


# Westfield XTR2

 The philosophy - go your own way and lead from the front - has established Westfield Sports Cars as a pre-eminent force in today's specialist car market. Not only has this company democratised the ownership of spartan road/race sports cars of the traditional sort - it has also gone further than other specialist manufacturers in redefining the concept of the sports-car itself for twenty-first century use.

Forget the boulevard cruisers with electric hoods, all-dancing air conditioning extras and sound systems guaranteed to vibrate the seat of your pants with the energy of a thousand Pavarottis at full belt. "That" sort of vehicle is for those who like "That" sort of vehicle. There's no argument here. That sort of vehicle may nod in the direction of a sports-car, but shall we just say that it is to sports-cars what Tony Blair is to heavy metal guitar playing?

I hope we are agreed. Because for me the Westfield XTR2 - which does not have a shopping list of "desirable" extras aimed at converting an automobile into a mobile lifestyle lounge - is how you define a sports-car, Period. Yes, there ARE desirable extras, but not THAT sort. We are talking about REALLY desirable extras here - proper "Wings of Desire" stuff that will transport the true believer into the fabled realm of internal combustion heaven.

"What's he on?" I hear the arm-chair reader enquire. Well, let me tell you. I've just had a dose of Westfield XTR2. Forget all the old clichés. Forget Viagra. This is better.

The first time I saw this car I had an empathy shock that curled my toes. Sports cars rarely connect with me on this level, but the audacious XTR2 smashes most frames of reference with a club. Here is the car that out-performs the £303,000 Pagani Zonda with its 7.3 litre 550 bhp engine. When tested back-to-back, Westfield lap times were seconds quicker.

The XTR2 is a racer, of course, that can be driven on the road - just like they used to be in those days when people such as the great Jim Clark would drive to a circuit in a D Type, run rings around the opposition and drive home again.

It has a super lightweight tubular space-frame chassis with removable bodywork to make adjustments and maintenance easy, unequal wishbone suspension, a Quaife torque biasing limited slip differential and, at its heart, a mid-mounted 1300cc 4 cylinder engine from the legendary Suzuki Hayabusa bike.

An amazing 480 bhp/tonne is what you get with this 440 kg lightweight and the subsequent performance is shattering. The engine is happy to loaf and idle at leisurely revs and pick up cleanly with a smooth surge of raw power, but it's at its awesome best, of course, when fully extended to 9,800 rpm.

For those whose motoring enjoyment would be incomplete without statistics you'll be pleased to know that 100 mph is reached in 7.9 seconds - and given the opportunity, the car is geared for around 160 mph. But that's only a fraction of the story. This is such a precise and well-sorted car in the handling and road-holding department that you can be pouring on the power when others are backing off - as evidenced by those faster laps than the Zonda. (All recently televised on a popular motoring programme.)

And so, I slid into the XTR2's racing seat embrace, in an interior that has an excitingly raw edge reminiscent of the glorious days of proper sports-cars, fastened the full race harness, replaced the steering wheel, adjusted the mirrors, flicked the ignition switch on and

pressed the starter button. I was introduced to the brilliant engine with its deliciously raspy snarls - hinting at the potential enjoyment ahead.

Just the lightest touch on the throttle sent revs rising, amplifying the raucous exhaust note and fuelling the sense of exhilaration. You push the gear lever forward for first and pull back four times as you change through the sequential box. Forwards for down and back for up - that's all you need to remember. I found it best to blip the throttle on down-changes, which might be difficult for car drivers, but motorcyclists will find it second nature.

A motorcycle gearbox has only forward gears of course, so Westfield have cleverly devised an electric motor reverse system. It might be useful if you spin and need to get back on a racetrack quickly without unstrapping yourself, but in road use reality is that you're best to get out and push (no problem, because the car is so light).

In traffic the XTR2 behaves with good manners. The only problem on the road is the low ride height which means that the front catches easily. Road humps must be avoided, but it's obviously best to head for the open road anyway. One of the issues with

this car is the dramatic looks and if Marilyn Monroe walked down the street in a bikini holding hands with Long John Silver they wouldn't get as much attention. I have driven many exotic cars, but NONE has attracted so much interest. At a road junction a middle-aged lady even got out of her car, camera in hand and asked if she could take a photo. (Of the car, of course, and not me.)

You can buy an XTR2 kit for around £13,000 depending on what performance features you choose and build it yourself, or there's a factory built car for about £26,000 - and if the quality of construction is as good as the test car, it's worth it.

Back to the open road where things come alive and where this Westfield likes to be if not on the track. It has that ability to take you under its spell with enough furious acceleration to send the senses reeling and dismiss with disdain just about any car you are likely to meet. The onward rush is merciless and disregarding - and brutish and uncaring. There is no subtlety or finesse to the performance. Grace has been sacrificed on the altar of power. Even when you brake to come back into the land of normality you experience shoulder-strap aching deceleration, retiring the performance once more into the Westfield's hidden depths. The cockpit of an XTR2 is truly a wonderful place to be.

Handling is surgically precise and you feel as if your hands are directly attached to the wheels as you dart through bends at a rate of knots that generates high 'G' force. Stable and controlled this car never seems to put a foot wrong with performance and handling limits that are way, way beyond my ability to reach on the road - or even on the track for that matter.

Sensations are heightened too by the addictive exhaust snarl that encourages you to press on harder and harder as you enjoy the blissful harmony of what has to be one of the purest driving machines you can legally use on public roads.

This is certainly a car with raw steel sinews and barbaric intent and such it's not everyone's cup of tea.

**Syd Taylor**

## Westfield XTR2 Technical Specification - At-a-glance

Engine:	GSXR 1300R Suzuki Hayabus 1300cc. 4 cylinder. 180 PS @ 9800 rpm.
Transmission:	6 speed sequential. Torque biasing Quaife Limited slip differential
Chassis:	Triangulated tubular space frame
Brakes:	Discs all round
Suspension:	Double unequal wishbones
Weight:	(Race trim) from 410 kgs
Performance:	Top speed - around 160 mph. Acceleration - 0-100mph, 7.9 seconds
Price:	£13,000 upwards - depending on specification.

