

DACIA LOGAN

by David M Ross

I've long been a sucker for affordable cars. Bad ones can be terrible to own but the more successful ones leave those who go on to own more expensive vehicles with wonderful memories.



Among those that have achieved greatness and gone down in history as classics are the Citroen 2CV, Volkswagen Beetle and Renault 4. All of which we can look back on fondly as many bring memories to mind such as great days out with family and friends.

For a while it looked as if those days were over. Legislators, as often as not carried away with their corruptive power, have come up with demands that have made cars not only much heavier than those of old but also much more expensive.

Driver aids and passenger safety systems have doubtless made motoring safer but they cost money and that results in cars that are far from cheap.

So do we just go on stumping up or do we go an alternative route and seek out the best second hand bargains? Possibly, but now there is an alternative. You buy a new car but one built where wages and overheads are a fraction of what they are in Northern Europe and in all fully developed economies.

And, thanks to robots, countries where there may be little or no history, and therefore experience, of car building can produce build quality the equal of much more expensive vehicles.



We've known of the Rumanian Dacia brand for many years, the early Dusters of yesteryear being horrendously badly put together. But, with engines and much of the running gear sourced from Renault, the seeds of something much better to come were sown.



The first of the new generation Dacias, the new Duster, made quite an impact but that has been comprehensively covered elsewhere. The major difference being that, today, Dacia is fully owned by Renault.

For those looking for an inexpensive SUV, the Duster makes a whole load of sense, as does the Sandero for hatchback buyers. Both struck me as worthy, but why no Dacia Logan? The roomy hatch that borders on an estate and is seen in huge numbers all across the Continent.

My understanding is that, currently, there are only two Dacia Logans in the UK and I had the opportunity to try both, one being the Access and the other the more expensive Ambiance.

A large, roomy family car with phenomenal carrying space, a bright and airy interior to go with its cheery demeanour, acceptably good looks and major and minor controls that make for a decent drive. For that, what would you expect to pay? Especially as it comes with a three-year warranty.

Well, the least expensive one would set you back just £6,995 in Access guise while the more expensive comes in at just £7,795. Neither should break the bank and, while the three year or 60,000 mile warranty probably means work being done by the dealer, it's Renault dealers that sell Dacias so you can expect a decent level of service and work carried out by fully trained technicians.

But why should anything go wrong? As I found out the day I drove the Logans, Renault has really, and I mean really, upped its act where build quality and engineering are concerned. The new Clio for instance, is light years ahead of its predecessors, feeling as robust as a VW Golf.

So I was not surprised to find the 1.2 16v 75bhp engine in the Logan Access got the car moving along quite smartly. In fact, I favoured it over the Ambiance's TCe 90 turbocharged three cylinder. It just felt smoother but both are excellent performers. The five-speed gearchanges are nothing to be ashamed of either.

In the Access you do without electric windows, roof bars, chrome air vent surrounds and chrome steering wheel logo surrounds. There's a monotone upholstery colour instead of two tone and the

door mirrors are manually-adjusted. The Ambiance has a higher security level and a bit more comfort and convenience with a boot light, electric front windows, passenger vanity mirror and grab handle and a luggage cover. For the money you pay for the Access, why cry over a few luxuries it won't kill you to do without?

But best of all, and the Achilles heel of so many cheap cars of the past, are the seats. With impressive steering, roadholding, ride comfort and brakes, it would have been a crying shame to let the Logan down by fitting poor seats but what's there are more than up to the rest of the car. Good support is essential if you are to stay away from the chiropractor and that's what you get.

They round off a great package. I loved the Logan and being a bit parsimonious myself, loved the thought of not having to put myself in hock to buy one.