Vauxhall Classics No. 9 – Astra GTE (Mark 1)

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In this series about important Vauxhall models through the decades, this time we are looking at the company's first official hot-hatch, the Astra Mk1 GTE, which spawned an almost continuous line of fast Astras, ending with the last-generation, 280 hp VXR.

VAUXHALL ASTRA GTE MK. 1

The Astra GTE Mk. 1 marked Vauxhall's first foray in to the relatively new 'hot hatch' segment, which had been dominated by the Golf GTi since the late Seventies.

Based on the 1980 Astra Mk. 1, its fuel injected, naturally aspirated 1.8 litre four-cylinder engine produced 115 bhp, giving it a power-to-weight ratio of 115 bhp per tonne, and a top speed of 115 mph. Acceleration from 0 – 60 mph was a highly competitive 8.5 seconds.

But the GTE wasn't all about power. The standard Astra on which it was based was already acclaimed in the dynamics department, but with revised springing and damping, wider and lower profile tyres and a close-ratio gearbox on later cars, the three door GTE raised the bar yet further.

As Car & CarConversions reported: "Remarkably high cornering loads are attained without any deliberate 'unsettling' of the chassis. As with less powerful Astras, it is virtually impossible to spin the car and it always turns-in on command, irrespective of entry speed."

Technical Data:

Engine: 4 cylinders, in-line
Engine Capacity: 1796cc
Top Speed: 115 mph
0 – 60 mph: 9.5 seconds
Fuel Consumption: 29 – 47 mpg

VAUXHALL MOTORS

Vauxhall Motors started making vehicles in the UK in 1903. Today, as the oldest and most familiar of Britain's automotive manufacturers, its philosophy is to build vehicles that are relevant to all. Vauxhall's two manufacturing plants in Ellesmere Port and Luton produced 206,000 cars and vans in 2018, and its sales accounted for nine per cent of the UK market.

Vauxhall has been a Groupe PSA brand since 2017. By 2024, each of its models will offer an electrified version, part of the company's PACE! plan to become sustainably profitable, global and electric. www.vauxhall.co.uk

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