

MOTOR MANUAL

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**NEW
HOLDEN
- IS IT
WORTH
THE
EXTRA ?**

FIRST TESTS
New Commodore

*New
Corolla
New
Sigma
Turbo*

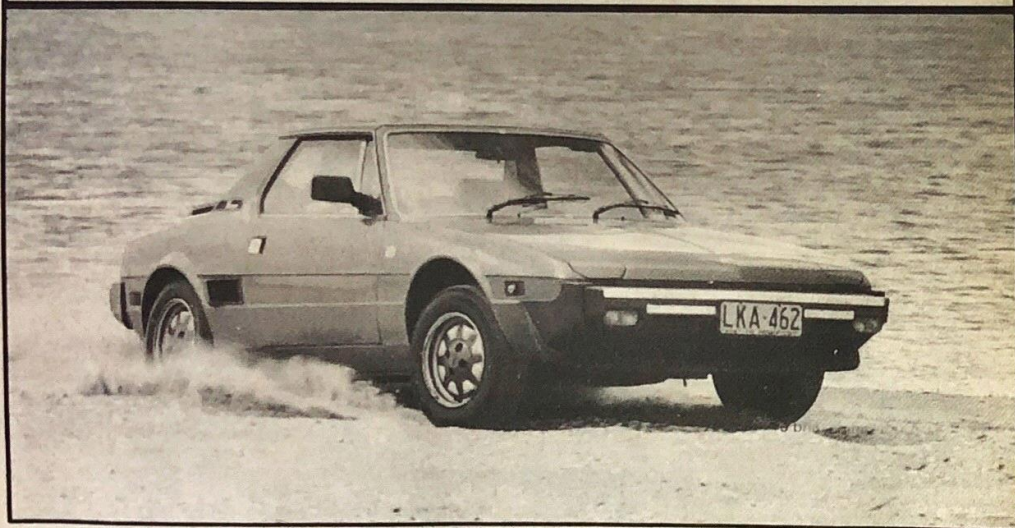


**New Fiat X1/9, Datsun Pulsar
V8's - STILL COMING ON STRONG**

ON TRIAL. FIAT X1/9 1.5 LITRE

Room for your ass -and a gallon of gas!

Though it's a GMH quote it fits the diminutive X1/9 perfectly! But remember — great things come in small packages. Ask Doug Hicks.



IF YOU ARE any sort of a driver, you could not fail to get a buzz out of punting the new more powerful five speed Fiat X1 9. To put it into a nutshell, it's a real driver's car — but not much else! There's room for a friend to come with you, but there's not much room in which to get friendly — if you get the drift!

In true sports car tradition, the attractive Bertone designed wedge is a very compact piece of mobile machinery with little, if any, compromise in space utilisation, particularly in the cockpit. However, what little space there is has been carefully, innovatively and tastefully used.

The X1 9 is not new of course. It has been on Australian roads since 1977, after being released in Europe way back in 1972. The earlier cars had a 1290cc motor mated to a four speed box. In its revised form the transversely mounted powerplant has been stret-

ched to 1498cc and given an extra cog for the pilot to play with.

The new motor produces 58.8 Kw at 5,750 rpm, up from 53.7 for the 1300. Torque has been further improved, going from 101 Nm to 118 at 3,200 revs. An upgraded clutch takes the power to the new five speed box, where first, second and third ratios stay as before, but with fourth dropped slightly to accommodate the 0.863:1 overdrive top cog. From there the power finds its way through an independent McPherson strut rear suspension to bigger five inch steel road wheels. Alloy wheels are an option.

While the extra power and the additional ratio are very welcome, they still fall far short of taxing the other attributes of the diminutive Italian projectile. Not that the car is slow mind you! It hauls out to an impressive 185 clicks per hour, but it takes its time get-

ting there. The whole car feels like it could still use a little more spice in the grunt department, to bring it up to match the absolutely superb road manners.

Just stepping into the cockpit is a delight, especially if you appreciate Italian flair for automotive architectural aesthetics. From the clean lines of the dash through to the more mundane trim items, the interior is both functional and fashionable.

Perhaps the greatest pleasure comes from finding an Italian car with seats which seem to suit most Australian bums. Visually they appear too deeply contoured, and thus awkward to shift around in on long trips. In fact, this is not the case — unless you happen to have a six foot plus frame, in which case the Fiat will be a little cramped for you. There is very good lateral support to contend with the considerable G-forces able to be generated on twisty roads.

Instrumentation is both comprehensive and clear, with only the rev counter causing initial confusion. It spins anti-clockwise for some unknown reason. Other than that oddity the whole dash and all the secondary controls are very well laid out from an ergonomic point of view. Primary controls are not, however, above comment.

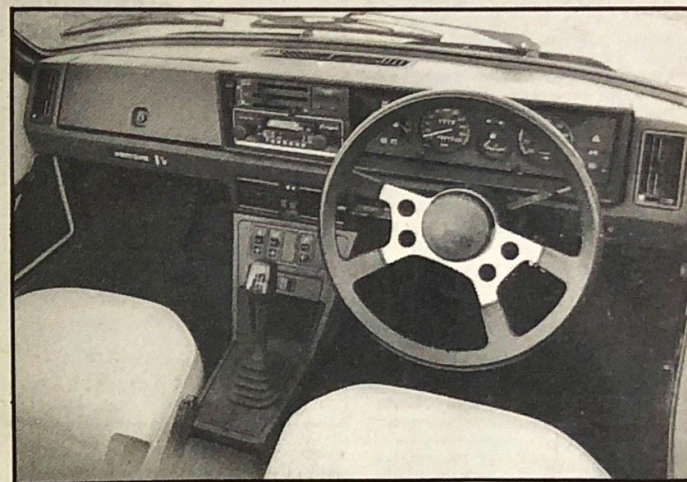
As is so often the case with mid-engine cars, the occupant's feet wind up falling between the front wheel and suspension arches where there is precious little space for the pedals. It takes a little time to become accustomed to the crammed pedal space, but once it's sorted out a driver can heel and toe simply by rolling his right foot on the brake pedal rather than twisting to reach the loud pedal. For the left foot there is a rest.

A very angular gear knob sits atop the five speed shift lever. Unfortunately we mortals were not built with square hands, so there is an unnatural, but not uncomfortable feel to the knob. We discovered that it could be twisted on the lever, and ended up with the shift pattern diagram facing the passenger's window, giving it a better feel in the palm!

Once the pedals, the knob and the back-to-front tachometer are mastered, a driver can really get stuck into whipping the vehicle around at a great rate on challenging roads, with the five speed box proving to be nigh on impossible to beat, no matter how hard and fast the lever is jerked. Our test car did have a notchiness on first gear. We suspect it was not typical of the car, but rather of the hard times it had been subjected to by some of our ham-fisted pen-pushing mates.

In ten tenths mountain motoring it reminds one of a go-kart with suspension. The damn thing hangs on like glue, making a road tester's lot a little dicey as the outer limits are searched in order to relate the pros and cons to you. Within the bounds of sanity we did not find the limits on dry paved roads. Only by deliberately inducing slides were we able to get the car out of line, and even then it came back into shape almost without any help from the driver.

There is a minor amount of initial understeer on high speed slow in-fast out corners. Oversteer can be obtained with a flick of the wrist, but again it must be a positive action from the driver. Even backing off or braking



Top: Luggage space is not as limited as with some sports cars, but it's not generous. The hatch behind the engine will take brief cases, handbags and other small items, while the forward compartment is deep enough for suitcases and the like.

Above: The instrument panel and controls are clear and comprehensive. Only the tachometer, which turns anti-clockwise, and the very angular gear knob take time to adapt to.

Test drive the **FIAT** X1/9 **five speed**

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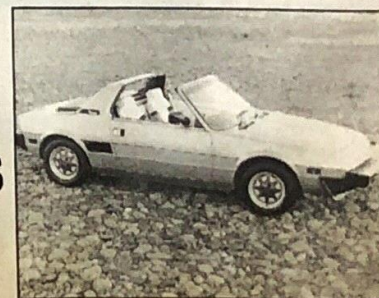
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in the middle of a sweeper only just brings the tail out. Handling is, in a word, superb!

Naturally the controls are very light to use, and there would never be any chance of car induced driver fatigue even after hours of mountain madness. Braking capacity far exceeds the weight, although when cold a great deal more pedal pressure is required to arrest progress.

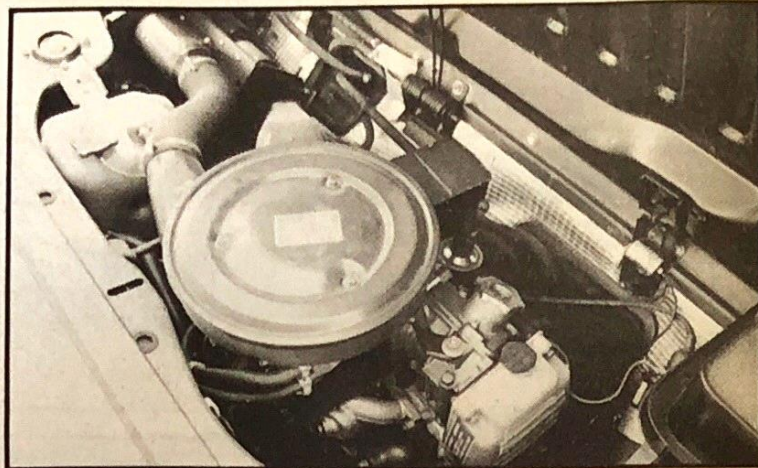
Unfortunately nothing is perfect. The X1 9 does have just one undesirable trait on the highway. It is quite susceptible to crosswinds. Being so light in the nose, there is very little to prevent the front of the car wandering around while the tail stays still. There's no danger, but it is an eerie feeling.

Perhaps this out-of-character straight-line handling is explained by the weight distribution, which LNC Industries, the Australian Fiat distributors, claim to be 49 percent for the rear and 41 for the front. Thus the X1 9 only weighs 90 percent of itself — Weight Watchers would probably be very interested in how the Fiat engineers achieved this remarkable feat, although we are sure that this discrepancy will be appreciated by many female Fiat owners who have the ability to stay 21 forever!

Minus the crosswinds, it's a delight out on the open road. It is a continual statement of what a driver's car should be. There is a moderate level of engine noise coming from the rear to keep you in touch with matters mechanical. And, without jeopardising comfort, there is good feedback from each and every wheel to keep you informed of where the whole shooting match stands traction-wise.

With the Targa-top roof section removed and stowed away in the nose, wind noise naturally increases, however normal conversation is possible without raising voices right up to legal speed limits. Above that there is a strong roar, but surprisingly there is very little wind buffeting in the cockpit, provided the side windows are kept up.

Removing the roof panel does have one considerable drawback. It dramatically upsets the otherwise very clean aerodynamics of the wedge. Top speed, for example, is cut by about twenty percent, so presumably fuel consumption is proportionately increased. With the roof in place, the little car



winds out to well over 185 km/h, with the feeling that more would come when the car was a little better run-in. Without the roof, it is struggling to reach and maintain 160 klicks per hour — a substantial handicap.

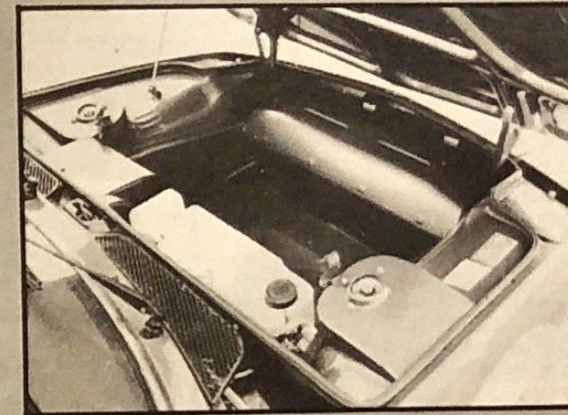
At \$13,995, the X1 9 can hardly be called cheap — but in terms of performance and driving satisfaction it is good value for money. If driving is your 'thing,' then maybe it's time you had an Italian love affair — we did!

Top: Nestled beneath all the plumbing lies the more powerful 1500 cc motor mounted transversely on top of the new five speed gearbox.

Above: Outwardly the new X1/9 differs from earlier models with the heavy US safety regs inspired bumpers and new wheels. Alloy wheels are an option.

MOTOR MANUAL ACTION ANALYSIS

FIAT X1/9 1.5 LITRE



MODEL..... Fiat X1 9
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN..... Italy
BODY TYPE..... Sports
SEATING CAPACITY..... Two
PRICE (excluding on road costs)..... \$13,995

ENGINE:
Location..... Transverse centre
Cylinders..... Four
Capacity..... 1498cc
Bore/stroke..... 86.4x63.9mm
Block..... Cast iron
Head..... Alloy
Valve actuation..... Overhead cam
Induction..... Twin choke dd Weber
Compression ratio..... 9.2:1
Power (kW/bhp)..... 58.8/80 at 5,750rpm
Torque (Nm/ft lbs)..... 118/ at 3,200rpm

TRANSMISSION:
Driving wheels..... Rear
Gearbox type..... Five speed manual
Shift location..... Centre console
Gear ratios —
1st..... 5.383:1
2nd..... 2.235:1
3rd..... 1.454:1
4th..... 1.042:1
5th..... 0.883:1
Final drive ratio..... 4:1

BODY/CHASSIS:
Construction..... Unitary
Material..... Steel
Kerb weight..... 920 kgs
O/A length..... 3963mm
O/A width..... 1570mm
O/A height..... 1180mm
Wheelbase..... 2202mm
Front track..... 1355mm
Rear track..... 1350mm
Fuel tank capacity..... 49 litres

SUSPENSION:
Front type..... Independent McPherson strut
Springs..... Coil
Rear type..... Independent McPherson Strut
Springs..... Coil

STEERING:
Type..... Rack and pinion
Turning circle..... 10 metres

BRAKES:
Actuation..... Dual circuit hydraulic
Front type..... Disc
Rear type..... Disc

WHEELS:
Material..... Steel
Diameter/width..... 13/5 inches

TYRES:
Make/type..... Pirelli radial
Dimensions..... 165 x 13

PERFORMANCE DATA
Weather..... Fine and Mild
Road..... Good
Odometer Reading..... 2320

Speedometer error at
60 km/h 80 km/h 100 km/h
58 km/h 77 km/h 97 km/h

MAXIMUM SPEEDS IN GEARS:
1st..... 48 km/h
2nd..... 77 km/h
3rd..... 116 km/h
4th..... 155 km/h
5th..... 184 km/h

ACCELERATION FROM REST TO
60 km/h..... 4.5 secs
80 km/h..... 7.8 secs
100 km/h..... 11.0 secs
120 km/h..... 15.8 secs
60 to 100 km/h..... 7.0 secs
(3rd gear manual or "D" auto)

400 metres..... 18.2 secs
Terminal speed..... 116 km/h

BRAKING FROM 100 km/h TO STAND-STILL
Average of four tests..... 36 metres

FUEL CONSUMPTION:
Published AS 2077 figures:

City..... 9.5 litres/100 kms (29 mpg)
Highway..... 6 litres/100 kms (46 mpg)

Motor Manual figures on test:
City..... 11 litres/100 kms (25 mpg)
Highway..... 8 litres/100 kms (35 mpg)

NOTE: No special driving techniques are employed to obtain fuel consumption figures on test. Unless otherwise stated, Motor Manual's figures are those obtainable under normal driving conditions.



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