

Daewoo Lanos

Featuring 1.4 5-door



THIS IS WHERE THE ACTION STARTS for most prospective buyers of Daewoo's new range. The three-door S is £1200 cheaper and the more powerful 1.6SX – with standard air con and electric front windows £1200 dearer. This five-door SE (£10,000 at the time of writing) is, therefore, on the face of it, being jostled by several alternatives, including some of those in our rivals table. Others include the Kia Mentor, Hyundai Accent and the Suzuki Baleno. But none has had the courage to emulate Daewoo's peerless after-sales package of free servicing and routine replacements – not to mention AA membership – for the first three years; we calculate it represents at least a £1000 saving on alternatives which come with a 12-month warranty – more if you cover 20,000 miles a year. And did you also know that when the owners of 1995 Nexias and Esperos start paying for their own spares this year, they're going to discover that only Ford's are cheaper?

In the past, we said that it was this after-care, rather than the cars themselves (which were really obsolete Vauxhalls with a make-over), allied to keen pricing, which made the Nexia such an attractive proposition for private buyers. The Lanos doesn't display its Vauxhall connections so obviously (though they're still there), and its rise in price has been accompanied by improved standard equipment compared with the old Nexia GL. For example, there's central locking,

there are two airbags on this SE, the rear seat backrest is split, the door mirrors fold flush and there's a tachometer in the displays – in the Nexia GLXi, most of these were provided, but at a higher price.

So far so good, but the downside is that this 1.4 Lanos (which is really 1349cc) lacks the performance of its predecessor – again, our comparison table illustrates the point. This Lanos' taller gearing should give better fuel economy and relaxed motorway cruising right up to the 70 limit – but then the Nexia was just as frugal and as quiet and it certainly pulled more vigorously up hill or when accelerating, especially in top and fourth. An unwelcome similarity is the hesitant jerk that still recurs when you reapply the accelerator; however, most of the gearchanging (that's often needed in this Lanos when you want to make progress) is reasonably precise, although the light clutch is devoid of feel about the point of engagement.

The steering, on the other hand, is unnecessarily wooden and unwieldy in initial deviation from straight-ahead; this is in complete contrast to the Nexia's. Of course, parking is effortless, but this power-assisted system's pronounced "tail-off" effect as speeds rise, doesn't result in true feel of the road, only the artificial semblance of it. The Lanos does ride the bumps better, however – especially with a bit of weight on board. It combines this with a reasonably

Continued on page 3

roomy and sufficiently supportive back seat to convey a family of four in commendable comfort. The space for luggage behind is sufficient, too, and although the interior plastic trim for facia and the luggage deck lacks soft feel and is prone to scuffing, it's a distinct improvement on the Nexia's.

The driver isn't treated to a plethora of adjustments, but our only real criticism at the helm is that when most people are at the right distance from the pedals, the wheel is at full stretch, except for those with long arms. The wheel has only rake adjustment and the seat height is fixed (although we did note that packing washers could be used to raise the seat permanently). Some types of shoe sole make the accelerator jerky to depress until the pedal rubber is discarded. All-round vision isn't too bad and the tailgate stays muck-free in wet weather, so the absence of an intermittent wipe that end isn't missed. The interior dipping mirror neatly works like an Astra's, but the headlamps lack penetration on main beam. A centre roof lamp spreads it favours evenly between back and front.

Heating doesn't reach the rear footwells, however, although there are no complaints up front because at mid-point heat settings, the face-level vents will deliver cooler air. There are times when their lack of independent on/off controls is a nuisance, however.

We're impressed by the provision of twin airbags and ABS at this level of the market; the latter works reasonably well *in extremis*, although the test car's unexceptional best stop and a tendency to oscillate from side to side in the process, indicates a slower "cycling" rate for the mechanism than the most sophisticated systems now use. Our car's Hankook

tyres may also have had something to do with it. We particularly liked the light and secure handbrake action, though.

The front seatbelts are convenient, but the rear tags are left flopping about; of course, the fixed rear cushion means that they don't complicate the folding process, but the longer belt runs can catch in the backrest latches and there's no way of securing the luggage from the front in heavy braking or preventing access to the luggage from the interior, either.

The key-operated central locking does have the provision of locking (or unlocking) the tailgate independently, but the key will only "fire" all door locks from the driver's keyhole – a serious flaw if you're helping a disabled passenger – or merely trying to be a gentleman!

VERDICT

Apart from its more contemporary appearance outside, with better use of plastic inside, the 1.4 Lanos brings mixed blessings to Nexia GL owners contemplating trading up. There's little change in accommodation, but it's more compact outside, whether you're negotiating a tight kerb space or a narrow-width garage or sideway.

On the road, it's better when hustled through the bends or over poor surfaces, but some may find the steering and its overtaking ability a disappointment and there's unchanged, unexceptional fuel consumption, too.

Even though we drove it only briefly, we are left wondering whether even Nexia 1.5GL owners will need the more expensive Lanos 1.6 to avoid disappointment.

Likes . . . and gripes

RDS radio/cassette performs well . . .	but sited too low, and a bent aerial will tangle with tailgate
Underbonnet straight-forward and accessible . . .	but our car had four mechanical faults
Clear, fairly accurate dials . . .	but fuel gauge pessimistic
Some lined (quiet) oddments shelves . . .	but door receptacles limited
Shorter than Nexia with good turning circles . . .	but painted bumpers and no door protection strips
Effective heated rear window . . .	but too easy to leave it on

HOW THE LANOS COMPARES

	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (m/kg)	Maximum legroom – front (cm)	Typical leg/kneeroom – rear (cm)	Steering turns/circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
DAEWOO LANOS 1.4	1349/75	3190	14.3	39.5/26.3	38½/2	27/16	106	96/73	3.0/10.0 (p)	408
Fiat Punto 60	1242/58	3600	14.4	31.2/21.9	42½/2	27½/20	105	102/72	45/10.2	376
Skoda Felicia 1.3	1289/68	3250	18.6	36.5/24.5	42½/2	29/18	105	97/72	3.7/10.5	386
Rover 214i	1396/75	3620	13.6	29.3/19.8	39½/2	28/16	107	94/66	3.4/10.4 (p)	397
Proton Persona 1.3i Compact	1299/74	3620	14.7	32.1/23.2	40½/2	29/12	107	91/65	2.8/10.5 (p)	399
Daewoo Nexia 1.5GL	1498/75	3500	13.0	25.9/18.7	38	28½/18	105	95/71	3.5/10.1 (p)	425

(p) power-steering