

FORD FOCUS ST

By Jim Mc Cauley

When you produce the benchmark handling car in class, it is simply a must to take it to the ultimate performance edge. And while Ford has an established history in producing performance saloons, this is the first time that such a model is being rolled out as a world car with simultaneous launch in 40 countries.

The latest ST badge to adorn a Ford comes on the new Focus, interestingly available only in 5-door and estate bodystyles, the company arguing that the vast majority of buyers (70%) are now looking for 5-door cars.



Power for the new flagship performer comes from the latest version of Ford's 2.0 litre turbocharged EcoBoost engine, outputting 250PS and capable of hitting 62 mph (100km/h) from rest in 6.5 seconds with the potential to see 154 mph. The main engineering trick however is transferring the

power as safely as possible to the front wheels via the car's standard 6-speed manual gearbox. And this transfer relies mainly on a raft of electronic packages that manipulate power delivery and individual wheel braking to maintain the car in as safe an attitude as possible.

Moving off into London traffic en route to Ford's Longcross test track the car is docile and restrained with the excitement on open country roads proportional to the throttle input. A firm suspension setup is less harsh than expected, yet provides the necessary cornering response, while the electronic power assisted steering is high geared and sharp in response, but feedback from the road surface is vague, lacking the ultimate communication expected in a performance model.

Increase the revs and the engine's dedicated sound system which relays the intake snarl directly into the cabin plays an appropriate melody to accompanying forward urge.

Slipping onto the high speed track at the Ford test facility, the refinement found at motorway speeds remains undisturbed as



the speed advances into three figures, while the steering response and suspension support show that they competently underwrite the power potential.

Styling-wise, the signature colour of Tangerine Scream identifies the uniqueness of the ST more so than the five other colours, but both variants – 5-door hatch and estate – sit 10mm lower on their suspension and feature a unique front bumper unit with additional aerodynamic winglets, large rear spoiler, additional side sills and central double exhaust outlets.

Inside, there is the familiar Focus dash but with additional instrumentation on top, and gripping Recaro sports seats which offer excellent and comfortable support.

Trim-wise, the car is available in ST1, 2 and 3 options ranging in price from £21,995 and stepping up in two increments of £1,500 and a further £2,000. 18-inch alloys are standard across the trim levels as are keyless starting, air conditioning, Bluetooth and USB connectivity.

Best buy would be the ST2 model which adds partial leather trim, rain sensitive wipers and automatic headlights as well as self-dimming rear view mirror and heated windscreen.

Despite the performance credentials of the car, environmental aspects have advanced with a 20% improvement in CO₂ over the previous model, now 169 gms/km, and mixed driving fuel economy of 39mpg.

The German built model has been available for delivery from September 2012.

