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BOXER PACKS POWERFUL PUNCH!

By Tim Saunders, Motoring Correspondent

The Subaru XV Boxer packs a powerful punch, if slightly subdued compared to its ancestors. It has road presence as you would expect and commands respect from other road users. Interestingly, they don't seem to tailgate the Boxer in the way they do with other cars that I drive. It might be that there are comparatively few of these on Britain's roads and that there's a healthy interest about what it is that is in front of them. Certainly during the test I do not see a single Subaru on the roads, making me feel that I am driving something rather special.

This all-wheel-drive five-door car is basically an estate with raised ride height. An attractive alternative for those not wanting a traditional 4x4 but certainly as competent.

Paddle shifts either side of the steering wheel allow the driver a choice between lazy automatic or more involved driving. This petrol-hybrid clicks over from petrol to an electric motor at low speeds or when slowing down, or at least it should do. Trouble is the motor doesn't kick in very often. I find this a lot with hybrids. You see, I expect them to be able to handle speeds of at least up to 30mph, for say for

a mile, regardless how heavy your right foot, but I am always left bitterly, bitterly disappointed. Unless the driver nurses the car along whispering sweet nothings about the environment it completely forgets it's a hybrid. When driving there's a graphic in the middle of the dashboard showing the electric motor charging. That keeps the children entertained but it's unnecessary and I question how much more efficient this really is over a standard model because Subarus have always been fairly thirsty and so's this one. The cruise control is easy to operate and automatically brakes or accelerates depending on what the car in

front is doing. One annoying thing - on damp days the windscreen mists up quickly and the blowers have to be put on full to clear it.

There's a comfortable driving position and the black leather seats are hardwearing. In the back there's a good amount of space for passengers meaning that oldest daughter Harriett (9), who has now grown out of using a booster seat, has some room, which isn't often the case in other cars.

The large boot easily copes with the weekly shop and there's a neat cover that can be pulled over for security.

Another bonus is the sizeable tilt/sliding glass sunroof that fully opens; a joy on a sunny day. A problem though is that when the sun shines it hits the plastic on the screen of the centre console and bounces off forcing both driver and front passenger to squint. A shame to have to pull the blind over the sunroof to stop this.

Tim Saunders is an advanced motorist and journalist. He has always been passionate about motoring and regularly reviews cars from the leading manufacturers. His first report on a BMW 520i was published in the Dorset Echo when he was 17 (just after passing his driving test) in 1995. He went on to become business and motoring editor at the Bournemouth Echo.



FACTS AT A GLANCE

Subaru XV e-BOXER 2.0i SE Premium Lineartronic

Price: £32,130

0-60mph: 10.4secs

Fuel: Petrol

Economy: 36mpg

Power: 147bhp

Top speed: 120mph

Watch the video at www.testdrives.biz

