



A driving legend

Ian Lamming drives the all new Vauxhall Viva

THE offer was genuine; a tap of the pocket and the chance for him to take the key of a driving legend.

It was only fair, after all I had just driven the man's Aston Martin and it seemed only right and proper to reciprocate.

There, nestled among the ranks of Ferraris, Maseratis and Astons, resplendent in acid green livery, was the Viva, yes a Vauxhall Viva. It's back, it's in the showrooms now and it could be yours.

Okay, the Aston Martin GM wasn't impressed; in fact he walked off without another word. But that's his loss and anyone else's who does not at least try the latest GM town car because it is really good.

So many people would say "Viva, oh, I had one of those, a green one, I loved it." You won't hear as many people say that about an Aston Martin as a first car.

The old Viva inhabited the late 60s early 70s – I think, my memory isn't what it used to be. In its day it was thoroughly modern and affordable allowing many a new driver to venture on to uncluttered roads. By today's exacting standards it was a dog but back then it helped drivers develop skills – braking without skidding, correcting over-steer and

under-steer (sometimes at the same time), surviving a mild impact.

Not so with the new Viva. It is very much of this century and up to the job.

Innocuous and inoffensive lines hide hidden depths. It is a compact, well-proportioned hatchback with a modern and well-finished interior. It's not quite as funky as an Adam or a Corsa but it is still impressive with a great feel, being both friendly and functional.

The real strength lies in the engine, a characterful and torquey three cylinder that is willing to please. It is surprisingly perky for a normally aspirated motor of such modest capacity. It never feels slow or sluggish and zips around town and up the slip top road of the motorway where it is happy to cruise at the legal limit.

Good performance also means you don't need to thrash it and consequently it remains economical with a genuine 50+mpg easily attainable.

All good then and the offer is still there should the nice man at Aston Martin fancy a quick spin round the block as the new Viva definitely comes with a licence to thrill.

Fact File

- Vauxhall Viva
- Engine: 1.0 three-cylinder petrol
- Power: 75PS
- 0-62mph: 13.1 secs
- Top speed: mph: 106
- Combined miles per gallon: 62.8
- Transmission: five-speed manual
- Insurance: 4E
- CO2 g/km: 104