

Little things



mean a lot

by Ian Lamming

HERE is a Japanese philosophy and it goes something like this.

Take care to produce every component to the very best of your ability and the sum of those parts can be nothing short of astounding.

So if every screw, nut and bolt, every grommet, spring and wire is honed to perfection then it is a forgone conclusion that the result will be near perfect.

Sounds far fetched doesn't it? Yet Mazda believes it, practices it, and follows this mantra with near-religious zeal.

The result is impressive and the new Mazda3 is a prime example of what modern engineering can achieve if the will is there.

Mazda engineers have always enjoyed doing things a little differently, their own way, and the 3 is no exception. This particular variant is a four door, which in this class makes it unusual in itself.

It may be a saloon but it has the sleek aesthetics of a coupe and it is quite a looker from any angle thanks to perfect proportions and excellent lines.

The interior is stunning too with a sporty cockpit you would expect to see in something twice the price.

And it feels special too, from the moment you slip inside that excellent interior, with its superb sports leather seats

and great clocks and dials.

Things get even better when you get under way. The 2.2 diesel is ultra refined and torquey, the six speed box and clutch delightfully positive and slick and the brakes anchor-chucking powerful.

It flies from a standing start reaching the legal limit in third or fourth without really trying. The ride is firm, controlled and perfectly balanced. Country roads become joyous affairs, motorways gain new interest.

Steering is weighty and sharp and the whole combination makes Mazda3 a peerless drive through the dales.

Everything works so well together making it dynamically flawless.

Some diesels can be twitchy around town as they struggle to pull high gears at low speed. Not so the Mazda3 which is just as comfortable on the streets as it is on the open roads.

And despite being a genuinely spirited drive with cracking real-world performance, this motor is happy to approach the 60 miles per gallon mark.

Cars in this class are not supposed to be this good, this exciting, this well put together but the Mazda3 excels in every way. See what can be achieved when you look after the little things in life.

Fact File:

Mazda3 Fastback
2.2D
Engine: 2.2 turbo diesel
Power: 150PS
Insurance group: 24
0-62mph: 8 secs
Top speed: 132mph
Combined miles per gallon: 72.4
Transmission: six speed manual
CO2 g/km: 104