

Vauxhall Astra

1.7 CDTi SRi

Road Test - by Ian Lamming



IN the war of the world's car makers there's a new soldier on parade – and he's British.

If the Vauxhall Insignia was the car which staved off global meltdown, then the Astra will be the secret weapon that drives it out of recession.

Now in its sixth incarnation and with three decades of successful production behind the name, Astra has the means to battle and win in the most competitive class there is.



The previous model set the standards when it was launched five years ago marking a transformation of the product range. New Astra is bigger, better and braver still.

One glance tells the observer of its origins. Insignia is obviously a very close relative and this band of brothers shares the same innovative technology and dynamics that will see Astra advance through the market.



The five door bodyshell is longer, wider and more muscular than the model it replaces. The grille is relatively slim highlighting the new contemporary griffin badge. The eagle-eye lights give off a menacing stare which is appropriate given that this car has its sights fixed on the competition.

Overall the new model is much less angular and more organic in its shape, with softer curves giving it a coupe profile. It oozes class which belies its value for money price-tag.



That air of quality extends inside into a cockpit second to none. The steering wheel, clocks and gently sloping dashboard have premium brand written all over them. It has been crafted with military precision; it is brimming with the latest technology.

Just as the outside will have you reaching for the sponge and chamois, so the tactile interior will see you running a hand over myriad surfaces.

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But cars are for driving not just admiring and the design ethos that makes the Astra so aesthetically appealing also extends to on-the-road driving dynamics.

There are eight engines, including three diesels and five trim levels. The 1.7 CDTi SRi falls into the sporting category despite being impressively clean and frugal.

You instantly forget it's a diesel so smooth and refined is the power delivery. It will power away from a standing start or cruise happily past slow moving traffic with little strain on the motor or driver.



And its responses are sharp and swift thanks to clever steering and suspension. Opt for the sophisticated adaptive ride and things get better still. It wheels right and left under complete control and when conditions demand a quick halt, the brakes are powerful and backed by all manner of electronic wizardry.

Being larger not only makes Astra more comfortable it makes it more practical and it will happily carry people and ordnance galore.

Also in the armoury are a plethora of features that push the Astra to the head of the parade. This includes adaptive forward lighting, which changes to suit road conditions, six airbags, three point seatbelts in the rear and brake lights that pulse under emergency braking and when the ABS is activated.



Vital Statistics

Model: Vauxhall Astra

1.7 CDTi SRi

Engine: 1.7 litre, turbo diesel

Drivetrain: six speed manual

Power: 125PS

Top speed: 122mph

0-60mph: 10.7secs

Insurance group: 5E

Miles per gallon (combined): 60.1

CO2 (g/km): 124

There is also electronic stability programme, air conditioning, decent sound system, cruise control and a multi-function trip computer.



The outgoing Astra has stood the test of time and still passes muster at inspection time. The new one has moved the cause on even further and truly is a car for heroes.