

VAUXHALL ASTRA

1.9 CDTi 150

by Tunit



With more and more buyers turning to diesel power, Vauxhall is keeping up its end by offering three state-of-the-art, turbocharged, common-rail direct-injection engines from its ECOTEC range; all of which comply with Euro 4 exhaust emission regs. Thanks to a turbocharger with variable turbine blades, the 'entry-level' 1.7 CDTi offers 99bhp at 4,400rpm, and a respectable 177 lb ft of torque to the crankshaft at 2,300rpm. Not at the wheels, you'll note. Still, it's enough to take it to 60mph in 11.4 seconds and return a Combined figure of 55.4mpg. There are three specification levels, with list prices opening at £16,700. Next up is the 8-valve 1.9 CDTi, which, as you might expect, has decidedly more grunt: an extra 19bhp and 29 lb ft of torque, to be precise, which lops almost 2 seconds off the 0-60 sprint time, and nearly 7mpg off the Combined figure! The 1.9 CDTi 118bhp starts

from £17,555. Top of the Astra diesel heap, power-wise, is the 1.9 CDTi 16v 150PS for which Vauxhall will ask you to pay £18,100 and upwards. In return, you'll get 148bhp at 4,000rpm and 236 lb ft of torque between 2,000 and 2,750rpm. (More on that later.) Equipped with the latest six-speed manual gearbox, this Astra will hit 60mph in 8.9 seconds, which is quicker than a 2-litre Golf TDI 140, albeit only by a midge's, and, should you suddenly have a burning desire to lose your licence, it will go on to 130mph. The Combined figure is 48.7mpg – some 3mpg down on the Golf. And the Golf costs rather less to buy: £17,411 against the Astra's opening price of £18,105. You pay your money and all that. It was the Astra that Nina Colquhoun plumped for a couple of years ago, when she traded in her Focus TDCi. She'd enjoyed the Focus very much, she told us when we met up at Tunit HQ,

but it wasn't quick enough. Here was a young lady who clearly knows her torque from stutter... After one or two minor teething problems, the Astra has served her well. It's averaged around 37mpg in day-to-day, mainly urban motoring and easily topped 50mpg on a recent trip to Germany for her honeymoon. We fell about when she described their exploits at the Nürburgring racing circuit. Apparently you can pay at a machine – just like a parking pay-and-display – and take your car onto the track. At one point, they were overtaken by a Volvo XC90 laden with madly waving children, and there were even charabancs (coaches, for the benefit of our younger readers) whizzing round. The average is one fatality a week, mostly motorcyclists. Our nanny government would probably close it down! Still, the Astra was two years old, and Nina sort of felt like a change. But she had a dilemma:



The Astra's design is more swoopy in Sport Hatch form.

"Power went up to 198.4bhp and torque to 300.5 lb ft. That's over 24 per cent and nearly 21 per cent..."

she loved everything about her Astra, and it was in immaculate condition. What to do? An uncle came up with the solution. No less than five of his cars had been given the Tunit 'treatment'. "Why not keep the Astra," he suggested. "And give it a Tunit boost? It would be like getting a new car, a better one even, but for a fraction of the cost." Problem solved. So, to Tunit, and its exceedingly accurate dynamometer. Quite possibly because the Astra was well run in – it had just over 25,000 on the clock – a reading of 159.7bhp was recorded at 4,200rpm, with maximum torque of 248.9 lb ft at 2,400rpm. Both appreciably up on Vauxhall's published figures. Less than half an hour later, with the Tunit fitted, we saw those figures positively leap. Power went up to 198.4bhp and torque to

300.5 lb ft. That's over 24 per cent and nearly 21 per cent respectively.

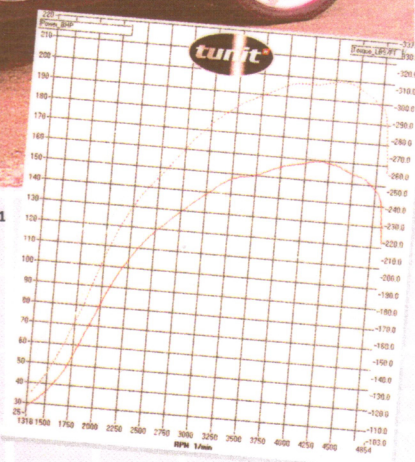
We were impressed, and expected Nina to be thrilled. She was, but, with a slightly embarrassed smile, said she'd love it if we could top 200bhp.

After some ten minutes fine tuning, it became clear that the lady's wish was not to be granted. Tunit technician Dan managed 199.2bhp, and squeezed the torque up to 306.5 lb ft in the process. He could have taken the bhp higher, but was concerned that the torque would suffer.

The real test, of course, was whether the 'new, improved' Astra would impress Nina on the road. It did – instantly.

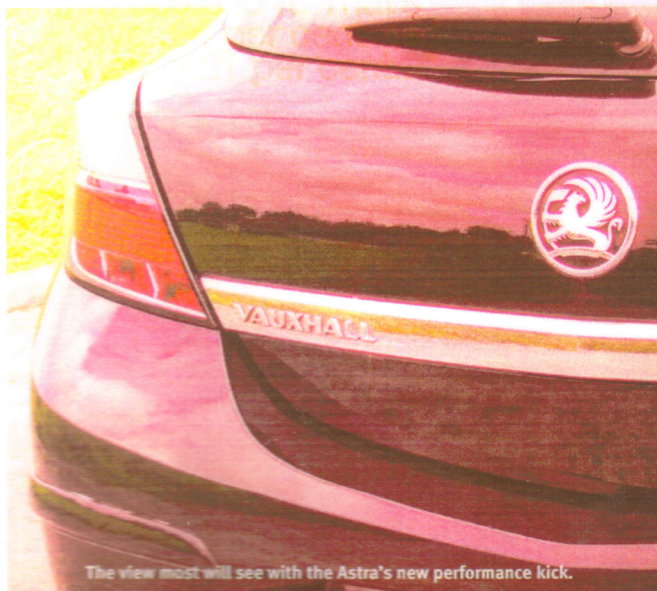
She commented immediately that it pulled away much more smartly, even with three up. Before, she said, it was a question of getting into second as quickly as possible to generate any real impetus.

Talking with her earlier, it had become clear that she'd wanted more get-up-and-go and now she had it. Acceleration in all gears was vastly improved, and the car felt altogether more

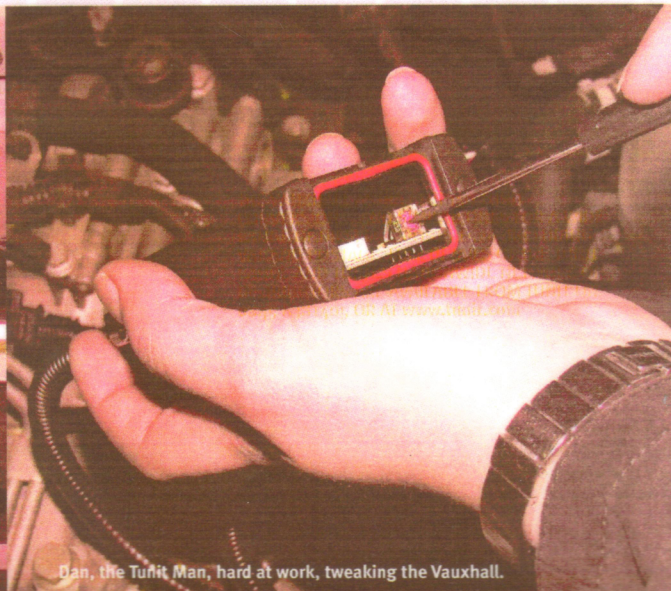


THE VAUXHALL ASTRA CDTI 150 TUNIT CONVERSION – AND SIMILAR ONES FOR A WIDE RANGE OF DIESELS – COSTS £526, INCLUDING VAT AND POSTAGE. FULL DETAILS OF THE TUNIT RANGE AND TUNIT'S NATIONWIDE NETWORK OF DISTRIBUTORS ARE AVAILABLE FROM TUNIT ON 0845 8381405 OR AT www.tunit.com

responsive. It was like switching on a light, she said. Clearly, a Nürburgring contender now! A check of the Astra's on-board computer revealed 58.8mpg. Given the relatively short test drive, we concluded that this wouldn't relate to 'real life' usage, but she could look forward to an improvement in overall economy in her zippiest Astra. Win-win, indeed.



The view most will see with the Astra's new performance kick.



Dan, the Tunit Man, hard at work, tweaking the Vauxhall.