

GOOD THINGS TO COME?

Suzuki's first C-segment saloon enters CAR's long-term test fleet

KIZASHI is Japanese for "a sign of good things to come", which I'm sure Suzuki hopes will prove true with its first foray into the mid-sized saloon market. As do I, for that matter, as I will be covering 20 000 km in the car over the next 12 months on the daily commute, on weekend shopping trips and during long vacations.

I was fortunate to experience a preview drive of the car at the vehicle's local media introduction in Johannesburg a few weeks prior to our long termer arriving at the CAR offices. The short drive on the Reef left me impressed and excited for my tenure with the car. While the Kizashi has a tough job fending off rivals such as the Honda Accord, Volkswagen Passat and Mazda6, after a brief period behind the wheel it was clear why Suzuki has managed to successfully and rapidly build its brand in this country.

The Kizashi offers great cabin space and reasonable luggage capacity, good perceived

quality, a neat interior and a long list of standard features. The cabin is roomy and comfortable, both at the front and especially in the rear, but the dash does infringe a bit on the driver's legroom.

At the front of the cabin, there is electric adjustment and heating for the front seats, satellite controls on the steering wheel, a radio/CD audio system with USB connectivity and dual-zone climate control. It also has an anti-dazzle rear-view mirror, sunroof, cruise control and park-distance control. Safety features include six airbags, ABS with EBD and ESP.

The range has a single powertrain option, a 2,4-litre naturally aspirated four-cylinder petrol similar to the one used in the Grand Vitara, but with 131 kW and 230 N.m of torque (compared with 122 kW and 225 N.m). The engine is surprisingly responsive, probably owing to the addition of a sixth ratio that spaces the gears closer (a CVT is also available).

Progress is swift considering the car's mass

and size, and the shifts are quick and smooth, although there is a strange clicking sound when changing from fifth to sixth.

On the road, the Kizashi has a very supple ride quality, despite its 45-profile tyres, and, while it does lean quite a bit in corners, the car impresses with great dynamics for its class.

It's covered over 2 068 km since joining our fleet, during which time it has consumed fuel at an average of 10,04 litres/100 km. This figure is a little high, but I did do a lot of town driving. – BH

QUICK FACTS SUZUKI KIZASHI 2,4 SLX

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|---|---|
| Mileage on arrival (km): | 3 539 |
| Mileage now (km): | 5 607 |
| Fuel consumption (litres/100km): | 10,04 |
| We like: | huge cabin, punchy motor, refined ride quality |
| We don't like: | clicking sound when changing from fifth to sixth, not very frugal |

Peugeot 3008 1,6 THP

The "comfy-chair car" developed a sniffle... The 3008 would start perfectly but, after about a kilometre of driving, would idle roughly as if one cylinder was not receiving its spark. It would soon clear and run as normal. Soon after, the engine-warning light decided that it was time to be booked-off sick before the sniffle turned into pneumonia. The warning was accompanied by an "anti-pollution system faulty" readout.

It is likely that this is a generic warning message that may cover a number of issues. In this case (and in many others, no doubt), it could have been a reading from one of the oxygen sensors detecting a mixture imbalance.

So I booked in the car at Peugeot-Citroën Culemborg for some TLC. It turned out not to be a spark problem as anticipated, even though we all know how temperamental coil packs have become over the last decade and presumably still are...

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