

# A great piece

*Motor  
Madness*

# of kit

**Ian Lamming** assesses an estate car that has been whittled to perfection.

**H**ERE'S the acid test. When the collection driver asks how I got on with the car my response is instant; no thought, no hesitation and therefore, I feel, an honest assessment. "What a great piece of kit," I say. "Fabulous engine, 4x4 grip and an awesome DSG gearbox." He agrees, but then he drives a Skoda too. From railway station to home that's all we talk about like a couple of Skoda groupies, but then this marque does seem to engender enthusiasm and brand loyalty in equal measure.

Strangely, only the week before, a young friend had posed the question: "Why would any one buy a Skoda?" Tsk, tsk, tsk, oh dear, my dear, you simply haven't kept up have you?

Don't you know? Skoda is simply on trend darling, on trend. Where to start? Well, Octavia is new and so is its Scout variant. This is the butch off-roader model which starts life as an estate, gets 4x4 and hill descent control and off-road driving mode. Visually it gets bash plates front and aft, side sill protection and

wheel arch liners. Looks great, particularly with the new Octavia 'crystalline' look, funky LEDs and muscular grille (that doesn't eat children because there are electronic gadgets which won't allow the car to hit or devour pedestrians). So there's the first reason to buy a Skoda, it looks smart.

Next up is the diesel engine; a 2.0 litre turbo that whacks out 184PS, a veritable chatroom of torque and 50+ miles per gallon economy. It is creamy smooth, superbly usable and very quick. This makes it fun to drive and very relaxing too. It eats miles instead of children in the most splendid way.

Given recent low temperatures, the intelligent 4x4 proves to be a brilliant addition. You don't really notice it working, the car simply grips no matter how slippery the surface and for off-road there is a special mode and hill descent control to dictate a safe pace on the slopes.

The DSG gearbox remains the best there is with slick and rapid changes like no other. It even knows when you are going down a steep

hill and drops ratios to increase engine braking.

There are modes for several different driving moods, from lazy and comfortable to sporty and aggressive. Scout is incredibly agile for such a big boy.

Size does matter and the Octavia is a warehouse on wheels. There is just so much room for people, paraphernalia and luggage.

Clever features abound, like somewhere in the seat to place your brolly, Velcro devices to stop little shopping items rolling around the huge boot, an internal light that doubles as a removable torch and a proper grab handle in the inside of the hatch door so you don't have to get your mitts mucky when closing the boot. Nobody does real world like Skoda.

A very attractive dash is dominated by touch screen infotainment that is easy and intuitive to use and is happy to talk to your digital devices. More important for me – I feel the cold you know – are the heated seats throughout and... and...wait for it...the heated steering wheel; oh yes! So, giving the Scout some serious thought the result is the same as my instant assessment. Just shows you should always follow your gut instinct when choosing a car. What a great piece of kit.

## Fact File

- Skoda Octavia Scout 4x4
- Engine: 2.0 diesel
- Power: 184PS
- 0-62mph: 7.8 secs
- Top speed: 136mph
- Combined MPG: 55.4
- Transmission: Six-speed DSG automatic
- CO2 g/km: 133
- Price: £29,520.00

