

Skoda Rapid

By Jim Mc Cauley

Skoda has recently launched a 7th model range, nestling between the successful Fabia and Octavia ranges. The compact, yet deceptively spacious Rapid bridges the gap between the company's supermini and medium saloon offerings opening up a new



sector of the market for the Czech company. The Rapid also launches a corporate facelift with a new logo and wide chrome-rimmed grille that flows into the headlamp units.

Like any model coming from the VAG stables, there is a wide variety of engines and transmission choices and the test vehicle was the 105 PS 1.6 litre TDI model driving through a standard 5-speed manual gearbox. This turbo diesel unit returns a 0-62 mph time of 10.6 seconds with the potential to top 118 mph.

On-road, and the car handles impressively, hinting at its Volkswagen Golf underpinnings with the initial sharp acceleration complemented by the diesel's mid range punch. On the open road, the car is quiet and relaxing but at lower speeds around 40 mph, road noise from the 16-inch Bridgestone tyres fitted to the test vehicle becomes noticeable within the cabin.

Accommodation-wise, the car is surprisingly roomy with excellent rear room and a well finished cabin, more than comfortable for long journeys. While appearing to be a bootied saloon, the rear window cleverly conceals the hatchback opening, giving wide access to the cavernous 550 litre boot. On the test vehicle in top 'Elegance' trim, both front seats have height adjustment and rear seat passengers have pocket storage on the backs of the front seats and good storage in the well proportioned door compartments.

The Rapid is the resurrection of a historic name for Skoda, but more importantly it fills a gap in their model line-up with a vehicle that extends the quality provision of the larger Octavia and Superb ranges to a more affordable car in a wider market segment. All variants feature remote central locking, curtain airbags, daytime running lights, rake and reach steering adjustment, height



adjustable driver's seat and electric front windows. An innovative feature in the car is the fitting of a screen ice scraper in the fuel filler flap which unfortunately is not



protected by the central locking. At the top of the three-trim range is the 'Elegance' model which additionally comes with 16-inch alloy wheels, interior trim upgrades, cornering front lights, cruise control, Electronic Stability Control with supporting programs, manual air conditioning, trip computer and Bluetooth connectivity.

On the economy and environmental fronts, the 1.6 TDI has a stated combined fuel consumption of 64.2 mpg and in a week's mixed driving I was able to approach this at 57 mpg, highlighting the fuel efficiency of the engine. This diesel unit has a CO2 emissions of 114 gms/km

which puts in in Band C for zero annual car tax in Year 1 and £30 per year thereafter. For business users it represents a BIK rate of 16%.

In the 50-group ABI insurance ratings, the car is in Band 15E, and like all Skoda vehicles is covered by a 3-year, 60,000 mile warranty and 12 years body protection cover. While the range starts at £12,900, the 1.6 TDI model tested in top 'Elegance' trim is listed at £17,850.