

A car for



all seasons

Ian Lamming takes the Clio for a seasonal ride

As the autumnal clouds gather on the horizon and settle on the tops of the Yorkshire Dales, a little hatchback fights back with a disposition so sunny it can't fail to get us through the winter.

The fact that the new Clio arrives in a colour so vivid, so loud, that it threatens to dissolve our retinas, actually helps keep seasonal affected disorder at bay for just a bit longer.

Wow, this is one serious colour, Inca Yellow, which brightens the relative gloom of Arkengarthdale on a dull day.

It's a stand-out colour for a stand-out hatchback. Not since the original Clio of yesteryear, or was it in living memory, has the Renault hatchback made such an impact.

The effect is instant; you barely turn a wheel before thinking how special it feels. Some cars are like that; they just feel right.

New Clio is much longer, sleeker and more modern than the models it replaces. It is an eye-catcher in any livery with its sporty lines and perfect proportions and the obvious design flair extends inside to an excellent cabin.

The dash is very much of its day with the main console aping the now ubiquitous tablets that govern our lives. It sits all pod-like in the centre of the car and could not be easier to use. Straight ahead of the driver are equally attractive dials with a digital speedo but needle gauges. It is all spot on.

The extra length gives the Clio excellent ride and control. It fair skims across the rollercoaster road over the Stang and soaks up Swaledale's uneven nature with grace.

A1 and the A66M become snooker table smooth and then in Darlington you can expect to be approached by plenty of people asking for your views on the Clio; it certainly provokes bags of interest, particularly among the ladies.

It's exactly the same at the school gate in Barnard Castle; mums and dads seem genuinely interested, attracted like bees to the high intensity flower the Clio undoubtedly is.

The little diesel engine is also of its day; powerful, refined and very frugal. Without really trying the trip computer registers 66 miles per gallon which is simply superb.

Equally impressive is how the Clio goes, which is like a train. It is even more incredible when the performance is set against the reality – this is only a 90HP 1.5 litre motor. But the torque nature and slick five speed box are more than a match for the up-hill, down dale nature of the region we are blessed to inhabit.

New Clio really is a remarkable vehicle which excels in every aspect and more than warrants its in your face paintwork. It is high-intensity motoring at its best and just what is needed to cheer you on even the dullest of days.

Fact File:

Renault Clio
 Engine: 1.5 turbo diesel
 Power: 90BHP
 0-62mph: 11.7 secs
 Top speed: 112mph
 Combined miles per gallon: 83.1
 Transmission: five speed manual
 Insurance: 13E
 CO2 g/km: 90