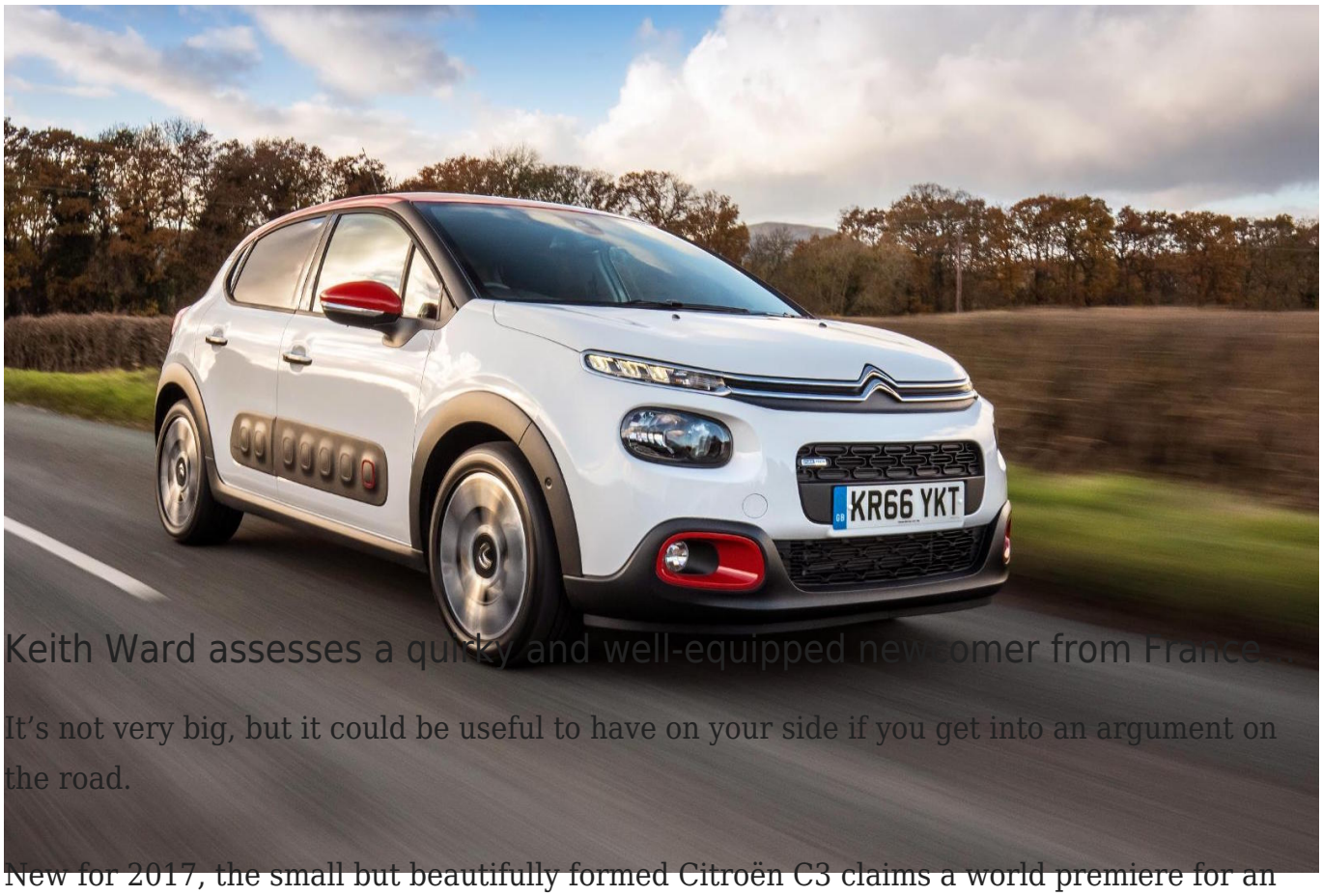
New Citroën C3 Road Test

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Keith Ward assesses a quirky and well-equipped newcomer from France...

It’s not very big, but it could be useful to have on your side if you get into an argument on the road.

New for 2017, the small but beautifully formed Citroën C3 claims a world premiere for an onboard HD camera, standard with the top Flair trim, that allows drivers to share their road trip photos and videos directly. It also switches on automatically in in the case of a collision to capture what could be valuable evidence.

This latest version of the C3 sports a chunky-looking five-door body further bulked out with the black plastic bumps or air-filled cushions along the side doors, first seen on its C4 Cactus cousin.

Don’t scoff. In what seem these days to be ever-tighter public parking spaces they could be valued protectors.

The exterior has a two-tone paint option, with a choice of nine body and three roof colours as well as complimentary touches of colour around the car for fog lights, door mirrors, rear quarter panels and those bump panels. It becomes a bespoke painting by numbers exercise for the prospective customer.

A high bonnet line, hefty rear flanks and extended wheel arches catch the eye and the roof turns out to be four centimetres (about an inch and a half) lower than the previous model.

A 12-strong range perms three petrol and two diesel engines, with outputs between 68 and 110 hp, and three levels of trim for the same five-door body, at prices from £10,995 to £17,485. At a tad under 4 m (13 ft 1.5 in) long, it is pitched against such as the sector-leading Ford Fiesta and VW’s Polo.

Our test car, next-to-top of the price range, came eye-catchingly enhanced with options of a vivid orange power paint body (£495), an opal white contrasting roof with matching door mirrors (no extra cost) and 17-inch special alloys (£200).

Its top Flair trim exclusively included a reversing camera and rear parking sensors, automatic lights and wipers, dark tinted rear windows, foglights with a cornering function and leather sleeves for gear knob and steering wheel.

They add to six-speaker audio with DAB radio (and its still dodgy reception nationally), Bluetooth hands-free and a seven-inch touchscreen linkable to your mobile, on which you would depend for sat-nav unless coughing up £500 for Citroen’s optional built-in system.

A fussy facet of tecky-tuning: To simply alter the cabin temperature you need to scroll through to the appropriate screen and dab it.



In a pleasantly furnished interior the front two occupants should not feel cramped, — there is 2 cm (just under an inch) more shoulder room than before – but rear space is only average. And there are practical limitations to load carrying.

The boot is fairly deep, plunging a good 210 mm (8.27 in) below the hatchback sill with only a skinny spare underfloor, but to extend it the rear seatbacks merely flop onto their cushions at an upward angle beyond an obstructive 90 mm (3.54 in)crossbeam step. The Honda Jazz in this class still leads the way with its “magic” conversion.

On the road, the C3 rides comfortably, true to Citroen tradition. The 1.6 turbocharged four cylinder diesel can sound a little hoarse from cold starts but later in top fifth at 70 mph it is pulling a fairly relaxed 2,000 rpm, even if you do feel yourself reaching for a sixth slot at times via the rather knobbly gear change.

(Automatic is offered only with the 110 hp PureTech petrol engine and Flair trim at the very top of the C3 range, £17,485).

VERDICT/PLUS POINTS

Our diesel's sub-100 g/km CO2 figure is tax-friendly. And the further good news at the end of the day was a recorded fuel consumption in a week's varied driving of well over 60 mpg.



Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Citroën C3 Flair Blue HDI 100

Type: Supermini; five-door hatch; 4/5 seats

Size: Length 3,996 mm (13.11 ft); width 1,749 mm (5.74 ft); height 1,474 mm (4.84 ft); kerb weight 1,090 kg (2,403 lb)

Boot Length 670 to 1,230 mm (2.20 to 4.04 ft); min width 990 mm (3.25 ft); vol 300 to 922 litres (10.59 to 32.56 cu.ft)

Engine and transmission: Diesel; 1,560 cc; four cyl; turbo; five speed manual; stop&start

Power and torque: 110 hp @ 3,750 rpm; max torque 151.2 lb ft (205.0 Nm) @1,750 rpm

Pace: 115 mph; 0-62 in 10.6 secs

MPG: On test 62.7; official Combined 76.3; tank 45 litres (9.90 gallons)

Emissions and taxation: CO2: 95 g/km; band B; VED Nil; BIK 19%

Tyres: 205/50 R17 Goodyear on special alloys; space-saver spare

Insurance Group: 20A

Warranty: 36 months/60,000 miles; paint 36 months; anti-rust 12 years; breakdown 12 months

Service: Every 20,000 miles

PRICE: £17,385; as tested, with options £18,080

Rivals: Skoda Fabia; Honda Jazz; Hyundai i20; Ford Fiesta; Renault Clio; VW Polo.