

CZECH THIS OUT



The Superb, current flagship of the Skoda range, offers outstanding value for money. **By C Y Chew**

CAN you name the four Baldwin brothers? Most people would say Alec and William but few are able to name all of them. It's the same with the Volkswagen Group. Many know about the VW and Audi brands but there is one more in Singapore which is slightly more obscure but nevertheless alive and kicking. It is called Skoda.

Authorised distributor Harvest Automobiles is now at a new showroom on 3 Leng Kee Road and it has a new model from the Czech carmaker. The Superb is the current flagship of the Skoda range and is available with two different powertrain choices – a range-topping four-wheel drive with a 260 bhp 3.6-litre V6 engine, and a front-wheel-drive variant featuring a turbocharged 1.8-litre four-cylinder unit.

Both engines tout direct injection, which means fuel economy, and emissions are kept to a minimum while performance is maximised. Both models get VW's familiar DSG double-clutch gearbox although the 1.8 has a seven-speed transmission while the V6 get a six-speeder.

The more popular 160 hp 1.8-litre variant has pleasantly adequate performance for such a big vehicle. With 250 Nm and seven cogs to choose from, the 1,471 kg Skoda Superb is never caught in the wrong gear and meaningful acceleration is delivered without needing much revs. All this helps translate to a drive that is sedate and hushed.

The black leather-clad interior



of the car is spacious. There is more space than in a competitor model in the same segment. Passengers in the back enjoy plenty of legroom and there is ample head and shoulder room as well.

Front occupants have the benefit of electrically adjustable seats, with the driver side featuring a three-position memory. While fit and finish are exemplary, some might find the interior styling a little dated. Another negative point is the relatively shallow trunk. This is caused by a double layer "floor panel" that unfortunately cannot be removed. Two golf bags will definitely fit, but four will be pushing it. That is a pity, considering the Superb has a clever twin tailgate system that allows the boot lid to be opened like in a regular sedan or on a hatchback.

But there are no complaints with the ride comfort and handling balance. The suspension is tuned to offer the right amount of compliance over bumps big and small while avoiding that "floating" sensation at highway speeds. The Superb won't go around corners with as much verve as an Audi A6 but those in the back will compliment it for its space and cossetting ride.

Which leaves us with styling and the badge. Compared with the old car, the new Superb is leap years ahead in terms of design. But its nose, with the large chrome-rimmed grille, makes it look a little 1990s. It does not gel with the styling of the rear and profile which are very 21st Century.

Yet at \$111,000, the Superb offers outstanding value. It is a large, well-equipped sedan with all the bells and whistles of some luxury models. From bi-xenon headlamps and nine airbags, to the tyre pressuring monitoring system and Park Assist self-parking feature which facilitates automatic parallel parking, the Superb is fully loaded with all the creature comforts you desire. Except maybe for the correct badge on its upright grille.

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DESIRABLE

The Superb is a large, well-equipped sedan with all the bells and whistles of some luxury models

SPECS

Skoda Superb 1.8
Engine 1,798cc turbocharged
Transmission 6-speed double-clutch
Max power 160 hp @ 4,500 rpm
Max torque 250 Nm @ 1,500 rpm
0-100 kmh 8.5 secs
Top speed 220 kmh
Price \$110,800 (with COE)
Distributor Harvest Automobiles
☎ 6472-1188

WITH 250 NM AND SEVEN COGS TO CHOOSE FROM, THE 1,471 KG SKODA SUPERB IS NEVER CAUGHT IN THE WRONG GEAR AND MEANINGFUL ACCELERATION IS DELIVERED WITHOUT NEEDING MUCH REVS.