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Hyundai i30N hot hatch – Road Test

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The new Hyundai i30N rally-bred fast hatchback...

Assessed on the road by Robin Roberts (Miles Better News Agency).

Some car-makers shout about their performance models which can quietly disappoint, yet Hyundai play it the other way with the i30N and have a normal looking five door mid-sized hatchback model which excites every time you take the wheel.

The Korean brand has electrified the World Rally Championship and it's now quietly building on that performance and publicity with its subtle yet sporty i30N fastback or fast hatchback.



You can choose the ultimate i30N Performance model with 275hp underfoot or save about £3,000 and go for the 250hp version. Now 250hp would delight many but the rally fans would go for our slightly more powerful version for the ultimate entertainment value.

And you'll get that make no mistake, mostly because it has eschewed all-wheel-drive for front-wheel-drive which is superb on dry roads but becomes more interesting on damp surfaces and twisting tracks. It was created in Hyundai's Namyang R&D centre and developed at the Nurburgring circuit, hence the suffix.



The sophisticated four-cylinder turbocharged direct injection petrol engine (T-GDI) is a good starter, pulls very strongly with 378 Nm (279 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm and yet uses its six speed gearbox to stretch its economical legs as well to almost 40 mpg.



You'll love the way it spins up the engine note and the pulling power, pushes it through the front wheels and covers ground quickly before cruising at a sedate 70 mph, under half its possible maximum speed. That would not discredit a big executive car but in the i30N Performance it seems more remarkable yet refined as well.

The gearchange is quick and slick with a short travel clutch and direct action lever, the steering imparts excellent feel with just the right balance between assistance and effort. It turns easily to park, it possesses confidence-inspiring control at speed and it slows and stops without a second's concern.

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I liked the very comfortable, well-shaped and supporting seats, particularly in the front, and their adjustment range, while those in the back never complained about lack of room. Boot space is good, the shape practical for shopping or cases, access is easy and the cabin and oddments space is sensible.

Once inside the ride quality is slightly firm but not really as hard as you might expect in a car with close to 300hp available. I have certainly driven firmer hot-hatches which can shake you and make a short journey an endurance event.

The secondary controls are well placed and spaced to use with familiarity, the instruments easy to read thanks to their size and positioning and the infotainment display is clear.

Heating and ventilation is straightforward and works well, the lights bright and far reaching but I found the wipers a bit too slow for my liking when driving quickly in heavy rain. Front and side vision is clear, a little less so over the shoulder when reversing or pulling out.



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VERDICT

A few drivers asked me what model it was and seemed surprised to know Hyundai has a performance car in its range, but after a look inside they were impressed.

It's the sort of car which turns heads because it's rare and unexpected and for some drivers I know that makes it the ultimate Q-car to enjoy and remain discreet at the same time. Whispers to the wise.

For: Performance & economy, excellent sharp and precise steering with powerful brakes, excellent, good sports seats, reasonable luggage room, good value and long warranty.

Against: Front wheel drive only and skittish on damp roads, road rumbles, slow wipers.



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Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Hyundai i30N Performance 275vhp.

Price: £28,850.

Engine/transmission: 2.0 litre, T-GDI four cylinder 275 hp, 378 Nm (279 lb.ft) torque from 1,750 rpm, turbo-petrol, six speed manual, front wheel drive.



Performance: 155 mph, 0-62 mph 6.1 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 39.8 mpg (37 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 emissions 163 g/km, new VED road tax First Year rate £515 then £140 Standard rate, BiK company car tax 33%.

Insurance Group: 28E.

Warranty: Five years/unlimited miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4.34 m (14.24 ft), W 1.80 m (5.91 ft), H 1.46 m (4.79 ft), bootspace 381-1,287 litres (13.45-45.45 cu.ft).