

FUEL TEST- BP ULTIMATE DIESEL

BOSS OF THE BLACK PUMP

WIND THE CLOCK BACK A FEW YEARS AND THE IDEA OF A PERFORMANCE DIESEL CAR WOULD HAVE BEEN LAUGHED AT.



Times have changed and so have the fuels required

to best power these cars. we take a look at bp ultimate diesel – a fuel that claims to be the first performance diesel fuel in the uk.

Although many informed drivers have cottoned on to the fact that an enjoyable sporting car can now be powered by a diesel engine, it seems to have taken the fuel manufacturers a little longer to catch onto the fact that a performance diesel market exists. It would seem to have been a no-brainer, targeting buyers of cars like the BMW 330d, the SEAT Ibiza Cupra TDi and the Mercedes C320CDi with a fuel that would get the best performance possible, but it's been a long time coming. BP Ultimate diesel is the first such fuel and makes some bold claims. How do they stack up?

It seems idiosyncratic in the extreme to buy a car that's been honed to a pinnacle of oil-burning technology only to have to pour dire supermarket-standard fuel down its filler neck, but until the advent of BP Ultimate diesel, that was exactly what UK motorists were forced to do. BP's claim of better engine responsiveness and sharper acceleration appears a reasonable return for the slightly increased price of the BP Ultimate diesel over conventional derv. The tricky thing to assess is whether or not this extra outlay is buying us a warm and fuzzy sense of well being rather than any quantifiable performance advantage. BP seems to have the figures to back up its marketing hype.

BP Ultimate diesel has been developed through an extensive and rigorous testing programme lasting more than 18 months. A total of 62 vehicle models were used for long term fleet tests, ranging from the small to large engine capacities and covering the latest models, as well as vehicles that that have been in the market for many years. The protocol for testing was carefully developed so as to be representative of the experience of motorists switching to this new fuel from conventional regular fuels.

Further tests were conducted looking at the benefits of using BP Ultimate diesel from new, compared to the use of ordinary fuels. The majority of testing used to show the benefit to drivers was conducted in independent laboratories, with further tests in BP's own facilities in the UK and Germany. The fleet testing was conducted over significant mileages, because the loss in performance from ordinary fuels is a gradual process, and the performance benefits of BP Ultimate diesel increase with time.

In a typical test, BP's testers operated the vehicle for several thousand miles on standard fuel and measured performance. The vehicles were then switched to BP Ultimate diesel and the performance was again measured. This aimed to show the immediate benefits of the fuel, but the vehicles were subsequently run for a further distance (as much as 10,000 miles in some cases) to also see how the benefits of BP Ultimate diesel grew with time.

BP found that the fuel delivered 50 per cent more cleaning power compared to regular diesel and removed the majority of injector deposits that can form when using typically low grade supermarket style fuels. This makes an appreciable difference to performance. Many of today's diesel cars are built with enormous attention to detail paid to the way fuel is burnt. A slight degradation in the way the fuel enters the combustion chamber can have a very marked effect on the car's responsiveness, fuel efficiency and also to the exhaust emissions it produces. This is especially true of the latest common rail diesel engines which utilise massively high injection pressures.

Our long term Jaguar S-TYPE 2.7 diesel has become the mobile test rig for this diesel fuel. After carrying out back to back performance and noise tests using standard diesel and BP Ultimate, we discovered that in-gear acceleration (the best way to accurately measure engine responsiveness) was noticeably sharper. The figures churned out by the laptop were illuminating. Accelerating from 30-70mph when running on conventional diesel fuel detained us for 9.3 seconds but when running on Ultimate the increment was dispatched in 8.9 seconds. Almost half a second can mean the difference between a safe, comfortable overtaking and a 'will-it-won't-it' cold sweat. With a guaranteed cetane rating of 55 compared to 51 for normal diesels, the performance advantage was only to be expected. Noise was measured when revving the engine to 4,000rpm on a stationary car with a bonnet mounted

microphone. When running on BP Ultimate the measurement was 0.4 decibel lower – not much but when manufacturers go all out for refinement it is certainly good to have.

Dr Wolfgang Schneider a key development Director at Ford of Europe feels the introduction of the fuel is a big step forward for diesel motoring. "We've welcomed BP Ultimate Diesel. As the first performance fuel specifically developed to meet the needs of diesel engined vehicles, we can see clearly how it contributes to lower emissions of regulated pollutants, improved cold starting, lower noise, improved economy and performance and improved protection of the engine. This, we've found, allows for cleaner, more efficient vehicle operation and helps protect diesel engines for longer life."

If you run a diesel car, be it a high performance diesel or a small city car, and want it to perform at the top of its game, the solution is obvious.