

Fully Loaded



Ian Lamming enjoys the generous nature of the Vauxhall stalwart

ONE glance at the spec sheet leaves you scratching your head in wonder.

What possible gizmo could engineers still find to fit to the mid-priced car and why on earth does anyone pay any more for a motor when they come as well specified as this?

Vauxhall's new Astra – now there's a model designed to be an affordable run-around back in the late 70s – now even comes with internet access!

OnStar is Vauxhall's latest development in vehicle technology and includes a high-speed 4G LTE mobile wi-fi hotspot for up to seven devices, emergency response notification and stolen vehicle recovery technology.

Smartphone users are also able to connect their vehicle remotely with the OnStar app, called MyVauxhall, which allows occupants to contact the system, view vehicle diagnostics, remotely lock and unlock the car, locate the car – even honk the horn and flash the lights as well as download destinations to the in-car navigation system. Unbelievable.

Even all those years ago, original Astra set new standards in modernity and its successor continues that tradition with gusto.

Features like alloy wheels, spoilers and fog-lights are barely worth mentioning and passing reference can only be made to the steering mounted controls, premium speakers, cruise control and dual zone

climate control. Then there's satnav, tick, rain sensitive windscreen wipers, tick, multi-function trip computer, tick.

Heated steering wheel is definitely worth more than a nod – it's great for the digits – as are the heated seats in the back and the front and the USB ports in the rear to keep the techno-kids happy.

Automatic lighting can even detect tunnels, there is hill start assist and an electronic parking brake, front, side and curtain airbags and anti-skid and anti-locking technology galore. This Astra has everything.

It is also amazing to see how performance has come on over the years.

On paper the 1.4 litre appears modest but thanks to the turbo this thing flies and is actually quicker than an old GTE, with the sprint time of 0-60mph popping up in a brisk 7.8 seconds.

Steering and chassis tuning match the engine just fine and overall the Astra is a spirited little mover, particularly in the countryside where its broad and strong mid-range is a boon for overtaking tractors and the like.

The benefit of a small blown engine is economy and the Astra will also return more than 50 miles per gallon.

Practically the Vauxhall excels with a large cabin and accommodating hatch area. The new look is great. The front has been polished rather than overhauled but the rear definitely looks more stylish with

attractive light clusters that look like they could have been designed by an Italian, in the best sense of the meaning.

New Astra wants for nothing, absolutely nothing, which is going to leave the opposition scratching their heads in

Fact File

Vauxhall Astra
 Engine: 1.4 petrol turbo
 Power: 150PS
 0-62mph: 7.8 secs
 Top speed: 134mph
 Combined MPG: 51.4
 Transmission: six speed manual
 CO2 g/km: 128