

Most Wanted *Motor Madness*

Ian Lamming falls for the new Range Rover Velar on a driving day to remember

WANT one. Now how many times do I say that when testing a car? Not many to be honest. But the new Range Rover Velar is so gorgeous how could anyone resist?

It's that time of year again when the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders organises test day north and the Wetherby Racecourse forecourt is full of vehicles to drive back to back.

We get advanced notice of what will be there and the green highlighter comes out. Once again it is Jaguar/Land Rover at the top of the list, this time with Velar.

The new model fills a gap between the Evoque and Range Rover Sport. So it appears to have the former's roof line and the latter's length which has an incredible effect on aesthetics.

It looks long, low and lovely, then there's an aerodynamic nose and tasty rump to give the Velar must-have appeal. It's fabulous, darling.

That's not the half of it. Lovely touches make it even better. So plip the key fob and door handles that had once snuggled flush in the doors pop out for your hands to grip. It's a feature you could play with all day.

Then there's the interior; oh my! We are well used to Land and Range Rovers being of exemplary design; few are better. But Velar is in another league, it's amazing. There is the

traditional leather and tactile trim materials, great controls and dials. But the centre console appears to be a sheet of touch screen glass offering the functions of a space shuttle and graphics beyond compare. It is beautiful.

Velar comes with a variety of engines and power outputs as you would expect but the 240PS 2.0 diesel is more than enough car for me with a good blend of refined power and reasonable economy. The motor pulls strongly making Velar feel lively on the road. But the combined figure of 48.7mpg also appeals to my northern frugality. Ride and handling are good too and Velar feels taut and sporty through the bends.

So Velar has been driven and I'm smitten; but on to other vehicles. There couldn't be a great contrast than the Smart Fortwo electric. It would probably fit inside the Velar's boot.

Switch it on and 99 miles comes up on the dash but this drops instantly if you floor the throttle and the tiny city car whizzes off silently down the drive. It is really quick and quiet but the most impressive thing is the ridiculously tight turning circle. It will turn almost within its own length.

BMW's latest 5 Series does the usual job until you wave at the radio. Yes, it responds to gestures. Circle left to reduce the volume and circle right to increase it, genius.

Next door sits the new Mini PHEV in All4 Countryman guise. That's a plug in petrol hybrid to me and you and it goes rather nicely.

Test day also provides a chance to get a sneak peek and quick blatt in the new big Ssangyong, albeit in left hand drive form. First impressions of the new Rexton? As Pres Trump would say, 'It's going to be great'.

Second place on the day goes to the nearly-as-gorgeous as the Velar Alfa Romeo Stelvio. Not only does it look classy oozing typical Italian design flair, but it drives like only an Alfa can. Considering this is an SUV, it goes more like a sports car.

Another great day thanks to SMMT and the motor manufacturers who take the trouble to travel North. Thank you. Now where did I leave that Velar?

Fact File

- Range Rover Velar HSE
- Engine: 2.0 diesel
- Power: 240HP
- 0-60mph: 8.5 secs
- Top speed: 135mph
- Combined MPG: 48.7
- Transmission: Eight speed automatic
- CO2 g/km: 154

