

Socket to them



with a new plug-in

Ian Lamming tests the first ever plug-in hybrid diesel

Fact File

Volvo V60 Plug-in Hybrid

Engine: 2.4 five-cylinder turbo diesel
Power: 215HP plus 70HP electric motor
0-62mph: 5.9 secs
Top speed: 142mph (74mph electric only)
Combined miles per gallon: 155.2

Transmission: six-speed automatic

Insurance: -

CO2 g/km: 49

IT'S not often you drive a car that is a first but this one is.

Volvo has used its considerable technical knowhow to produce the first ever plug-in hybrid diesel.

So what I hear you cry? What is so special about that? Well here are the headline figures: top speed 142mph; 0-62mph in 5.9 seconds; CO2 g/km 49; and combined miles per gallon 155.2. All unbelievable.

This particular V60 is special, very special. The unique chrome tailgate moulding with integrated exhausts, aerodynamically designed alloys that cut through the air more easily, recharge point in the front wing, high gloss grille and distinctive spoiler set the hybrid apart but tell little of the true story that lies beneath.

Plug it into the mains, let the hybrid charge to the max, in a relatively short time compared to many, add that electric power to the already muscular five cylinder diesel and the V60 is one awesome car with supercar performance.

But drive it steadily and the claim is that you can expect a combined fuel figure of more than 150 miles per gallon – astounding.

Switch to 'Pure' and for more than 30 miles it will only use electric reducing emissions to a big fat zero despite being capable of more than 70mph.

'Hybrid' and 'Power' bring diesel and electric motors into play, the former driving the front wheels, the sparky the rear, giving all wheel drive by default.

On a wet, windy and disgusting day on the A1, this combo shows how effective this can be bringing superb and safe driving dynamics on an otherwise slightly intimidating day.

It's a partnership that also loves the dales with its steep climbs, tricky surfaces and twist and turns. The combination of power and handling make the V60 as good as anything on the roads to drive.

Sounds great because it is, totally. But that level of technology and development doesn't come cheap and you can expect to shell out around 50K for the privilege – that's firsts for you.