

AUSTRALIA'S TOP SELLING MOTOR MAGAZINE

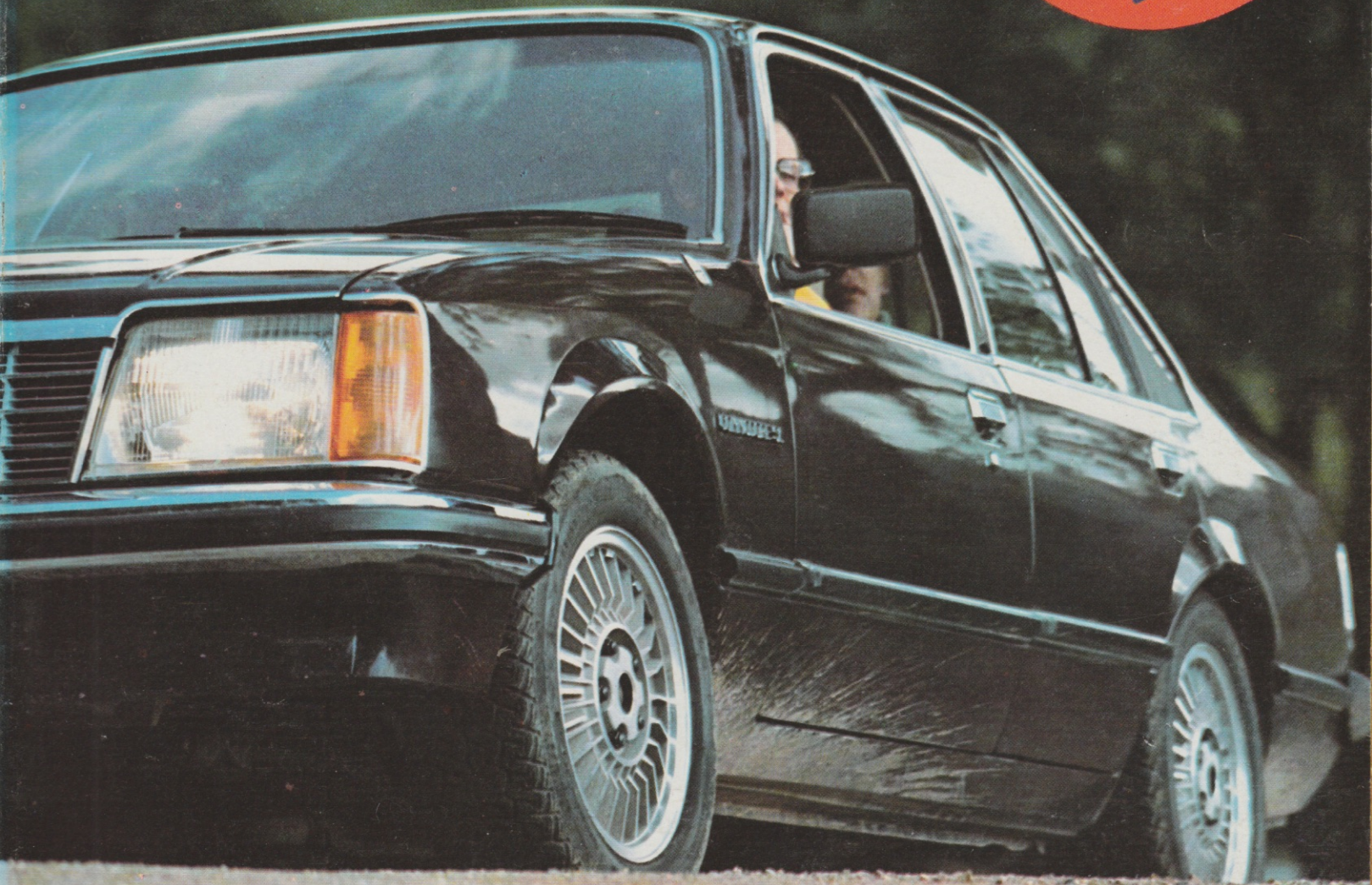
WHEELS

DECEMBER, 1978

\$1.00*

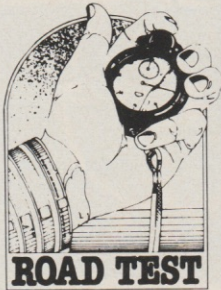
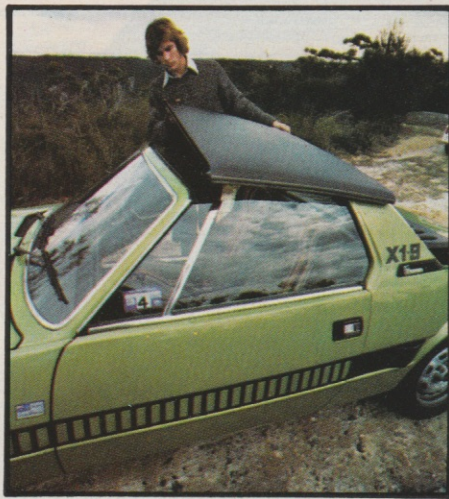
NZ \$1.15*

ALL ABOUT
THE NEW
HOLDEN



HOLDEN COMMODORE

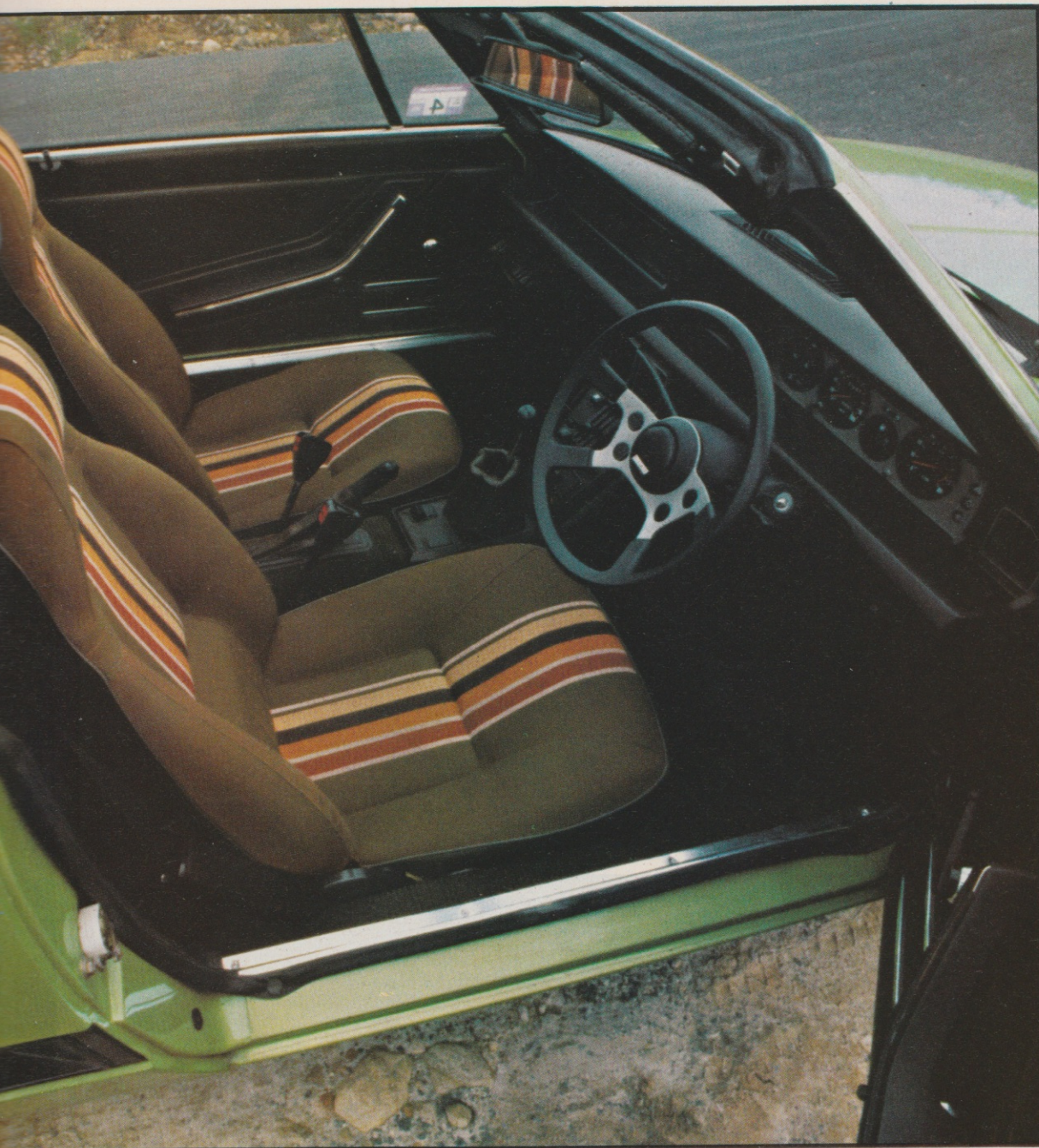
Driving one of the world's best sedans



"IT'S JUST A SHAME THAT THE BUYERS WHO ARE ITS
PRIMARY TARGET WILL NOT BE ABLE TO AFFORD IT"

FIAT X1/9

THE GREATEST IS A FEATHERWEIGHT



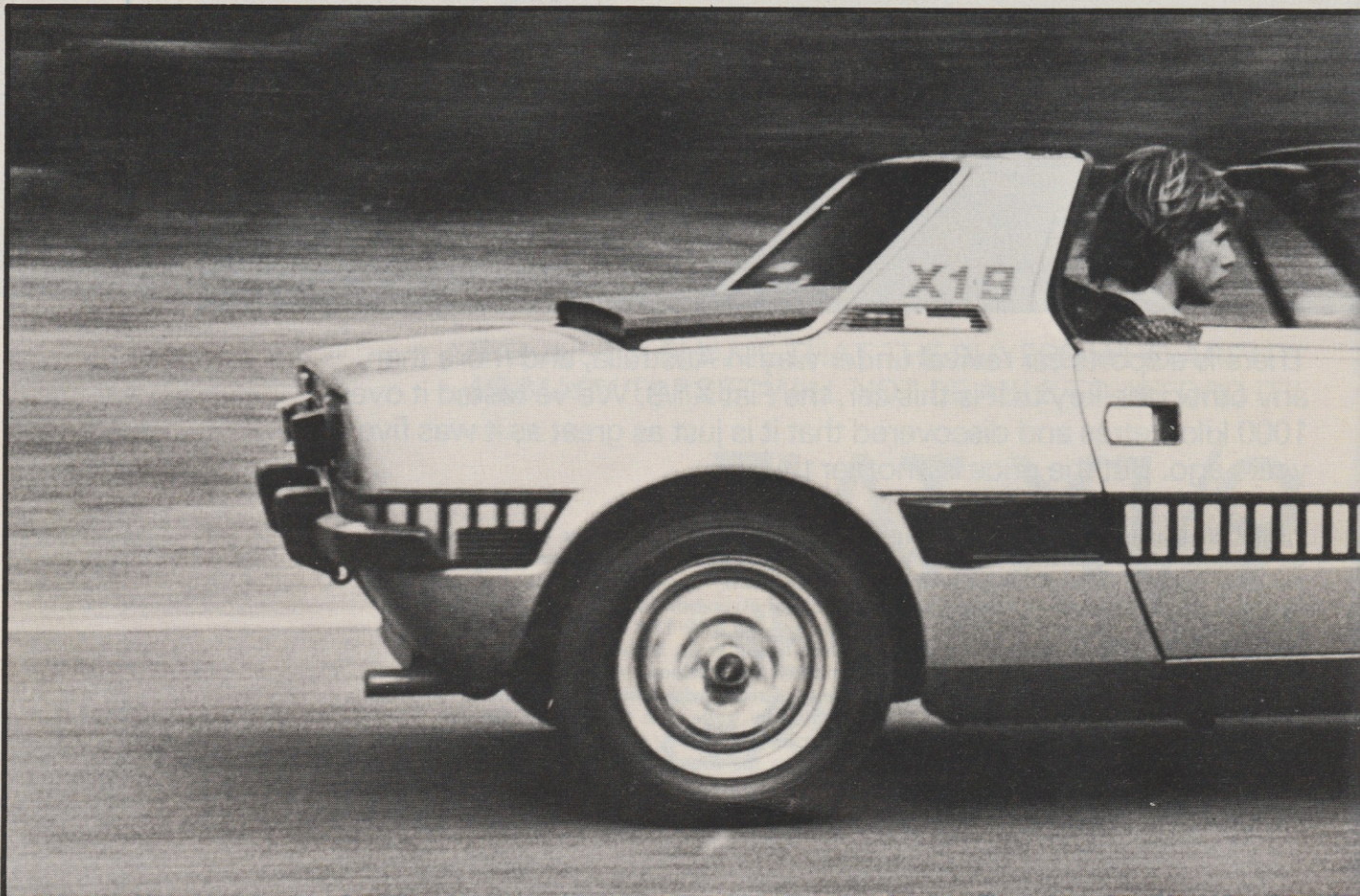
There is a sports car revival under way in Australia, and more than any other, the key to it is this car, the Fiat X1/9. We've tested it over 1000 kilometres and discovered that it is just as great as it was five years ago. But the price is another thing.

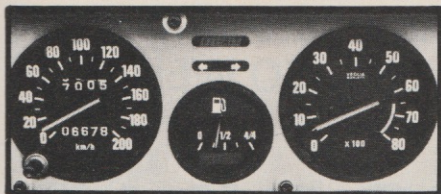
THERE IS no argument in WHEELS about the excellence of the Fiat X1/9. It is nearly five years since Mr Editor Robinson returned from a trip to Italy, where he drove one of the first year's production models, and announced that people who had driven a mid-engined Ferrari would understand how the little car handled.

Since then the X1/9 has loomed large in WHEELS' consciousness — if not its roadtest repertoire. We have admired its

melding of compact dimensions and mainly bog-standard Fiat 128 components with a no-compromise mid-engine layout and a quality of styling fit for a far more rare and expensive car. The Fiat is amazingly strong in conflicting areas. It has performance with economy, compactness with comfort, simplicity of repair with design sophistication.

Naturally we've been trapped into the old motor magazine thing of driving the first example in the country, then reporting what





Above: This instrument binnacle is Fiat's second for the X1/9. Instruments are now more conventional and are easier to read than previously.

Below: Fiat cockpit is snug for the 1.8 metre tester shown here, but it is comfortable. Photo shows how controls and instruments are grouped for easy access.



the importer said: that the first batch was "nearly on the water". Later experience showed that the cars were still many months away!

We have published overseas stories on the X1/9 and we have felt impatient and disappointed at our occasional trots around the block in privately-owned Spridget or a fourth-hand TR3.

But now the X1/9 is here. Not *nearly*. Not *on the water*. It's in occupation at Fiat showrooms with an Australian Design Rule compliance plate riveted to its firewall and petrol refined from Bass Strait crude in its tank. The price is \$9650 and the demand initially at least will ensure that no X1/9 gathers dust in the showroom.

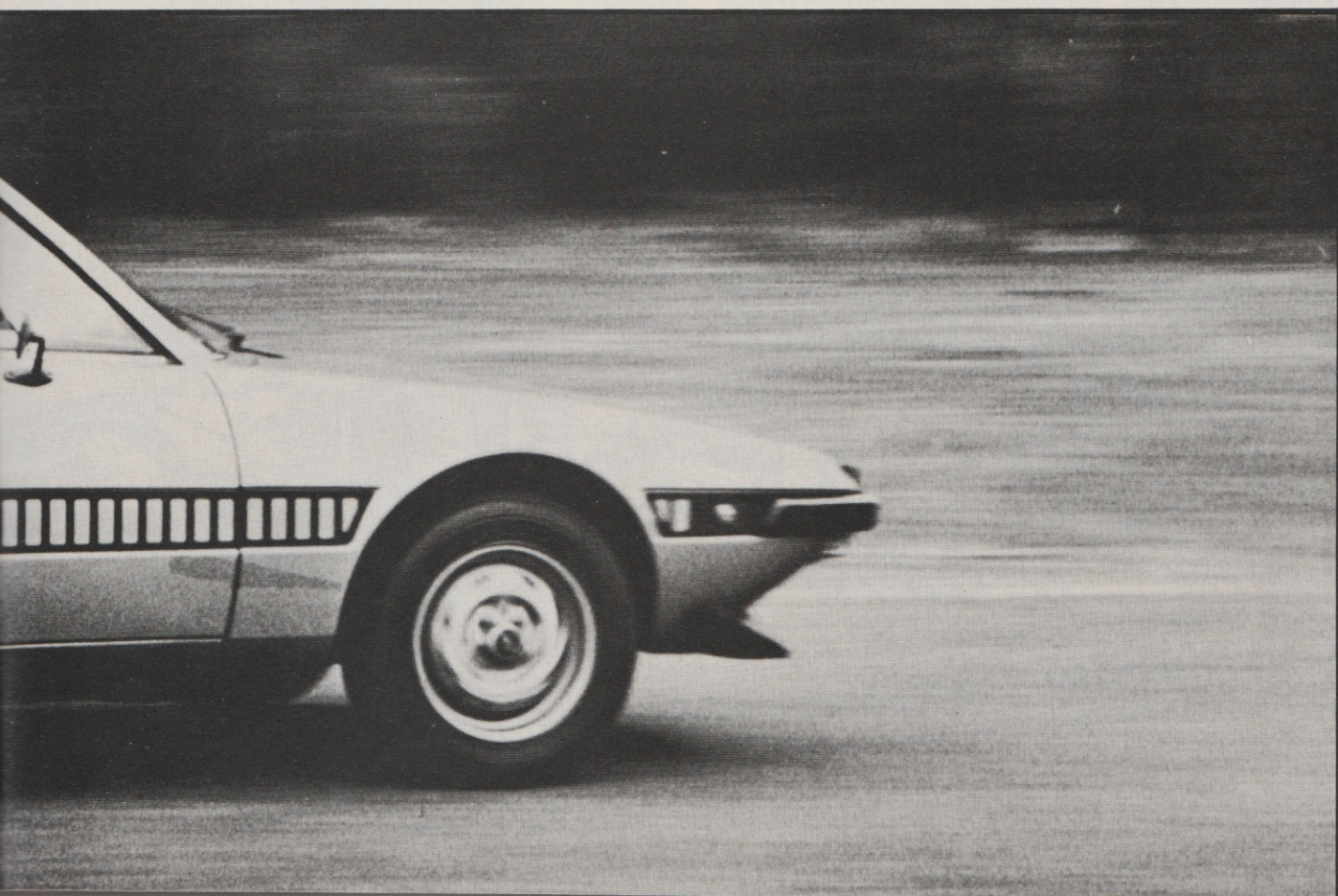
The list of reasons why it has taken nearly six years for the X1/9 to get to Australia is depressing. First, there were no right hand drive cars and the story was that there *would* be none. Then Fiat decided to make a few RHD cars, but those went to Britain where the volume of demand was. Then when supply to Australia became a possibility, the local hurdles came more into focus. But was the cost of proving the X1/9's compliance with local design rules likely to be returned in profits? Then came car import quota problems. Was it better to import 131s or 132s alone and not be bothered with X1/9? And just to give Fiat Australia an extra shot of the jitters, there was the depressed state of the local market to be considered. Would the car — intended by its designers as an Italian equivalent to the Sprite and Spitfire — sell at \$9650?

But despite all, the car is on the showroom floor. WHEELS has run full performance and fuel consumption figures on it and its staff now feels that it has the answer to how the car suits local conditions.

It cannot be a foregone conclusion that a good European car will perform as well in Australia. There are scores of engineers in the country now, imported by the local motor industry who will acknowledge that Australia's unusually poor road surfaces, its long distances, its hot, dry weather and its drivers' lack of driving technique make the requirements of an Australian car very different from one destined for Europe or the US.

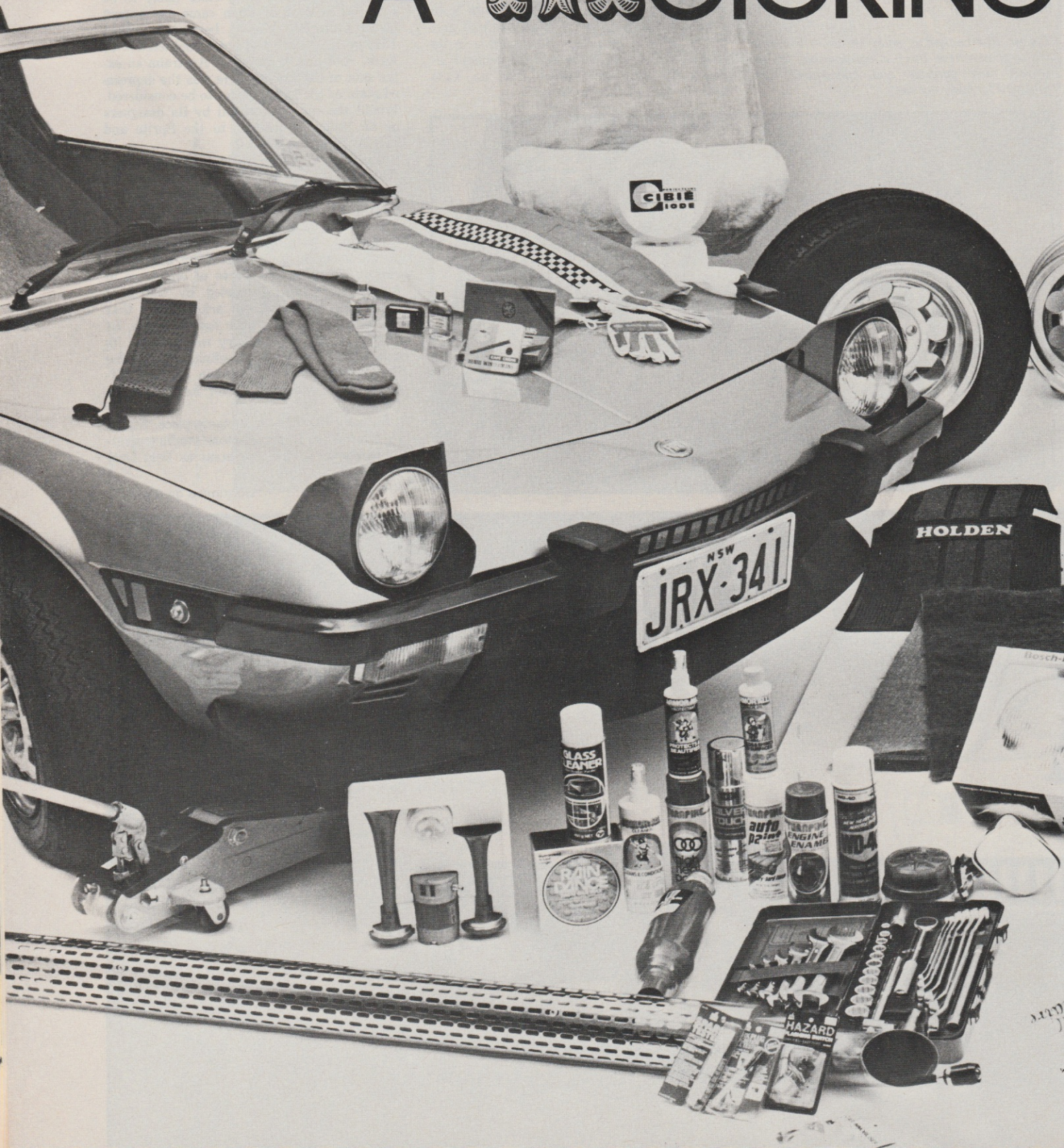
Visually the X1/9 is a masterpiece. Styled by the famous Italian Bertone studio (regrettably known to the irreverent as Bert One)

Continued on page 68



IT'S THAT WONDROUS TIME OF YEAR WHEN
WHEELS TAKES A RIDE ON SANTA'S SLEIGH TO WELCOME

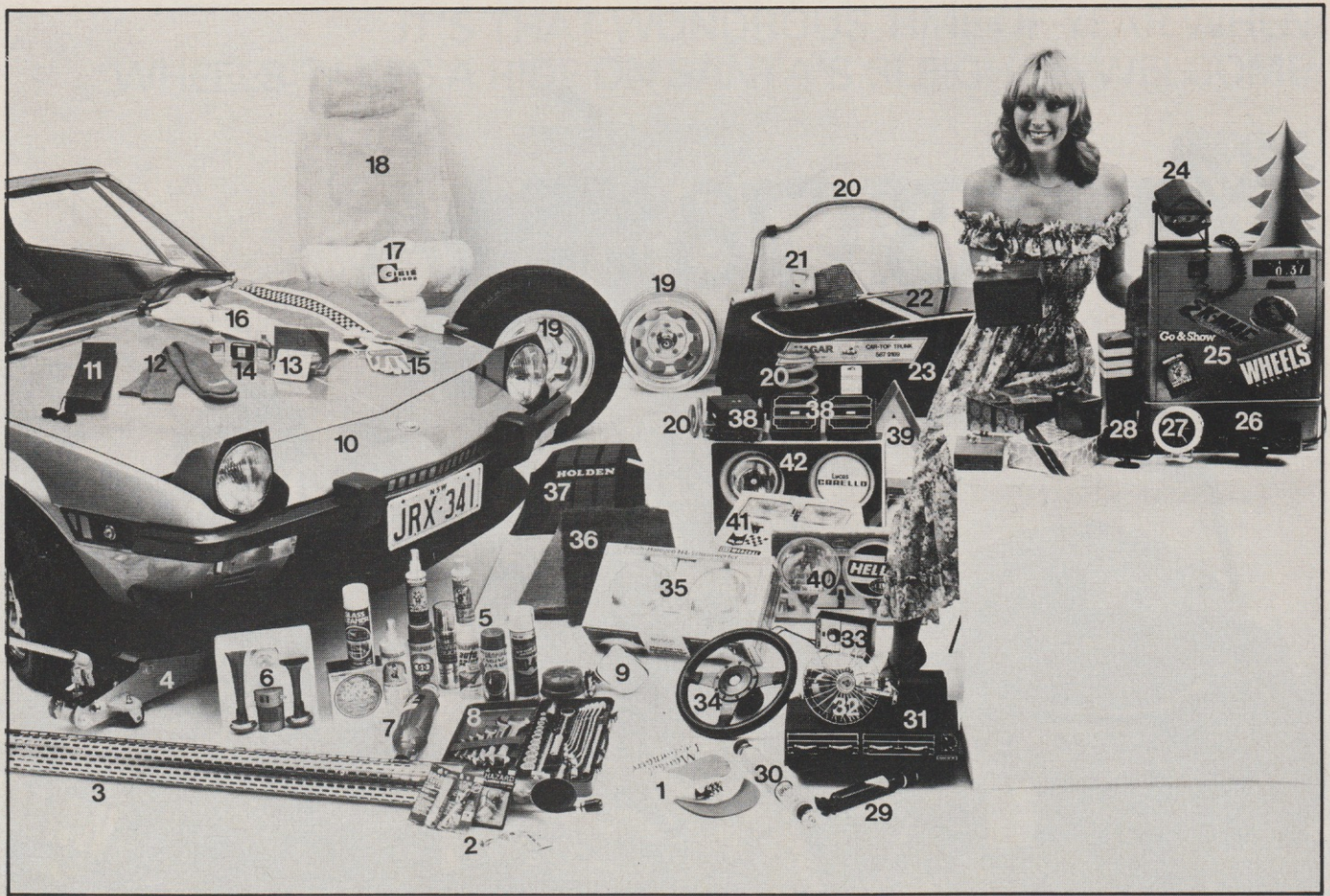
A **M**OTORING



V MAS '78



The Editor's
 little helpers
 have been sent
 hither and thither
 throughout the land,
 collecting goodies for our
 Christmas extravaganza.
 And here they are, laid before
 you in all their expensive glory,
 a \$9000 car to a \$2 tin of cigars.
 Let's hear the merry
 jingle of cash registers. 



1. Marchal Legionnaire Cap, \$2 from Race and Rally, Rosedale Ave, Greenacre Sydney.
2. Swann Spark Tester, \$3.99. Spark Plug and Ignition Tester, \$3.87. Hazard Flasher, \$8.31, and Anti-Theft Car Immobiliser, \$4.99 from selected car accessory stores.
3. Streaker Side Pipe for \$113.85 from Imported Van Accessories, 431 West Botany Rd, Rockdale, Sydney.
4. Hydraulic Short Wheelbase Jack, \$69 from Bri-Law, 152 Old Pittwater Rd, Brookvale, Sydney.
5. WD-40 and Armor-All products for under \$4.50 each. From most department and auto accessory stores. Transac Spray Paints, \$4.99 to \$6.99 from Bri-Law.
6. Bosch Air Horns, \$34.72 from Bosch dealers.
7. Can-Am Hotdog for \$11 at Can-Am Industries, 13 Excellor Ave, Bankstown, Sydney.
8. Large 28 piece toolkit, \$67 from Eastern Tool Company, 28 Egerton St, Silverwater, Sydney.
9. Sport Mirror. Two for \$30 from Bri-Law.
10. Fiat X 1/9. Only \$9650 from Morrison Motors, Chatswood, Sydney.
11. Super Sports Grip Steering Wheel Cover, \$5.95 at selected department and auto accessory stores.
12. Stage Three socks for \$4.95 from Race and Rally.
13. Henri Winterman Cigars for around \$2.
14. Givenchy Toiletries from \$10 at selected chemists and department stores.
15. Racing Mate gloves, \$14.75 from Race and Rally.
16. Nylon Marchal Wind Jacket, \$25 at Race and Rally.
17. Cibie Super Oscar, \$55.70 from Cibie dealers.
18. Comfortmaster Tailormade Sheepskin seat covers, \$225 a pair from G.C. Foster, 51 Mandoon Rd, Girraween, Sydney.
19. ROH mags from around \$45 each at Straight Talk Tyres.
20. K-Mac rear stabiliser bars for \$54. Springs are \$78 a pair.
21. Bosch Car Vacuum-Cleaner, \$59.95 from Bosch outlets.
22. T-Top, \$425 (not including fitting) from Imported Van Accessories.
23. Hagar Roof Luggage Holder, \$59 from Roto-Moulded Plastics, 17-19 Production Ave, Kogarah, Sydney.
24. Super Snooper, \$248 from the Snooper Company, Kent St, Sydney.
25. Cash register courtesy of the Palisade Hotel, Millers Point, Sydney.
26. LED readout instruments, around \$95 each (bracket for three instruments costs extra) from M and H Imports, PO Box 409, Milsons Point, Sydney.
27. Dixco Tachometer, \$69 from Eastern Tool Company.
28. LED Car Clock, \$55 from Bensons Auto Shop, 210 Waldron Rd, Chester Hill, Sydney.
29. Proven Shock Absorbers from \$12.45 at Proven Products, Cann St, Guildford, Sydney.
30. Gas Spax Shockers from \$36.81 at Proven Products.
31. Lucas Imperial VII Car Air-Conditioner from Lucas outlets. Price varies depending on car.
32. Bri-Law Car Fan for \$30.
33. Lucas Diagnostic Tune-Up Analyser, \$29.95 from Lucas outlets.
34. Sports Steering Wheel for \$69 from Race and Rally.
35. Bosch H4 Halogen Headlamp Conversion Kit, \$47.60 from Bosch outlets.
36. Rear Deck Rug for around \$5 from department and accessory stores.
37. Mermax Floor Mats, two for around \$19 from department and accessory stores.
38. Speedking Radio Cassettes from \$169. Cassette players from \$85 at radio stores.
39. Reflecting Safety Triangles for \$4.75 at most department and accessory stores.
40. Hella Long Range Driving Lamp Kit for \$69.50 from Hella outlets.
41. SEV Marchal Light Ensemble for \$47 at Race and Rally.
42. Lucas Carello for \$94.30 at Lucas dealers.