

Kia Strikes with the Stinger GT S

by Ian Lynas

Audi, BMW and Mercedes there is something new about to join you in the fast lane- the Kia Stinger GT S; a grand tourer in five door fastback guise which marks an all new departure for the South Korean carmaker.



However they are quick to point out that they are not about to enter the premium sector of the market but to challenge and this I am confident they will do.

In order to get a first impression I took on a generous test drive which took me through seven counties in England from a base in Cornwall.

On arriving at Newquay Airport we were greeted by the sight of three Stingers at high speed (161mph) on what is one of the longest runways in the UK.

Purists are going to adore this newcomer

as it is rear wheel drive, but I must point out that all wheel drive will be offered in Europe.

As the fastest and most powerful model ever from Kia it is one of a planned five-strong family of Stinger models and early next year in our market a 2.0T petrol and a 2.2 CRDi Turbo will add further choice.

Should you have been lucky to attend the 2011 Frankfurt Motor Show you might have caught sight of the Kia GT Concept, this is the inspiration for the GT S.

While in Cornwall I had the opportunity to have a word with one of the development team and he explained that after he drove an early prototype, he found it sterile. So with a number of tweaks the newcomer was transformed into a driver's car.

A huge amount of testing was carried out, 1.1 million kilometres of testing, the equivalent of driving 27 times around the world as well as 10,000 kilometres, 480 laps, around the Nurburgring.

Featuring grand tourer proportions with a long bonnet, short front overhang, extended wheelbase, a 'Coke-bottle' nip in the waist and a long rear overhang

with broad shoulders, the 'tiger-nose' grille between complex headlights, castellated windscreen and simple, unadorned flanks and special 19-inch alloy wheels and quad exhaust outlets visually complete the understated performance look.



Joint co-operation re design from the company's European design headquarters in Frankfurt, with input from the main design centre at Namyang in South Korea. In harmony with the exterior the interior continues the GT theme with an aluminium-finish centre console, satin chrome interior door handles, aeronautically inspired air vents, alloy pedals, suede headlining and stainless steel door scuff plates emphasise gran turismo luxury and quality.



The tactile winged dashboard with its high horizontal sweep is interrupted only by the central eight inch touch screen. Luxury is added courtesy of Nappa leather upholstery complemented by leather trim on the D-shaped steering wheel, gear shift, dashboard and door armrests.

Five can travel in comfort and for their trappings 406 litres of boot space.

However should the need arise for more cargo space, with the rear seats folded- 1,114 litres are available.

State-of-the-art driver aids and connectivity systems, as well as a number of Kia firsts including an advanced head-up display of essential

driver information. The latter gets a big thumbs up from me.

But for most the real icing on the cake is performance. A 3.3-litre direct-injection twin-turbo V6 T-GDi engine with 365bhp can take you from rest to 62mph in around 5 seconds and should you have access to an airport runway on to a top speed of 168mph.

Other goodies which adds to the joy of driving the fastest ever Kia, a Vehicle Stability Management system which incorporates dynamic torque vectoring for exceptional cornering performance.

The Eight-speed automatic transmission drives the rear wheels through a limited slip differential, with up to five different shift and throttle programmes, accessed through the car's electronic Drive Mode Selector.

Suspension wise, a MacPherson strut front and multi-link rear suspension which features electronically-controlled Dynamic Stability Damping Control. I did take note that further suspension testing was carried out on UK roads for RHD versions.

Just one minor disappointment, I felt a lack of feel with the steering, a rack-mounted motor driven power system featuring drive select modes and variable gear ratio.



With all the performance you are ever likely to require at the command of the right foot, braking is very important. Please be reassured the GT S is equipped with Brembo-developed ventilated disc brakes, measuring 350mm at the front gripped by quad-piston calipers and 340mm at the rear, fitted with and dual-piston calipers. No surprise to learn that Continental developed rubber especially for the newcomer, 225/40 R19 front and 255/35 R19 rear.

No escaping technology with the modern car and the GT S comes well equipped with an extensive suite of standard-fit driver aids includes Autonomous Emergency Braking, Lane Keep Assist, High Beam Assist, Speed Limit Information warning, Driver Attention warning, Blind Spot Detection with Rear Cross Traffic Alert and an Active Bonnet to protect pedestrians in a collision.

With the earlier noted 8 inch touch screen navigation system, Kia Connected Services with TomTom and Android Auto and Apple CarPlay voice control integration are fitted as standard.

Bluetooth with music streaming, a DAB radio, MP3 compatibility and a 7 inch full-colour Thin Film Transistor supervision cluster.

One feature really impressed the head-up display.

For music on the move a 15-speaker harman/kardon premium sound system with subwoofer, external amp and front centre speaker fitted as standard. To be honest I preferred the sound from the V6 engine.

What price for such a package, £40,495 and there is only one option-metallic paint and this is the only car in its class to offer a 7 year warranty.

On returning to Belfast International Airport I got onboard my weekly test car which just happened to be the new Picanto and despite its modest one litre engine it does manage to deliver and it does now show the wide choice of models in the Kia family. Finally if Kia ever sends a GT S my way for a long term test I will be one very happy motoring scribe.

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