

KIA Proceed GT

By Jim Mc Cauley

Stunning at every angle; mean, menacing and a thing of beauty. Kia has set the cat among the pigeons with its first foray into the performance market. The Proceed GT has a clear 'Don't mess with me' look, but can it hold its own against the established contenders? Benchmark competition comes from a quartet of performance hatches from Ford, Vauxhall, Volkswagen

and Renault, all of which have their devotees and every one a development provenance.

But what of the new kid on the block? Canonised within the company, the initial acknowledgement for design has to go to Peter Schreyer who has overseen the emergence of Kia from a lesser known Korean manufacturer to a world force that can competently back up its products with a 7-year warranty.

Power for the GT comes from an upgraded version of the company's well established 1.6 litre petrol engine, the turbocharged unit now producing 201 HP with a deliciously supporting 265Nm of torque. The statistical return is a 0-60 mph time of 7.4 seconds with the potential to top 143 mph. And while this is not enough to trump the competition, it is the delivery of the power and the fluidity through the gears that endears you to it.

Mid range enthusiasm is shown by a 37 to 60 mph time of 5.4 seconds and a 50-75 mph time of 7.3 seconds, keeping the car instantly responsive to the slightest tip on the throttle. A major rework of the suspension sees increased firmness and greater roll resistance, yet produces sufficient initial 'give' to maintain a welcome degree of comfort. Steering is also sharpened for the GT, and while not providing surface rendering feedback, nevertheless delivers the accuracy required in a performance model.

The interior features figure hugging Recaro front seats in the all-black 5-seater cabin. Upholstery is part leather and part suede with red stitching, echoing the red base line on the lower grille of this top performance



model. Instrumentation is clearly presented while the LCD multi-function display allows the driver to switch between analogue-type or GT performance digital information. In performance mode it shows the car's speed, engine torque, turbo boost pressure and engine coolant temperature.



The 3-door GT may be the new kid on the block but has nothing to learn when it comes to presentation and performance. The established icons have to respect the new arrival and surrender sales to this well-sorted competitor.

The new model is available in two options, standard GT and GT Tech at a £2,500 premium over the standard car's price of £19,995. The European built car – at the company's Zilina plant in Slovakia – will be sold only in Europe. A launch edition of just 50 models have been assigned to the UK

with cars available in black, red or white. The launch edition with several additional features including a sunroof, high gloss cabin inserts and ambient interior lighting will be available only in Fusion White Metallic.

All derivatives are fully equipped with air conditioning, cruise control, automatic lights with cornering function, reversing sensors and Bluetooth connectivity included in the comprehensive specification list.

The official average fuel consumption is given as 38.2 mpg, while a CO2 emissions of 171 gms/km puts it in Band H for annual car tax.

While the new model enjoys a 7-year warranty, this is subject to a standard servicing schedule. Kia's 'Care-3' all-inclusive servicing plan covers the cost of the first three 12-month / 10,000 mile services for £399.