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Suzuki Really Motoring Again in 2016 – Plus Swift 1.2 Dualjet 4×4 First Impressions

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David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) gives his assessment...



(Note from Kim: In addition to David's typically comprehensive and insightful coverage within this feature, you may also be interested to read my own thoughts on Suzuki's current position, also my impressions of more Suzuki models; please click [HERE](#)).

After consecutive years of record UK sales Suzuki suffered a blip in registrations in 2015 with a fall of 7.9% to 34,437 sales.

Dale Wyatt, Suzuki's UK Director Sales and Marketing told Journalists, "2015 was a year of consolidation for us with the Alto, Splash and Grand Vitara models coming to the end of their life cycles followed by our new Celerio City Car and the Vitara SUV coming on stream. But with the revised range in place and more new models to come, we are really motoring again with a 27.7% increase in our sales for the first two months of this year and we have a target of 40,000 UK new car registrations in 2016."

He added, "The new models will include another A-segment car and a small SUV, the S-Cross crossover C-segment range with 2WD and 4WD models will receive a facelift later this year, and at the end of 2017 there will be a new Swift supermini sized range as well. In June this year we will also introduce the Indian built Baleno five door supermini sized hatchbacks, the most aerodynamic Suzuki ever, and I expect this range to achieve 4,000 UK sales in its first year. The Baleno will keep our customers wanting to move up in size from a Swift in the Suzuki family."

To reach their record UK 40,000 sales target this year, even without taking into account the arrival of the new Baleno, the Swift range is expected to achieve 15,000 sales, the Swift Sport 1,200, the new Vitara SUV 10,000, the S-Cross crossover 5,600, the Celerio 7,000, and the long serving Jimny small SUV around 1,200 registrations.

Dale Wyatt added, "In the UK the Suzuki brand remains niche with a close family relationship between us, our dealers and their customers. It is a brand family, you belong, you feel valued and 63% of UK customers who test drive a Suzuki buy one. I am very proud of the fact that the Suzuki brand was voted the third most valued franchise in the recent UK



National Dealers Franchise Survey.”

Although Suzuki, by their own admission, remain a niche brand in the UK, on the global stage they are the 9th largest car brand, they sold 3 million new cars worldwide last year and expect to reach a total of 3.4 million in 2019. In addition they sold 2.1 million motorcycles in 2015. They are the third largest manufacturer in Japan, they build cars in Japan, Hungary and India and under their Maruti-Suzuki partnership they hold a 48% share of the 2.0 million annual new car market in India.

New Suzuki Swift 1.2 Dualjet 4x4, 5-door First Impressions...





Suzuki UK has a vowed intent to increase their sales this year to an all-time record of 40,000 units. This follows last year's transitional period when older models were taken out of the line-up and replaced with a new generation of more fuel-efficient vehicles and others received updates and the latest engine options.

Their best selling Swift range of B-segment 'supermini' sized three and five door hatchback models have already had changes to keep it 'market-fresh' and maintain its 15,000 annual UK sales target.

Prices start at a hugely competitive £8,999 and rise to £14,499 for their five door 1.6 litre Sport version. However, perhaps the most notable but niche version is the £14,199 five door 1.2 SZ4 Dualjet petrol 4×4 manual model which I have just had a brief test drive in.

But before that just a quick overview of other updates to current Swift petrol engined range for 2016. There is a choice of 1.2 litre SZ2, SZ3, SZ-L, SZ4 and the 1.6 litre Sport models. All versions offer seven airbags and ESP as standard, front passenger airbag deactivation facility, electric front windows, remote central door locking with deadlocks, electrically adjustable and heated door mirrors, MP3/WMA compatible CD tuner with USB port and steering wheel mounted audio controls.

As part of the Swift range updates, all five door models now have electric rear windows as standard equipment. The acclaimed Sport model is now available in Galactic Grey metallic, which replaces Silky Silver metallic.

The spare wheel/tyre is now deleted from the Swift and now there is just a temporary repair kit, which is in line with the new Celerio City Car and the new Vitara SUV. However a spare wheel is offered as an accessory and will be available from the dealer network or online.

But back to the latest model in hand - the five door 1.2 SZ4 Dualjet 4×4 costing £14,199. It is a logical marriage, Suzuki is well known for their small cars and their 4WD models, so the Dualjet 4WD combines both offerings in one Swift model. This new version replaced the previous 1.2 petrol SZ4 4×4 which cost £13,699 but it offers improved fuel economy, lower



CO2 emissions and a lower VED band, moving from Band D (£110) to Band C (£30), helping to lower cost of ownership by £80 per year.

The latest 1.2 SZ4 Dualjet 4×4 has CO2 emissions of just 111 g/km and a Combined Cycle fuel consumption figure of 58.8 mpg, representing a 15 g/km reduction and 7.5 mpg improvement versus the older SZ4 4×4 model.

The 1.2 litre Dualjet petrol engine incorporates Suzuki's latest technology that utilises twin fuel injectors for improved fuel economy. Dualjet technology positions the fuel injectors very close to the engine inlet valves, allowing for a finer fuel atomisation, which in turn provides a more effective transfer into the engine. The same engine is also available with 2WD with the same SZ4 specification and this variant costs £12,699. The addition of 4×4 traction and some styling body parts costs an extra £1,500 over the 2WD model, so for some people it might be hard to justify the cost of that extra all wheel drive facility.

To set the 4×4 model apart from its stable-mates the ride height is raised by 25mm, it gets front and rear skid plates and has extended wheelarches. Also of added value is the improved handling with reduced traditional front wheel drive understeer, thanks to the 4×4 system. It sticks to the road surface really well with its permanent 4×4 system which directs extra grip to the rear wheels when needed in dry, wet, muddy, icy or snowy conditions. The only downside on dry roads is a bit more tyre noise but the raised suspension handled potential cornering body-roll really well. Driven in a 'Swift' manner on winding country roads was very rewarding and the extra grip supported by the precise and accurate steering also added up to offset the extra purchase cost over a 2WD model. Can you put a price on driving fun?

The vehicle also has a high level of specification including items mentioned before but in addition has 16 inch alloy wheels, air-con, cruise control, sat-nav, automatic headlights, LED daytime running lights and 60/40 split folding rear seat backs which boosts the boot space from 211 to 533 litres (7.45 to 18.82 cu.ft).



The interior has the usual hard plastics, but they are well fitted and the satin-effect trim inserts raise the quality of the overall appearance. Although headroom is good, as is visibility, the Swift of course is a relatively compact car so the rear seat legroom is minimal.

Getting to the crux of the new model is the 1.2 litre, four-cylinder Dualjet engine. This has 90 hp and 120 Nm (88.5 lb.ft) of torque at 4,400 rpm. It thrives on being revved, although during our test driving, trundling along in its high ratio fifth gear at low engine rpm in slow moving nose-to-tail traffic didn't prove an issue – but it thrives on the open road.

Once on the South Cotswold country roads, we found full use was needed of the five speed manual gearbox, and overtaking slower traffic needed some thought to change down a ratio or two before taking the plunge to get past.



Top speed is 103 mph and zero to 62 mph takes 13.4 seconds; it's not fast or 'Swift' but it is fuel efficient. Our test drive resulted in a very impressive 47.5 mpg and on a motorway cruise I reckon 50 mpg plus should be an easy task. Coupled with the low CO2 emission, low tax costs and an 11E insurance group rating it must be one of the most affordable 4x4s you can buy.

VERDICT

Distinctive, fun to drive and economical to buy and to run.

For: Fuel-efficient engine gave excellent real-life fuel economy, 4×4 traction, low taxes, affordable, high specification, sharp handling.

Against: Road noise intrusion, not swift, cramped driver's footwell, limited rear leg room, a niche model and only for those that want 4×4 traction.



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MILESTONES AND WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF:

Suzuki Swift 1.2 SZ4 4x4 Dualjet 5 door.

Engine: 1.2 litre, 4 cylinder, normally aspirated petrol, 90 hp, 120 Nm (88.5 lb.ft) of torque at 4,400 rpm.

Transmission: 5 speed manual, 4WD.



Performance:

0-62 mph: 13.4 seconds.

Top speed: 103mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 58.8 mpg, (47.5 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 111 g/km, VED road tax £0/£30, BIK company car tax 17% now and 19% from April.

Insurance group: 11E.

Warranty: 3 years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 3,850 mm (12.63 ft), W 1,695 mm (5.56 ft), H 1,500 mm (4.92 ft), boot/load space 211 to 533 litres (7.45 to 18.82 cu.ft), 5 doors, 4 seats.

Price: £14,199.