



Vauxhall Agila Suzuki Wagon R+



THIS JOINTLY DEVELOPED DUO JOINS THE Hyundai Atoz/Amica and the Daihatsu Move, to offer multi-purpose vehicle solutions to the mini-car market sector.

Of course, the Wagon R has been selling successfully (especially back home in Japan) for several years, but this latest version isn't just prettier – it's also a bit longer and wider, sturdier and safer, with a significant weight increase as a result.

This extensive redevelopment, with Euro-appeal in mind, made the joint venture with Opel-Vauxhall mutually beneficial. Result: two variations on the same theme, but with entirely different engines and individualist tweaks to front seating and chassis fine-tuning. And they're built in two different factories – both in Eastern Europe.

This type of small car, with its "build-'em-tall" approach, is designed to produce surprising interior space within an envelope around 3.5m long and 1.5m+ wide. However, it can't reproduce the nip-and-tuck agility of a Fiat Seicento, Ford Ka or even the venerable Rover Mini. But there's no reason why it shouldn't offer good straight-line performance and congenial mechanical manners.

Both partners manage the accelerative bit with their

dearer, larger-engined versions, but the enlarged (1.2 to 1.3 litre) Suzuki engine sounds and even feels harsh, particularly when its legs are stretched. Put the optional auto 'box between it and the driver and it goes much more smoothly – but then performance and economy are both significantly compromised.

The one-litre Wagon R won't reappear for a year, but at launch, there's a smaller Vauxhall one litre with three cylinders; in fact the 1.2 is the same basic all-alloy unit with an extra pot. This three-cylinder is reasonably flexible at lower speed and reasonably subdued at faster cruising speeds, but it's getting from the one to the other that's the problem.

It's too soon to say for sure, but we suspect that there won't be much difference in mpg in real-life driving, either, so the very pleasant 1.2 Agila is our favourite. With tyres that are a bit more compliant and seat cushions a bit softer, it's the Vauxhall that seems to ride better, as well, although undulating roads can still induce some pitching, and it jibs at serious ruts and ridges. With its narrow tracks and lofty build, it shows little enthusiasm for rapid cornering, but electric power-assistance keeps the steering light and easy, if a shade wayward at times.

The car's shape (like a rounded house-brick) and the

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FACTS AND FIGURES

	Agila	Wagon R+
BODY		
Style	five-door hatchback	
Length x width	350 x 175cm (between folded mirrors)	
Trim levels	one only	two: GA and GL
ENGINES		
Type and size	973cc/3cyl 1199cc/4cyl	1298cc/4cyl
Power (bhp/rpm)	58/5600 75/5600	76/5500
Torque (lb ft/rpm)	63/3800 81/4000	84/4250
Valves	chain-driven twin overhead camshafts operating four valves per cylinder	
Fuel/ignition	electronic multi-point petrol injection with integrated spark timing. 41 litre tank; "drive-by-wire" accelerator on Agila only	
TRANSMISSION		
Type	5-speed manual standard - 4-speed auto optional on Wagon R	
CHASSIS		
Suspension - front	damper/struts with integral coil springs	
- rear	torsion beam (dead) axle, coil springs	
Steering	rack and pinion with electric power-assistance on all except GA version of Wagon R	
Wheels	4½in steel – alloys optional	
Tyres	155/65R14	165/60R14
Brakes	solid discs front, drums rear with vacuum servo electronic ABS optional extra	

