

Client: Suzuki
Source: The Daily Mirror (Main)
Date: 03 September 2010
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Reach: 1242446
Size: 1190cm2
Value: 44636.9



Way of Life!



Top Gear's motoring maniac

...he's got va va vroom

TWEAKS MAKE SUZUKI'S HATCH AN EVEN BETTER EXPERIENCE..

Swift gets a 'new do'

I'M having a wife's hairdo moment with the new Suzuki Swift.

You know how it goes: get home from work and the beloved is standing in the hall with a questioning look on her face. She's had her hair done at enormous expense.

This you know from the familiar expression on her face. The trouble is you can't for the life of you spot the difference between the before and after.

The only possible answer is "you look great" and make quickly for the loo/garden

shed/anywhere else that's safe. Similarly, the new Suzuki Swift has had a total makeover yet I can't see any difference between it and the old one.

The front grille looks a bit slimmer but I can't really tell. I'd need the old Swift next to it to tell for sure. Whatever has changed, the Swift is just as neat looking as it was before.

Underneath it is a totally new car with revised MacPherson

struts at the front and a torsion beam at the back.

The engine is a 1.2-litre unit that's been seriously tweaked to give good emissions and reduce fuel consumption. This

is very good news because the previous Swift's emissions and economy were rather poor for a small car and pushed it into a higher tax band than it should have been in.

The new Swift now emits just 116g/km of Co2 and will do 56.5mpg on the combined optimistic cycle which is much more like it. Actually, judging by the digital readout, I think it might get close to that figure in the real world.

But not if you live anywhere near any "entertaining" roads that have bends in them and no traffic jams because it's hard to resist taking advantage

of the Swift's rather good handling and sense of fun.

The Swift has only got 93bhp but it'll still whizz to 62mph from zero in 12.3sec which isn't too shabby.

Best of all, the Swift is really good fun to drive.

Trouble with rockets like the Focus RS and even Renault's brilliant hot hatchbacks is that you're often tempted to drive in a fashion likely to increase the ink content on your driving licence.

You're always having to rein in the 300bhp Focus RS but to make the Swift go swiftly you have to give the 1.2-litre

engine quite a bit of whip and row it along with the five-speed gearbox. Suzuki will no doubt make a Sport version of the new Swift with a little more poke and stiffer suspension. I doubt it'll be any more fun to drive than this basic SZ4 1.2.

The SZ4 is the poshest Swift in the range (the SZ2 is the pauper version) and costs £12,245. It comes with steering wheel-mounted controls (fairly useful), cruise control (fairly pointless in a small hatch) and automatic headlamps (very pointless). But

even the SZ2 comes standard with a USB connection and, rather more importantly, electronic stability control.

For a saving of almost two grand I'd make do with the simpler car. The Swift isn't trying to be a German hatchback - the interior is simple, plasticky, unpretentious and alright.

The revised suspension has improved the ride and even choppy country roads won't make the needle jump off the record.

More sound proofing has been added and now you can hardly hear the engine at motorway speeds.

There's not a lot of body roll for such a well-riding small car and the accurate

steering is nice and light for driving around town but firm enough to feel what's going on.

Suzuki has kept the dimensions the same on



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the new car, which means that there's adequate room for four inside even though the Swift is short and squat.

Suzuki has done well to not mess with the Swift's styling by giving it a perm or extensions.

The big changes are underneath and they turn Suzuki's best-ever small car into an even better one.

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THE FACTS
Suzuki Swift 52R
Five-door hatchback
Price: **£12,345**
Engine: **1.2-litre**
four-cylinder, 93bhp
0-62mph: **12.3sec**
Fuel consumption:
56.5mpg

THE RIVALS
Volkswagen Polo 1.2 70
Better quality but more money for less power and less standard kit.
SEAT Ibiza 1.4 95 Sport
Good value, good fun and a strong rival to the Suzuki. Slightly down on performance, though. **£12,795**
Skoda Fabia 1.2 TSI
Great value and good performance from 103bhp turbo engine. Not as much fun as Swift to drive. **£12,025**