

## Kia Carens 1.7 CRDi

By Jim Mc Cauley

Riding on the crest of a wave with sales records that the rest of the industry would kill for, Kia has launched their new Carens MPV. This significantly completes the



regeneration of their model ranges since the arrival of design director Peter Schreyer, and brings their popular MPV up to date in terms of both appearance and performance.

Available in three engine options, test choice was the lower output 1.7 litre diesel model, finished in mid range '2' trim. This turbo-diesel outputs 114 bhp at 4,000 rpm and drives through its standard 6-speed manual gearbox. The end result is a 0-62 mph time of 12.6 seconds with a potential top end speed of 112 mph.

Despite the majority of new vehicles growing in size, Kia has managed to pare the dimensions of the third generation Carens down a few millimetres in all directions, most significantly 45 mm in height. Increasing the wheelbase and lowering the seating position means there are no adverse effects on accommodation and even luggage space benefits with increased volume and a lower loading lip.

The lines of the new model are beautifully balanced with the use of a fine chrome line to scribe the window line and grille circumference, adding a very up-market touch. Inside, and the move upmarket is clearly intended with clear, crisp instrumentation, quality and perfectly fitting mouldings and an overall ambience that nudges at classic German expectations.

On-road, and it very soon becomes clear that the aesthetics of the new Carens are more than matched by the dynamics. A quiet running and responsive engine is complemented by its car-like handling with precise steering response and comfortable ride up-front. Even in the mid-row seats, closer to the rear axle, ride remains very acceptable while overall cabin quietness allows for normal level conversations to be held. The mid-row accommodation benefits from three individually moveable seats, and they, like the rearmost pair fold flat to provide a cavernous load bay when not required.



For long loads, the back of the front passenger seat folds flat to extend the carrying options.

Access-wise, the Carens retains the traditional 4-door hinging, maintaining the important structural middle B-post that some competitive models now integrate into the front doors when they have sliding or forward opening rear doors. Folding middle-row seats provide access to the rear-most pair, while the lower rear sill and wide opening hatch provide easy luggage loading.



Available in the now accepted Kia trim levels of 1,2 and 3, the test vehicle was in mid-range '2' trim, tipping the price to a tad over the £20,000 mark. But in mid range trim, there is an exceptionally comprehensive equipment list which includes 7-seat accommodation with sliding and reclining mid-row seats, driver's seat height adjustment and reach and rake adjustment on the steering column.

Cabin comfort features include dual automatic air conditioning, all-round electric windows, ambient lighting, cooling glovebox, underfloor storage, RDS radio and Bluetooth connectivity with voice

recognition.

With regards to active and passive safety provision, the vehicle is again comprehensively equipped and includes six airbags, Electronic Stability Control, Vehicle Stability Management and Hill Start Assist. There is also a 3-way choice on the steering weighting as well as speed sensing door locking and reversing sensors.

Overall, Kia has raised the stakes once again, not only with respect to the outgoing model but also with regards to the competition. The vehicle goes as good as it looks and its visual appeal will initially tempt potential buyers to get in and test drive.

On the economy and environmental fronts, the test vehicle with its 114 bhp 1.7 litre turbo diesel has a quoted combined fuel consumption of 60.1 mpg, and with a CO2 emissions of 124 gms/km is in Band D for zero road tax in Year 1 and £95 per annum thereafter. This model is listed at £20,595 and is covered by Kia's unique 7-year / 100,000 mile transferable warranty with 1-year's roadside assistance.