



WHAT VAN?
 AWARDS
 2007
 WINNER
 Light Van

Ford Transit Connect

We've always had a high regard for Ford's Transit Connect — it's repeatedly won our Light Van of the Year award — but there have been one or two occasions when we've felt it could be a bit on the dull side. How wrong can you be.

We'd defy anyone not to smile after a few miles at the wheel of the 110hp version. It's simply a superb vehicle to drive.

The 1.8-litre Duratorq TDCi diesel delivers power surely and steadily right

the way across the rev range. Floor the loud pedal and the engine's maximum torque smacks you straight between the shoulder blades as you forge ahead almost regardless of how much weight you've got in the back.

Nor is all this fun going to break the bank. Even though we're endowed with leaden right feet, we nonetheless managed to achieve 40mpg the last time we got to grips with this model.

OK, not everybody is going to be lucky enough to get their hands on the most powerful Connect. The 75hp and

90hp versions of the 1.8-litre are pretty good too and all Connects offer an impressive ride and exemplary handling.

Providing plenty of feedback from the steering, they corner as though on rails. You should stay firmly glued to the road unless you do something really foolish.

Given the foregoing it will come as no surprise to anybody that Connect has driven off with our sector award yet again; and not just because it can be such fun to drive. Produced in both short- and long-wheelbase guise, it's a practical cargo-carrier too.

The smaller of the duo features a 2.8m³ load bay and can handle gross payloads of from 637kg to 837kg depending on which version you've picked. Its stablemate offers a 3.7m³ cargo box and can deal with gross payloads of from 805kg to 941kg.

Good to sit in such a roomy cab — the driving position is one of the most comfortable we've ever encountered — and good too to see that there's plenty of space for all the oddments that drivers need to cart around with them. As well as various bins and shelves there's a storage tray under the



passenger seat marketed as an option.

ABS with Electronic Brakeforce Distribution is standard on everything apart from the entry-level short-wheelbase model, and Connect is without doubt one of the most solidly constructed vans in its class. High strength steel has been used extensively and its head and tail lamp lenses are made from polycarbonate.

At the British CV Show earlier this year Ford was energetically publicising a concept short-wheelbase Connect SportVan. Goodies fitted to it included 18in alloys, side skirts and a body-coloured roof spoiler and bumpers. It's finished in a distinctive shade of blue white bonnet stripes.

Ford is already busy selling Fiesta and Transit SportVans, so how about adding a Connect SportVan to the line-up too? ♦

