

First drive

VW has rediscovered some flair with its new coupé

Scirocco blows in

VW SCIROCCO

The new Scirocco is great to look at and a joy to drive – and all for around £20,000.

It shares its DNA with the VW Golf GTI and Audi TT – indeed, the ‘GT’ model we tested (£20,940) uses the 197bhp 2.0 TSI turbocharged petrol engine from those cars.

It’s a superb engine for the Scirocco – quick (0-62mph in

7.2 seconds), flexible and fairly economical (we averaged around 35mpg versus VW’s claimed 37.2mpg).

The suspension is firm, but not unpleasantly so. ‘Adaptive Chassis Control’, which lets you switch between normal, comfort and sport modes, comes as standard.

Around town, the Scirocco feels light and easy, while motorway jaunts are effortless, despite noticeable tyre noise.

But this car comes into its own on twisty A and B roads, where it offers plenty of grip and confident handling.

Inside, the Scirocco is smart and logical, if not very exciting. It has two rear seats – OK for children or smaller adults – but the boot isn’t as big or easy to access as the Golf’s.

Overall, the Scirocco has the charm to win buyers who may be tempted by the Audi TT or a mid-sized hot hatch.

At £20,940, the Scirocco GT costs little more than the recently discontinued MkV Golf GTI (the MkVI GTI arrives in summer 2009).

That’s £4,500 cheaper than the Audi TT with the same engine – and the Scirocco is better equipped, too.



Find our video review of the Scirocco at which.co.uk/cars

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BMW’s bestseller gets a mid-life makeover

New look for 3 Series

BMW 3 SERIES

BMW’s bestselling 3 Series has had a face-lift. The styling hasn’t changed much – external changes amount to some newly profiled panels and different lights.

Engines and trims have been tweaked, too. You can now opt for the company-car-friendly 318d with six-speed automatic transmission.

The 325d, 330d and 335d diesels get economy and performance gains in an effort to reduce running costs.

The 3 retains its compact dimensions and its 460-litre boot. It’s suitable for four adults and their luggage, although the rear headroom isn’t great if you’re taller than 5’8”.

We’re pleased to see new ‘active’ front head restraints, designed to reduce the whiplash effect in a rear-end shunt.

The £22,765 318i SE we tried felt a bit underpowered and bare inside. Far better, if you can stretch to it, to opt for the smooth, powerful 320d. But the 330d is the real star of the range, with breathtaking acceleration

combined with saloon practicality and 49.6mpg fuel consumption (although real-world economy figures probably aren’t quite as impressive).

VERDICT It’s business as usual for the 3, which means sublime driving and some truly awesome engines higher up the range.



This month

You can read our latest first drives at www.which.co.uk/cars through the month, including several with video reviews.  Here are some highlights to look out for:

Volvo XC60

Just at the wrong time to launch a new 4x4, Volvo’s XC60 has arrived. Smaller than the XC90, it’s a classy, if expensive, car, designed to take on Audi’s Q5 and BMW’s X3. It’s quietly capable but will face a tough time in showrooms. Read more at www.which.co.uk/XC60.



Vauxhall Insignia

Vauxhall has pensioned off the Vectra and replaced it with the all-new Insignia – a car that feels a whole lot classier, inside and out. But does it drive as well as Ford’s Mondeo? Look out for our online review this month to find out.



Skoda Superb video

We first drove Skoda’s new large family car back in June, and concluded that it offered a whole lot of car for the money. We’ve just added a video review, including a demonstration of the Superb’s optional self-parking system.



Fuel calculator

It’s common knowledge that you’ll struggle to match the ‘official’ EU test figures printed in carmakers’ brochures. But do you know how many miles your car really does to the gallon? We’ve made it easy for you to keep track – visit www.which.co.uk/fuelcalculator and use our interactive tool.