

VAUXHALL CORSA

By Jim Mc Cauley

Vauxhall is confident that the new Corsa will stay on course to maintain the model's popularity. In addition to contesting the market in the lucrative 'A/B' segment, the car will also compete within the Vauxhall range against the smaller Adam and re-introduction of the Viva badge on a new 2015



model. The latest turn-out for the Corsa however is a two-way choice in styling between a 3-door coupé-like model and the more soberly styled 5-door body option. But the choice is more than just the exterior styling as the new arrivals run on comprehensively upgraded chassis units powered by an all-new range of petrol engines and improved 1.3 litre diesels.

The Corsa is an important car for Vauxhall which now rolls into its 5th generation and currently accounts for 84,000 units per year with sales equally attracting retail and fleet buyers. So there is no doubting the company's knowledge of the market and their intention to keep the Corsa in the best-selling list.

Sitting lower than the outgoing model, the new car features Vauxhall's corporate front end with the lower side body crease effectively maintaining its relationship to the other recently released Vauxhall ranges. While it may lack the ultimate charm of Adam, it nevertheless has sufficient visual appeal to engage a potential buyer to have a closer look.

Two examples from the wide model range were driven at launch with the 3-door hatch featuring the company's all-new 1.0 litre 3-cylinder ECOTEC turbo petrol engine. Available in two outputs, test choice was the higher producing 115PS model. This lightweight power unit of just 106 kg has a counter-rotating balancer shaft as well as other noise reducing features. Claimed to offer benchmark refinement, this Euro 6 engine is capable of going from rest to 62 mph in 10.3 seconds with the potential to reach 121 mph. But unlike the distinct 3-cylinder sound from competitors' engines, the Vauxhall unit does indeed better them in terms of refinement and is notably placid across the rev band. Mated to this engine is an all-new 6-speed manual gearbox which offers a sporting short throw change to complement the enthusiasm of the power unit.



A totally new cabin design adds to the car's youthful appeal with the now obligatory body colour intrusion to the dashboard but retaining traditional placement of instruments to maintain a touch of familiarity.



Moving to the larger 1.4 litre turbo engine, this time in the 5-door version, the additional practicality of the car with its extra doors and extended roofline projects a totally different image. The larger cabin makes the car feel bigger and more mature, but the driving dynamics still impress.

This engine produces 100PS and in the heavier bodysell returns a 0-62 mph time of 11.0 seconds with a given top speed of 115 mph. But the appeal of this new version of an established engine is its mid-range response with a very useful 200Nm of torque on tap from 1,850 rpm. Again, transmission choice on this car was the 6-speed manual gearbox. Automatic options are also available across the range.

Even with a sports suspension and lowered ride height on this VX-Line trim level, overall ride still offered a good compromise of comfort with useful cornering support.

While this sector of the market is overcrowded and hotly contested, the main opponent for Corsa is Fiesta and Vauxhall's response is in a £1,000 price undercut on the entry models as well as a unique across the range specification list that includes six airbags, Electronic Stability Program, a heated windscreen, tyre pressure monitoring system, hill start assist, speed sensitive power steering and steering column adjustable for both reach and rake. And while pricing against competitive models is keen, pricing trim for trim against the outgoing model sees reductions by as much as £3,000.

Standard on all but the entry level models is Vauxhall's 'IntelliLink' system. Featuring a 7-inch central touch screen, it can be controlled through mobile phone apps that include navigation, global radio channels and internet podcasts. Compatible with both Apple and Android phones, the system also incorporates voice command and Bluetooth.

But the new engine range brings economy benefits as well as performance advantages with the higher output 1.0T engine in the test car returning an official combined fuel consumption of 57.6 mpg, and with a CO2 emissions of 115 gms/km is in Band B for annual car tax of £30. The 1.4 Turbo on the other hand returns 53.3 mpg on the official combined cycle and with a CO2 emissions of 123 gms/km is in Band D for annual car tax of £110.

With nine trim options and a wide choice of petrol and diesel engines, the new Corsa range opens at £8,995 for the 1.2i 70PS 'Sting' model and extends to just over £15,000 for the top trim models. The 1.0T SRi model tested in VR-Line trim is listed at £14,460 while the 5-door model tested in the same specification is listed at £14,230. Metallic paint adds £545.