



# Hyundai Coupé F2 Evo

Featuring F2 Evolution



**H**YUNDAI HAS MADE GREAT STRIDES with its Formula 2 world rallying programme in the past 12 months, culminating in first and second places in the Rally of Portugal in March. The class-winning driver was Alister McRae, and if you fancy yourself as something of a wheelman you can now emulate the flying Scot, because Hyundai has launched a road-going version of the world-beating rally car he conducts with such gusto.

Called the Coupé F2 Evolution, it features several styling changes over the current model, with McLaren F1 stylist Peter Stevens giving it competition looks with a deeper, more aggressive front spoiler and a prominent rear wing complete with integral brake light.

There are, of course, technical changes too, made in conjunction with Motor Sport Developments of Milton Keynes (the company that builds Hyundai's rally cars). Apart from a few detail changes, however, the interior layout, trim and accommodation remain unchanged from the previous 1.6 and two-litre versions we drove and commented on earlier. The price rises by just over £2000, though.

Naturally the new car's power unit doesn't boast the exact spec of the rally engine, which delivers no less than 265bhp. "Why not?" cry enthusiasts! However, it does have a number of modifications that ensure it's the most powerful engine in the Coupé range. The major changes to the two-litre, four-cylinder twin cam are the fitting of a different inlet camshaft (borrowed from the 1.8 Beta engine) and a bigger-bore exhaust system – terminating in a huge tailpipe.

The overall effect of these changes is to increase the power output by 12 per cent to 154bhp and the torque by five per cent to 140 lb ft at 4900rpm. Hyundai claims that the changes cut the 0-62mph dash from 8.6 to 8.1sec, although maximum speed remains the same at 125mph.

At first it doesn't feel all that quick, just flexible and easy-going with a lively turn of speed. It will pull from 1200rpm in top gear without complaint and cruises discreetly on a motorway. Beyond 4000rpm, however, it really comes to life and, with a purposeful thrum from underbonnet, the tachometer needle sprints smartly round to the 6000 red line and (if you let it) will sail on to 7200 before the ignition cut-out steps in to spoil the fun.

Keeping the engine on the boil is no hardship because it's such a smooth, rev-happy motor anyway, added to the fact that it's a delight to use the slick-shifting gearchange, which now has a shorter throw. The lever's brightly chromed knob and gaiter surround look rather naff, though – at least we think so.

Even more than its tamer-powered stablemates, the Evo is a rewarding car to drive quickly, feeling taut and competent in the way it swallows sweeping curves and tight turns. The steering responds crisply to the leather-clad wheel, but there's not much feel, and grippy though the soft-compound 45-Series Yokohama tyres on the 16in alloy wheels are, they induce a certain amount of twitch and "tramlining" on uneven surfaces, which spoils directional stability. Their lack of compliance also does no favours to the low-speed ride on patchy roads, although naturally progress is a lot smoother on main roads and motorways.

New brake pads, jointly developed by MSD and AP Racing, enhance the current four-wheel ventilated disc brake set-up. They're claimed to reduce fade by providing better heat dissipation; they certainly give tremendous reassurance when used in anger and have good pedal feel.

The standard Coupé's generous level of equipment is further extended on the F2 Evolution with new features

which include cream coloured instruments, leather trim for the handbrake and gear lever gaiters and centre armrest, plus thick lambswool carpets and chrome sill kickplates. A Sony CD hi-fi is also provided. Its controls are small and fiddly, but it boasts 4 x 40W power, an RDS facility and a removable front panel for added security. Talking of which, a Thatcham Category 1 remotely operated alarm is fitted as standard.

#### VERDICT

**The original Hyundai Coupé rattled a few cages when it was launched three years ago and this even more sporting spin-off is likely to do the same.**

**It may not have the cachet of its major rivals, such as the Alfa GTV, Fiat Coupé and Honda Accord Coupé, but it's very well equipped and beats them all on power, performance and price. Only the slightly wayward steering mars an impressive chassis which otherwise helps to make the Evo a swift and satisfying speedster to enjoy on the open road.**

**Even if it never gets so much as a sniff of a rally stage it looks the business, too. In fact, in a survey last year, the Coupé was voted the sixth sexiest car on sale in Britain. This version should pull even better.**

### FACTS AND FIGURES

#### ENGINE

Type	transverse four cylinder; iron block and alloy head
Size	82.0 x 93.5mm - 1975cc
Power	154bhp at 6250rpm
Torque	140 lb ft at 4900rpm
Valves	double overhead camshafts, 16 valves
Fuel/ignition	electronic multi-point injection and distributorless ignition. 55-litre (12.1-gallon tank)

#### TRANSMISSION

Type	five-speed manual, front-wheel drive (four-speed automatic optional)
Mph per 1000rpm	20.9 in top gear

#### CHASSIS

Suspension - front	MacPherson coil spring/damper struts and lower wishbones
rear	multi-link with offset coil springs. Anti-roll bars and gas filled dampers all round
Steering	power-assisted rack and pinion, with 2.8 turns between full locks
Wheels	7J alloy with 205/45R16V Yokohama A520 tyres. Full size spare
Brakes	ventilated discs all round, with vacuum servo and electronic ABS standard

#### DIMENSIONS

Length	434cm
Width	196cm (including mirrors)
Height	130cm