

GT Line is fun and frugal

The GT Line
Mégane range
is as fun to
drive as its
more expensive
RS derivatives



Renault South Africa introduced its new Mégane GT Line range to the media last weekend. The GT Line is set to build on the success of Renault's popular RS models by offering consumers sporty dynamics without compromising on comfort and affordability.

"The unprecedented success of the thrilling new Mégane RS points to a healthy market for sporty versions of our models," said Renault SA managing director Xavier Gobille. "Therefore, the launch of the GT Line expands this sporting character and demonstrates that driving enjoyment can be affordable."

The GT Line range comprises a five door hatch and a three door coupé, which have been given a thorough once over by Renault's RS Division. Externally, the GT Line is differentiated from the rest of the Mégane range by a new bumper design that incorporates a revised central air intake and gloss black centre section – similar to the Mégane RS. Further individual touches on the GT Line range include front fog lamps and anthracite wing mirror housings.

At the rear, Renault stylists have incorporated an aerodynamic diffuser in the lower half of the bumper to emphasise the GT Line's sporting character.

Interior updates also bring the GT Line closer to the look and feel of the company's hardcore RS models. Renault has opted to use the same front seat design, as featured in the Mégane RS to provide drivers with more lateral support. While the seats are slightly firm, it's nowhere near uncomfortable or cramped.

Other sporty enhancements include the addition of RS-style instrumentation, aluminium pedals and GT Line decals on the dashboard and along the front door sills and headrests.

To provide a sporty driving experience, Renault's RS engineers fitted a sports chassis to the hatch, which was available on coupé models only. This means that the GT Line hatch is 12mm lower than the Dynamique specification model it is based on. The revised setup incorporates stiffer springs and dampers all round, along with a lower front roll centre height for more precise handling.

The front suspension features a MacPherson type set-up that is coupled to what Renault calls a "horned" subframe. According to the manufacturer, this set-up has been engineered to provide improved directional precision by restricting the lateral movement of the engine sub-frame in

relation to the body of the vehicle when driven enthusiastically.

The rear suspension comprises a programmed-deflection flexible beam that is lighter and more compact than a conventional multi-arm setup. The addition of 17-inch alloy wheels and wide section tyres enhance the GT Line's road-holding capabilities.

Renault has opted to make use of its fantastic TCe (Turbo Control efficiency) engine in the GT Line range. Displacing 1397cc, the engine produces 96kW of power at 5500rpm and a healthy 190Nm of torque from 2250rpm. The tuning of the engine, combined with the six speed manual transmission, ensures that the GT Line is as fun to drive as its RS big brother.

It's not as smooth as Volkswagen's small capacity turbocharged engines, but it remains unique in its power delivery. There's a hint of turbo lag though, especially in the higher gears, which means that drivers should be prepared to drop a gear or two when overtaking slower moving vehicles.

In terms of specification, the GT Line range is packed to the rafters with goodies and gadgets. These include an integrated Carminat TomTom navigation system, cruise control with speed limiter, dual-zone climate control and an

Arkamys 3D Sound audio system that incorporates Bluetooth connectivity.

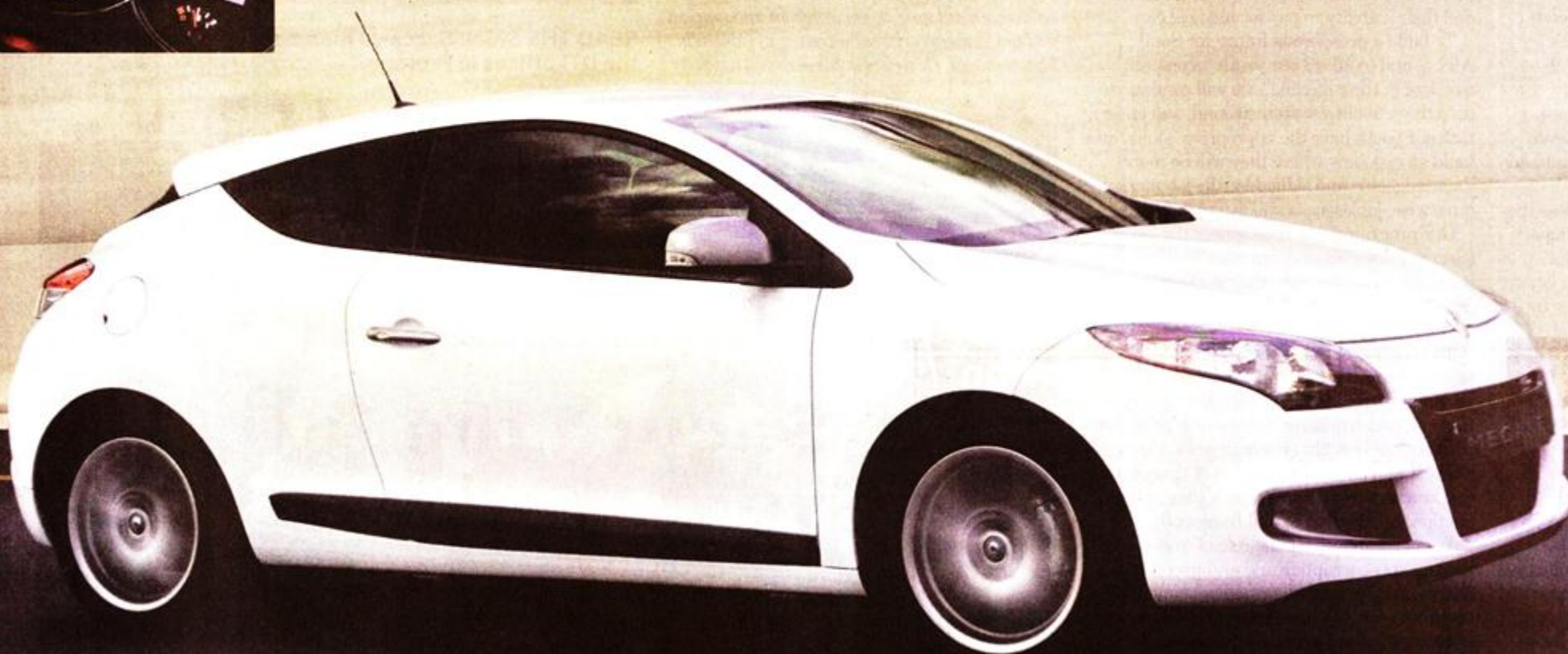
On the safety front, the GT Line range is fitted with anti-lock brakes, emergency brake assist, six airbags, twin side-impact sensors and dual seatbelt pretensioners with load limiters. Electronic stability control is available as an option but should definitely be considered when ordering your new GT Line.

The Renault Mégane GT Line is one of the first models in South Africa to feature TomTom LIVE, which operates via an embedded SIM card that links to live satellite updates and feeds. The system provides up to the minute traffic information as well as point of interest information through a Google interface.

The GT Line range serves to emphasise Renault's commitment to the South African market. The vehicle is sold with a comprehensive five-year/150 000km warranty and five-year/100 000km service plan.

It's fun, fast enough, and frugal enough to satisfy a wide range of wants and needs, and allows individuals to experience a little bit of Renault's RS flair in a more practical package.

Pritesh Ruthun



THE GOOD:

- Sporty and comfortable at the same time
- 1.4TCe engine performs well under heavy load
- Lots of standard features

THE BAD:

- 18-inch wheels are not available as an option
- Thirsty when driven hard
- No diesel engines available yet