

Banish your



preconceptions

Ian Lamming learns to expect the unexpected with the new Vauxhall Zafira

Fact File:

Vauxhall Zafira Tourer
CDTI

Engine: 2.0 turbo
diesel

Power: 130PS

0-62mph: 10.6 secs

Top speed: 120mph

Combined miles per
gallon: 62.8

Transmission: six
speed manual

Insurance: 15

CO2 g/km: 119

THERE are some manufacturers you can always count on; they are consistent, solid, reliable.

There may not be too many surprises but neither do they threaten any gremlins. Vauxhalls are a bit like that.

They are what they are; they do what they do; they come with certain expectations and they generally meet them. They look, go and even smell a certain way.

So when the Zafira Tourer arrives I know what to expect – although I'm not expecting such a vibrant shade of red, which is nice.

This is a people carrier so it is big, accommodating and even has three rows of seats. So it is going to be a cool customer on the motorways and there are no surprises, as you would expect. The 2.0 litre diesel is nice and refined, frugal too – expect 50+mpg at the legal limit – Zafira is built for these conditions.

And when it arrives in town, it excels too being easy to drive in traffic, even better to park thanks to swathes of glass and beepy devices that help you manoeuvre.

All good so far; all equally expected. Then comes the shock; this thing really motors in a way you would not expect from an MPV. So the fast A roads suddenly remind you of

the pleasure motoring can bring; the old bus handles the sweepers with aplomb and the big oil burner helps it storm out of the bends. Hmmm?

But there's no way it will like Dales roads, surely? Oh yeh, Tourer flies up and over the hills, liking in particular those tricky little hairpins that can catch a driver out. The suspension handles the ups and the downs of Yorkshire's finest, of which there are many, then Tourer fair whoops its way along the twisty stuff. Who would have thought it, a people carrier that loves to play?

That said it still possesses all the traits that make MPVs so popular. Space is intelligently managed, comfort levels are high and when the third bench of seats is stored under the floor, the boot is huge. Driver and passengers get a great view from high-set seats and the masses of glass allow greenhouse levels of light into the cabin to make all concerned flourish like seedlings in a pot of the good stuff. We all have preconceptions no matter how hard we try. So I love it when a vehicle blasts your stereotypical thoughts to pieces – and that's what the Zafira Tourer does in a surprising fashion.