

Ian Lamming finds his inner 'Soul' in the new Kia

Fact File:

Kia Soul
 Engine: 1.6 litre turbo diesel
 Power: 126PS
 0-62mph: 10.8 secs
 Top speed: 112mph
 Combined miles per gallon: 56.5
 Transmission: six speed manual
 Insurance: 10
 CO2 g/km: 132

IT'S the car that started a revolution; it's the car that put the soul in a range of cars now taking the automotive world by storm.

The Soul showed the market that Kia was a brand to be reckoned with, a marque here to stay, a match for any of the competition in any of the sectors and a model at the vanguard of design.

Back in 2008 it was penned in California and looked every bit the cool wheels that would appeal to surfer dudes. It represented sunshine on a cloudy day, cheeriness when it would be so easy to remain sad.

It proved so successful that for the next seven years it would remain unchanged but Kia has decided that this faithful Korean friend needs a fresh look, updated dynamics and revived appeal.

Slip inside the 2014 Soul and it has progressed leaps and bounds. Let's face it, it had no choice as the rest of the Kia range now sets the standards others strive to achieve.

Gone has the cheap and cheerful feel of the cabin which now oozes a quality essence that Kia customers have come to know and love.

The Connect Plus model features leather-look trim and the

genuine article on chunky steering wheel and gearlever. It's fab. The clocks, touch screen, switches and controls are pure new-Kia and are as good as they come right across the automotive world.

Ride is Cee'd-like in its sophistication and control. Ride and handling are superb and the cabin is quiet and serene no matter how bad conditions become outside.

New-look Soul is the spiritual successor of the original but benefits from a 21st century update. It still looks boxy, but in a good way, like an American dragster, but this helps it stand out from myriad SUVs that inhabit our roads.

The 1.6 litre diesel is refined and economical. It is torquy and loves the open road as well as urban life. The six speed manual box is glorious in both feel and weighting and matches perfectly light throttle and clutch making the Soul lovely to drive.

Its proportions have been increased slightly making the Soul even more accommodating for people and possessions.

The original Soul was a marker for great things to come.

The refreshed model reaffirms Kia's position as one of the most exciting brands to hit the roads in recent years.

The new Soul **Diva**

