

Running fast & free

Ian Lamming takes to the hills in the Seat Leon ST

IF THERE'S a car that has you heading for the hills it has to be this one and you know the minute you turn a wheel. There's a clue in the badge – SEAT – helped by the designation FR and boosted again by the simple labels TSI and DSG.

SEAT means this is going to be a driver's car, first and foremost. FR means sporty, while TSI refers to blown petrol performance and DSG the best automatic box on the road.

That's quite a combination and it is all dressed up in a natty and practical ST body style.

The impact really is as quick as this; reverse ten feet down the drive and you appreciate instantly this is no ordinary estate car.

The 1.8 develops a smooth and creamy 180PS offering scintillating performance both from rest and in the mid-range. This also makes the Leon the perfect hill climber; quite the tour de force on Swaledale's finest.

It purrs quietly along the A1 where it is happy to return miles per gallon figures well into the 40s and it is delightful around town as well.

DSG is breath-taking; it just swaps ratios so quickly leaving the engine note sounding like something from a grand prix track. Leave it in auto and forget about it or play with the paddles, the choice is yours.

FR gets sporty interior, including seats, and a driver mode allowing for honed handling and generally sharper dynamics.

Just dip into the sophisticated touch screen infotainment centre to select from sport, comfort, eco or individual.

The same screen is multi-functional operating anything from the trip computer to the satellite navigation. Bluetooth lurks in there somewhere too for the phone and audio-streaming.

Cars are so hi-tech nowadays.

New Leon has great lines and the ST is a wonderful interpretation not just a bolt-on load bay. It is a match for the attractive hatchback and will leave the buyer spoilt for choice.

The extra space the ST affords is a useful addition to the range.

The interior is typically SEAT dark – both the trim and fabrics. The red stitching is a nice touch and there is plenty of equipment, including the optional upgraded sound system with ten speakers including a boot mounted sub-woofer – big respect'.

Leon does everything exceptionally well and cossets in the right places to help you through the daily toil. But point it at the open countryside and it becomes a different beast, one that loves to roam fast and free.

Fact File

SEAT Leon ST FR
1.8 TSI 180 DGS-
auto
Engine: 1.8
Power: 180PS
0-62mph: 7.7 secs
Top speed:
139mph
Combined miles
per gallon: 48.7
Transmission:
DSG-auto
Insurance: 25E
CO2 g/km: 135

