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MG5 EV estate – Road Test

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Chris Adamson test drives MG's all-electric estate car...

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Sales of new combustion engine cars are set to be banned in the UK in not so many years meaning that all motor manufacturers are now gearing up for electric only sales – but have you noticed that almost every new electric model seems to fit into one of two categories –either small city runarounds or big family sized sports utilities?

So when someone launches an electric estate car it tends to stand out and one of the marques to offer this alternative is MG with the new MG5EV Station Wagon (MG using the American description instead of the word estate car).

One of the few other makers to offer an electric estate is BMW – so MG is in good company.

Visually the MG5 is smart looking with a low roof fastback profile rather than the slab of a conventional travelling salesman estate. MG has managed to keep the overall height down and also give it a low centre of gravity by integrating the water-cooled battery pack into the chassis.



However, it does rather lack its own identity; it could be one of a number of models from rival manufacturers which is a bit of a disappointment.

The noticeable rear silhouette slope of the roof, while fashionable and aerodynamic, does limit the driver's rear and three-quarter vision so the rear parking camera supplied is essential.

In recent years MG has created a brand identity with its large grilles, but as this is electric it has no need for engine cooling so makes do with a still expansive, but rather anonymous pinched face.



The business end features a wide hatch with a modest height sill entry into the load compartment where the extensive and generously proportioned boot (with useful side pockets to accommodate the charging cables) will swallow 464 litres (16.39 cu.ft) of luggage with the seats and load cover in place (which is about average for the class) or 578 litres (20.41 cu.ft) with the load cover retracted.

Dropping down the 60/40 split seat backs increases this to 1,456 litres (51.42 cu.ft) but I am disappointed that MG hasn't taken the time and effort to find an arrangement for the 60/40 split rear seats that will allow them to fold-down completely flat, something I would expect in a traditional estate.



In this case the seats go nowhere near level which is a serious compromise for anyone looking for a fully functional estate.

The relatively high floor also means the driver and passengers, while being given loads of head and leg space (both front and rear) have limited hip to ankle distance with a lack of support under the knees to be truly comfortable. With the steering wheel in a convenient setting for me to see the instrumentation clearly I was not in the most comfortable driving position.

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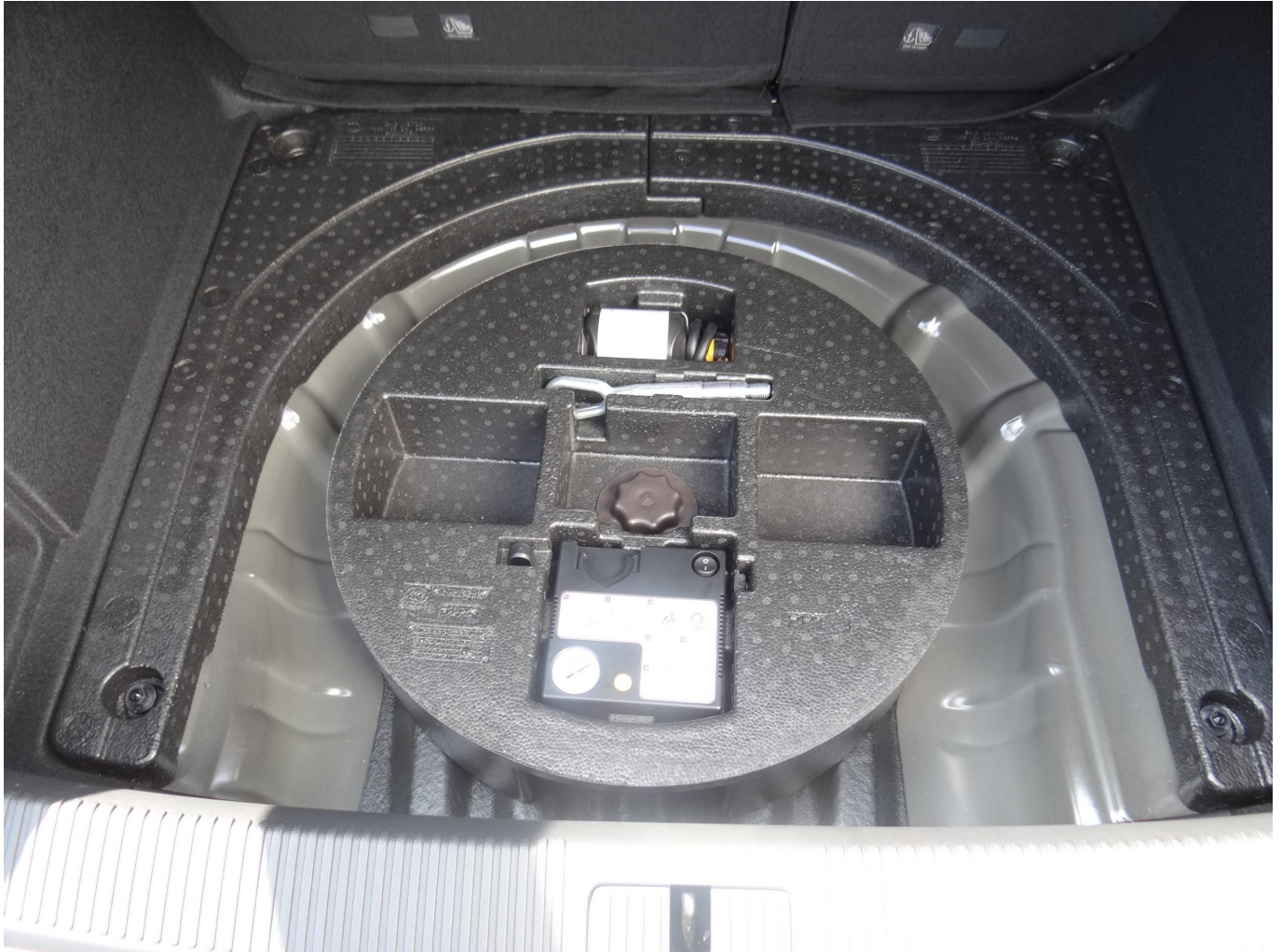
Below the load floor is a compartment that will accommodate a full size spare wheel (or the air and sealant so prevalent these days) this is a rarity for an electric vehicle as the boot space is often occupied by a mass of electronic control units.





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I am a great believer in carrying a spare wheel after a couple of incidents with road debris and potholes where a wheel has been buckled making the air and foam solution invalid.

One word of caution, I have recently read a report that suggests jacking an electric vehicle at one corner to replace a wheel can distort and potentially damage the battery packs set into the floor or chassis and jacking should only be done at all four corners on a lift - I have yet to get a definitive answer on this question.

The quality of the interior fixtures and fittings initially looks very promising although for my taste they have used one too many different materials and textures which makes for a busy



cabin.

A minor disappointment is the rather limited capacity of the door pockets but there are plenty of other storage spaces to compensate.

The dashboard is broad and slim-line and thankfully not too complex so everything falls close to hand and is easy to use. Many of the controls are located on the steering wheel and again this has a good intuitive feel.

Ahead of the driver the digital instrumentation is clear and informative with a useful swinging dial to indicate operating efficiency and when the batteries are being re-charged.

If you are trying to stretch the potential distance you can travel on a single charge you can tend to get fixated on this dial - so be warned.



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Photo MG Motor.



Photo MG Motor.

Elsewhere the MG5 dash is dominated by an eight-inch central touch screen to operate features such as the six-speaker audio system with DAB radio, satellite navigation, Apple CarPlay, Android Auto and smartphone mirroring.

On the top-of-the-range Exclusive model (as tested) other features include cruise control with speed limiter, six-way adjustable driver's and four-way adjustable passenger heated seats, cloth leather-style upholstery, air conditioning, rain-sensing wipers and push-button starter.

Safety systems include front, side and curtain airbags, electronic brake assist, ABS with EBD, twin ISOFIX points in the rear, a tyre pressure monitoring system, Hill Start Assist and



seatbelt warnings for front and rear passengers.

On the Road:

Propulsion to the front wheels only is supplied by a 115 kW electric motor, which has an output equivalent to 156 PS – this in turn is powered by the water-cooled 52.2 kWh lithium ion battery pack.

Even before speed statistics the first thing everyone wants to know about an electric vehicle is how far can I go in it...well for an electric vehicle this is normally very much a moveable feast depending on your driving style, driving mode selection and how many creature comforts you want.

MG claims a maximum distance of 214 miles on a full charge (276 if only driving in town) but getting anywhere near this will need some careful driving so I would be very conservative and erring on the side of caution restrict my maximum stints to no more than 180 miles.

On full charge the best I saw the system indicate was a 197 mile range but even that can be deceptive, as I will relate, due to the on-board recharging possibilities offered by KERS regenerative braking.

KERS activates when you lift off the throttle, applying the braking automatically which not only slows the vehicle down but also recovers energy that is normally lost as heat.

Over a series of test runs I drove the MG5 in differing modes to see how much difference this would make and overall I have to say I was surprised to find the differences were very small.

A central rotary control allows the driver to select between Economy, Normal and Sport modes and a flip switch alters the level of regenerative braking.



On the first test over a 41 mile mixed route of dual carriageway, city streets and country lanes (always keeping strictly to the speed limits) I started out with 100 per cent battery power and a predicted 197 mile range.

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I then selected Economy driving mode, the maximum KERS setting available (in Economy mode the amount of KERS is restricted so less recharging it available) and switched off power sapping elements such as air conditioning.

I reached my destination with 85 per cent power remaining (so I had used 15 per cent of battery power) and a predicted range of 162 miles – so according to the onboard diagnostics I had gained six miles though energy regeneration.

For the return journey over the identical route I switched to Normal driving model, the KERS on three quarters setting but again with no air conditioning.

I was back home having used another 16 per cent of battery power and had 135 miles of range indicated – so I had gained 14 miles on potential range which was something of a surprise.

Finally I undertook a mixed 56 mile journey using the Normal setting, low KERS, switched on the air con and when I had the opportunity on a fast stretch of dual carriageway slipped the selection into Sport mode for a noticeable punch of acceleration.

Totting up the figures here I had consumed 23 per cent of battery power and had seen the range only fall by 38 miles which was a gain of 18 miles – which demonstrated that you really don't have to be that fussy about which driving mode you are in.

Since I tested the MG5 its makers have introduced an extended range version that claims to be able to travel 250 miles on a single charge, rising to 334 miles if the car is used solely for urban driving, based on the WLTP City driving cycle.



It uses a new 61.1 kWh lithium-Ion battery pack that can be charged up to 80 per cent in 40 minutes using a 100 kW rapid charger, 61 minutes on a 50 kW rapid charger while a 100 per cent overnight fast charge takes approximately 9.5 hours on a domestic home charger.

Also new on the long range model is the addition of MG's MG Pilot Driver Assistance System.

When it comes to recharging the connecting cables slot into the front grille behind the MG badge and can then be connected to the charging system of your choice - whatever is available at the time.

Included is a three pin plug connection to hook up to a standard domestic 240V socket should this be all that is available - a full charge should be possible overnight.

When it comes to the driving experience itself, we are all now familiar with electric motors providing instant acceleration and a linear application of power and the MG5 is no different offering hot hatch like performance if required - just over seven seconds to 60 mph is impressive for an estate car.

In most driving situations the MG5 responds well to driver demands, putting on a burst of speed for brisk overtaking, sustained performance along country lanes, quiet motorway travelling and gentle dawdling in city traffic.

Without the short wheelbase of a city car and the height of an SUV plus the low centre of gravity the MG5 has one notable advantage, it is able to offer a particularly comfortable ride quality, something that my wife, a connoisseur of ride quality, was quick to point out.

The wheelbase is long enough not to get jittery on broken surfaces and the nicely tuned suspension absorbs a lot of pothole movement while the relatively low roof line and good weight balance across the vehicle eliminates the bounce and body sway often associated with SUVs.



The only observation on the ride experience is that the lack of an exhaust noise means you hear tyre patter on the tarmac.

When it comes to the steering, I am a bit of a traditionalist and like a lot of feeling, especially when the model has an MG badge. While the MG5 is light and easy for parking at low speeds it lacks a positive response at higher speeds. That's not to say it is dangerous but not what you would describe as an enthusiastic drivers' car.

VERDICT

Estate cars are not fashionable at the moment but the MG5 proves that they have a place in the electric market, offering the space and practicality of an SUV with superior handling and driving characteristics.

It is very easy to live with, fulfils lots of roles and is simple to get to grips with if you are an EV novice.

The only reservation (as in all EVs) is the distance you can travel on a charge so I would be favouring the new extended range version.

And when it comes to purchasing a modern MG, you have the added attraction of a seven year / 80,000-mile fully transferable warranty as standard.



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Wheels-Alive Tech Spec:

Vehicle: MG5 EV

Engine: 115 kW electric motor / 52.2 kWh lithium-ion battery pack

Power: 156 PS

Torque: 196 lb ft / 260 Nm



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Performance:

0 - 60mph: 7.3 seconds

Top Speed: 115 mph

Combined Range: 214 miles

Urban Range: 276 miles

Price (On the Road): £27,595 as tested





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