



It's a bit of a Beast

by Ian Lamming

WHO doesn't love dinosaurs? Big, daunting and it took a meteor strike to knock them down.

Some cars are a bit like that. Look at Volvo's XC90. Huge, designed sometime in the Jurassic period and still here, like sharks and crocodiles – marvellous.

XC is much more diplodocus than velociraptor so expect to see it majestically grazing the foliage rather than sprinting after prey with a blood curdling screech.

This is one big mammal, enormous, inside and out. It fills your mirrors, packs the car park and chokes your consciousness with its sheer presence.

That girth comes in handy. People get out of your way without even asking. The view is truly splendid, you barely notice the Dales dry stone walls or the hedges which line many of our roads and on the A1 you feel you can mix it with the big boys – or could survive a meteor strike.

Inside is refreshingly retro. XC belongs to a different era, one free from touch screens, multi-function mouses (mice?) and technology that can read your very thoughts even if your brain isn't big enough to know what to do with it.

There are knobs and switches and they serve the function that is drawn on the cover. It is easy to use and does little to

distract the driver from what he should be doing – namely driving.

The interior is also vast. It's like sitting inside the belly of a brontosaurus. There are seven seats but the rear set folds neatly away into the boot leaving a cave-like load area the Croods would be proud of.

For such a beast the XC is actually powered by a modestly sized 2.4 litre turbo diesel. But the fact it is five-cylinder makes it charismatic and being highly tuned to 200PS gives it bags of muscle.

It revs surprisingly willingly and could even pull a higher ratio to improve economy from the 34 average miles per gallon. There's nothing wrong with the sound and the feel, it's just the expectation it fails to meet.

Neither is there anything wrong with the way it climbs hills and dales. The long travel suspension soaks up the lumps nicely but keeps handling in check with equal aplomb. It also allows you to bump up the kerbs, should the occasion arise, without fear of grinding the sump or bottoming out.

With technology running at a mind-blowing pace it is sometimes nice to take a primordial backseat and there is no better place to do that than in the Volvo XC90.

Fact File

Volvo XC90

Engine: 2.4 five-

cylinder turbo diesel

Power: 200PS

0-62mph: 10.3 secs

Top speed: 127mph

Combined miles per
gallon: 34.4

Transmission: six-
speed automatic

Insurance: 42

CO2 g/km: 215