

## RENAULT MEGANE 130dci

By Jim Mc Cauley

Renault is a company not without its recent problems as it reduced its vehicle ranges along with dealer outlets, and embarked on different strategies for its electric vehicles. But part of that rationalisation is the strengthening of the brand, and with the demise of the Laguna the top hatchback model is now Megane.

Offering a 15 model range with 5-door hatchback bodywork, test choice was the 1.6 litre diesel with the lower 130PS output on this dual-option capacity. Finished in GT Line trim, Renault claims that this is the world's most powerful yet frugal engine of its size returning an official combined fuel consumption of 70.6 mpg and a lowly 104 gms/km CO<sub>2</sub>.

The new model is the first significant revision of the more conformist version launched in 2008 and while this never merged from its anonymity, the reworked 2012 model very much accentuates its presence with a more determined stance, fluid lines

and a lower ride height. Underneath is a new generation of powertrains that deliver improvements in efficiency, fuel economy and emissions, while core equipment includes the necessary demands of air conditioning and Bluetooth connectivity along with front fog lights, Renault Key Card and push button start.



With GT Line badging, this particular model gets suspension and steering upgrades. Springs and dampers are stiffer while overall the car's centre of gravity has been rendered 112mm lower.

On road, and the 1.6dci quickly emerges from its past cocoon, offering superb response from a smooth and willing power unit through its 6-speed manual gearbox. Suspension provides enough gentle movement to maintain a comfortable ride on the straight and narrow yet firms progressively and smoothly for cornering support. Despite a marginally lower gearing on the steering from the previous model range, there is increased feel and accuracy, possibly unique to the revised calibration on the GT Line specification.

The cabin design and material choice also raises the image of the Megane with clear instruments and central raised information screen which on this TomTom equipped car presents navigation information safely while maintaining awareness of the road ahead. A low-set radio is immaterial as duplicate controls are at the driver's fingertips on the steering column stalk.

The driving position benefits from an adjustable height seat (as is the passenger's) along with reach and rake adjustment on the steering column, and additional comfort is offered by the adjustable high seatbelts. However, while the stitching on the leather trimmed steering wheel is red and matches the inset detail across the dashboard unit, the highlighted seat stitching is in white, distracting from the otherwise holistic treatment of the interior, as does the push button starter distanced from the driver on the left hand side of the central console.



Good rear room is complemented by easy access and substantial boot, while the test vehicle carried the optional spare wheel underneath.

Although the range starts at £16,280, the test car sits second from the top of the range and is priced at £21,800 taking it into the price bracket of some serious alternatives. But the model range has progressed and benefits from the fact that it is now Renault's flagship family car taking quality assurance to a new level.

On the environmental front, there is a quoted combined fuel consumption of 70.6 mpg with the realistic return over a week's local driving indicating 47.4 mpg. With a CO2 emissions of 104 gms/km, the Megane 130dci in GT Line trim is in Band B for zero annual road tax in its first year and £20 per annum thereafter. For business users, Benefit-in-Kind is just 14%.

Equipment-wise, this highly specified model comes with six airbags, and Electronic Stability Control with Traction and Understeer Control. Also included are 17-inch alloys, automatic parking brake with hill start assistance, automatic wipers and lights with self-dipping function, cruise control and parking camera with rear sensors.

This model also benefits from Renault's recently introduced 4-year / 100,000 mile warranty, 4 years' free routine servicing, 4 year finance package and 4 years' roadside cover.