



Victor Harman is

*Mr Chips*

# POWERFUL DESIRE

The Citroën Xsara may be long in the tooth but with the Superchips treatment it's been transformed into a willing performer...

Citroën's 1997-launched Xsara can now have few pretensions to cutting-edge technology – with the exception of the admirable HDi diesel engines that represent the strongest remaining argument for Xsara ownership. Going on five-years-old, these first generation common rail units destroy any logic in considering the petrol power alternative, offering a choice of adequate (90bhp) or punchy (110bhp) performance – both with 50mpg economy potential.

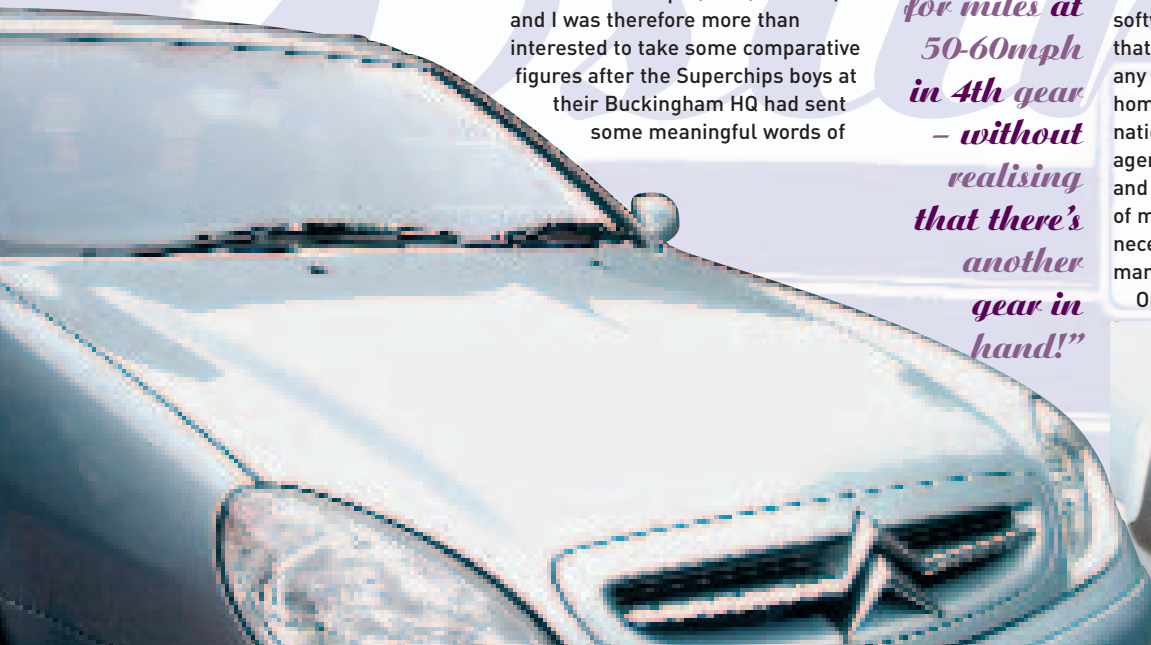
So, coupled with bargain basement pricing by Citroën, the Xsara HDi continues to offer a decent argument, with constant presence in the top ten sales charts of both France and Spain. And although never a big UK seller, the Xsara has stood the test of time remarkably well, and no more so than in estate form, when powered by the lusty 110bhp HDi engine first offered in early 2001.

Out of the box, the 1,200kg standard car is no sluggard, as our August 2001 test figures of 6.4 seconds 30-50mph (in 4<sup>th</sup>) and 8.3 seconds 50-70mph (in 5<sup>th</sup>) showed, and I was therefore more than interested to take some comparative figures after the Superchips boys at their Buckingham HQ had sent some meaningful words of

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encouragement down the wires to the Xsara's ECU chip. The Superchips package consists of a carefully developed re-write of the standard software, in the form of a package that is applicable to the HDi 110 in any of its many Peugeot/Citroën homes. It's available from the many nationwide Superchips authorised agents at £513.12 inclusive of VAT, and comes with a Superchips 'peace of mind' warranty that covers any necessary repairs not covered by the manufacturer's own warranty.

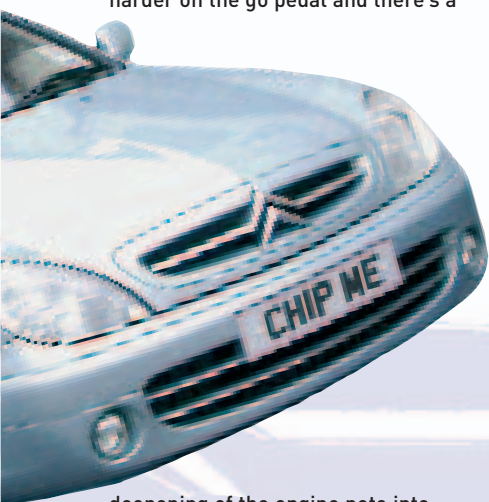
On-road impressions confirmed a





The HDi motor is not slow to begin with.

healthy boost to engine output, giving a 15% plus reduction of those in-gear acceleration increments down to 5.5 seconds and 7.1 seconds respectively – which put the car almost up there with a 130bhp Golf GT TDI 130, or Audi 130 TDI A3. Well-chosen gearing (28.5mph/1,000rpm) means that there's always plenty of overtaking power and torque available in 5<sup>th</sup> at main road speeds, whilst the refinement of the HDi motor under light load means that it's all too easy to waft along for miles at 50-60mph in 4<sup>th</sup> gear – without realising that there's another gear in hand! Press harder on the go pedal and there's a

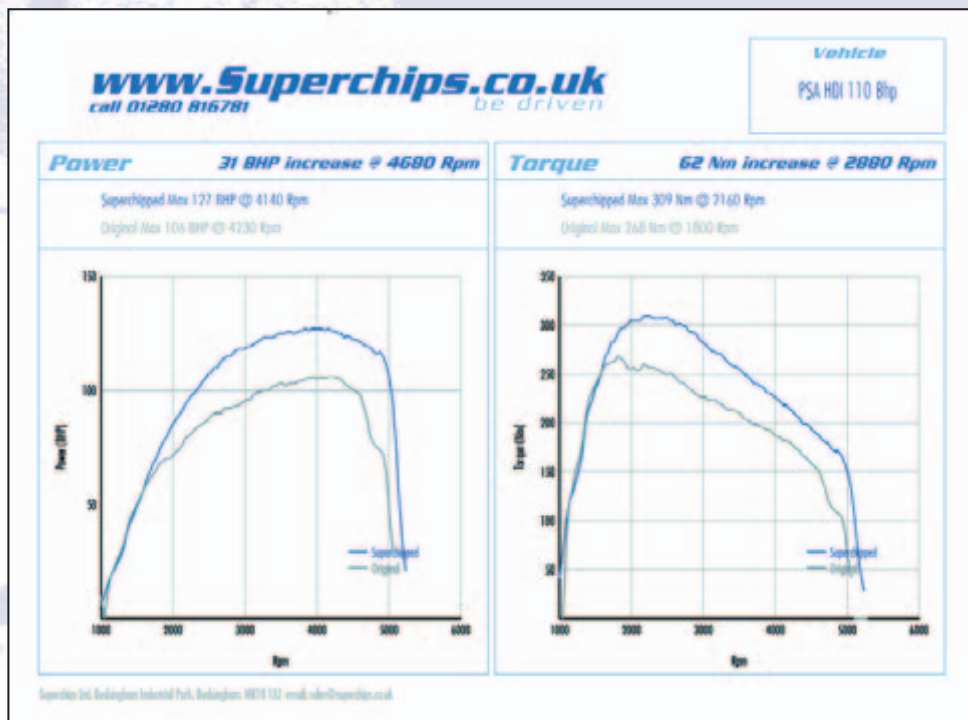


deepening of the engine note into something of a growl – but nothing too disturbing, and quite appropriate to the zestful acceleration that's the result. In fact the converted Xsara could happily pull a higher top gear, with the probable benefit of reduced fuel consumption.

The Xsara's chassis copes pretty well with the added performance, with no suggestions that the power has corrupted or compromised the standard set-up of the limited-edition 'Desire' model tested, whose modest tyres preserved a comfortable ride whilst showing little obvious deficit in grip over more exotic alloys and low-profiles that many might, however, feel more appropriate.



Superchips' Tracey Island base.



Mid-range power gains are very useful in an estate that is used to carry load. And consumption remains low too!

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The end result is a very swift and competent, yet modestly priced, load-lugger, which at around £11,700 (with a typical big discount on the standard car, and including the Superchips conversion) represents a superb performance/cost compromise. Dynamometer test figures for the car in question showed maximum power and torque gains of 21bhp and 46lb.ft on the standard car's 106bhp and 201lb.ft, with particularly strong gains around the 2,500-3,000rpm range – where the boost is most useful, and where any sensibly-driven HDi engine



will spend most of its working life!

From previous experience of Superchips conversions there's little doubt that the fuel economy will remain typically around the 45mpg plus level, meaning little or no penalty for the extra pleasure and enjoyment of what is essentially, and undeniably, a 'better drive' – which is something that Superchips claims to have delivered to its 150,000 customers, over 20 years. I'd have no hesitation therefore in suggesting that the Superchips HDi upgrade would offer similar benefits in Peugeots and Citroëns of all shapes and sizes, and there's a particularly interesting similar conversion also available for the non-intercooled HDi 90 engine, that offers a useful 20% odd power and torque boost to hard-working and heavily-loaded Picassos!



Goodbye,

*Mr Chips*

# Superchips

Superchips Engine Management System Tuning  
Tel: 01280 816781 or visit [www.superchips.co.uk](http://www.superchips.co.uk)



Gains in mid-range power are very useful.