

## SKODA RAPID SPACEBACK 1.6TDI (90PS)

By Jim Mc Cauley

Skoda have expanded their rapid model range with the addition of a 5-door hatchback, entering the high-volume compact segment for the first time. The 7- model range will be sold in over 100 countries with a choice of five engines – three petrol and two diesel, offering power outputs from 86PS to 122PS.

The new model sits on a long 2.6 metre wheelbase and with its slim pillars and generous glass area could be seen as a compact estate, offering the best rear legroom and headroom in sector. It also offers a luggage volume of 415 litres, extendible to 1380 with the rear seats folded.



Styling-wise, the Spaceback is pleasantly penned, the new corporate nose design asserting the manufacturer's identity while a gently sloping tailgate window adds rear-end elegance to what is otherwise safe and well balanced exterior lines. In addition, a degree of personalisation can be added with the full-length panoramic glass sunroof extending to over 1.7 metres and an elongated rear window which extends the hatch glazing a further 100mm lower.

The 1.6 litre diesel engine is available in either 90 or 105PS outputs with the lower output unit driving the front wheels via a 5-speed manual gearbox or 7-speed DSG transmission. The test

car, with its 90PS engine returns a 0-62 mph time of 11.9 seconds with a potential top speed of 113 mph. On road, the diesel engine is relatively refined with excellent suspension support and steering accuracy enhancing the character of the car, very much in keeping with that of the original Rapid.

Accommodation-wise, the car is surprisingly roomy with excellent rear room and a well finished cabin, more than comfortable for long journeys. On this mid-range SE model, the driver's seat has height adjustment and rear seat passengers have pocket storage on the backs of the front seats as well as good storage in the well proportioned door compartments.

Overall, the Rapid Spaceback extends the quality appeal of the Skoda brand with a vehicle that exudes quality and solid construction. A 5-way engine choice satisfies customer preferences and ultimately the pricing of the car has to persuade potential customers into the showroom. The lower output 1.6 litre diesel tested has more than adequate power for everyday use while a careful driver can set his sights on the official combined fuel consumption of 64.2 mpg which significantly adds to its appeal. On the environmental front, a lowly CO2 emissions of 114 gms/km places the car in Band C for annual car tax of £30. Equipment levels are also at their most popular in the SE specification

with updated 15-inch alloys, audio and phone controls on the steering wheel, front fog lights, hill-hold control, rear parking sensors and Bluetooth connectivity.

On the safety front the car has gained a 5-star EuroNCAP award and all models feature Electronic Stability Control along with a full complement of twin front, side and head airbags. The 1.6, 90 PS TDI model tested is listed at £17,280 and like all Skodas, the new model is covered by the company's comprehensive 3-year / 60,000 mile warranty. Available extras, fitted to the test car, include Amundsen touch screen navigation with DAB radio for £550, temporary spare wheel in lieu of a puncture repair kit for £75, and climate control air conditioning for £300.

