



Vauxhall Adam Reborn

Review | Vauxhall wants to sell more cars. That won't come as a surprise. The way Vauxhall wants to accomplish its target is new. So far Vauxhall has improved on existing models to keep customers satisfied. Those who owned a Corsa or an Astra, would buy a new model a few years later. With the "Adam", Vauxhall opted for a new approach: this extravagant model has been designed to attract new customers to the brand. Will the Adam succeed?

What is the Vauxhall Adam? The Vauxhall Adam is a compact car that focusses on looks and image. Of course safety and handling have not been forgotten, but fun is paramount. This makes the Adam very different from other Vauxhalls, where practicality and build quality come first. A Vauxhall certainly may look good, but it shouldn't stand out from the crowd.

Instead, the Adam screams and shouts. Next to the other Vauxhalls the Adam isn't just daring, it's a bit daft. This is because of its many looks. The Adam can be executed in bright colours and many details can be personalised. Even the rims and key can be customised.

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Space

The cabin is basically as functional and well built as any other Vauxhall. The design is -of course- much more pronounced. The dashboard, the centre console, the door panels and the steering wheel can all be executed in the same colour as the bodywork of the car. Many panels can easily be replaced if a colour or pattern doesn't live up to expectations (or if a panel gets damaged).

The ceiling can be decorated with various patterns like a cloudy sky or a chequered flag. Even a starry night, consisting of sixty LEDs, is available. Although the LEDs aren't in the driver's vision, they do provide a warm glow from above which is very pleasurable.



The space in the front is ample, even tall drivers fit comfortably. The room in the rear is poor, even for a small car. The boot measures 170 litres, which is average. The threshold is very high, which makes loading and unloading not so easy.

Trim level

To make the Adam affordable, a very special audio, communication and navigation system has been developed which is called "Intellilink". By using a smartphone (iPhone or Android) as the "brain", a lot of money can be saved. In fact Intellilink is just a pass-through window. Instructions from the satnav running on the phone appear on the display of the car. Likewise, music stored in the phone sounds from the speakers of the car.



To increase the fun, a high-end audio system from Infinity is available. Judging by the modest price of this option, this is certainly worth the extra cost. Keep in mind that the sound quality isn't especially clear, yet Infinity is always willing to party. A word of warning: the boot space is cut in half by the accompanying subwoofer.

Those who prefer not to park the 3.7-metre-long Adam, can opt for a fully-automatic parking assist. The Adam will turn the wheel and park the car, the driver only needs to operate the accelerator and the brake as instructed by the computer. In city traffic "Blind Spot Alert" alerts the driver that another vehicle is in the blindspot of the wing mirrors.

The Adam is also available with "FlexFix": a bicycle carrier which is integrated in the rear bumper. Just like a drawer, the carrier slides in and out of the car, making mounting and unmounting or a carrier obsolete.



Driving

While there's a huge number of possibilities to customise the looks of the car, there's a surprisingly small number of engines available. At this moment there's a choice of just three engines, which vary from 70 to 100 PS. Neither a diesel engine nor an automatic gearbox is available.



For this drive the 87 PS strong 1.4 litre petrol engine, which is also available in many other Vauxhalls, was tested. By using an existing engine, once again the price of the Adam could be reduced. And since the 1.4 litre power train has been around for a long time, all the bugs have been ironed out. Yet there is a downside to using an existing engine: the character of the engine doesn't match the promising look of the Adam.

The 1.4 litre engine certainly is strong enough to keep up with traffic. When asking for more, the engine speed (and therefore the actual car speed) hardly goes up. In many other cases this would make a car more comfortable and relaxing to drive. However, a car like the Adam should respond instantly to any movement of the throttle. The result is that the Adam feels slower than it actually is; and it should be the other way around.



The engine noise is more audible than in most other cars in the price range. This is why on the open road the test driver repeatedly tried to engage sixth gear, which isn't there (yet again to keep the car affordable, this is a deliberate choice of Vauxhall).

The below average performance is matched by below average fuel consumption. Of course the Adam has been fitted with an idle start system, a gear shift indicator and a trip computer. This is why in real life the Adam is as frugal as Vauxhall promises. Even after a full day of driving on twisty mountain roads and lots of city traffic, the average fuel economy was a modest 6.5 litres per 100 km (43 mpg).



Handling

A car like the Adam almost seems to demand huge, shouty rims and wide tyres. Vauxhall didn't just account for this by having lots of space in the wheel arches. Even the suspension seems to be made for giant rims and almost flat tyres. Even when opting for the sports suspensions and the largest possible rim size (18 inch), comfort on bad roads is still adequate. Many other cars will skip, bump and jump on bad surfaces with a wheel size like this.

When it comes to handling, again it is more about the presentation than the actual performance. For example, the steering wheel is small and fat. This alone makes the driver feel connected to the car. Steering itself is a bit more direct than average and this makes the Adam dynamic. In fast corners, grip is excellent. Yet the Adam never comes alive, like its rivals (MINI and Citroën DS3) do. It is in city traffic where the Adam really shines with agile handling and razor-sharp lane changes.



Conclusion

Vauxhall wants to appeal to customers who so far have never cared for the brand. Vauxhall wants to accomplish this by offering a compact, outstanding car that can be personalised down to the smallest details. The Adam is larger than a Fiat 500, yet smaller than an Audi A1 or Citroën DS3. This price tag is also nicely between these other fun cars.

The low price could be realized by using existing technology. This goes as far as to use a smartphone as part of the car, so audio and satnav can do with less parts. Using existing engines does mean the Adam is less exciting to drive than its promising looks will lead one to believe.

The strongest point of the Adam is the combination of extravagant looks with the technology of the other models. This goes from safety equipment via the engines to an integrated bicycle carrier. With this unique mix the Adam doesn't just differ from the other Vauxhalls, it also distinguishes itself from other lifestyle vehicles. It also means the Adam has everything it takes to attract new customers to the Vauxhall brand. ■



Specifications

Vauxhall Adam 1.4 ecoFLEX Slam

Size and weight



Length x width x height	370 x 172 x 148 cm
Wheelbase	231 cm
weight	1.120 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	38 l
Luggage space	170/663 l
Tyre size	215/45R17

Engine and performance



Capacity	1398 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/
Max power	87 PS @ 6000 rpm
Max torque	130 Nm @ 4000 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	12.5 secs
topspeed	176 km/h
Average mileage	5.1 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	6.6 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.2 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	119 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 15,175
Price base model	Â£ 15,060