

SUZUKI SWIFT

4th Generation

By Jim Mc Cauley



Evolving a design is a fine art, taking familiarity to new horizons without leaving too much of the subject anchored in the past. With the new Swift, Suzuki has successfully made the transition maintaining the personality of the outgoing model as it matures into a more confident frame with a greater visual presence. The car is lower and wider with a longer wheelbase which contributes to both ride quality and increased interior space.

There is no doubting the importance of the car for Suzuki which has accounted for global sales of 5.4 million units since the original model was launched in 2005, with the UK claiming 127,000 of the one million models sold in Europe.

Despite the retention of key features, the 2017 evolution is all-new, built on the company's latest platform already put to good use in both the Baleno and Ignis models. This new platform, which incidentally also enhances collision safety, is 30kg lighter than that of the outgoing model in a car that is overall around 100kg lighter.

Power choice is a two-way one between the company's 1.0 litre Boosterjet petrol engine and 1.2 litre Dualjet diesel with automatic and all-wheel drive variants available within the range. Test choice on the model's European launch well ahead of showroom availability was the 1.0 litre Boosterjet model with mild hybrid support. This 3-cylinder turbo engine produces 111bhp and returns a 0-62mph time of 10.6 seconds with a potential top speed of 121mph.





On road, and the car is very refined, the engine winding its way smoothly up the rev band as you slot through the 5-speed manual gearbox. While steering may not be as communicative as you would like in a small hatch, it is nevertheless well weighted and maintains an appropriate feel for the size of the car, with the leather-trimmed steering wheel a standard fitment across the range.

Ride is well cushioned and comfortable while initial body-roll on flat corners is well controlled and contributes to the confident driving experience. On the demanding roads of the initial test drive, there was a lot of 2nd gear / 3rd gear work, with both the engine and smooth gear change contributing to a smooth flowing drive.

The mild hybrid model (SHVS) features an integrated starter / generator which assists the vehicle during take-off and when accelerating, as well as generating charge to the lithium-ion battery through regenerative braking. The combined technologies enable the car to match the diesel version in economy, returning 65.7mpg on the official combined cycle, while its CO2 emissions are the lowest in the range at 97gms/km.

And as the SHVS version comes only in top SZ5 trim, there is a full package of electronic support systems including Suzuki's first application of an advanced forward detection system that combines the input from the on-board camera, laser and radar to provide autonomous emergency braking, lane departure warning, automatic headlight dipping and adaptive cruise control.

Other features include switchable start/stop and 'see-me-home' headlights for increased safety when approaching or leaving the vehicle at night.

For the driver, the main analogue instruments are separated by a digital information screen and a central colour touch screen takes care of the



infotainment controls including 3-D navigation maps, and connection to smartphone applications with MirrorLink, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. Unlike some competitive models, the new Swift is a full 5-seater with improved cabin space and a 55 litre increase in boot space to 265 litres.

This 4th generation of Suzuki's best seller is available only in 5-door guise with the rear door handles now neatly disguised in the upper door to blend into the 'C' pillar. At its European launch, no UK prices were settled which would suggest a possible increase over those of the current model, which is not surprising given the high specification across the range. The all-new model goes on sale on 1st June, with demo models in the showrooms for May.

(Driven March 2017)