

Shhh.....



the secret's out

Ian Lamming enjoys the luxury, refinement and sophistication of the Octavia

Fact File:

Skoda Octavia
Elegance 1.6 TDI CR
Engine: 1.6 turbo
diesel
Power: 105PS
0-62mph: 10.4 secs
Top speed: 121mph
Combined miles per
gallon: 74.3
Transmission: five
speed manual
Insurance: 14E
CO2 g/km: 99

THERE'S a tractor in the inside lane and so am I – not good.

Bearing down on the slow mover along the A66 it's time to move out into the fast lane but there is another car and he is close. He's not going to like this, but I have erred and need to move quickly. Then I see him drop back, flash and allow the late manoeuvre; good man.

Bit of courtesy on the open road is as unusual as it is welcome these days, then I realize why, he is in the same car and it is an Octavia – well brought up lot these Skoda drivers.

As he passes me he smiles and nods and it is a knowing acknowledgement. He knows what I know and I know what he is thinking and together we are a couple of know-alls and there is nothing wrong in that.

Skodas have that effect on you. They are a best kept secret of discerning drivers who have invested wisely in a vehicle which maximizes their spend and rewards their faith in unassuming but ultra-effective engineering.

Sadly, driving test vehicles isn't restricted to the Yorkshire Dales; oh that it was. Yes, the Dales are dispensed with a happy smile and the Skoda is perfectly in tune with the conditions thanks to a mode button that allows you to change the dynamics of the car from eco, through normal to

sporty. Engine and handling adjust accordingly to best cope with the terrain.

Town driving is equally splendid and the reverse park-the-car-for-you device is a dream. But the true test comes off-piste when the Skoda is forced to head north on the A1, then cross to the hideous A19 for a trip to Nissan at Washington, in filthy weather, during rush hour – now what's that about?

After a lifetime of dodging the rush hour, being nose to tail is a huge culture shock; queuing at roundabouts and to join the dual carriageway, ridiculous. But it's not as bad as it could be because the Octavia takes the strain.

Yes, the Octavia has a clever touch screen infotainment centre and packaging but more important today is the stuff under the skin which keeps you between the white lines, on the road and will actually brake you to a halt if you forget.

Strong, economical diesel engine, slick five speed gearbox and extremely comfortable and well equipped cabin and a massive boot, what more could you ask for?

Octavia is a car that looks after you like a butler in Downton and gives you confidence that you can survive today's roads not only in one piece but also in style. No wonder other road users suddenly become so polite.