

A Warm Feeling



Ian Lamming ends up feeling warm and fuzzy about Kia's new Optima Sportswagon

THE touchline has its own micro-climate; ask any parent who turns up valiantly to watch the fixtures.

Two degrees in the car park will almost certainly spell zero on the pitch. More chilling still is the fact that the match is part of a tournament; that will be three matches then and lots of down-time in between.

Taking pictures of the action does little to warm the limbs and at the final, final whistle hypothermia must be only a degree away. Now where did I leave my St Bernard?

Climbing rigidly into the Kia Optima Sportswagon my eyes scan the interior for help. Motor on, the climate control is the first to be cranked to the max. Then there are the wonderful heated seats – number three of three please.

Then the gaze falls on the symbol of a steering wheel – yes! It's heated. How I hug it like a long lost relative, warming not only my digits, but pressing ears, cheeks and nose to the soul-warming wheel. It's bliss.

I could stop the test here but I won't as there is more to say about the Kia Optima that will surely warm the cockles of your heart and other appendages.

Sportswagon is a very long estate car version of the super smooth Optima, always a firm favourite in this camp.

It's an attractive looking car with great

proportions and lines. The estate does nothing to spoil that aesthetic and it is proud to be very much its own model, not simply a house with a flat roof extension.

When you stick your mush on the interior, apart from warming through, the evidence of Kia's stunning quality is clear. Like the rest of the range, Optima is incredibly well made and that gives it an air of opulence not normally associated with this price bracket.

Ergonomics are fabulous too, as is the specification and layout of dials and controls. Touch screen, of course, Bluetooth your phone for calls and music, and an easy to use satnav make it the perfect companion.

Quality extends to the drive and Optima boasts excellent ride, steering and grip. The 1.7 litre diesel is willing but economical, the six-speed gearbox is slick, the clutch light, the driving experience top-notch.

Then there's the space. A quick glance at the boy in the back shows just how much legroom passengers are offered and the boot is huge too. It's a big old car but that doesn't make it unwieldy and the reverse camera is a boon when reversing into tight spots – once you have scraped the layer of road filth off its lens that is.

Optima is a really good vehicle in every way and definitely a car to leave you feeling warm all over.

Motor Madness

Fact File

- Kia Optima Stationwagon
- Engine: 1.7 diesel
- Power: 139BHP
- 0-62mph: 10 secs
- Top speed: 121mph
- Combined MPG: 64.2
- Transmission: six-speed manual
- CO2 g/km: 113