All-new Peugeot 208 – Road Test

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THE PEUGEOT 208, EUROPEAN CAR OF THE YEAR 2020, TRIED AND TESTED…

…By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

Keeping calm and carrying on – for now, for this new model road test I slipped behind the wheel of the all-new Peugeot 208 ‘supermini sized’ 5-door family hatchback recently announced as the European Car of the Year 2020.

With the World in turmoil on health grounds and the automotive industry in meltdown with

previous poor global sales due to economic reasons now made far worse by the Covid-19 epidemic which has stopped production of new cars and commercial vehicles, there are severely tough times ahead as the UK and other countries are in lockdown health measures.

You have to feel particularly sorry for Peugeot who launched with great expectations their all-new 208 range which picked-up the Car of the Year 2020 Award, only to have the sales momentum stall due to the on-going pandemic. Will potential customers still be willing to visit new car showrooms in the next few months or even beyond as the World struggles to get back on track health and wealth wise?

At least for now the professional side of the motoring media, via the worldwide web and other publications, can still keep potential customers informed as to what new models are available once we all get up and running again.

The all-new Peugeot 208, like the all-new Vauxhall Corsa, both under the parentage of the PSA Group of brands, share the same new CMP platform and most of the mechanical components including engines and the new all-electric powerpack for electric versions.



The new 208's competitors are of course the UK's long time top selling Ford Fiesta, the new and similar to 208 Vauxhall Corsa, VW Polo, new Renault Clio, SEAT Ibiza, Skoda Fabia and even the more upmarket Audi A1 and MINI models.

Peugeot 208 on the road prices start from £16,250 and run up to £29,650 for the e-208. The all-electric e-208 has just received a £500 promotion by the manufacturer to restore its £3,500 plug-in-vehicle grant. This was in response to the Government action in their recent Budget when they reduced their national grant to £3,000 from the original industry £3,500 figure.

The petrol engine options are 1.2 litre, three cylinder PureTech units. These range from the

normally aspirated 75 hp five speed manual, 100 hp turbo six speed manual and eight speed automatic and 130 hp eight speed automatic. The diesel is a new 1.5 litre, four cylinder BlueHDi 100 hp unit with a six speed manual gearbox. The CO2 emissions for petrol models range between 94 and 104 g/km, the diesel is 85 g/km and the all-electric e-208 zero g/km at the tailpipe.

Peugeot's first new generation 100% electric vehicle is the e-208 which uses a 50 kW battery and electric motor to provide a driving range of 211 miles from a full charge under the new WLTP testing requirement

Specification levels depend on the power unit chosen but the full line up is Active, Allure and GT Line. The electric model however is available with all trim levels plus exclusively from petrol and diesel versions with a top GT level.

In detail the spec levels are: Active trim features 16-inch alloy wheels (steel wheels for the e-208), Active Safety Brake with pedestrian detection, electric and heated door mirrors and LED daytime running lights with unique 'Tooth' design. The e-208 in Active trim also features pre-heating functionality and automatic air conditioning.

The Allure level comes with 17-inch diamond-cut alloy wheels (16-inch alloy wheels on e-208), a glossy black B-pillar, tri-material leather-effect seat trim with double stitch detail and the 3D i-Cockpit with configurable 3D head-up instrument panel and brand signature 'Claw Effect' full LED 3D rear-light clusters.

GT Line models feature front and rear parking sensors and 180˚ reversing camera. Also included are 17-inch wheels across petrol, diesel and EV models, Active Safety Brake with Night function, cyclist and pedestrian detection, eight-colour ambient interior lighting, and full LED headlights with Smartbeam Assist. Additional styling cues include gloss black wheel arch extensions, twin chrome exhaust pipes (on petrol and diesel models) and a Diamond Black roof.

The e-208 is also available exclusively in range-topping GT trim featuring fully automated

parking assistance, adaptive Cruise Control with Stop & Go, Lane Positioning Assist and Blind Spot Monitoring. Inside there is grey Alcantara leather trim, heated front seats and 3D i-Cockpit with a larger 10-inch touchscreen and Connected 3D Navigation.

Exterior styling wise the all-new 208 is larger and wider than previous generation models and its exterior dimensions in most ways mirror the well-balanced proportions of the equally new Vauxhall Corsa which shares the same platform and most of the mechanicals, but for some models are a shade cheaper. The Peugeot 208's detailed styling is more interesting I feel over the rather bland looking exterior of the new Corsa. The 208 has a much stronger looking front end, distinctive large front grille flanked by smart headlights with very different vertical daytime running lights which actually look like two fangs. They certainly add to the new character and harmonise well with the claw effect light design elsewhere around the car.

The side profile is typical modern-day B-segment hatchback with a lightly sloping coupé roofline, a slightly rising waistline and my GT Line version had plastic wheelarch trims which gave it a sports look. It's rounded at the rear but a neat spoiler over the tailgate and a rear diffuser under the bumper add to the sports looks.

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Inside its glitzy design follows the trend set with the very popular Peugeot 3008 and 508 models with a curved fascia panel creating a cockpit design and the sweeping curved lines continue round to run into the front door panels, door cards and handles. There is the usual partial free-standing central touchscreen and below that is the usual line-up of piano key style controls. Unfortunately Peugeot persists in having the temperature and air-con controls operated via the touchscreen, why can't they adopt the simple and safe separate rotary heating temperature controls as Vauxhall have with the new Corsa?

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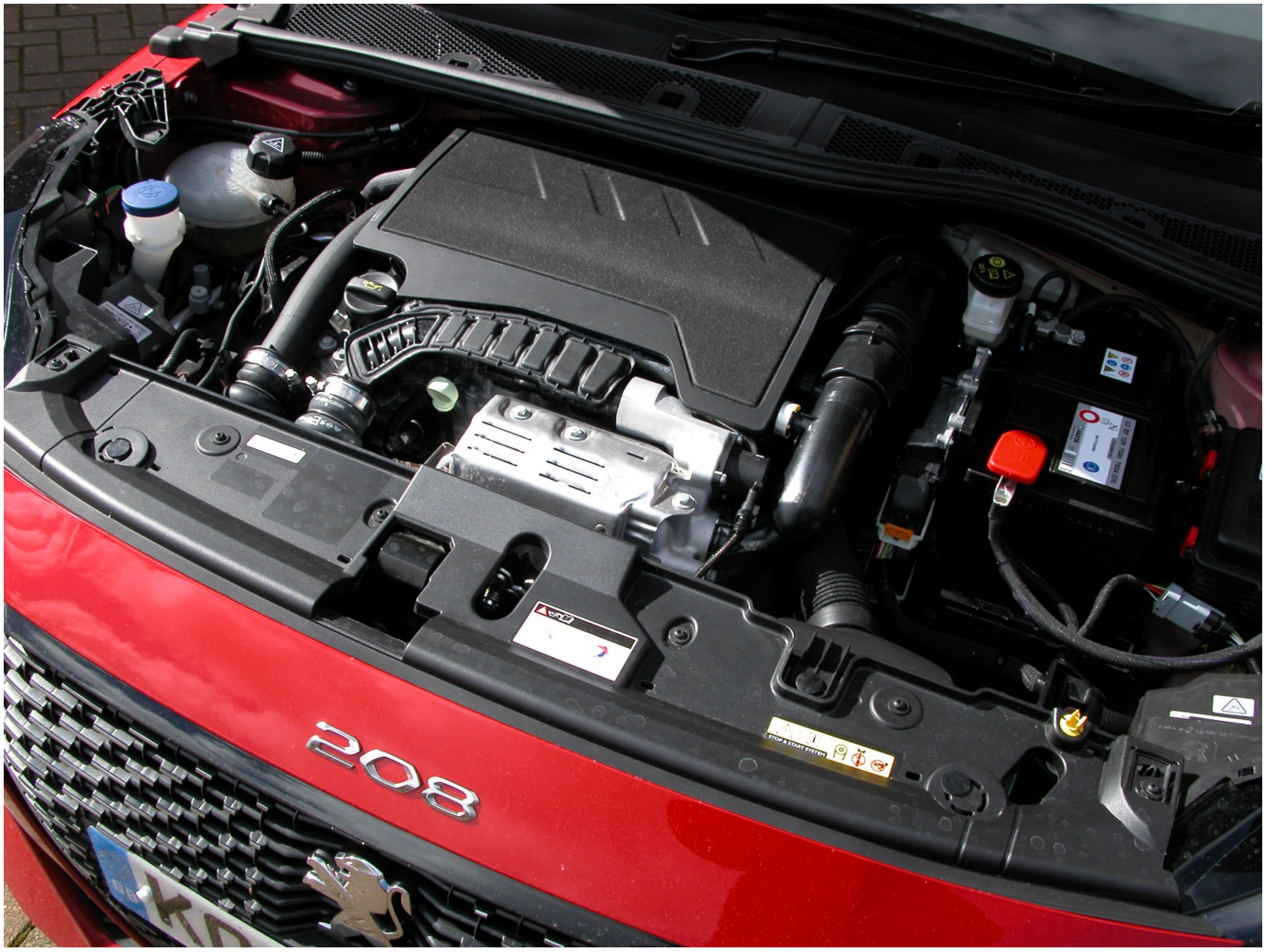
I also had an issue with the adjustment of the driver's seat which I didn't experience with the new Corsa. I'm a six-footer but with the 208 I never managed to get the driving seat into a low enough position and the small steering wheel, which in other Peugeot models I like, I just couldn't get it far enough away from me as the steering wheel rim was so low it was in my lap. Other than that the front seats were very comfortable and the interior quality excellent. In the rear the legroom, as with the Corsa, will be limited for teenage children and adults and the rear door frames are fairly narrow. The 60-40 split rear seat backs fold down to increase the boot space from 311 litres (10.98 cu.ft) to 1,106 litres (39.06 cu.ft) but items have to be lifted over a high-ish rear sill and down into the boot. An adjustable height load floor would improve usability.



My exact test drive model was the 1.2 litre PureTech 100 hp three cylinder turbo petrol model but with the excellent eight speed auto gearbox. The hatchback was a well equipped GT Line version priced at £22,100 but had a few extra cost options such as the £695 Elixir Red pearlescent paint, the £300 Drive Assist Pack Plus with adaptive cruise control with Stop and Go plus lane positioning assist, and the 10-inch upgraded colour touchscreen with Connected 3D Navigation which includes TomTom live updates with a three years subscription. All told the test vehicle cost £24,245 on-the-road. Insurance for this model is Group 20E and the warranty is three years/60,000 miles.

The punchy triple-cylinder turbo petrol with 205 Nm (151 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm had a throaty sound-track which I found quite pleasant and sporty, in keeping with the model's GT Line specification. This is expected to be the most popular engine in the line-up and the Allure and GT Line spec levels will be the see most demand from UK customers.



Top speed is 117 mph with the zero to 62 mph acceleration time of 10.8 seconds, not especially speedy but easy to drive in combination with the excellent eight speed auto gearbox. The new WLTP fuel consumption figures range between 44.3 and 50.3 mpg and my week of driving produced an overall figure of 42 mpg. The CO2 emissions are 99 g/km so new First Year VED road tax costs £135 followed by £150 Standard rate and the BiK company car tax level is 23%.

The steering, like the Corsa, was mostly sharp to respond because of the small steering wheel. Small inputs from the driver produced fast changes in direction which I liked and it made it nimble. But under windy conditions, which prevailed most of the time during my week of driving, the predictability of the car's handling was a times questionable. Heading

into the strong wind or in the slipstream of another vehicle, the front end lost its precise handling with the bluster from the airflow causing the car to stray from my intended driving line. It was the same changing direction with the head-on wind moving the front end around and it was also less stable with the wind blowing from the side on to the front quarters. Now whether that was due to the aerodynamics of the bold chunky front end design of the 208 or the lightness of the 1.0 litre three cylinder petrol engine I'm not sure, but these characteristics were not evident with the new Vauxhall Corsa test drive model which had a more streamlined front end and a heavier four cylinder diesel engine. Understeer was also less predictable, again depending on the amount of airflow over the front end of the car. The ride comfort however I found slightly softer and more compliant than that with the new Corsa – which would be down to each brand's own particular settings.

VERDICT

Overall the new Peugeot 208 is a nice but not perfect package but in fairness not many cars are. Does it justify the Car of the Year 2020 title, marginal I would say but certainly worthy of serious consideration as is its similar new Vauxhall Corsa.

For: Distinctive sporty good looks, strong looking front face design with innovative vertical driving lights, high quality interior finishes, comfortable front seats, compliant ride, good real-life fuel economy and reasonable running costs.

Against: Not user-friendly heating and air-con controls operated via the touchscreen, tall drivers might find their seat and steering wheel adjustments are compromised, limited rear seat leg and head room and narrow rear door openings, unsettled and variable front end stability and cornering grip, ungenerous warranty.

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

Peugeot 208 GT Line, 1.2 PureTech 100, eight speed automatic,

five door hatchback.

Price: £22,100 (£24,245).

Engine/transmission: 1.2 litre, three cylinder, turbo petrol 100 hp, 205 Nm (151 lb.ft) of torque, eight speed automatic.

Performance: 117 mph, 0 – 62 mph 10.8 seconds.

Fuel consumption: WLTP Combined Cycle 44.3 to 50.3 mpg (42 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 99 g/km, VED road tax £135 First Year rate and then £150 Standard rate, BiK company car tax 23%.

Insurance Group: 20E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,055 mm (13.30 ft), W 1,745 mm (5.73 ft), H 1,430 mm (4.69 ft), wheelbase 2,540 mm, (8.33 ft) boot/load space 311 – 1,106 litres (10.98 – 39.06 cu.ft), five doors; four/five seats.