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NEW SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT TAKES OFF UK BEST BUY HOT HATCH AWARD

The new high performance version of the Suzuki Swift hatchback has won a prestigious European award even before it goes on sale.

Britain's biggest car buyers guide, "What Car?", named the new generation 1.6-litre Swift Sport as the "Best Buy Hot Hatch" at its 2012 awards in London.

The Swift carried off the accolade the week before the model officially went on sale in the UK on January 16.



The new performance flagship of the top-selling Swift is also destined to be launched in New Zealand in the first quarter of this year.

"Renault's stranglehold on the hot hatch category has finally been broken," said the editorial team from the monthly "What Car?" magazine. "It has taken something pretty special to do it and that something is the new Suzuki Swift Sport."

Judges said building a good hot hatch was not easy. "It requires far more than simply putting a big engine in a small hatchback.

“The best hot hatches have to be as thrilling in the corners as they are in a straight line, and that takes real engineering expertise. However, while thrills are undoubtedly at the top of our wish list, our winners can’t merely be a one-trick pony,” said the judges.

“It also needs enough class, comfort and kit to make life easy when you’re not in the mood to play.”

The publication asked if this was too much to expect and said no because the winner did all of this.

“What Car?” said the Swift Sport was the best buy, pointing to its UK price of less than 15,000 GB pounds - about NZ\$30,000 - and the fact that it was well equipped for the money.

Chas Hallet, “What Car” editor in chief, said: “The all new Suzuki Swift Sport is a brilliant junior hot hatch which is at home on all kinds of roads thanks to its strong grip, tight body control and accurate steering.”

Cost of ownership was also lower than the previous Sport model as emissions and fuel consumption had improved by around 10 per cent and insurance classification had gone down by four groups thanks to extensive use of high-tensile steel and computerised structural analysis which kept the body light while promoting safety.

Dale Wyatt, sales and marketing director of Suzuki Great Britain, said that in the past the Swift Sport had a customer profile which was male dominated. However, Suzuki believed the new car would broaden the appeal in terms of customer gender.

“Whilst Swift Sport retains the sporty DNA of the previous generation, this one is easier to live with, the styling is not extreme, it’s not forced,” he said.

The more powerful Sport version will supplement the existing range of Swift models when it arrives in New Zealand within a few weeks.

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