

Not about



the price tag

Ian Lamming relishes the economic virtues of the new Porsche Cayenne

WOULD you buy one? That's the acid test when road testing the good, the bad, the ugly and the indifferent. And the answer doesn't necessarily depend on the price tag, it is dictated by the car, because when people ask that question it is about empathising with the inquisitor not my wallet.

So in the case of the Porsche Cayenne S, I might not be able to afford one but the people who are asking certainly can; I can tell by the vehicle they are currently driving.

With the Cayenne, the answer lies very much in the affirmative for a host of reasons including the price.

Amazingly – and in relative terms – the S is an absolute bargain.

I drove one of its competitors recently and it was inferior in every way and cost more than £20,000 more. Before I checked the price list I hazarded a guess and thought the S would retail for between £80 and 100K; that's how it feels.

But it actually weighs in under the £60,000 mark, which I think is astonishing in the world it inhabits.

Secondly, this particular Cayenne is stunningly good to drive; not just great but brilliant. Before the delivery driver started the Porsche up to reverse it off his wagon he grinned and said: "You are going to love this – it's the S."

A twist of the car-shaped key and the rumble from the diesel motor is of seismic proportions. This 4.2 litre oil burner is like no other thanks to its eight cylinders. Diesels just don't sound this great. In fact it is one of the most amazing, thrumming, menacing aural delights I have ever heard. The fact it is a diesel simply doesn't compute. It really is arguable whether this actually sounds better than my friend's M5 and that actually plays its song through its speakers.

If you think it sounds good, just wait until you slot the eight

speed Tiptronic into drive. The Cayenne may weigh more than 2.2 tonnes but it will fly out of the blocks like a sprinter. This off-roader is one serious sports car. It is stunning to drive and the combination of space-time-continuum-shredding torque (620Nm for goodness sake), in-the-blink-of-an-eye ratio changing gearbox and stunning handling make this 4x4 peerless to drive.

The aforementioned competition feels like driving a small terrace house by comparison. The Cayenne feels taut and composed, sporty and manageable. It is fun, sharp, balanced. It is just plain lovely.

You can change the feel of the suspension on the hoof moving seamlessly from comfort to normal, normal to sport, at the flick of a switch. All three feel fantastic and you tend to play with the system just for the fun of it.

Another boon is the cockpit. It is straight from a sports car and forsakes the dreadful mouse pads and touch screen computers which afflict modern cars for good old fashioned buttons, which do as they say on the surface. Again, the interior is pure delight.

Cayenne is big and practical enough for people and luggage, but never too large to be unwieldy. It is easy to park in town, easy to pilot down narrow country roads, easy to control in all weathers.

Finally, the Cayenne has one last trump card – economy. Most cars boasting power like this end up falling into the low 20s when it comes to miles per gallon. On a gentle pootle across the A66 and up the A1, the trip computer was reading and incredible 39mpg.

So would I buy one? With its provenance, its performance, its price tag, you bet I would. What a car.

Fact File

Porsche Cayenne

Diesel S

Engine: 4.2 turbo diesel

Power: 382BHP

Insurance group: NA

0-62mph: 5.7 secs

Top speed: 156mph

Combined miles per gallon: 34

Transmission: eight speed Tiptronic

CO2 g/km: 218