



Motoring focus

‘Mondeo Man’ rides again?

FIRST DRIVE

FORD MONDEO
£18,827 TO £26,717

Few cars can claim to typify a generation of middle-England drivers, but that’s exactly what the Mondeo did when the ‘Mondeo Man’ tag was coined in the late 1990s.

However, in recent years the Mondeo has looked distinctly long in the tooth compared with the latest offerings from BMW, Honda and Volkswagen – indeed, it has ceded its sales crown to the costlier BMW 3 Series. So Ford will hope the all-new Mondeo can restore faith in a model that’s managed sales of more than 1.1 million cars since 1993.

The new Mondeo is certainly striking, drawing heavily on the success of sporty styling features from other Ford models, such as the S-Max MPV. And, arguably, it’s better looking than the current 3 Series and VW Passat, for example.

There’s a choice of 80 different engine and trim combinations – many with an



New Mondeo is vital for struggling Ford – but it bodes well

automatic gearbox to take the strain out of city driving. While at first this might seem bewildering, we recommend not shying away from entry-level ‘Edge’ spec models because equipment levels are still generous. Indeed, all Mondeos come fitted with electronic stability control (see p17), cruise control and air-con or climate control.

We drove the quiet and composed 2.5-litre Titanium X estate model with variable

Arguably, it’s better looking than the current 3 Series

suspension settings. ‘Normal’ mode easily soaks up bumps, contains body roll and offers super roadholding, even when fully loaded. There are weaknesses – the six-speed manual gearbox is a little rough and the estate’s rear visibility is restricted when reversing, so push for a deal on the optional parking sensors (£400). The 2.5 petrol model is also not the most frugal choice, returning 30.7mpg in our tests.

The interior is spacious, with lots of head- and legroom for four people and a logically laid out dashboard. The estate’s large, practical boot will take 530 litres of luggage or 950 litres with the seats folded down (measured up to the window line).

We are currently testing a diesel saloon, as we expect the lower-CO₂ engines to hold most appeal to tax-conscious company-car drivers and fuel-conscious private buyers.

VERDICT Ford has built a terrific new family car, which delivers an upmarket feel for mainstream money. It’s too soon to judge reliability, but in most respects, the Mondeo looks a winner.

Qashqai cleans up

EURO NCAP TESTS

Nissan’s Qashqai hatchback-cum-4x4 has set new standards in the latest Euro NCAP tests, with the highest points score ever awarded. It achieved close to maximum marks for adult occupant protection. Child protection would also have scored top marks, had Nissan provided clearer instructions and warning information.

Dodge’s chunky Caliber is vying for similar buyers but falls short by comparison. Side protection is good, but hard structures in the dash could cause debilitating leg injuries in a frontal crash. We have other serious safety concerns that wouldn’t show up

in Euro NCAP’s tests (see *Which? Car 2007/08*, p37), which we’ve since demonstrated to Dodge bosses.

Honda’s Civic Hybrid also falls short of five stars, with insufficient pressure in the airbag to prevent the driver’s head hitting the steering wheel in the frontal crash (also a problem in the Dodge). Again, there’s a risk of leg injuries from the dash. Pedestrian protection beats many rivals, though.

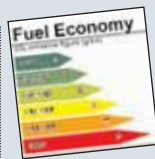
Skoda’s new Fabia (opposite) and Kia’s Carens both lost points because the driver and passenger may suffer leg injuries from the dash. Carmakers must do more to combat this.



MODEL	CLASS	EURO NCAP SAFETY SCORE		
		ADULT OCCUPANT PROTECTION (OUT OF FIVE)	CHILD OCCUPANT PROTECTION (OUT OF FIVE)	PEDESTRIAN PROTECTION (OUT OF FIVE)
SKODA Fabia	Supermini	★★★★	★★★	★★
NISSAN Qashqai	Medium	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★
HONDA Civic Hybrid	Medium	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
DODGE Caliber	Medium	★★★★	★★★★★	★
KIA Carens	MPV	★★★★	★★★	★



15%
of thefts from cars in London
in 2006 involved satnavs
METROPOLITAN POLICE



44%
of new-car buyers are still unaware
of 'green' labels on cars
SOCIETY OF MOTOR MANUFACTURERS AND TRADERS

Success unlikely to be a cakewalk for Skoda's new supermini

Fabia lacks icing

FIRST DRIVE

SKODA FABIA
£7,990 TO £13,015

Skoda's TV advert for the new Fabia involves a team of pastry chefs making a life-sized cake model of the car. The real car is (unfortunately) not edible, but it is appealing in other ways. For example, it has grown a little, meaning interior space is better than before and access is easier.

The styling has much in common with the Roomster mini MPV (see 'Motoring focus', *Which?*, March 2007, p35). It shares the same range of engines and gearboxes, so it's no surprise to find it drives similarly, with light controls and safe handling. However, keen drivers may wish to spend their money elsewhere.

We've driven the most basic 1.2 60bhp petrol Fabia, which costs a modest £7,990. It's reasonably nippy for town driving but struggles with a headwind on a motorway. It averaged 44mpg on a mix of town and motorway driving. The spongy suspension smooths out all but the biggest bumps, but there's a fair bit of body roll in corners.

Inside the entry-level Fabia 1, it feels pretty basic. You don't get a lid on the glovebox, for example, and air conditioning is standard only on costlier 2 and 3 models. Head-protecting curtain airbags are a £200 option unless you choose level 3 trim. At least the standard CD/radio is

Your say



Ben likes new, bigger Fabia

A current Fabia owner gives his verdict

'Compared with our Mk1 Fabia, there's more space inside the new one, and it feels more modern – very Germanic. The cupholders are great, and the seats are more comfy than ours, with much more space in the back. This petrol Fabia is quieter than our diesel but I don't like the inside door handles – they feel like they might fall off!'

BEN COLLINS, LONDON

Inside the entry-level Fabia it feels pretty basic

simple to use, and even the most novice drivers will be able to find all the switches.

VERDICT Other rivals offer better value, despite Skoda's budget pricing. We don't think the new Fabia matches up to our current Best Buy superminis, such as the Toyota Yaris. We'll report on the 1.4 diesel next month.

Picasso pleases

FIRST DRIVE

CITROËN C4 PICASSO
£14,550 TO £21,940

Citroën has renamed its seven-seat MPV the 'C4 Grand Picasso' and brought in a five-seat baby brother called C4 Picasso. All a bit confusing,

but is the smaller car any good?

We test-drove the 110bhp 1.6 diesel with a five-speed manual box. It has ample power for overtaking and feels agile for an MPV. The gearbox is well matched to the engine and fifth gear is flexible for



motorway driving.

Inside, there's good head- and legroom and a decent-sized boot, but switches and dials are quite unusual and not very intuitive.

VERDICT Well worth a look – especially with a big discount.

In brief

New rules for cherished plates

There are now simpler rules for transferring cherished numberplates

between owners. Only the keeper can grant retention rights directly to the buyer – reducing the risk of fraud. See www.dvla.gov.uk for details.

K155 XME

Fiat's 310,000-mile warranty

A five-year/310,000-mile warranty on the new Fiat 500 city car, to be launched early in 2008, sounds good. But 'it will be tied into a Fiat finance deal, and details still have to be finalised,' Peter Newton of Fiat UK told us. We wait to hear more.



TomTom growing

TomTom, currently number one for UK satnav sales, has just bought out the world's second largest mapmaker, Tele Atlas, for £1.35bn. It looks as if TomTom is mapping out its own future, ready to take on ever-increasing opposition.



New arrivals

Audi A5 (coupé, on sale now, from £33,430); Citroën C-Crosser (compact 4x4, now, from £22,790); Fiat Bravo (medium car, now, from £10,995 – reviewed next month); Mazda 2 (supermini, now, from £8,500 – pictured below); Mazda CX7 (compact 4x4, now, £23,960); Peugeot 4007 (compact 4x4, now, £22,790); Volkswagen Golf estate (medium car, now, from £14,347); Volvo V70 (estate, now, from £26,495); Peugeot 308 (medium car, September, £TBA); Subaru Impreza (medium car, September, £TBA); Kia Ceed SW (medium estate, October, £TBA).

