

MODERN

# Motor

December 1979.

\$1.25\* NZ \$1.40

## THE NEW TOYOTAS Corona, Corolla and Celica



**TESTS:**  
Lotus Esprit, Fiat X1/9, Chrysler RV ute.

**NEW RELEASES:**  
Gemini and Subaru Leone

**SPORT:**  
Italian and Canadian GPs

**PLUS**  
The 1980 Calendar Girls

## Delightful...but more power, please

**F**IAT should include a large shoe horn in the list of options for the X1/9; climbing into it for the very first time is akin to trying on a new pair of shoes.

And like new shoes, the fit is a little on the tight side for a day or two.

But then the driver's extremities — mainly legs — find a happy compromise between comfort and convenience and suddenly a tight squeeze becomes a snug fit.

The limited cockpit space and lack of engine power are the only real deficiencies in the marvellously-ingenuous coupe-cum-spider designed by Bertone.

Mid-engined, with a fully-independent suspension, splendid four-wheel disc brakes, a close ratio four-speed gearbox, precise rack and pinion steering, Fiat boasts that the X1/9 has specifications similar to the exotics like Ferrari, Lamborghini and Maserati . . . at a fraction of the price.

It handles unbelievably well with no bad habits, stops better than most, still attracts plenty of looks and, in the fine weather, the detachable hardtop (which fits neatly away under the bonnet) can be removed.

A bit more grunt would make the X1/9 almost impossible to resist.

The recently-released updated 1979 X1/9 incorporates a number of changes, but sadly the bigger 1500cc engine isn't among them.

The more-powerful engine will undoubtedly get here one day but meanwhile we're going to have to live with the present 1290cc overhead cam unit that produces 51 kW at 6000 rpm.

The most obvious differences between the old model, released in Australia in 1977, and the new one are the large US-market wrap-around bumpers which are capable of absorbing minor bumps up to 5 km/h.

The engine hood has been strengthened, ribbed and enlarged, and the waist line "tiger" stripes have been abandoned. And the car looks better for it.

Always a tenacious handler, the X1/9 is now even more stable thanks to a slight increase in the front and rear track.

Inside, the revamped dash, centre console and seat trim combinations are a vast improvement over the rather bland earlier offering.



The dash now incorporates a lockable glovebox, regrouped instrument cluster and a new quartz digital clock. Switch gear is all new and is set into a more-attractive centre console, while there's also an upgraded sports steering wheel.

It is Fiat practice not to fit radio or cassette players as standard, but the test car had been thoughtfully outfitted with a superb Jensen AM/FM stereo radio/tape deck. The Jensen people worked a minor miracle getting the four-speaker system to sound so good in the confines of the tiny Fiat interior.

The revised car also gets intermittent wipers while the ventilation system has been thankfully boosted with bigger outlets and additional air flow volume.

The subtle re-style inside and out, the refining of the suspension and the inclusion of some important creature comforts make the fully imported X1/9, priced at \$10,998, a still very desirable sporty car.

But sumo wrestlers, VFL ruckmen and rugby front rowers need not apply . . .

### Fiat X1-9

#### ENGINE

Cylinders	Four
Bore x Stroke	.86 x 55.5 mm
Capacity	1290 cc
Carburation	Two-barrel downdraught
Compression Ratio	9.2 to 1
Claimed Power	51.5 kW at 6000 rpm
Claimed Torque	96 Nm at 3400 rpm

#### TRANSMISSION

Type	Four-speed manual
<b>Gearbox Ratios</b>	
First	3.580
Second	2.235
Third	1.454
Fourth	0.959
Final Drive Ratio	4.076

#### SUSPENSION

Front	Independent by MacPherson struts, coil springs, lower wishbones
Rear	Independent by MacPherson struts, coil springs, lower wishbones
Wheels	.5J x 13 alloy
Tyres	165/70 SR x 13
Steering	Rack and pinion

#### BRAKES

Front	227 mm discs
Rear	227 mm discs

#### DIMENSIONS AND WEIGHT

Wheelbase	2202 mm
Front Track	1355 mm
Rear Track	1350 mm
Overall Length	3969 mm
Overall Width	1570 mm
Overall Height	1180 mm
Ground Clearance	125 mm
Kerb Weight	890 kg
Fuel Tank Capacity	49 litres

#### CALCULATED DATA

Weight to Power	17.3 kg/kW
Specific Power Output	39.9 kW/litre

#### PERFORMANCE

Fuel Consumption	8.7 litres/100km
Standing 400 Metres	18.8 seconds
0-100 km/h	14.2 seconds
Top Speed	160 km/h
Braking from 100 km/h	39.8 metres