



# Step this Way

by Ian Lamming

**C**HEAP and cheerful, what more could you ask for? Until recently there haven't been any cheap cars. There used to be plenty but they are now all really well made and extremely well equipped and the prices have crept up accordingly.

So Dacia has put the veritable cat among the veritable pigeons by producing cars which are genuinely affordable.

Take the new Sandero Stepway. It's a nice looking SUV-lookalike with decent lines and proportions. It doesn't look cheap at all. There's nothing wrong with the aesthetics and yet it is a staggeringly cheap £9K. That's crazy.

Inside is fine too. It's practical and functional, spacious and comfortable, with a useful boot; everything you need in a car for a fraction of the price.

But there must be a catch. It's made in Romania but now owned by Renault so the important bits work perfectly well, in fact better than that.

The 1.5 litre diesel is amazingly refined and economical. It pulls really well on to the slip-road, romps over the hills and the gearbox is perfectly suited and nice to use. The

consumption is fantastic and it seems like an age before the fuel gauge actually moves off full, which is not surprising when you look at the official figures that claim the combined cycle is 70mpg. That's another cheap reason to be cheerful.

There has been no stinting on the suspension either and the Stepway rides well, feels in control even under the most demanding conditions and offers excellent levels of grip. You never feel like you are in anything approaching a budget vehicle even though you are.

It's the same on the motorway; the Sandero chomps happily through the miles in a very quiet and unassuming fashion, so there has been no skimping on insulation either.

The new Dacia range is incredibly impressive because it doesn't appear to be built to a price. It's hard to imagine how they make a profit with such a low retail price. So in this particular case cheap leaves me cheerful every time.

## Fact File:

Dacia Sandero  
Stepway  
Engine: 1.5 diesel  
Power: 90BHP  
0-62mph: 11.8 secs  
Top speed:  
104mph  
Combined miles  
per gallon: 70.6  
Transmission: five  
speed manual  
Insurance: 10  
CO2 g/km: 105