

SUZUKI SWIFT 4X4

By Jim Mc Cauley

We can have different associations for 4X4 badging from large Jeep-type vehicles to prestige German manufacturers and to all-conquering rally cars. But all-wheel grip has advantages for everyday motoring, particularly where a combination of terrain and adverse weather conditions make it a necessity, and in the compact sector it is a niche not widely contested by the manufacturers. Fiat have had the market virtually their own with the 4x4 Panda, and now Suzuki have extended their



successful Swift range to offer an all-wheel drive derivative in the UK. The model has found its footing in Japan and several Continental countries including Germany and Switzerland, where successful sales have prompted Suzuki to extend their market westwards.

While the standard 2-wheel drive range is available in both 1.2 litre petrol and 1.3 litre diesel options, the 4X4 transmission is available only with the petrol engine equipped in either of the two top trim levels of SZ3 and SZ4. The 1.6 litre petrol engine is retained exclusively for the Sport model. Externally there is little to differentiate the model with silver finished

lower trim on the front and rear bumper units indicating the presence of skid plates underneath as well as black wheelarch protective trims. Ride height is also marginally higher at 25mm above that of the standard range.

While the 4X4 may be a new model for the UK, the Swift should be seen as the most important vehicle built by Suzuki, produced in seven plants around the world and sold in over 100 countries. Indeed UK sales exceed 11,000 units annually.

On-road, and there is no discernible difference between the 4X4 and the standard 2-wheel drive models until you push it in corners and feel the advantage of the power transfer to the rear axle, adding to the front end grip. For the driver, the 4X4 system is an uncomplicated permanent arrangement using a viscous coupling which automatically detects front



wheel slip and transfers a percentage of the available torque to the rear wheels.

However, the real advantage of the all-wheel drive availability is not in revving the maximum performance out of a 1.2 litre engine, but in the security it offers in adverse terrain or poor weather conditions where it provides the required grip to maintain safe and steady progress.



A relatively firm suspension provides good support, right up to a fully loaded vehicle, which for its size can comfortably accommodate five adults. Steering is via electric power with variable gearing and offers a quick ratio for initial movement away from the centre line to a slower ratio towards the end of its turning limits to reduce the effort required by the driver.

Behind the wheel, and the cabin has a distinct European practicality to it with the quality black dash unit simply relieved by silvered highlights. In this top trim SZ4 model, the driving position benefits from a reach and rake adjustable steering column as well as height adjustment on the driver's seat, while convenience features

include trip computer, automatic air conditioning, cruise control and all-round electric windows. Safety features include Electronic Stability Program and seven airbags as well as snap-off pedals to lessen lower limb injuries in the event of a serious accident.

On the performance and economy fronts, the Suzuki Swift 4x4 has a 0-62 mph time of 13.4 seconds with its top speed just crossing into three figures at 103 mph. Official fuel consumption on the combined cycle is given as 51.3 mpg and with a CO2 emissions of 126 gms/km, the car is in Band D for annual car tax of £95. The model is currently listed at £15,739 and has a 5-star EuroNCAP crash rating.