

MOTORING MATTERS *by Anthony Goodwin*



Taxi Globe was recently invited to attend a drive day with GM. It turned out to be a gloriously sunny day and there was a range of fantastic General Motors Cars to drive - what more could I have wanted? I was spoilt for choice on models to choose from, the brand new Insignia Sports Tourer, Corsa VXR Arctic, Saab 93 Convertible, 93 Sports Wagon and Chevrolet Captiva to name but a few.

Firstly let's look at the Insignia Sports Tourer, the third body style to be added to Vauxhall's

A DAY OUT WITH GM IN THE SUSSEX COUNTRYSIDE

much praised 2009 European Car of the Year. There has been much hype about the new Insignia and I can report that there is good reason for this. With a great range of engines and trim levels, to choose from there is something for everyone. With the launch of the Sports Tourer they introduced the new 1.6 Turbo petrol, this means exceptional performance combined with reduced fuel consumption and lower Co2 emissions. Why do most people buy a sports tourer? They need a large boot! The Insignia covers that one well to with an impressive 540 litres with the seats up, going up to a massive 1530 litres with the seats folded flat. On the models I tested during the day, all models had those fabulous power tailgates, great for loading

shopping or the dog in the boot. The power tailgate can be opened and closed via a button on the key fob or controls on the driver's door and on the tailgate itself. Its comes as standard on all SE and Elite models but is available as an option on all other trim levels.

Standard equipment across the range includes front, side and curtain airbags, ABS and ESP, Cruise Control, auto headlights and electric driver's seat height adjuster with four way lumbar support. I was very impressed with the standard equipment, I am sure that most buyers will opt for the SRi model in the 2.0 ltr CDTi which come in at £22,510. Prices start from £18,455 and topping out at £31,970 for the Elite Nav 4x4 2.8i V6.

SAAB 9-3 CONVERTIBLE

Next up to test drive was the Saab 9-3 Convertible. I have always liked the Saab convertible and the new version is the best ever. It has been more than 25 years since Saab first launched its convertible at the 1983 Frankfurt motor show, much to the surprise of the automotive world. The first model was the first convertible to come with a heated glass rear window, now standard on most convertibles. The 9-3 convertible has some great new ideas that also make it one of the greenest drop tops out there. These include BioPower, fill up with bioethanol (E85) fuel and you get increased power, but if you cannot get bioethanol, then you can fill up with petrol or mix the two. There is also the new TTiD, it's a two stage turbo. There is a smaller turbo which works up to 1800r/min then the larger kicks in once you get to 3000 r/min the larger one takes over all on its own. This means better performance and lower emissions.

Other features include the second generation active head restraints for the front seats which reduce neck injuries in rear-end collisions. A nod to Saab's aviation heritage the unique night panel function is activated by the touch of a button all but the speedometer fades out. When a function needs your attention it immediately lights up! Another great feature is CargoSET this automatically expands the boot space when you put the roof up, which means you get an impressive 380 litres of luggage space. As for the roof its triple layered design with a 20 second operation time. All roofs are tested at the Magna Steyr production plant where they spray over 1,500 litres of water to check weatherproofing. As for safety the 9-3 convertible comes with DynaCage, rollover protection which if the system detects the risk of rolling over or in severe impacts from the front or side, activates the seatbelt pretensioners and rear pop-up bars.



NO ROBOTS!

My last observation on the Saab 9-3 convertible which I think is very impressive, is this. How many robots are used in the general assembly area at the Magna Steyr Plant? The answer is zero! There is a 750

CHEVROLET EPICA

Drove my Chevy to the levy, well not really - but I did drive the Chevrolet Epica, its big on the outside and inside and massive on savings. A new model for 2009 with some minor tweaks being made which include a smart new rear end with larger more squared off tail lights, a new range of alloy wheels and a fold down armrest for the rear seats. At an amazing £14,255 on the road, it's lower in price to many of its competitors in the class above.

Standard equipment includes air conditioning, cruise control, electric front and rear windows, front fogs, front side and curtain airbags and a CD stereo with mp3 input with remote audio controls. With two trim levels LS and LT and either a 2.0 litre petrol, average fuel consumption 34.5 mpg or 2.0 VCDi diesel, average fuel consumption 46.3 mpg. Personally I would opt for the LT model that comes with diesel engine equipment includes climate control, rear parking sensors, leather seats, CD auto changer and ESP.

SMILING THROUGH

Finally a quick little bit about the car that made me smile the most during that day. The Corsa VXR Arctic, a special edition VXR that comes in white and white only! From the moment I saw the car I thought I must try that one, from its black alloys, triangular exhaust pipe, side sills, rear roof spoiler, honeycomb sports grill and air dam/bumper and rear bumper with diffuser it looks great.

As for driving it, well as soon as you turn the key the Remus Sports exhaust system rumbles, it has been tuned for sound and performance, the sports suspension and recaro shell backed sports front seats aid in the sporty drive and feel of this car. Put you foot down and wow the 1.6i 16v Turbo engine springs into life, its responsive and the gear change makes you feel like a race driver even at low speeds. Also the exhaust note is great, I drove without the radio on just to hear it!

Prices start at £17,795 with an interesting range of options which include a tow bar! For me its one of the best small sport hatches available currently.

