

# Classy Megane oozes fun

By  Henrie Geysers

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The new Renault Megane has strutted into South Africa with the cocky confidence of being the most sophisticated and sexiest in this badge-wearer's 21-year history and undoubtedly one of the most attractive cars in its class.



'French Flair' is an overworked term but the new Megane really brims with it, from the entry-level, normally aspirated 1600 manual to the turbo-fed flagship 1200 GT, the range is in the flamboyant finery of uniquely-shaped headlights, coupé-like sloping roofline, contoured bonnet and menacing black mesh grille, gaping air intakes and large chrome exhaust outlets.

The latest Megane is longer, wider and lower than the previous model and is available in four guises – a 1.6 petrol 85kW/156Nm Dynamique with five-speed manual transmission; a 1200 turbo-petrol 97kW/205Nm GT-Line with six-speed manual transmission; a 1200 turbo-petrol 97kW/205Nm GT-Line EDC with seven-speed auto transmission and the flagship 1.6 turbo-petrol 151kW/280Nm GT EDC with seven-speed automatic transmission. Prices range from R279,900 to R449,900.



## Quality living quarters

The living quarters are really upmarket and reeks of quality, particularly in the pricier models with leather seats and a 8.7-inch touch screen with Renault's R-Link2-multimedia system and Satnav. The GT derivative also offers the choice between Neutral, Comfort or Sport settings for the engine, transmission and exhaust note.

Standard features are comprehensive across the range and include ABS brakes, front-, curtain- and side airbags, hill start assist, stability control, dual climate control, automatic lights and wipers, a classy sound system, cruise control, rear park control (and leather seats in the GT-Line and GT) as well as a peace of mind five-star EuroNcap safety rating and the price-inclusive backing of a 5-year/150,000km warranty and 5-year/90,000km service plan. The list of optional extras is comprehensive, very tempting but quite pricey.



## Polished ride

But looks and fancy kit aside, one of the biggest talents of this new French hatchback is its polished ride and generous servings of driving fun which I got a good taste of on the tightly-curved Red Star Raceway and adjoining skidpan, as well as on motorways and side-roads in the Witbank area.

The GT-line model which I drove oozes confidence and felt inspiringly solid through the corners and even when being pushed hard on the track or driven at legal limits along bumpy and worn public tar roads it never lost its comfortable composure.



Although not a red-blooded hot hatch the Megane scoots out of the starting stalls with the kind of enjoyable enthusiasm that makes driving it in the conservative manner required to achieve Renault's claimed 5.3 litres per 100 kilometres very difficult.

This Megane is a multi-talented and handsome contender in the crowded local hatchback market with more than enough magic to shape up to well-entrenched stalwarts such as VW Golf, Honda Civic Sport, Opel Astra, Hyundai Veloster, Peugeot 308 GT, Ford Focus and the rest.

## ABOUT HENRIE GEYSER

Henrie Geyser joined the online publishing industry through iafrica.com, where he worked for five years as news editor and editor. He now freelances for a variety of print and online publications, on the subjects of cars, food, and travel, among others; and is a member of the South African Guild of Motoring Journalists. [henrieg@iafrica.com](mailto:henrieg@iafrica.com)

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