



Automotive Perfection

Ian Lamming discovers his perfect motor

IT'S the perfect car – well nearly – and that is no mean feat as drivers come to demand the most for their pound.

To qualify for such an esteemed accolade the test vehicle must shine in myriad area including looks, interior, handling, performance, economy and feel.

The V40 Cross Country shines brightly in every area and falls short in only one, which I have every confidence Volvo plans to address.

The pumped up V40, which sports higher ride height and stick-ons designed to make it look more off-road-ready, looks fabulous, whether that is in the drive, the car park or on the road. Like the V60 it is a hatch/estate but somehow manages to look sporty and macho.

Inside, the dash and clocks are quirky and well finished; equipment levels are high and there is an excellent blend of traditional and hi-tech. It is spacious and well finished and is supremely comfortable and upmarket. It has premium brand written all over it with two tone leather and trick bits including



technology to stop you crashing, straying from the lane and one bit that actually reverse parallel parks for you.

Cross Country boasts handling for all occasions. If you want to sneak off into the rough then the larger wheels, longer travel suspension and increased ride height will allow you to get away with it.

But tackle the challenges of the roller-coaster ride over Arkengarthdale and the tortuous subsidence-stricken route back down Swaledale and you will marvel at the way the suspension remains composed whatever hole, crest or bump is hurled its way.

Equally impressive is the way it glides along the A1 and tackles the fast sweeping curves of the A66.

The five cylinder turbo diesel has to be one of the best on the market. The off-beat sound and feel translates to creamy smooth torque that combine to provide storming performance and amazing economy.

The D4 churns out 177PS and linked to a slick six speed box this gives the V40 incredible punch. But without even trying the trip computer never dropped below 52 mile per gallon; now that's my sort of vehicle. Around town centres the five cylinder is amazingly tractable and as happy chugging through traffic as it is on the open road.

So where does the Cross Country fall down? Well, at the moment you can't buy an all-wheel-drive version with a diesel engine, which seems strange. If you want 4x4 then you have to opt for the T4 which is a fire-breathing petrol powered monster that will only return 35mpg, probably not enough for

those looking for a Cross Country.

An AWD diesel must surely be on the drawing board and when it appears the V40 Cross Country will become my perfect car.

Fact File:

Model: Volvo V40 D4 Cross Country
Engine: 2.0 litre diesel
Drivetrain: Six speed manual
Power: 177PS
Top speed: 130mph
0-60mph: 8.2secs
Insurance group: -
Miles per gallon (combined): 64.2
CO2 (g/km): 117