Westfield XTR2

The philosophy - go your own way and lead from the front - has established Westfield Sports Cars as a pre-eminent force in today's specialist car market. Not only has this company democratised the ownership of spartan road/race sports cars of the traditional sort - it has also gone further than other specialist manufacturers in redefining the concept of the sports-car itself for twenty-first century use.

Forget the boulevard cruisers with electric hoods, all-dancing air conditioning extras and sound systems guaranteed to vibrate the seat of your pants with the energy of a thousand Pavarotti at full bell. "That" sort of vehicle is for those who like "That" sort of vehicle. There's no argument here. That sort of vehicle may nod in the direction of a sports-car, but shall we just say that it is to sports-cars what Tony Blair is to heavy metal guitar playing?

I hope we are agreed. Because for me the Westfield XTR2 - which does not have a shopping list of "desirable" extras aimed at converting an automobile into a mobile lifestyle lounge - is how you define a sports-car. Period. Yes, there ARE desirable extras, but not THAT sort. We are talking about REALLY desirable extras here - proper "Wings of Desire" stuff that will transport the true believer into the fabled realm of internal combustion heaven.

"What's he on?" I hear the armchair reader enquire. Well, let me tell you. I've just had a dose of Westfield XTR2. Forget all the old clichés: Forget Viaggio. This is better.

The first time I saw this car I had an empathy shock that curled my toes. Sports cars rarely connect with me on an empathy shock that curled my toes. Sports cars rarely connect with me on an empathy shock that curled my toes. There is no subtlety or finesse to the performance. Grace has been sacrificed on the altar of power. Even when you brake to come back into the lane of normality you experience shoulder-strap aching deceleration. Retiring the performance once the road is the low ride height which means that the front catches easily. Road humps must be avoided, but it's obviously best to head for the open road anyway. One of the issues with this car is the dramatic looks and if Marilyn Monroe walked down the street in a bikini holding hands with Long John Silver they wouldn't get as much attention. I have driven many exotic cars, but NONE has attracted so much attention. I have driven many exotic cars, but NONE has attracted so much attention. I have driven many exotic cars, but NONE has attracted so much attention.

Back to the open road where things come alive and where this Westfield likes to be if it's not on the track. It has that ability to take you under its spell with enough furious acceleration to send the senses reeling and dismiss with disdain just about any car you are likely to meet. The onward rush is merciless and disregarding - and brutish and uncaring. There is no subtlety or finesse to the performance. Grace has been sacrificed on the altar of power. Even when you brake to come back into the lane of normality you experience shoulder-strap aching deceleration, retiring the performance once again the raw power, but it's at its awesome best, of course, when fully extended to 9,900 rpm.

For those whose motoring enjoyment would be incomplete without statistics you'll be pleased to know that 100 mph is reached in 7.9 seconds - and given the opportunity, the car is geared for around 160 mph. But that's only a fraction of the story. This is such a precise and well-sorted car in the handling and road-holding department that you can pour on the power when others are backing off - as evidenced by those faster laps than the Zonda. (All recently televised on a popular motoring programme.)

And so, I slid into the XTR2's racing seat embrace, in an interior that has an excitingly raw edge reminiscent of the glorious days of proper sports-cars, fastened the full race harness, replaced the steering wheel, adjusted the mirrors, flicked the ignition switch on and pressed the starter button. I was introduced to the brilliant engine with its deliciously raspy snarls - hinting at the potential enjoyment ahead.

The XTR2 is a racer, of course, that can be driven on the road - just like they used to be in those days when people such as the great Jim Clark would drive into a circuit in a D Type, run rings around the opposition and drive home again.

It has a super lightweight tubular space-frame chassis with removable bodywork to make adjustments and maintenance easy, unequal wishbone suspension, a Quaife torque biasing limited slip differential and, at its heart, a mid-mounted 1300cc 4 cylinder engine from the legendary Suzuki Hayabusa bike.

An amazing 480 bhp/tonne is what you get with this 440 kg lightweight and the subsequent performance is shattering. The engine is happy to load and idle at leisurely revs and pick up cleanly with a smooth surge of raw power, but it's at its awesome best, of course, when fully extended to 9,900 rpm.

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Just the lightest touch on the throttle sent revs soaring, amplifying the raucous exhaust note and fueling the sense of exhilaration. You push the gear lever forward for first and pull back four times as you change through the sequential box. Forwards for down and back for up - that's all you need to remember. I found it best to blip the throttle on down-changes, which might be difficult for car drivers, but motorcyclists will find it second nature.

A motorcycle gearbox has only forward gears of course, so Westfield have cleverly devised an electric motor reverse system. It might be useful if you spin and need to get back on a racetrack quickly without unstrapping yourself, but in road use reality is that you're best to get out and push (no problem, because the car is so light).

In traffic the XTR2 behaves with grace. The only problem on the road is the low ride height which means that the front catches easily. Road humps must be avoided, but it's obviously best to head for the open road anyway. One of the issues with this car is the dramatic looks and if Marilyn Monroe walked down the street in a bikini holding hands with Long John Silver they wouldn't get as much attention. I have driven many exotic cars, but NONE has attracted so much attention. I have driven many exotic cars, but NONE has attracted so much attention. I have driven many exotic cars, but NONE has attracted so much attention.

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