



NEW FORD B-MAX

FORD B-MAX 1.6 TDCI TITANIUM *Tim Barnes-Clay, @carwriteups >*

The B-MAX is aimed at people just like me – parents of young kids who need their motor to be practical – not just fashionable.

If you've never had to cope with a struggling two year old then you won't know what I'm on about, but seriously, trying to fit your grumpy toddler into a car seat isn't the first thing your aching back wants on a

Monday morning.

So, Ford came up with a solution - the 'Easy Access Door System'. This combines conventional hinged front doors and rear sliding doors in a new body design. It creates a huge opening which makes it easier to enter or exit the rear seats, attend to your children, or load and unload shopping.

Behind the wheel, the seating position is high and comfortable. The steering wheel is chunky and all the

controls are user friendly. The performance and average fuel economy of the 1.6-litre TDCi model I drove was more than adequate on my motorway test run, with excessive wind noise around the wing mirrors being the only disappointing aspect.

Even though ease of access has been a key focus with the B-MAX, Ford has not ignored protection. In fact the car has

been awarded the highest possible five-star safety rating by independent crash test authority Euro NCAP.

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 108 mph
- 0-62 mph: 13.9 secs
- Combined mpg: 70.6
- Engine: 1560 cc 4 cylinder 8 valve turbo diesel
- Price: £18,895



FineCity

Motoring correspondent Tim Barnes-Clay reports on this month's top three test driven cars.

Originally from Norwich, Tim is experienced in reviewing new motors for many media outlets and has gathered an enormous following from Fine City readers. He is an active member of the Midland Group of Motoring Writers and a former radio reporter. Tim has also been a motoring journalist for the Mirror Group's Live TV network and a presenter, reporter and producer at ITV Central.



THE NEW HONDA CIVIC 1.8 I-VTEC EX

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The Civic has gone 'under the knife' again to achieve an even tighter, sharper appearance. The result is an aesthetically pleasing, sporty motor that drives as brilliantly as it looks.

Inside, the car has a more athletic cockpit layout, a redesigned small steering wheel, as well as blue door lining illumination. The Civic's six speed gearbox is slicker than ever, and the gear ratios

have been optimised to give higher speed refinement and a more satisfying action.

In EX trim the Civic is a very pleasurable place to be ensconced - particularly if, like me, you spend long periods on the road. Equipment includes leather upholstery, climate control, automatic headlights, electric windows and mirrors, as well as navigation, Bluetooth and a six speaker stereo.

The up-to-the-minute Civic is indeed a top motor. Made by a company with a legendary reputation for bullet-proof reliability and comfort, the hatchback, although not the most affordable in its class, is one of the best looking.



FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 134 mph
- 0-62 mph: 9.1 secs
- Combined mpg: 47.1
- Engine: 1798 cc 4 cylinder 16 valve petrol
- Price: £21,960 on the

CHEVROLET CRUZE STATION WAGON LT 1.7 VCDI

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The Cruze Station Wagon is the latest addition to the Chevy family. It builds further on the strengths of the already available Cruze models, and adds greater practicality with its 1,478 litre load space capability. The boot area is very square, flat and wide, so this car will definitely be a motor you'll appreciate if buying flat-pack furniture from a certain Swedish

furniture outlet is your weekend hobby.

It's not the prettiest motor on the block, but it's a comfortable and nippy number. Don't get me wrong, the Chevrolet is by no means ugly; it's just like a lot of estate cars – a little bland at first glance. But, behind the wheel, things brighten up. The Station Wagon is surprisingly responsive. The steering is direct and road holding is good – almost sportily so – and the gearshift is smooth and precise. In addition, the driver's seat is particularly supportive, making commuting seem less of a chore.

The cabin is generally well screwed together and



standard features such as the leather clad steering wheel and gear knob give the car a quality feel. The dodgy looking cloth covered dash lets the side down a bit though, and the noisy central locking mechanism sounds cheap, but in many ways the Cruze is excellent value. You see, the Station Wagon 1.7 VCDi, under review here, emits just

119 g/km and it can return over 62 mpg. This makes it an attractive option for fleet customers and drivers alike.

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 124 mph
- 0-60 mph: 10 secs
- Combined mpg: 62.7
- Engine: 1686 cc 4 cylinder 16 valve turbo diesel
- Price: £19,785 on the road