

DS4

By Jim Mc Cauley

For Citroen it is a case of now you 'C' it, now you don't, but has the progression to stand-alone DS models performed the magic for the French company? For reasons best know to themselves, Citroen have removed their badging from what is to be perceived as an exclusive in-house brand and their



up-market models now only sport a 'DS' badge. Test choice was the C4 derivative, the DS4 with its own styling and more luxurious and comprehensive appointments.

Citroen can on occasions blend innovation with sensible practicality and many of their main range models are testament to this. But what of the DS range? The DS4 clearly differs in presentation forsaking the elongated chevron grille and all hints of Citroen branding for the Art-Deco DS badge and deeper, more assertive and executive-looking grille. The styling adds a solidity and refinement to the image with the

recessed rear door handles incorporated into the tapering side glass area and adding a coupé element to the car. However, its higher stance is at odds with the flowing upper lines and there is a styling conflict that manipulates the viewer's interpretation of what category, if any, into which the DS4 can comfortably nestle.

Underneath is the wide choice of Citroen petrol and diesel power units with the test car featuring the company's top of the range Blue HDi 150hp diesel unit. Driving through its 6-speed manual gearbox, this combination returns a 0-62 mph time of just 8.8 seconds with the potential to see 129 mph. Working through the six ratio range, the engine remains quite refined even as the revs increase with it coming into its own at open road speeds, where it is quite relaxed. Gear change is OK but not outstanding, while a relatively heavy clutch could potentially prove tiring in slow stop / start city traffic.

The DS4 benefits from a slightly raised driving position, and despite the higher ride height, its wide track and firm suspension offer good cornering support. However, on the test vehicle with the optional 19-inch, 40 per cent profile tyres, suspension responded sharply on poorer





surfaces, distracting from the high level ambience of the front cabin.

As the vehicle was finished in the higher 'Prestige' trim, the luxury balance was very much to the front of the cabin with those in the rear less well catered for. Lavishly folded leather seats all-round could have come out the back door of any supercar producer, with the front ones also featuring selected heating. However, there are a number of problems for those in the rear, starting with avoiding the pointed edge of the rear doors and then slipping through the narrow access to be greeted with limited leg room. For the central

5th passenger, the situation is worse with the intrusion of the central console. And while the rear seat passengers benefit from grab handles and a second courtesy light, door windows are fixed with no opening options.

But in other respects, the car seeks to strut its stuff as an executive challenger with a lavish equipment list that would have a purchaser trembling towards the £30,000 mark if considering a relevant competitor. For the DS4, the model tested is listed at £23,595 and comes with a full suite of active and passive safety provision, as well as keyless entry with push button starting, auto-locking on moving off, automatic lights and wipers, reversing sensors with colour rear view camera, DAB infotainment centre with 7-inch colour screen, dual zone air conditioning and selectable instrument display lighting.

Overall, the DS4 remains a Citroën, despite the deletion of its parentage on the badging. But it offers a lot for its money in terms of its performance, finish and equipment levels and has the proven development of Citroën's engineering to back it up. But rear seat room must be considered in any purchase decision, and the alternatives don't necessarily have to come from other manufacturers, as the C4 range in its various guises covers just about any requirement.

The DS4 is covered by the company's comprehensive 3-year / 60,000 mile warranty while the model tested is in Group 26E for insurance purposes. With regards to running costs, the car has an official combined fuel consumption of 72.4 mpg and with a CO2 emissions of 103gms/km is in Band B for zero annual road tax. For business users, the vehicle has a Benefit in Kind rating of 20%.



(Driven February 2016)