



A good sport

Ian Lamming drives the all weather Suzuki Swift Sport 4x4

WEATHER forecasts hold no fear, even when you live in the country, at least not if you are in the right car.

Second week running and the badge still sports the S moniker of Suzuki, there are chunky tread tyres and a 4x4 badge – but this is no off-roader.

Unusually, it is a Swift; that's Suzuki's sterling little hatchback. There are bash plate lookalikes front and back but otherwise this is the same five door that plies the towns and cities so frugally.

The all wheel drive uses as a clever bit of technology underneath which detects loss of traction and automatically switches power to the wheels with the most grip. So the driver doesn't get involved but benefits from the fact the car keeps going. When it is not needed it lies in wait while the power turns the front wheel in a conventional fashion.

There's just been a sprinkling of the white stuff on higher ground so there's no better time to venture over the tops.

It's already slushy when the Suzuki arrives but there's enough to test the system and, you know what, it works.

Power is on the limited side so any tight hairpins are going to need second gear and a fair few revs. Normally that would send front wheels into a spin and see the car heading straight rather than round the bend.

Not so the Swift which seems to shift the power around

appropriately and sends the car shooting uphill quick enough to catch third gear, which is great. In fact, handling is superb; this little car just grips and grips and the ride is ultra-refined and forgiving while retaining a sporty edge.

This is more than enough to make you smile and makes up for the singular lack of poke from the 1.2 litre engine. It's nice and refined, not bad at all down the motorway at 70mph and great around town. But if you want to feel sporty you are going to have to buzz it towards the red line, and that hurts economy of course. The gearbox is sweet so at least you are going to enjoy any cog-swapping that will be required.

Everything else is pure Swift; tidy looks and proportions; nicely appointed cabin that is practical and well made; easy to live with ergonomics.

Rear legroom is more than adequate and the boot is a handy size. The CD radio is good quality and comes with Bluetooth for your phone and the key is the proximity sensor type that picks up when you are in the vicinity and allows you to unlock the doors by pressing a little rubber button on the handle. Engine starter is a button.

Fitting a hatchback with 4x4 is a stroke of genius as the benefits to grip are astounding. The Swift oozes confidence, which transfers to the driver and means you can leave others to worry about the state of the weather.

Fact File:

Suzuki Swift Sport
4x4
Engine: 1.2 petrol
Power: 94PS
0-62mph: 13.4 secs
Top speed: 103mph
Combined miles per
gallon: 51.3
Transmission: five
speed manual
Insurance: 10
CO2 g/km: 126