

PHOTO BY MARA POPOVICH

Extended-Use Report: **AUDI 5000 AT** **36,000 MILES**

*More impressive
with each twist of the key*

IT'S BEEN A relatively short time (June 1979) since we reported on the first 24,000 miles of our long-term test of the Audi 5000, but in the interim the car has been kept hustling hither and yon and we've now accomplished 36,000 miles. To update readers who may have missed the previous report, our 48,000-mile test Audi 5000 came into our hands in August 1978 because we wanted to determine how the car would hold up over an extended time and mileage period. After all, we had named the 5000 one of the Ten Best Cars for a Changed World in June 1978, and we were curious if we would still be as impressed with it thousands of miles later.

During the first 24,000 miles, the Audi had some minor problems, including a fuel leak upon delivery, incorrect speedometer readings, misalignment of the electric sunroof, a cracked distributor cap, an improperly fitting vent wing and reduced efficiency of the air conditioning system. Of a more serious nature was that after two attempts to correct a pulsating brake pedal by resurfacing the front discs, we discovered the latter were warped and had to be replaced. We also needed a new radiator after 20,000 miles because of a leak in the original unit. Most of these fixes were covered by Audi's 1-year/unlimited mileage warranty, so our repair costs for the first 24,000 miles were only \$42. However, it's only fair to mention that because of the accelerated rate at which our long-term cars accumulate mileage, the average driver might have been faced with repair bills for the warped discs and the leaking radiator.


Over the course of the subsequent 12,000 miles, our repair costs have been a stunningly low \$8—for a new set of windshield wiper blades! However, we have had other work done on the car, but the 36,000 miles had been rolled up prior to the 1-year warranty expiration date, so there was no charge for replacing a sparkplug wire and repairing the air conditioner—it was given another Freon charge and a loose connection was resoldered. These fixes, plus replacement of a condenser on the coil, were done when we took the car in for the 30,000-mile service, which includes a major tune-up. The bill for the routine maintenance was \$143: \$84 for labor, the remainder for parts, oil and grease,

and sales tax. This servicing includes replacing the sparkplugs, oil, air and fuel filters, adjusting the valves and a raft of other checks and adjustments.

Through the first 24,000 miles of our test, the Audi 5000 averaged 22.0 mpg and our fuel cost was 3.4¢ per mile. Over the course of the next 12,000 miles, the mpg figure climbed to 23.0, which is most likely a reflection of the type of driving that predominated, i.e., long trips. There were a number of skiing outings from our southern California home to the Lake Tahoe area, a roundtrip of roughly 1000 miles including excursions, and a major cross-country journey of some 4500 miles, as Editor-at-Large Henry N. Manney III galloped to and fro to cover the Indianapolis 500.

Although the bulk of the 24,000–36,000 mile period was concluded prior to the large increases in fuel prices, our fuel cost per mile did rise 8.8 percent to 3.7¢—naturally, we expect the next 12,000 miles to show an even more dramatic jump in the cost of gasoline.

As we accumulated the 36,000 miles, there were a couple niggling problems still unresolved: the wind leak past the ill-fitting driver's vent wing had not been corrected as requested, and the inboard clips for holding the sun visors in place were again tearing loose from their mounting points. So, resolution of these maladies will have to wait until we return with our concluding 48,000-mile report on the Audi 5000. In the meantime, the interior is holding up very well indeed, with the upholstery looking particularly good; however, the body work is showing some signs of wear: scratches under the door handles, stone chips and the like.

To sum up our feelings to this point, we are still quite impressed with the 5000 for its comfort on long jaunts, good handling characteristics, and the fact that it's a pleasure to drive. We are somewhat surprised at the low cost figure for repairs and replacements, but the unlimited mileage terms of the Audi warranty have clearly saved us some money in this area. We're looking forward to the next 12,000 miles of driving the 5000, and at the same time, some of our staff members are already expressing regret that our long-term test will soon be over—a significant compliment to the car. 

AUDI 5000	
Overall Costs & Cost per Mile for 36,000 Miles	
Delivered price, including dealer prep (\$90).....	\$11,375
Gasoline (unleaded, average of 22.4 mpg)	1258
Routine maintenance, by the book.....	284
Repairs and replacements (\$42 during first 24,000 miles, plus \$8 for new windshield wiper blades)	50
Total expenditure	\$12,967
Resale value at end of test period (est wholesale)	\$8350
Cost of driving 36,394 miles	\$4617
Overall cost per mile for 36,394 miles	12.7¢