

# 4x4 OF THE YEAR

## 2004 • MID-SIZE GROUP •

### 1st

# JEEP CHEROKEE 3.7 V6 LIMITED JEEP



**M**odern citywise styling, a superbly powerful and refined power plant and genuine off-road capability in a comfortable, well-appointed estate mean an unbeatable combination that sets the smart Cherokee apart. It's a bold car with a touch of the American brushness it needs to carry the Jeep legend into the bustle of

modern high-image city life, the round 'Jeep' headlamps and seven-slotted grille hinting at off-road excitement while the passenger compartment is all about comfort and convenience. The interior décor echoes the high-fashion approach, the smart dashboard and door panels provide a solid modern background against which the round white-faced dials, circular air vents and round satin-chrome door handles add a touch of retro.

### EASY RIDER

Strong performance is this range-topping version's forte, the 3.7-litre V6 – boasting more power than Land Rover's 4.0-litre V8 – delivers enough getaway grunt to spin the wheels off the line, launching the Cherokee to 60mph in a hot-hatch-chasing 10.8secs with a slick-shifting auto slurring the changes through almost imperceptibly. The performance is there to be enjoyed, because the Cherokee also has road manners to handle this big power with easy confidence, the suspension being firm enough to tame body roll in fast corners, and

if you are in a hurry cornering can be enhanced as the Selec-Trac system allows the Jeep to be driven in four-wheel drive on the highway.

With such a strong heritage to live up to, the Jeep's designers hesitated to go the whole way when modernising the Cherokee's drivetrain. The body is a modern monocoque design, but it incorporates a built-in chassis-like structure to add rigidity, and the back axle remains rigid where contemporaries have gone all-independent in the interests of improved on-road ride and refinement. In spite of this the Jeep rides smoothly, just occasionally becoming a little unsettled at the rear on rippled or rutted stretches.

As with any modern urban off-roader the Jeep has sacrificed ground clearance and axle articulation for on-road stability, and it shows when the off-road going gets tricky since it's easy to lift a wheel in rocky or humpy areas, limiting progress because the Cherokee has no additional traction aids such as locking differentials or electronic traction control. Where its wheels can be kept on the ground, though, the Jeep has the power – and the low-range gearing – to impress with its off-road prowess, easily outpacing its key rival, the Land Rover Freelander. Though one of the more expensive cars in this group, the Cherokee features excellent equipment throughout the range, all versions having air conditioning, remote central locking, electric windows and a CD player which, along with the roomy, well-appointed cabin adds up to a lot of car for the money.

### SPECIFICATIONS

Price:	£23,145
Engine cc/bhp:	3700/208
Transmission:	4-speed automatic, dual range selectable 4WD

### RATINGS (0-10)

Comfort:	7
Refinement:	7
Off-road:	7
Value:	7
Style:	8
TOTAL:	36

**WE LIKED:**  
Powerful engine, great gearchange  
**WE DISLIKED:**  
Disappointing axle articulation

