

Man Racer

Ian Lamming relives his youth in a Vauxhall Corsa VXR

HOT-hatches; remember them? When I was a lad someone decided to shoehorn a big motor into a small body for huge laughs.

It went a bit awry when thieves decided to nick them, crash them and cut them up to stick back together. Insurance companies took a dim view and premiums rocketed.

They became less popular but never really went away and better immobilisers and alarms stopped the ne'er-do-wells half inching them.

If you fancy a snigger with your driving, Vauxhall offers the Corsa VXR. That's a three door Corsa with a 205PS motor under the bonnet – interesting.

I remember the first time Vauxhall did this and I nearly fell off the road trying to impress the cameras. It was certainly a wild child and the torque steer almost wrested the wheel out of my hands and the car onto the verge. Nice.

New VXR is still a bit wild but has now matured. It's more of a wild late teenager going on early 20s who likes to sprint but now has one eye on the law, social niceties and risk assessment.

So on paper, VXR is still pretty swift with a 0-62mph time of 6.8 seconds and top speed of

143mph (only on the track your honour, only on the track...) but the delivery is a bit more refined, the handling a bit more accomplished.

There is still a bit of torque steer but it is more controlled, less scary, less likely to put you in a hedge.

Very soon VXR actually encourages you to drive lazily because there is so much power it will pull a high gear from very low down. For instance, it will romp up the steepest of hills in fourth and once a bit of momentum has been achieved you can actually change up to fifth and even sixth.

Proper Recaro seats – it says so in the leather – hold you in place, which is just as well as the VXR is happy to yaw with the best of them pulling considerable lateral G-force in the bends.

Ride is hot-hatch hard but it isn't uncomfortable and is well worth the sacrifice for the dynamic drive.

Hatchbacks are now returning some pretty astounding fuel figures but the VXR is tuned for performance so expect mid 30s, which isn't a bad trade off either.

Sporty Corsa comes with all the Vauxhall infotainment gubbins, including OnStar, if you

fancy an automotive butler to do your bidding.

For the more mature driver VXR is tinged with a bit of welcome nostalgia that bathes your journey in a rose-tinted hue. For those who are driving a hot-hatch for the first time, the VXR will not disappoint either acting as a salutary reminder of why we drive for pleasure in the first place

Fact File

- Vauxhall Corsa VXR
- Engine: 1.6 petrol turbo
- Power: 205PS
- 0-62mph: 6.8 secs
- Top speed: 143mph
- Combined MPG: 37.7
- Transmission: six speed manual
- CO2 g/km: 174

