AA Car test

BRIEF TEST

R0170
See also R0103
October 2001

Ford Mondeo

Featured model: 2.5 V6 Zetec S saloon

THE ONLY THING MISSING FROM the new Mondeo range at launch was a more powerful, sportier version; there was never any doubt that, suitably tweaked, the excellent chassis would be able to handle a whole lot more horsepower. The re-introduction of the 168bhp 2.5-litre engine to the new range has fixed the omission.

It's done in some style, too, because the Duratec V6 is a melodious motor that's both smooth and wonderfully tractable. Admittedly, it's not at its most spirited below 3000rpm, but thereafter it comes alive and spins freely to the 6800 red line. Top speed is 137mph, but performance isn't electrifying; it is, however, very close to that of its rivals.

Beefed-up suspension and 18in wheels with wide, ultra-low profile tyres (£219 a go) give a firm, fretful ride on broken surfaces, but worse is the awful twitchy "tramlining" on road defects. This boils down to compromised manners in the pursuit of appearance.

However, once out on the smoothly surfaced highway; everything gels – particularly as you can then exploit the Mondeo's superb cornering. The firmer, roll-resistant suspension and enormous tyre grip cope admirably with tight turns and open sweepers; and it's comforting to know that traction and stability controls are on hand. The brakes feel reassuringly powerful, as well. Indeed, safety features abound.

Comfortable and supportive seats, plus height and rake adjustments to the steering wheel, give a first-rate driving position, but nothing has been done to "sportify" the cabin in any way. It's very much the spacious, well-crafted interior as described in our earlier Mondeo reports, except that the Zetec S has a metallic finish to the centre console.

VERDICT

Although those "rubber band" tyres do it no favours on by-roads (rivals cope better), the 2.5 V6 is, elsewhere, a wholly admirable family sports saloon that's swift, surefooted and an entertaining performer. It's not exactly a ball of fire, but there's more performance to come when the ST 220 arrives next spring.

AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

Overtaking ability	✪✪✪○○
Space/practicality	✪✪✪✪✪
Controls/displays	✪✪✪✪○
Safety	✪✪✪✪○
Handling/steering	✪✪✪✪○
Comfort	✪✪✪○○
Fuel economy	✪✪○○○

BRIEF SPECIFICATION

engine 2495cc, V6-cylinder, petrol; 168bhp at 6000rpm, 162 lb ft at 4250rpm; belt-driven double overhead camshafts, 24 valves
transmission 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive; 26.1 mph/1000rpm in 5th, 19.5 in 4th
suspension front: independent MacPherson coil spring/damper struts, anti-roll bar. Rear: independent multi-link, coil springs, anti-roll bar
steering hydraulic power assistance; 2.8 turns lock-to-lock; 11.3m diameter turning circle between kerbs (15.5m for one turn of the wheel)
brakes ventilated discs front, sold discs rear, with electronic anti-lock, brake force distribution and stability programme. Brake assist optional.
wheels/tyres 7½in alloys with 225/40ZR18 tyres (Continental ContiSport Contact 2 on test car); temporary spare

LIKES ...

easy-to-use audio system
lumbar adjustment on both front seats
secure seatback release pulls in boot
global/bounce-back window operation

and GRIPES

no proper left footrest
overstyled clock tricky to read
small, oddly shaped door mirrors
temporary spare wheel

HOW THE MONDEO 2.5 V6 COMPARES	engine cyl/cap/power (no/cc/bhp)	revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	fuel economy (mpg)	brakes – best stop from * 50mph (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering turns/ circle (m)	overall length (cm)
FORD MONDEO 2.5 V6	**V6/2495/168**	**2680**	**8½◎**	**22/16◎**	**28**	**25/19†**	**111**	**108/84**	**2.8/11.3**	**473**
Alfa 156 2.0 Twin Spark	4/1970/155	3310	7.8	22.6/15.7	31	26/22	106	95/76	2.2/11.4	443
Audi A6 2.4	V6/2393/165	3100	8.8	21.6/15.2	30½	23/19	109	100/74	2.8/11.1	480
Rover 75 2.5 V6 (auto)	V6/2497/177	2540	9.3	auto	28	24½/22	114	100/77	3.2/11.3	475
Volvo S60T S	5/1984/180	2880	8.4	20.0/15.3	30	25/16	115	98/73	3.0/11.5	458
VW Passat 1.8T Sport	4/1781/150	3060	8.4	20.8/15.0	34	26/14	110	101/74	2.8/11.0	470

◎ approximate * all with ABS † figures for 1.8 LX

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