

THE CAR MAN

Tim Saunders



Citroën DS3

"Ahhh, it's as if the car's greeting me," coos my wife Caroline as she walks up to the DS3. Its door handles pop out and the power folding wing mirrors unfold. The automotive equivalent of a dog licking you to death. "I can imagine this appeals to lonely people," she adds. This characteristic certainly draws admiration.

When the car's locked the door handles are flush with the body of the car, unlock it and they rise out. It's quite spectacular when you haven't seen this before. However, after a while it becomes annoying. If the keyfob is on your person and you walk past the door handles automatically rise and the car beeps. Walk past a number of times, as I do, and you can imagine how this would wind the neighbours up.

The DS3 pays homage to the triangle. There are triangles on the bold black grille, there's even a massive indentation of a triangle on top of another triangle on both sides of the car. And there are triangles before your eyes inside, wherever you care to glance. The dash is full of them.

Then there's the variety of trim. There's some kind of leather on the dashboard mixed with shiny metal and that metal with its various finishes is a joy to touch.

Then the designers have gone one step further and turned the usual into something more unusual. They've turned things upside down, in fact. The grab handles for the doors have been placed

at the top while the levers to open them have been kept in their usual place. The switches for the electric windows have been placed in the centre of the car, completely unnerving the unsuspecting driver. My wife complains that she doesn't have her own door mounted button (as she is used to) to operate her window yet the children in the back do. As a touch of design it's a masterpiece but in terms of practicality it's frustrating.

Back inside the DS3, which sounds more like a gaming system, there's an easy to operate sat nav but disappointingly it's not that helpful.

It's not without its flaws but this is a characterful car that stands out and is enjoyable to drive.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

DS3 Crossback Ultra Prestige Pure Tech 155 Auto 8 Speed Imperial Gold metallic

Price: £34,155

Top Speed: 129mph

0-60mph: 8.2secs

Power: 155bhp

Engine: 1.2 litre petrol

Economy: around 35mpg

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