

The joy of **Motoring**

Ian Lamming test drives the Mazda 2

THERE'S nothing on the roads, literally nothing; it's a perfect summer's evening and while it's Saturday night and I have to work, there's the broadest of smiles on my face.

Until now Mazda2 has been fine, serviceable, practical, sterling. But give it an open road and it becomes so much more; sporty, satisfying, special. You wouldn't credit it, after all this is an affordable small hatchback and on paper not that out of the ordinary.

In reality it is and here's why. Within minutes you forget what type of Mazda you are in as it shares a common interior.

It could be a CX-3, or a Mazda6, for instance, and the fit, finish and specification are premium standard rather than those you might associate with a modest hatchback.

The design, the leather, the equipment are all top notch. The clocks and dash are very pleasant on the eye and intuitive to use. It all feels great.

Leather steering wheel and gear-knob feel sporty to touch and the helm responses, ride and overall dynamics are sharp and engaging. This is a car that loves to be driven and the 90PS motor is surprisingly willing yet impressively economical. On paper 90PS is ordinary enough but on the road it has more than enough poke to be fun and spirited.

Mazda2 gets the corporate finish with the deep aggressive grille, sleek lights and great lines. It has grown up so much and has gained such a feel of quality it has been catapulted into a different class compared to the vehicle it replaced. It is fabulous.

Job done and the same roads lead back home and remain just as empty; the grin becomes even broader. Journeys like this in cars like the Mazda2 are a welcome reminder of the joys of motoring.

Fact File

- Mazda2 1.5 90PS Sport Nav
- Engine: 1.5 litre petrol
- Power: 90PS
- 0-62mph: 9.4 secs
- Top speed: 114mph
- Combined miles per gallon: 62.8
- Transmission: five-speed manual
- CO2 g/km: 105

