account maintained with the depository participant.

Process for those Shareholders whose email addresses are not registered with the Depositories/Company for obtaining Login credentials for e-Voting for the Resolutions proposed in the Notice:

1. **For Physical shareholders:** Please provide necessary details like Folio No., Name of shareholder, scanned copy of the share certificate (front and back), PAN (self attested scanned copy of PAN card), AADHAAR (self attested scanned copy of Aadhaar Card) by email to Company at shares.mcfl@adventz.com /RTA at investor@cameoindia.com
2. **For Demat shareholders:** Please provide Demat account details (CDSL-16 digit beneficiary ID or NSDL-16 digit DPID + CLID), Name, client master or copy of Consolidated Account statement, PAN (self attested scanned copy of PAN card), AADHAAR (self attested scanned copy of Aadhaar Card) to Company at shares.mcfl@adventz.com / RTA at investor@cameoindia.com.

for Mangalore Chemicals & Fertilizers Limited
Vijayamahantesh Khannur
Company Secretary

Place : Bengaluru
Date : February 25, 2022