

Rover gets added bite

If the elegant 75 CDT wants for anything it is get-up-and-go. **Victor Harman** says Bromley's has an answer

The elegant Rover 75 CDT stands out from the diesel crowd, and its up-market image alone means it is hard to make valid comparisons with other cars in its price band. Toyota's Avensis and the venerable but highly-respected Peugeot 406 were two cars that *Diesel Car* felt pushed the Rover closest for ride, relaxation and refinement in a group test last year. But somehow the Rover seems to belong in a class of its own, and, as a latter-day gentleman's

carriage, the 75 CDT may not have universal appeal to diesel enthusiasts. Indeed, we have always felt that it is somewhat underpowered and, for all its other undeniable virtues, this and its country club interior have generated a slightly stodgy image.

There is no doubt that, on account of weight, gearing and the nature of its 16-valve, 2.0-litre, BMW-derived, common-rail engine, the 75 tends towards the sedate and seductive, rather than swift and

stimulating. It is the penalty for matching 1,500kg of car to an engine which, although otherwise cutting-edge, lacks a variable geometry turbocharger and is arguably compromised in both cubic capacity and cylinder count. We can only dream of what a car the Rover would be with the six cylinders and 163bhp of the BMW 525d under its bonnet.

We were more than interested, therefore, to receive an invitation from Mike Bromley at Bromley's Tuning in Lancashire

to sample a 75 CDT on a before-and-after basis, to assess the benefits of fitting the Bromley V-CR Tuning Unit – one which, with minor modifications, is also applicable to all BMW and Land Rover Freelander common-rail power units originating from the same basic BMW design.

Fitting the V-CR took barely 20 minutes, involving removal of some of the trim on the nearside of the engine compartment bulkhead to gain access to the engine's electronic control unit

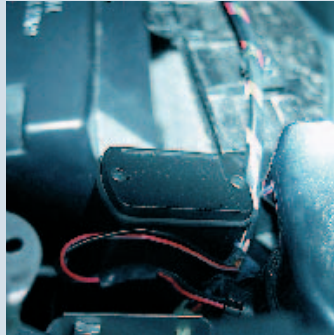




BMW-sourced turbodiesel is a little underpowered in the Rover 75



Tuning Box considerably changes power delivery characteristics



Bromley's discreet modification is effected in a matter of minutes

(ECU). Two cables from the Tuning Box terminate in multi-pin adaptors and are inserted into the standard wiring loom, while the 3 x 2 x 1-inch unit is clipped neatly into place nearby. Finally another single lead is plugged in to provide the 12-volt power source. And that's it. As soon as the trim was popped back into place we were off to see what the dynamometer figures would reveal.

The Rover clocked spot-on specification at 116bhp with the Tuning Box switched off, and, although the power peaked at a very modest 2,800-3,000rpm, a virtual plateau of 112-115bhp was maintained right through to 4,000rpm, before power suddenly tailed off. Peak torque came out

'Over 2,500rpm power delivery changes rapidly, translating into significant performance gains'

a touch under 200 lb ft at 2,600rpm, compared with Rover's claimed 192 lb ft at 600rpm lower. At the claimed 2,000rpm torque peak the figures lagged the factory specification by the considerable margin of 30 lb ft.

All the more interesting, therefore, to see whether the attentions of Bromley's Tuning could effect a change of character – one which may potentially transform the 75 into something considerably more dynamic. True to the claims, the 'after' run plotted a curve showing some 141bhp, which was almost maintained between 3,600 and 4,100rpm. Just where the standard power curve begins to flatten at around 2,600rpm – power figures were almost identical up to that engine speed – the Tuning Box-equipped engine continued to soar, as if freed from chains, adding another 20% to its peak output. Torque was up to just short of 230 lb ft but at a significantly higher 2,900rpm. Interestingly, it was also still well down on the 243 lb ft at just 2,000rpm claimed for the BMW 320d, attained with the assistance of

variable geometry turbocharging.

What does that translate to on the road? Unsurprisingly, bearing in mind the nature of the standard motor, there is no wallop of miraculously generated torque. In fact, up to around 2,500rpm there is precious little detectable difference, the motor remaining as docile, sweet, and quiet as in its standard form. Beyond this point the character of the power delivery begins to change rapidly, and the willingness of the motor to zoom up to, and well beyond, 4,000rpm translates into significant performance gains.

In practice that means considerably greater margins of safety in overtaking situations, and stronger reserves of power at all speeds, providing that you keep the engine revving above that critical 2,500rpm. The power plant feels more willing whenever it is asked to perform, and this is possibly most welcome when the Rover is wafting along in its natural habitat of the motorway. Long inclines and demanding traffic situations no longer leave the 75 a little breathless, and the swiftness and silence with which it will now head towards three figure speeds – if a keen eye is not kept on the speedometer – is the best evidence of the extra power released as a result of Bromley's work.

For more details, visit Bromley's website at www.bromleystuning.com or telephone 01257 274100.