Kia Stinger 2.0 – Brief Impressions

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Kieron Fennelly assesses the 2.0 litre version of Kia's Stinger…

(Photograph and all words by Kieron).

A company whose attractive styling usually masks conservative engineering, Kia, hitherto known for its mass market offerings surprised most observers in 2017 with its Stinger, its first foray into the premium car market. Although not averse to an element of adventurousness in its marketing, this is a bold move for a company which only twenty years ago seemed to be just another Far Eastern producer of cheap, uninteresting utility cars. A second generation with rather wider appeal came far closer to European standards and by then Kia had poached Audi design chief Peter Schreyer; a third and now distinctly

styled generation of Kias started to emerge. One of them is the company's flagship, the Sportage which has become the best selling SUV in its class in Europe. In Britain Kia's market share in 2017 reached 5% which compares with Vauxhall's 8% and Ford's 12%: progress indeed so perhaps a move towards a premium branded model is not so illogical.

My fellow *Wheels-Alive* scribe David Miles has already reported on the V6 engined top of the range Stinger (to read David's account, plus specifications on this model, please click HERE); now Kia seeks to widen the Stinger's appeal with this four cylinder, two litre petrol version priced 20% lower. Identical inside and out and sharing the same eight speed automatic transmission, this model is differentiated only by its smaller engine. In all other respects, except for details such as 18 rather than 19 inch wheels and plain rather than Brembo-branded brake calipers, it is the same. It uses the company's 1998cc engine which, boosted by a single turbocharger develops 244 bhp in right hand drive form (left hand drive versions can apparently claim 252 horsepower thanks to a less convoluted exhaust system). Torque output is said to be 353lbs/ft (479 Nm). For comparison, the V6 model is rated at 365 bhp and 510lbs/ft (691 Nm). Its larger engine and additional turbocharger mean it weighs about 130 kg (287 lb) more than its four cylinder brother.

On the road, it is hardly surprising that both models behave very similarly. The two litre Stinger manages to feel very refined most of the time. Ride over the variable and frequently broken road surfaces which seem to have become the norm in southern England is well controlled though a sudden hump can momentarily unsettle the car. Clearly though a lot of work has gone into the Kia's chassis; the cabin is well-insulated and road and tyre noise is subdued – certainly the Kia's serenity on the motorway stands comparison with any of the German makes. Perhaps only the Jaguar XF can beat it in this department. The steering is accurate and allows enough feedback to please the interested driver and the four cylinder engine is impressively quiet, sounding busy only when fully solicited, but never obtrusively so. Fast progress, particularly when the very smooth autobox is left to its own devices, is both pleasant and easy. And herein lies the dynamic difference between the 2 litre and the V6: although Kia is at pains to point out that the Stinger is a grand tourer, not a sports car, the huge acceleration combined with such a high level of refinement means that when

pressing on in the latter car, it is more easy to be caught out by the sheer velocity of the twin-turbo model. Your driving licence will undoubtedly be safer in the junior Stinger, which with a six second 0-60 is hardly a slouch.

A third, diesel version joins the UK Stinger range in April 2018. This will use the 2.2 engine which already serves in Kia's latest Sorento. In the firm's big SUV it provides very brisk performance and is vocal only under hard acceleration: in the Stinger it is unlikely to have a major effect on refinement whilst offering lower fuel consumption and that characteristic wave of torque.

VERDICT

Kia says modestly that it would be happy to sell 1,500–1,800 Stingers in the UK in its first full year, and thinks these may be split more or less evenly between the two petrol and diesel models; Alex Grant, editor of *Fleetworld* hazards that diesel uncertainties not withstanding, Stinger sales are more likely to fall largely between the diesel and "full Monty" high-performance V6. It would be a shame though if this pair overshadowed the two litre petrol: as an entry level premium car, the 2.0 is a particularly well-resolved effort and which is arguably the more practical model for UK road and traffic conditions if diesel mileages are not envisaged.

Wheels-Alive Technical Specification in Brief (where this differs from the V6):

Engine: 1998cc turbocharged petrol

Output: 244 bhp @ 6,200rpm; 353 lbs/ft (479 Nm) @ 1,400-3,500 rpm

Weight: 1,717kg (3780 lbs)

Performance: 0-60 mph: 5.8s; top speed 149 mph

Consumption: 35.8 mpg (Combined figure)

Emissions: CO2: 181g/km

Price: £31,995