

CHRYSLER 300C

3.0 V6 CRD AUTO

by Tunit



What would you say if I told you that £27,000 will buy you a quality, European-built, 4-door saloon that has more rear legroom than a BMW 7 Series, a huge boot, smooth 5-speed automatic transmission and is powered by a sophisticated 3-litre, Mercedes-Benz V6 turbodiesel that will zip you to 62mph in just 7.6 seconds, yet return 26mpg around town? And what if I went on to tell you that this car has a list of standard features as long as your arm? I'll run a few past you: heated/electrically adjustable part-leather seats (with "memory" on the driver's side, which also stores mirror and radio settings), a 6-speaker Boston Acoustic audio system, cruise control, infra-red dual zone automatic temperature control, 18-inch alloys, self-levelling suspension,

an air filtration system, 'express' up/down electric windows, rear park assist and metallic paint.

And that's before I start on safety kit like side impact protection bars, a full compliment of airbags (including side curtains), ABS, ESP, traction control, rain sensing wipers and xenon high-intensity discharge headlamps with high-pressure washers.

The car, as you've doubtless already realised, is the Chrysler 300C 3.0 V6 CRD Auto.

If you're still thinking petrol power, there's also a 3.5-litre, 249bhp V6, with exactly the same specification and £27,000 price tag, though why anyone would opt for it I don't know, given that it's slower to 62mph by some

two seconds, has less torque (250lb ft @ 3,800rpm plays 376lb ft @ 1,600-2,800rpm), and is around 10mpg more thirsty.

But then if you want more bang, and fancy spending top-side of £60,000, there's the 300C SRT-8. This 6.1-litre Hemi V8 belts out a massive 425bhp and 420lb ft of torque – enough to hurtle you to 62mph in 5



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"Swift, quiet, comfortable, exceedingly well equipped.."

seconds. Unfortunately, the petrol stations arrive almost as quickly, with a quoted Urban figure of just 13.5mpg and 20.2mpg combined. And it only manages that thanks to Chrysler Group's multi-displacement system (MDS) that seamlessly turns off the fuel supply to four of the cylinders when V8 power isn't needed.

If it's practicality you're after, the 300C Touring 'estate' may be of more interest, (despite what I personally find to be rather unbalanced looks) but it will cost you £1,000 more. (I did hear a rumour that the Touring is due for the chop but Chrysler assure me it's absolute nonsense.) I mentioned earlier that the right-hand-drive 300C is built in Europe - in Graz, Austria.

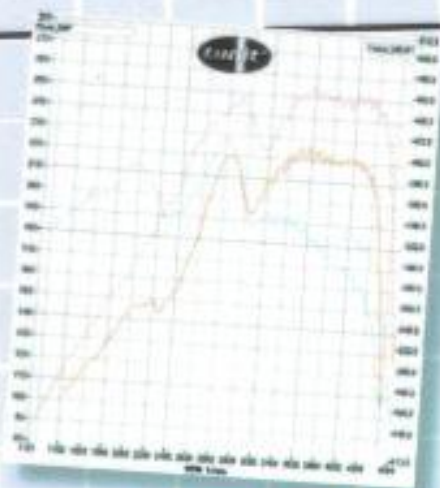
The 300C uses an up-to-the-minute Mercedes-Benz common-rail unit



to be precise - and Chrysler insist that it's been designed and set up very much with the European market in mind. But there's still more than a hint of The Godfather about it: sorry, that should read, 'it has retained something of the American style'.

I drove both petrol and diesel when the 300C was launched and recall being altogether very impressed, particularly with the CRD. Swift, quiet, comfortable, exceedingly well-equipped and with a passably tasteful interior, they were pleasant to drive and smooth riding. Everything you'd expect of a large, luxury saloon. Except for the price, that is. Ah yes, the price. At day one, the verdict was that 300C residual values would stay very much buoyant. Is that right?! Well, the fact is, they've held up amazingly. In percentage terms, they're pretty much on a par with comparable Audis, BMWs and Mercedes-Benzes. Which, of course, means that 300C buyers save thousands - and I mean thousands - in real money. Even the build quality has turned out to be far and away better than was expected.

So when Neil Mochan came to trade in his Rover 75, he decided on a new 300C 3.0 V6 CRD Saloon. He drove all of the usual suspects, he told me, but none of them gave him the same buzz. The fact that anything German



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with an even vaguely comparable spec. was going to set him back £10,000 to £20,000 more clinched it.

And the decision to give his new toy the Tunit treatment was made easier, too. He had one on the Rover, and Tunit offer an upgrade/transfer for £100 with a 3-year warranty, when units are compatible.

So, how did the 300C fare?

Not for the first time, the manufacturers' figures were out. The published bhp is 215, but it registered 226bhp @ 3,588rpm on Tunit's dynamometer. The torque was even further adrift: Chrysler says 376lb ft, but Tunit recorded 410lb ft @ 2,800rpm. That said, automatics are notoriously tricky to test, but we would be comparing like with like.

Tunit installed, and the dyno revealed that maximum power had risen to 254.8bhp with peak torque of 469.6lb ft arriving at just 2,622rpm. Impressive: 13% and 21% up, respectively.

Quite often when I take tuned vehicles out, the benefits aren't always immediately apparent. They were this time! In particular, mid-range acceleration was massively improved, and it would get even better once the Chrysler's 'intelligent' automatic gearbox got used to my driving style.

When I sat down to write this piece, I called Neil Mochan to get his reactions. He was absolutely delighted. Which is just as well, as he plans on keeping the 300C for a good few years!



The 300C is well appointed with full leather upholstery