

# KIA SOUL 1.6 GDi

By Jim Mc Cauley



For Kia, the original Soul was the car that escaped from the company's conservative design enclosure and prompted the public to believe that there might be more to follow. Indeed there was, and the South Korean company revised its total model line-up with a range of cars that now sit on many buyers' must-have list.

Now Kia has re-launched the car, that while retaining the styling impact of the 2008 original, is bigger and roomier with improved driving dynamics. Built on a new chassis, based on that of the Ceed range, the second generation Soul is available with a choice of two 1.6 litre engines – one petrol and one diesel.

Test choice was the 1.6 litre GDi petrol model, producing 130 bhp and with 161 Nm of torque available at 4,850 rpm. This drives the front wheels through a 6-speed manual gearbox allowing the car to cover the benchmark 0-60 mph time in 10.6 seconds with the potential to reach 115 mph. Acceleration is smooth if the revs are kept above the mid two-thousands between changes to maintain pace while the Ceed underpinnings provide a nicely balanced and well insulated ride on all but the poorest of surfaces. Overall comfort is helped by a slightly longer wheelbase and wider track than the original model, while the electric power steering offers taut precision through corners in its Sport setting. This has a three-way choice of assistance with an option either side of Normal. Sport offers improved response and feedback at higher speeds while Comfort provides greater assistance for low speed manoeuvring. Despite its 4X4 looks, the Kia Soul is strictly a front wheel drive vehicle, but its semi-elevated driving position offers a



more commanding view of the road.

The interior reflects the youthful appearance of the exterior with dashboard layout consisting of constructed elements as opposed to a more holistic inclusion. The instrument panel is dominated by a clear central speedometer flanked by rev counter and fuel / temperature gauges, while the central 8-inch colour screen offers clear information and very easy to navigate controls.



The new model comes initially with a choice of three trim options – Start, Connect and Connect Plus with two other more extrovert options joining the line-up in the Autumn. The standard range is very well equipped with six airbags, keyless entry, air conditioning, all-round electric windows, Flex Steer variable power steering and steering wheel mounted audio controls. Stepping up to Connect trim increases the wheel size to 17-inch alloys and adds Bluetooth connectivity, front fog lights and reversing camera. The current range topping model adds satellite navigation and premium sound system with front speaker mood lights.

The new Soul is a quirky model in the company's line-up, grabbing attention with its square-cut body frame and assertive road

presence. On the economy front, this refined petrol engined version returns an official 41.5 mpg on the combined cycle and with a CO2 emissions of 158 gms/km is in Band G for annual road tax. The model tested in 'Start' trim with steel wheels is listed at £12,600 and like all Kia models is covered by the company's industry leading 7-year / 100,000 mile comprehensive warranty. On the safety front, the new Kia Soul range has a 5-star EuroNCAP rating.