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No disrespect intended, but is naming a car after a desert dwelling nomadic tribe from South West Iran guaranteed to win sales in Europe?

Nissan obviously think and hope so, because that's where the name for their quirky looking Qashqai comes from. But when I think Qashqai I now think Citroen. The reason being the seats remind me of a Xantia I had as a company car in the last millennium. A car with big, soft, comfy seats that were a delight to slip into after a hard day pounding a computer keyboard in the office. It had style, it was a brilliant towcar and it leaked vital fluid all over the place. But it was a decent car that did the job asked of it and it was always comfortable. The Qashqai? You get the feeling it too would be a loyal friend. It too is comfortable in a cosseting and relaxing way, and during its time in our hands it did what it had to without fault. The only blip in the relationship was a smell akin to Paula Radcliffe's Reeboks appearing one night (at least what I imagine one of Paula Radcliffe's Reeboks might smell like) which disappeared as quickly as it arrived. Air con whiff? I don't know, but very glad it went.

Qashqai is kind of unique. It looks like a butch muscly off roader but it isn't. Well, not in 2.0 litre 2WD form as sampled here, although there is a 4WD version which should cut the mustard. It's dubbed a unique crossover concept which loosely translates to a passenger car top half mated to a strong and solid looking lower portion. So, the car shown on TV as a motorised skateboard with a difference is different. People who buy it are unlikely to conform to the norm, and Nissan predict customers for the car will be individuals with their own agendas, and 80 per cent of them will be buying a Nissan for the first time. They'll appreciate the fact it's all very neatly laid out inside, with loads of interior space which gives you a good driving position with plenty head, leg and shoulder room. Well done the chaps at Cranfield for that one. Throw in the optional panoramic glass roof (Â£700) and the interior becomes very light and airy â€“ great on a sunny day.

Good on road manners, running predictably in a straight line with no wavering, and with good steering response too. Clutch and gearbox are very light to use, making it easy for anyone to drive. The 2.0 petrol engine offers adequate performance and is very quiet in use. I had the radio turned down quite low and I could still hear Chris Moyles yabbering away. But then can't you always? Performance wise it develops 140PS at 6000rpm, and 194Nm of torque at 4800rpm, and its combined mpg is quoted at 34.4.

The cabin is very user friendly, with one downside. The window lifter buttons on the drivers door are not to my mind in the optimum position. I have the seat fully back in its range but even so found it awkward to operate the window controls because of their location on the door panel. Just about the only thing in the cabin that doesn't fall easily to hand and because they don't it's all the more noticeable. Trim levels are VISIA, ACENTA and TEKNA. The mid range ACENTA gives you â€“ on top of a standard spec that includes Bluetooth connectivity, aircon, glovebox cooler, automatic door locking and a drive computer â€“ automatic headlights and wipers, ultransonic reversing beepers (but which need to be a bit louder), dual zone climate control, front foglights and an alarm system.

Prices start on the road at Â£13,499 for a 1.6 litre VISIA, with the most expensive model being a 2.0 litre dCi TEKNA SAT NAV at Â£23,299. There's a total of 45 different models to choose from, with the engines choices being 1.6 petrol, 1.5 dCi, 2.0 petrol and 2.0 dCi. Something for everyone, then.

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