

# VAUXHALL INSIGNIA VXR

By Jim Mc Cauley

There is no doubt that Vauxhall has turned over a new leaf in recent years with a range of vehicles that has injected a fresh excitement into the brand. Cutting edge technology now underwrites the sharper and more appealing styling while each model offers an engine range that takes economy in a new direction at one end and performance to further heights at the other.



Winner of the coveted European Car of the Year title is the Insignia and at the top of its range is the V6 turbocharged VXR, the most stunning model in the Insignia line-up.

Facing established benchmark performers such as the Audi S4 and BMW 335i, the VXR adds visual spice to the elegance of the standard Insignia. Model-specific bumpers, additional air intakes, rear spoiler and twin exhausts embellish this flagship model which rests on lowered suspension with huge 19-inch wheels filling the arches. Styling merits a second look but maintains a restraint that complements the lines of the standard car.

Underneath is a 2.8 litre turbocharged V6 pushing out 325 PS and a massive 435 Nm of torque at just over 5250 rpm. Power is transferred through a 6-speed automatic transmission to all four wheels in a package that takes the car to 60 mph from rest in 5.6 seconds with the potential to top out at 155 mph.

Vauxhall interiors have caught up with the times as well, and the cabin adds to the appeal of the car with the occupants snugly accommodated in Recaro sports seats.

Fire up the V6 and response is superb, the 6-speed auto slicing through the gears to take the car up to the on-road speed limits. But while the performance is there, it is accompanied by an unexpected refinement both in power delivery and suspension response further adding to the attraction of the car as usable everyday fast transport. A sophisticated front suspension set-up removes the threat of torque steer under sharp acceleration while all-wheel drive provides additional handling security.



The car's response is further enhanced by the driver-selected menu which offers Standard, Sport and VXR settings which progressively increase the sensitivity and sharpness of the steering, throttle and suspension settings. In case the driver is unaware of the top setting, the instrument lighting changes to red in VXR mode.



The new range addition is a well thought out performance evolution that combines performance with refinement in a car that visually teases without taking its styling over the top.

As expected, performance engines don't reside in the green zone and a CO2 emissions of 251 gms/km and a combined fuel consumption of 26.4 mpg are the down points. But enjoyment at this level has to have its demons.

While the car tested was the hatchback at £34,600, the model is also available in saloon and tourer bodystyles.