

A Tale of Two Subarus

by Ian Lynas

For many Subaru is a well kept secret, a range of very much under rated vehicles as I recently discovered on a drive exercise which included on road and off road test routes.

Did you know that the Japanese company is the largest producer of 4x4 vehicles in the world with more than 900,000 per year, in the region of double what Land Rover

produces and their vehicles are manufactured in Japan unlike other companies who have facilities outside of Japan.

The facts continue to impress, 99.3% of Subaru models are still on the road after ten years; clearly you can become very attached to such a vehicle, more likely that it serves its purposes extremely well.

Refreshing for some in our midst, as yet no plug ins or hybrids and that is not to say that at some future date Subaru may come up with the like; for now satisfy your driving needs with the choice of petrol or diesel engines.

True to state that in Northern Ireland, it was not the off road capabilities of

Subaru which caught our attention but the sport of rallying. Yes Subarus ruled on the World Rally Championship stage and in lesser championships around the world, the brand became a rallying legend and that will be for ever more.

Picture this, very wet conditions; not ideal for many but absolutely perfect to go Subaru motoring; I could not have wished for better conditions to put two models from Subaru through their paces and right away I must state, road tyres, no gimmicks, no fancy frills, just solid, reliable engineering which puts their vehicles top of the class.

My choice the XV and the Forester both powered by a two litre diesel engine with 147PS, oddly enough the Forester felt just that little bit sharper in terms of performance.

Both vehicles had a six speed manual transmission, although later in the day I did take a Forester off road, the same power unit but with an automatic transmission.

On road the handling of both drew praise and an element of this can be attributed to the Boxer engine which



rests at a low level thus playing its part in reassuring handling.

Their symmetrical all wheel drive is legendary, the company first produced such a system back in 1972 with the Leone and over the years it has been refined to become one of the best currently available. Yes the Boxer engine and the all wheel drive system are the hallmarks of Subaru.

Now to the XV, it is a compact SUV and I can see it been the choice for a family, launched four years ago and now updated with engine improvements, a more direct steering and cabin enhancements, it is one vehicle worth taking a test drive.

I like its no nonsense styling, driving position and while I did not take it off road I am confident that it will deal with what ever the weather conditions are.

Acceleration is adequate at under ten second s for the sprint from rest to 62mph and I managed to squeeze just short of 48mpg.

With the XV, two trim levels, SE and SE Premium and of course the choice of manual or automatic transmissions.

The Forester accounts for one third of all Subaru sales and is a firm favourite. It first reached our shores in 1997 and like the XV it was updated this year.

Right away you will notice improved exterior styling; previous models looked just too commercial for my taste.

The interior has been given a makeover and you benefit from rear seat heating, a heated steering wheel which gets the thumbs up from this driver and so the list goes on and on.

There is no doubt the Forester in its latest guise ticks all of the right boxes but away from the cosmetics comes capability, it is superb off road as I discovered when I tackled a difficult off road course in equally trying weather conditions; I would best describe the location as simply a mud bath.

Thanks to all of the systems part of the Forester it never put a wheel wrong-totally impressive.

At some future date I hope to have a Forester on my home patch and I will bring a much fuller impression of this vehicle, quite easy to understand just why it has become such a key model for Subaru.

Driven November 2016