Article published on January 3rd 2012 | Auto

There wasn't a whole lot wrong with the initial Ford C-Max, which is bad news for its opposition as it's just got a fair bit better. The blue oval's medium sized family people mover has been given a new look for 2007 as well as a host of new features both inside and out. And it's no longer a Focus. Well, it is really, but they've dropped that from the name so it is more closely associated with its big brother S-Max.

With the launch of Focus C-MAX in 2003, Ford demonstrated that a compact MAV could be dynamic as well as flexible. More than 470,000 units have been built at Ford of Europe's Saarlouis plant in Germany. There are lot of improvements to the latest version, the more evident of them being a 'nip-tuck' makeover on the exterior that gives it a different appearance even if they've not gone for the full facelift. And on the inside there's evidence that Ford have decided to up the stakes for the benefit of the occupants. Comfortable seating, controls that are close to hand and one of the lightest and airiest cabins around, thanks here to the large panoramic sunroof that stretches front to back but which, when the sun is at its peak, can be shut off with two large sliding blinds.

It has always been a fairly crisp handler, no matter how many people you're carrying or what's loaded in the back, and in latest guise it's no disappointment, even with a diesel engine under the bonnet. No ordinary run of the mill diesel though, as the TDCi in 2.0 litre guise here gives you 136 PS to play with and big reserves of torque (340Nm at 2000rpm). That equates to quick safe overtaking even if the engine sounds a bit more audible than some others at low speed. In this guise it's mated to a six speed gearbox.

Ford now offers Titanium as a premium grade instead of the old favourite Ghia, along with Studio, Style and Zetec, with prices ranging from Â£12,995 to Â£19,045, before you start scanning the options available. Its flexible 'Comfort Seat System' is still available, and allows comfortable seating for three people in the second row or the unique ability to fold away the rear centre seat and allow the outer seats to converge diagonally and move back to provide even more leg and shoulder room for two passengers. For maximum luggage carrying capacity, each of the three rear seats can be individually tipped, tumbled or completely removed.

C-Max has bold new headlamps. When Bi-Xenon lamps are fitted, a distinctive light strip runs along the top line of the lamp unit and replaces conventional parking light bulbs. These strips feature light blue illumination which adds extra class to the vehicle's overall appearance. The standard LED tail lamps are a 'first' for Ford and add to the stylish contemporary finish of the C-MAX. The new tail lamps use LEDs to provide a strong graphic pattern of dots which, when lit, makes C-MAX immediately recognisable at a distance by day or by night â€“ a plus for safety. The LED strips are proud of the lens surface and are bright for strong visibility. And for additional safety, the panorama roof consists of laminated layers to prevent glass shatter.

A new centre stack features the gear shift, climate controls and audio / communication systems. The new gear shift bezel incorporates a chrome ring, while the controls for the Dual Electronic Automatic Temperature Control (DEATC, standard for Ghia and Titanium in most markets) system have been revised with knobs replacing push buttons for improved ergonomics with more accurate adjustment. Chances are you might catch the stereo control knob in the centre of the console accidentally while changing gear. The lever is sited high up and while it's not something you'll do very often it's a bit off putting when Chris Moyles suddenly booms out at you loud and proud, which actually he does quite a lot. Red graphics for the instrument cluster as well as illumination of switches and dials and in-car entertainment systems provides consistency with S-MAX.

It comes with new warm amber interior illumination, complemented by additional ambient lighting shining down on the centre console area from above. User friendly it certainly is.

Article Source:
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Optimization (SEO) services, ecommerce web design and development.

Article Keywords:
Acura parts, Acura MDX, Jeep Gran Cherokee, Lexus, BMW, Mercedes, Tahoe, Expedition, Honda Pilot

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