

Kia Cee'd Sportswagon

By Jim Mc Cauley

Hard on the heels of the launch of the all-new Cee'd hatchback model from the Korean firm of Kia, comes an estate version, produced exclusively for the European market. Aimed at the fleet buyer, the car will be sold in the UK with a choice of two diesel engines of 1.4 and 1.6 litre capacities. Test choice was the smaller option which produces 89 bhp and while an automatic transmission is available on the 1.6 litre car,



the 1.4 drives through a 6-speed manual gearbox, with start / stop fuel saving technology as standard.

Styling-wise, the abruptness of the rear end treatment of the hatchback gives way to a more relaxed transition of the lines on the Sportswagon with similarities to German competitors – a not surprising resemblance as the car is a product of Kia's Frankfurt Design Studios.

The interior mirrors that of the hatchback with a dominant 3-instrument cluster ahead of the driver in the raised binnacle, with the dash dropping gently away atop the silvered panels surrounding the air vents. The layout is very driver focused and the steering wheel has thumb controls for audio, phone and trip computer.

On road, and the Sportswagon emerges not as an estate version of the hatchback, but as a different vehicle in its own right. It is a better balanced car offering a more engaging drive than the hatchback while the additional rear glass area provides greatly improved visibility.

The 1.4 litre engine pulls extremely well, feeling sharper off the mark than its official 0-60 mph time of 13.4 seconds. But any diesel's attraction is in its mid range response, and here there is excellent pick-up if you select your gears to feed off the 220 Nm of torque above the 1500 rpm mark. A supportive suspension to cope with the car's load carrying capacity is neatly tuned to provide a settled ride, while overall refinement reflects not just the quietness of the engine, but also the overall acoustics of the car.

The packaging is interesting in that it appears much longer than the hatchback



yet its overall footprint extends a mere 15 mm to offer a massive 538 litres of load space, extendible to 1642 litres with the rear seats folded. To aid loading, the boot floor is flush with the tailgate opening and the 60:40 split rear seat bases and backrests fold to ensure a completely flat load deck. In addition there is an under-floor storage compartment and side load areas as well as a retractable luggage cover and 12 volt power outlet.

Equipment-wise, the test vehicle was in range opening '1' trim of the four options available, yet comes with a lot of the essential equipment including tilt and reach steering column, height adjustable driver's seat, wheel mounted audio controls, air conditioning, electric front windows, ambient cabin lighting, daytime running lights and USB audio connection with Bluetooth connectivity. On the safety front, the car comes with six airbags, Electronic Stability Control and Hill Start Assistance.

With regards to environmental and economy considerations, the 1.4 Cee'd Sportswagon returns an official 67.3 mpg on the combined cycle and with a CO2 emissions of 109 gms/km is in band B for zero car tax in its first year and £20 per annum thereafter. But a major attraction is its industry leading warranty of 7-years / 100,000 miles, 12-years anti-perforation guarantee and 1-years roadside assistance, enhancing its competitive list price of £16,895.