

More than a



Match

Ian Lamming tests the dynamic Subaru Impreza RC LinearTronic

Fact File

Subaru Impreza 1.6

RC LinearTronic

Engine: 1.6 boxer

petrol

Power: 114PS

0-62mph: 12.6 secs

Top speed: 111mph

Combined miles per
gallon: 46.3

Transmission: auto-
matic

CO2 g/km: 140

U TTER the word Impreza and it immediately conjures an image of a cult car, a rally-bred monster with an exhaust the size of a dustbin.

Huge spoilers, deep airdams, gold alloys, race team livery; one of the best cars on the road to drive, but also a tad crass. With all of this comes a sub-culture of “Scooby-lovers” in their sports coats, branded caps and accessory catalogues.

But there is another side to this model, a little-known hatchback, devoid of rally pretensions but oozing practicality. Impreza hatch looks for all intents and purposes like an XV with the suspension lowered. At a glance it may appear a littler plain but the look grows more appealing as the week goes on as does the functional XV interior.

A 1.6 litre petrol flat four engine is attached to the Subaru glorious 4x4 system and in this case a seamless automatic gearbox. That combination should not set the world on fire and I'm expecting modest performance and heavy fuel consumption.

Pulling away for the first time provides the first shock of the day, it is startlingly peppy and never feels slow. The trip computer approaches 40mpg, which is also pleasing and the appeal of the medium sized Subaru starts its insidious game of filtering into your soul.

Britain's finest weather also works to the Sub's advantage.

Let's face it, in winter our North Yorkshire roads are absolutely disgusting. If they aren't under water then they are covered in filth dropped by myriad tractors towing muck spreaders containing doubtful cargoes.

The constant freeze thaw and water erosion chomps heartily at the asphalt turning billiard table smooth to bomb-crater rough over night.

Traction on such roads is never assured – unless you drive a Subaru. I'm not really sure how they do it but the Impreza grips, sticks and glues itself to the highway in an uncanny and seldom matched fashion.

The result is a warm glow of self-confidence no matter how bad conditions become and the car simply endears itself to the driver in a peerless manner. In other words the way it actually goes on a day-to-day basis more than makes up for the plain looks, dull interior and on-paper modest performance; it really is so much better than the sum of its parts.

Impreza may have the Scooby cult scoffing and perhaps resenting the fact it shares the name of its rally-bred brethren but in terms of dynamism and ability it is more than a match for anything on the road.