

Review - Kia Cerato

Written by Dave Conole
Monday, 15 July 2013 17:40



Some years ago, to say Kia and their countrymate, Hyundai, had quality cars, was stretching the truth just a tad. A succession of pretty average cars such as the Spectra and Mentor barely troubled the tallyboard and Kia was in danger of being seen as an also ran Korean supplier.

Come 2008 and a stylish, reasonably well sorted car hit the market. Called Cerato, it flagged promise and delivered it.

2013 sees a revamp of the small mid-sizer; sharing its basic architecture with Hyundai's i40, it's immediately quite a pretty car to look at. From the curvy headlight cluster framing Kia's corporate grille, down the lithe and subtly scalloped flanks through to the neon look taillights (SLi) and looking proportionally pretty bloody good, the question is then asked: does it go as good as it looks?



I back to backed the Si with six speed manual against the SLi with auto, both with the two litre GDI (gasoline direct injection) engine. Up front, the manual gearchange in the Si is a shocker. The clutch is light, not unexpectedly, but the gear lever in the test car had no spring pressure,

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leaving the feel of it as vague, indecisive, unsure and unwilling to be hurried.

As a manual preferred driver, this was simply yuck. Sitting mid pack in the Cerato sedan range, the Si deserves better. The auto in the SLi supplied is well ratioed, smooth and quick changing, with the choice of sports shift via the lever or paddle shifts. Gear shift aside, both transmissions work well with the bigger engine (there's a 1.8L MPI available) and with 129kW/239Nm @ 6500/4700 rpm on tap (roughly 10 kilos per kilowatt), the Cerato's near 1300kg kerb weight gets hustled along pretty reasonably.



Somewhat oddly, the SLi has the more sporting ride; shod with 215/45 tyres riding on gorgeous 17 inch wheels (vs 205/55/16s), it's a little harder, a little more grippy thanks, one can presume, to the slightly lower sidewall. Not, by any measure, is it unpleasant, quite the opposite but one would expect the middle car to be more the sport. Both turn in quickly, bumps are absorbed a touch softer in the Si and there's no tramlining or disconcerting bumpsteer.



The interior is tidy to look at, very up to date and has a mix of material look in the plastics, from

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a matt finish through to a faux carbon fibre look (Si/SLi), it's a class impression. Not so are the seats. You sit on, not in them, adding a feeling of not being connected to the car via the classic seat of the pants. Having heating in the SLi seats is one thing, at least there's a touch more give in the cloth in the Si as opposed to the manufactured leather in the SLi.



Both cars score the 4.3 inch touchscreen radio, with a larger 7 inch setup only available with a Navigation Pack. The dash on the Si gets a less colourful dot matrix look with the SLi providing a full spectrum animated screen, including a welcoming musical tone as the graphic comes to life. Another lovely SLi touch is memory seating (two position) and extra access provided for the driver by the seat sliding back on engine stop/door open and resetting when the driver sits back in.

Externally, folding mirrors unfold before the car is unlocked by reading the remote keyfob (Si/SLi and push button start) and lights up under the wing mirrors and doorhandles. Class, again. All three levels cop front and rear parking sensors, the Si and SLi get auto headlights with the SLi showing off stylish LED running lights with the S dipping out on a reverse camera...which is useless after rain or condensation from a cold morning.



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As befits its top of the ladder status, the SLi offers open skies via a sunroof and will cool your soft drinks inside the glovebox. All three levels get Bluetooth streaming and Auxiliary/USB input via the sensibly located (ahead of the gear lever and not in the glovebox/centre console) lower central dash.

Quite simply, for 30K plus on roads, the SLi auto is the pick. Packed full of features, a great ride, a poky engine and a pretty decent auto, plus its svelte, lithe body, it ticks the boxes and the woeful manual shift seriously discounts that transmission as a serious choice.

With Kia making serious inroads into Australian sales and up globally by 2.6%, the once ugly duckling has grown into a serious contender for being a favoured swan.

[This blog review was published with approval by Dave Conole of [a wheel thing](#) , you can read more of Dave's reviews at [a wheel thing](#)

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