

Subaru WRX STI

Road Test

By Jim Mc Cauley

The 'Impreza' name is gone and the WRX STI badge sits alone on the bootlid of Subaru's latest performance flagship. However, still lying low in the chassis is the company's legendary 2.5 litre flat-4 engine, its 300 HP taking drive to all four wheels to hit the benchmark 100 km/h mark in just 5.2 seconds.



The new saloon benefits from a stiffened bodyshell and an extensively reworked suspension system, the combination allowing for increased suspension travel, While horsepower and torque remain the same as the previous model, improved delivery adds smoothness to the drive, although there remains the noticeable step in the gearbox into each ratio and stopping power could be improved. Although the suspension now offers a smoother ride, cornering support is not sacrificed and with the advantage of all-wheel drive excellent pace can be maintained even through the most

challenging of corners. Hip-pinching Recaro seats up front clamp the driver firmly in place while the retention of hydraulic steering provides both excellent feel and pin-sharp accuracy.

The engine mapping characteristics can be varied by the driver with the SI-Drive control system. The triple-choice menu varies from a smooth and economy-conscious set-up complete with a 'shift-up' indicator in the instrument cluster to mid-range Sport and a track day preference of Sport Sharp.

There is also a choice on the central diff setting which allows the driver to opt for automatic or manual settings as well as variable settings on the stability control system.

For previous generation STI owners the latest model is not a progression from the 'old shape' but a move in a different direction with a more mature solution which nevertheless continues to deliver the goods, but with additional refinement in both ride quality and power delivery. Cabin layout is clean and practical, the Recaro seats making sufficient statement as to the car's potential while rear passenger room is adequate. The car impresses as a very desirable rapid



commuting vehicle well suited to our local roads system, and the saloon alternative at the same price as the hatchback looks so much more substantial and capable of delivering its potential.

Fully loaded with all the upmarket goodies, the saloon WRX STI is listed at £32,995 and is in Group 40 for insurance purposes. With a CO2 emissions of 243 gms/km it is in Band L for annual car tax and has a 4-star EuroNCAP rating.