

# Mazda CX-3 2.0

By Jim Mc Cauley



Mazda's challenger in the small SUV market went on sale here in middle 2015 and the company present the vehicle as offering new levels of sophistication for the sector. There is certainly choice in the new range with an 18 model line-up offering both front and all-wheel drive variants. But while the opposition may offer pint-sized power units, Mazda keep to the larger engine options, which nevertheless are good performers in terms of refinement and emissions.

While a 1.5 litre diesel engine is on offer, the bulk of UK sales is reckoned to be with the lower output 2.0 litre petrol model. This was the

test choice with its 120PS more than capable of keeping the CX-3 honest on the road. Its basic statistics give it a 0-62mph time of 9.0 seconds with the potential to see 119mph. On road, and the advantages of the Mazda2 underpinnings are obvious with its superb chassis maintaining the poise of the vehicle throughout. There is excellent throttle response which permits you to tease the rev counter close to its 6000rpm red line without any hesitation while excellent steering response with good reaction time in heavy cross winds confirms Mazda's claim of endowing the car with new levels of sophistication. Supporting its enthusiastic pace is a relatively firm suspension set-up, which does its job without intruding on overall passenger comfort.

The cabin adds to the quality feel with the leather trim of the top spec test car edged throughout, including the dashboard and control surfaces, with red stitching.

For the driver, the instrument binnacle is dominated by the central rev counter with inset digital speedometer, and for Northern Ireland drivers, an easy push-button conversion takes it to km/hr as required in the Republic of Ireland. The test vehicle also benefited from a head-up display which provides useful monitoring of





speed, particularly in lower speed limit areas.

While front seat occupants have no complaints about comfort in the high back seats and surrounding space, the three rear seat occupants will find knee room restricted. But access all-round is good and for cabin visibility at night there are both front and centre mounted courtesy lights.

Luggage access is via a wide hatch which extends side to side to the internal wheelarches, while a low sill provides reasonable clearance to the 350 litre boot.

Safety-wise, the model comes with twin front, and front side airbags, while supporting electronic handling packages include stability control, cruise control, city brake support and lane departure warning. For additional safety and convenience, the test vehicle in top 'Sport Nav' trim was also fitted with front and rear parking sensors and reversing camera.

Maintaining the high level appointments, the 'Sport Nav' model also comes with automatic lights and rain sensing wipers, as well

as keyless entry, push button starting, and central coloured infotainment screen with satellite navigation and Bluetooth connectivity. The Premium Bose audio system and navigation requirements are operated either via the central touch screen or Audi-type control panel on the lower central console.

Overall, the Mazda CX-3 is an interesting contender in the compact SUV market which has wide ranging challengers in terms of segment interpretation. These include the Nissan Juke and Renault Captur, which come in less expensive, but the CX-3 steps up to its higher price in terms of its performance and economy.

While the 2.0 litre petrol range opens at £17,595, the model tested is top 'Sport Nav' trim is listed at £21,840. This model's official combined fuel consumption is given as 47.9mpg, while in over 200 miles of driving in mixed conditions, the test vehicle on 18-inch wheels recorded 36.6mpg, 76% of the laboratory test figure.

With a CO2 emissions of 137gms/km, the model is in Band E for annual road tax of £130. For company car users, the BIK rate for basic rate taxpayers comes in at £69 per month and £138 at the higher rate. Like all Mazda models, the CX-3 comes with a comprehensive 3-year / 60,000 mile warranty.



