

Mercedes-Benz C180 Sport Coupé

By Jim Mc Cauley

The latest design direction from Mercedes-Benz has turned the sedate image around and given their cars a more youthful and dynamic appeal. None more so that in their compact C Class Coupé which can fulfil the sporting aspirations of its owner for around £30,000 but with a 1.8 litre engine?

With manufacturers continually squeezing more performance out of smaller engines,

this range opening turbocharged petrol model should not be dismissed. In the test car, fitted with the £1,500 optional automatic transmission, 62mph can be seen in 8.9 seconds with a potential 139 mph on the horizon.

The car also carries AMG badging indicating styling additions and more importantly 18-inch AMG alloy wheels on low profile tyres (different percentage front / rear) and lowered sports suspension. While this adds to the mean look of the car, it does few favours to the ride which communicates just how poorly surfaced many of our roads are.

Cabin fits like a well-cut suit and dash

layout comes straight from the German design book – no nonsense practicality with engineering accents. The model benefits from a sports steering wheel with inset audio controls while the automatic option also includes manual override paddles. In short, a far cry from Mercedes interiors of old, and a perfect youthful interpretation that complements the sharp exterior lines.

On road, the 7-speed automatic takes care of the pacing, making all the necessary moves at the right time to maintain progress. Steering lacks the ultimate sharpness expected of a coupé, but if you opt for the smallest engine in the range you are looking for cruising comfort rather than definitive performance attributes. But the car is far from slow and cleverly disguises its pace in the ambience of the cabin.

A further surprise is the level of specification in the car which at first looks as though it is loaded with extras,

but in the test vehicle the additional bling was minimal. Of the extras included only the auto 'box and leather upholstery at £1,350 would be top of the temptation list. Standard on the car is automatic climate control, automatic bi-xenon headlights with auto dipping, rain sensing wipers, front and rear parking sensors and Bluetooth





connectivity. Like any Mercedes, it is the equipment you don't see that underwrites the engineering excellence of the car, and safety features are comprehensive. These include 'Attention Assist' which detects and alerts to long journey fatigue, ESP with acceleration skid control, and knee and pelvis airbag units for the driver in addition to twin front, side and curtain protection.

The C180 Blue Efficiency Coupé with AMG Sport upgrades is listed at £30,220 with the automatic transmission bringing the total price up to £31,720.