

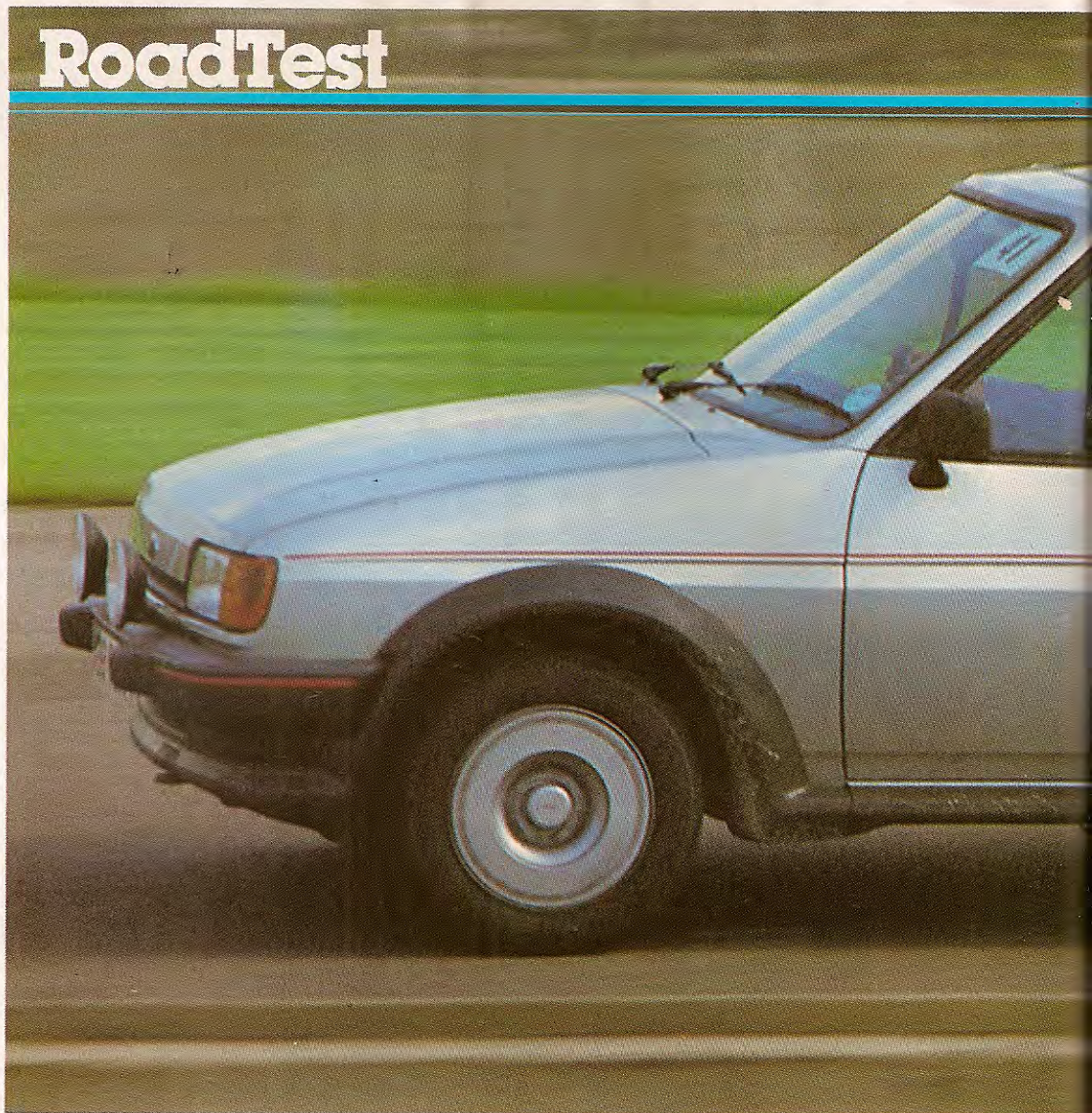
# RoadTest

**Back with more power, sharper styling and a seductive price tag, Ford's lion-hearted Fiesta is a formidable package. In a way, it's the Mini Cooper reborn...**

THE CONCEPT of the Mini Cooper has fired the imagination of many a car maker. "Modern-day Cooper" has become perhaps the most tired cliché in the motoring writer's repertoire, but cars that aim to capture the Cooper's magic still form a strong sub-plot to the GTi-inspired hot hatchback success story. In fact, with the advent of cars like the MG Metro Turbo and Peugeot 205 GTi, that sub-plot is assuming the importance of a central theme to enthusiasts who, unencumbered by large families, can afford to trade space for the sheer handiness and agility epitomised by the best small cars.

The commercial potency of the small hot hatch has been most amply illustrated by Ford's XR2 which, since its 1981 launch, has sold like hot cakes — despite its less than scalp-tling performance and board-like ride. There were public gasps of exasperation when, last January, the facelifted Fiesta appeared in the UK without the pocket-rocket version. Sensibly, Ford were taking their time: not tempted to milk the model's appeal for all it was worth, they wanted the new XR2 to be more than just a skin job. To this end, more power, more gears, and tyre/suspension revisions — designed to sharpen already responsive handling yet take the sting out of the ride — joined the bold wheel arch extensions, deep matt-black chin spoiler and fancy wheels on the drawing board. Meanwhile, Peugeot stole some of Ford's thunder with the 205 GTi but confirmed that if the XR2 was to remain competitive, it was due for an injection of pace, snap and style, anyway.

The new XR2's 1,598 cc CVH engine is the same as that used in the original Escort XR3, before it got fuel injection. On a 9.5:1 compression and breathing through a single twin-choke Weber carburettor, the single overhead cam unit develops 96 bhp (DIN) at 6,000 rpm with 97.6 lb ft of torque at 4,000 rpm. The previous XR2, which had to make do with Ford's ageing 1,598 cc pushrod "Kent" engine, gave 84 bhp at 5,500 rpm and 91.5 lb ft at 2,800 rpm. The XR3's five-speed gearbox transmits drive to the front wheels with no change to the internal ratios but longer gearing (23 mph/1,000 rpm in top) is achieved by using a 3.58:1 final drive. As before, squat low profile tyres (185/60 HR in section and rating) are supplied on 13in x 6J rims though, rather surprisingly, these are now made from pressed steel rather



## FORD FIESTA XR2

than the alloy of the old XR2.

Even so, the new model boasts a very full specification few of its rivals can match. It has long-range auxiliary driving lamps, full instrumentation, a 60/40 split rear backrest, map pockets front and back, cloth trim, an electric tailgate release, a remotely-adjustable driver's door mirror, a digital clock and a rear wash-wipe among other things. If the "goodies" factor is considered alongside the performance potential, the £5,731 price tag looks almost too good to be true when pitched against such rivals as Austin-Rover's MG Metro Turbo (£6,205), Nissan's Cherry Turbo (£6,995), the Peugeot 205 GTi (£6,295) and Renault's 5 Gordini Turbo (£6,150). Of our selec-

tioned rivals, only the Vauxhall Nova 1.3 SR (£5,404) is cheaper — but then its smaller engine, while efficient, lacks the Ford's muscle.

The extra power and torque of the new XR2 adds just over six mph to the top speed of the old "Kent"-engined model. Ford claim 112 mph, but we could not quite average 110 mph round Millbrook's high-speed bowl, compared with 103.1 mph for the previous model. The standing start acceleration, however, is significantly improved. From rest to 60 mph now takes just 8.7 sec (against 9.6 sec), while the 0-90 mph figure of 21.0 sec represents an improvement of 6.6 sec. In fourth gear — top for the old XR2 but similarly geared at around 18.5 mph/1,000 rpm — 40-





60 mph is covered in 8.7 sec and 50-70 mph in 8.9 sec, respectively only 0.2 and 0.9 sec better, so in terms of mid-range pull, the new car's advantage is far less prominent. Nevertheless, these figures place the XR2 well to the fore in this class, only the remarkably rapid and turbo-charged Cherry proving notably quicker in the yardstick sprints and increments.

The Fiesta's engine fires up promptly and reliably from cold and pulls cleanly during the brief warm-up period. As in the XR3, refinement isn't the 96 horsepower CVH's greatest virtue, but it is a solid power producer with plenty of sporting "edge". At moderate revs, it's the husky exhaust note that dominates, but full throttle and high revs bring an element of mechanical harshness which,

while leaving the driver in no doubt that to push harder would be unwise, does not inhibit prolonged exploitation of the engine's easy-revving nature and fine top-end bite, an endeavour encouraged by the light, quick gearchange.

Our overall consumption of 30.6 mpg reflects a worthwhile improvement over the old model's 28.6 mpg and, if they're not insistent on extract-

ing the last ounce of performance all the time, most owners should be able to approach, or even better, our computed touring figure of 37.1 mpg. But even when driven hard, the XR2 exhibits an admirable combination of performance and economy. The range from the 8.8-gallon tank should easily exceed 300 miles: four-star petrol is recommended.

The new XR2's front suspension boasts negative-scrub-radius geometry and features the usual MacPherson struts and coil springs. At the back, a beam axle is located by coil springs, trailing links, a Panhard rod, and an anti-roll bar. In other words, little has changed from the old XR2, but the springs have been re-rated and damping is now by gas-filled units.

The changes are fundamentally simple, but the fine tuning seems to have wrought the right shift of emphasis in the chassis' feel and character. Although the car remains firmly sprung, it rides much more flatly than its predecessor and suffers from little of the constant jiggling restlessness that afflicts the Peugeot 205 GTI in particular. But neither does it have the sheer grip or ultimate poise of the French car. Make no mistake, the XR2 hangs on well, wet or dry, understeers strongly only in the tightest of bends, and changes direction by muscle reflex rather than conscious steering input so crisp is the chassis. But the steering is a shade underdamped and cutting the power mid-bend can throw its quicksilver responses into sharp relief with abrupt tuck-in requiring quick and accurate correction at the wheel. That will appeal to the extrovert driver. On the other hand, it needs watching — the handling isn't as forgiving as that of some rivals. The brakes, however, are well up to the performance, providing fade-free retardation and good pedal feel.

Accommodation has always been a strong selling point for the Fiesta and, despite the presence of slightly larger and rather more shapely front seats, that holds true with the XR2. Both headroom and legroom in the back and reasonably generous for so compact a car: it is a genuine four-seater. The back seat folds forward in 60 per cent/40 per cent portions to supplement the 7.0 cu ft boot capacity, and loading is easy thanks to a tailgate that opens at bumper level. Internal stowage is provided by a modest glove box, rigid pockets in each door, and a small cubby in the centre console.

Once accustomed to a steering wheel which, while good to look at and hold, is slightly offset to the left, our testers found no fault with the driving position, especially since the relationship between the major controls is good. The front seats, which are comfortable but offer firm support round the hips and in the small of the back, have ample rearward travel for tall drivers and the backrest recline is finely adjustable by a large handwheel. Main electrical functions are controlled by Ford's regular triple-stalk arrangement on the steering column (winkers/dip/flash/horn



## MOTOR ROAD TEST No 28/84

## Ford Fiesta XR2

## PERFORMANCE

## WEATHER CONDITIONS

Wind	7-10 mph
Temperature	48 deg F/9 deg C
Barometer	29.2 in Hg/ 990 mbar
Surface	Dry tarmac/adam

## MAXIMUM SPEEDS

	mph	kph
Banked Circuit	109.7	176.5
Best ¼ mile	110.5	177.8
Terminal speeds:		
at ¼ mile	83	134
at kilometre	99	159
Speeds in gears (at 6,000 rpm):		
1st	33	53
2nd	55	88
3rd	82	132

## ACCELERATION FROM REST

mph	sec	kph	sec
0-30	3.1	0-40	1.3
0-40	4.6	0-60	4.3
0-50	6.6	0-80	6.6
0-60	8.7	0-100	9.8
0-70	12.2	0-120	14.1
0-80	16.2	0-140	19.8
0-90	21.0	0-160	32.4
0-100	32.4		
Stand'g ¼	17.0	Stand'g km	31.6

## ACCELERATION IN TOP

mph	sec	kph	sec
20-40	13.1	40-60	8.6
30-50	11.8	60-80	8.1
40-60	11.3	80-100	8.8
50-70	12.9	100-120	9.8
60-80	14.2	120-140	14.9
70-90	18.2		

## ACCELERATION IN 4TH

mph	sec	kph	sec
20-40	9.6	40-60	5.8
30-50	9.0	60-80	5.6
40-60	8.7	80-100	5.4
50-70	8.9	100-120	6.3
60-80	10.4	120-140	7.8
70-90	12.7	140-160	12.7
80-100	17.5		

## FUEL CONSUMPTION

Touring*	37.1 mpg
	7.6 litres/100km
Overall	30.6 mpg
	9.2 litres/100km
Govt tests	31.0 mpg (urban)
	49.6 mpg (56 mph)
	37.7 mpg (75 mph)

## GENERAL SPECIFICATION

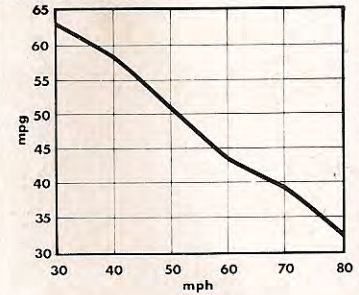
<b>ENGINE</b>	
Cylinders	4 in-line
Capacity	1,598cc (97.43 cu in)
Bore/stroke	79.96/79.50mm (3.15/3.13in)
Cooling	Water
Block	Cast iron
Head	Light alloy
Valves	Sohc
Cam drive	Toothed belt
Compression	9.5:1
Carburettor	Single twin-choke Weber
Ignition	Breakerless
Bearings	5 main
Max power	96 bhp (DIN) at 6,000 rpm
Max torque	97.6 lb ft (DIN) at 4,000 rpm

## TRANSMISSION

Type	5-speed manual
Clutch dia	7.5 in
Actuation	Cable
Internal ratios and mph/1,000 rpm	
Top	0.756:1/23.1
4th	0.951:1/18.3
3rd	1.275:1/13.6
2nd	1.913:1/9.1
1st	3.154:1/5.5
Rev	3.615:1
Final drive	3.58:1

## BODY/CHASSIS

Construction	Unitary, all steel
Protection	Cathodic phosphate electro-coat primer; enamel paint coats; PVC under-coating; cavity wax injection



Fuel grade	97 octane
Tank capacity	4 star rating 8.8 galls 40 litres
Max range	326 miles 525 km
Test distance	1,528 miles 2,458 km

\*Based on fuel consumption computed from the theoretical consumption at a steady speed midway between 30 mph and the car's maximum, less 5 per cent.

<b>NOISE</b>	dBA	Motor rating*
30 mph	64	10
50 mph	71	17
70 mph	78	28
Maximum†	90	64

\*A rating where 1 = 30 dBA and 100 = 96 dBA, and where double the number means double the loudness  
†Peak noise level under full-throttle acceleration in 2nd

## SPEEDOMETER (mph)

True mph	30	40	50	60	70	80
Speedo	32	43	54	65	78	87

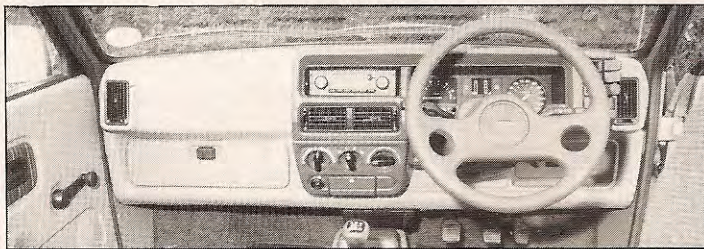
Distance recorder: 1.8 per cent fast

<b>WEIGHT</b>	cwt	kg
Unladen weight*	16.7	847
Weight as tested	20.4	1,036

\*with fuel for approx 50 miles

Performance tests carried out by Motor's staff at the Motor Industry Research Association proving ground, Lindley.

Test Data: World Copyright reserved. No reproduction in whole or part without written permission.



Above: XR2's facia is different from regular Fiesta's with conventional heater controls and better instrumentation (left)



Left: ingress to the rear is easy, space once there more than reasonable for the size of car. Above: seat comfort and driving position prompted no complaints from our testers

to the left, wash-wipe and lights to the right), with handy "tab" switches for the remaining functions sited on the right of the instrument binnacle.

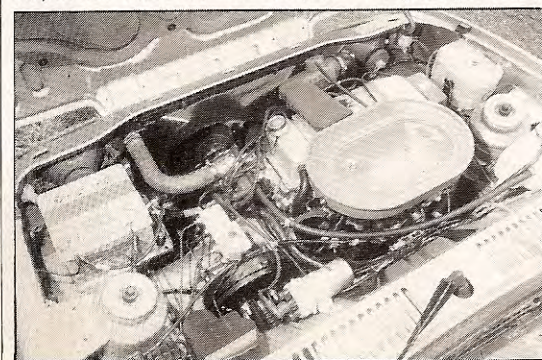
That part of the facia containing the instruments and heater controls has been substantially revised for the XR2. The reflection-killing single-glass binnacle supplies information on speed, revs, fuel level and water temperature via dials and gauges that are clearly marked and easy to read. As for the heater controls, they've moved from the side of the pod to a more conventional position on an integrated centre console. Here, too, an extra pair of vents is sited to provide a heater-linked air flow which, as in the Escort and Granada, is "stratified", or at a lower temperature than the main heater output. The system works well enough but still lacks the versatility of a good independent arrangement.

The XR2 doesn't win any prizes for mechanical refinement when driven vigorously, but the engine does quieten down considerably on light throttle openings and it's then that you realise that both road roar and wind noise are commendably well suppressed. Cruising on the motorway in the "overdrive" fifth is a plea-

santly relaxed affair.

All-round visibility is excellent with slim pillars, an efficient wiper pattern and powerful, well-defined headlamp beams at night. Twin door mirrors are standard, as is a rear wash/wipe. Interior decor has been executed with some taste and sensitivity, with well-matched materials for the seats and door trims that are anything but "loud". Assembly fit and finish couldn't be faulted.

Ford have clearly made great efforts to retain the essentially raw fun element of the old XR2 while endeavouring to refine the package and smooth out its wrinkles. When you consider that the new model is faster, more economical and smoother riding than its predecessor, it would be uncharitable to suggest that they haven't achieved their goal. As a practical (if rather noisy) fun car, it makes the grade in a way that the Mini Cooper did all those years ago and, at well under £6,000, it represents outstanding value. It's far from perfect, and Peugeot's more modern 205 GTI is, in many ways, a better car. When it comes to sitting down with your bank manager, however, you'll need to be a slick talker to argue against the Ford.



Ex-XR3 1.6-litre CVH engine is a solid (if rather noisy) power producer. Underbonnet presentation is reasonably neat and practical

Make: Ford. Model: Fiesta XR2.

Maker: Ford Motor Company Ltd, Eagle Way, Warley, Brentwood, Essex, CM13 3BW. Tel: (0277) 253000.

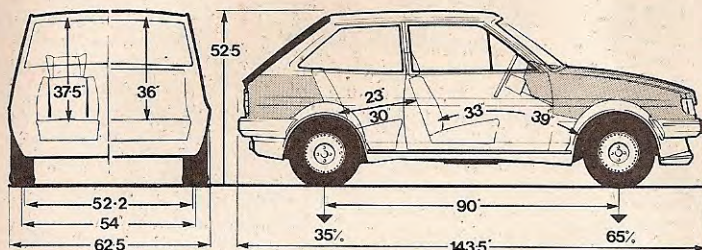
Price: £4,600.14 plus £383.35 Car Tax and £747.51 VAT equals £5,731 total.

# The Rivals

Other possible rivals include Citroën's Visa GT (£5,042) and Mitsubishi's Mirage 1400 Turbo (£6,825)

## FORD FIESTA XR2

**£5,731**

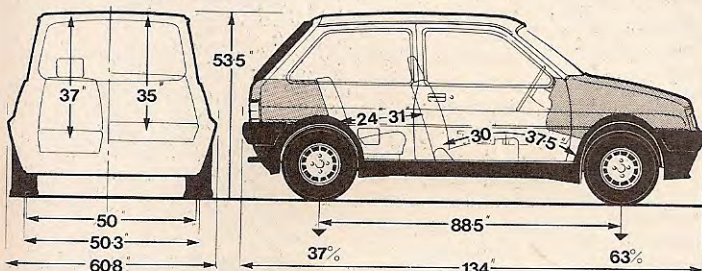


Power, bhp/rpm	96/6,000
Torque, lb ft/rpm	97.6/4,000
Tyres	185/60 HR 13
Weight, cwt	16.7
Max speed, mph	109.7
0-60 mph, sec	8.7
30-50 mph in 4th, sec	9.0
Overall mpg	T/C
Touring mpg	37.1
Fuel grade, stars	4
Boot capacity, cu ft	7.0
Test Date	June 16, 1984

"Mk 2" version of Ford's baby bombshell uses old 96 bhp Escort XR3 engine to boost performance, long gearing helps economy. Sub-110 mph top speed a little disappointing but acceleration is sparkling. Ride is also much better than before, yet sharp handling can be tricky in the wrong hands. Engine noisy when pressed but overall refinement levels not too bad. Slick gearchange, good accommodation and smart finish are further plus points. Outstanding value for money.

## MG METRO TURBO

**£6,205**

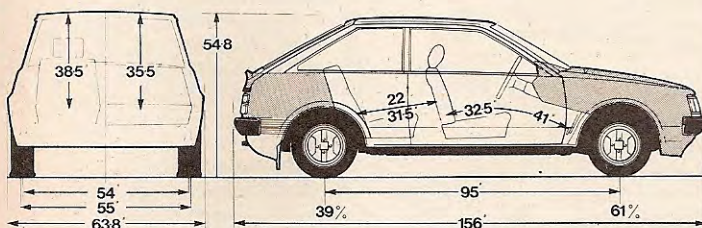


Power, bhp/rpm	93/6,130
Torque, lb ft/rpm	85/2,650
Tyres	165/60 HR 13
Weight, cwt	16.0
Max speed, mph	111.3
0-60 mph, sec	9.4
30-50 mph in 4th, sec	11.2
Overall mpg	28.1
Touring mpg	34.5
Fuel grade, stars	4
Boot capacity, cu ft	8.4
Test Date	August 20, 1983

The fastest Metro yet made has fine performance for the capacity but is a little outclassed here, though economy is competitive. Excellent brakes and safe, agile handling, though can get bouncy on some kinds of bumpy surface. Good gearchange but only a four-speed gearbox, comfortable seats but odd driving position. Accommodation is generous and versatile, with good visibility, efficient heating and ventilation, attractive finish and very acceptable refinement.

## NISSAN CHERRY TURBO

**£6,995**

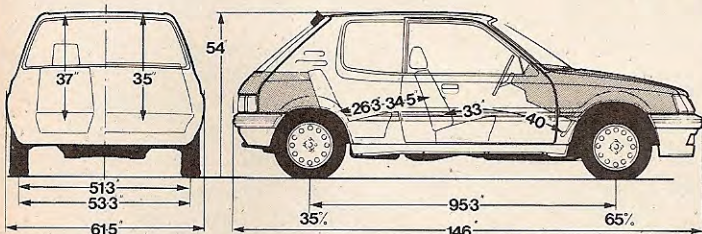


Power, bhp/rpm	114/5,600
Torque, lb ft/rpm	120.6/3,200
Tyres	175/70 HR 13
Weight, cwt	15.9
Max speed, mph	114.2
0-60 mph, sec	8.0
30-50 mph in 4th, sec	10.3
Overall mpg	28.9
Touring mpg	—
Fuel grade, stars	4
Boot capacity, cu ft	7.7
Test Date	December 10, 1983

A 1.5-litre engine with fuel injection and a turbocharger transform the normally mild-mannered Cherry into a stormer. Competitive top speed and scorching acceleration, though tall gearing means the engine has to be kept on the boil. Competitive economy but handling is no more than competent and rear legroom is poor. Slick gearchange and light controls are typically Japanese, as is comprehensive standard equipment at a competitive price. Well finished.

## PEUGEOT 205 GTI

**£6,295**

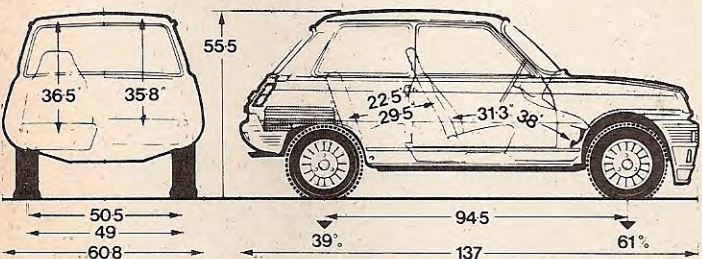


Power, bhp/rpm	104/6,250
Torque, lb ft/rpm	99/4,000
Tyres	185/60 HR 14
Weight, cwt	16.7
Max speed, mph	116.7
0-60 mph, sec	8.7
30-50 mph in 4th, sec	6.2
Overall mpg	31.3
Touring mpg	—
Fuel grade, stars	4
Boot capacity, cu ft	9.6
Test Date	May 26, 1984

Peugeot's hot-hatch GTI debutant combines scorching performance with class beating economy. Grippy and responsive chassis sets new front-wheel drive standards of handling and roadholding. Refined powertrain contributes towards low overall noise levels. Distinctive and roomy three-door bodyshell is modestly trimmed, but seating is comfortable. A very poor ride is the GTI's main weakness, and a surprising one from a maker with Peugeot's experience. Poor ventilation is a further shortcoming.

## RENAULT 5 GORDINI

**£6,150**

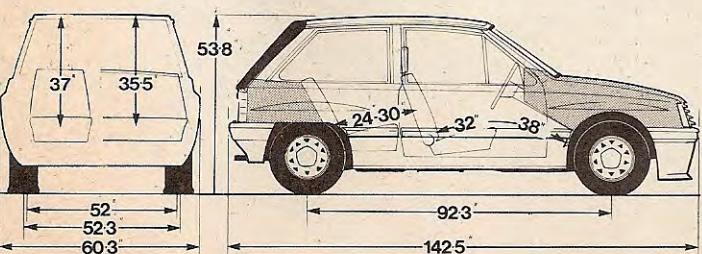


Power, bhp/rpm	110/6,000
Torque, lb ft/rpm	108.4/4,000
Tyres	155/70 HR 13
Weight, cwt	16.2
Max speed, mph	111.8
0-60 mph, sec	8.7
30-50 mph in 4th, sec	7.1
Overall mpg	28.3
Touring mpg	31.5
Fuel grade, stars	4
Boot capacity, cu ft	5.3
Test Date	June 19, 1982

A typically competent turbo conversion gives the 1.4-litre R5 Gordini sufficient performance to compete in this class with respectable economy. Handling is taut and quite predictable but the steering is rather heavy and traction is lacking on the relatively narrow standard issue rubber. The efficiently damped suspension gives acceptable ride comfort. Drawbacks are its cramped accommodation, plasticky trim, and poor refinement.

## VAUXHALL NOVA 1.3 SR

**£5,404**



Power, bhp/rpm	70/5,800
Torque, lb ft/rpm	74.5/3,800
Tyres	155/70 SR 13
Weight, cwt	15.1
Max speed, mph	103.1
0-60 mph, sec	10.6
30-50 mph in 4th, sec	9.6
Overall mpg	34.9
Touring mpg	44.4
Fuel grade, stars	4
Boot capacity, cu ft	7.8
Test Date	November 5, 1983

In its 1.3-litre SR form the Nova stands out as one of the best sporting superminis. Performance isn't up to scratch in this company but economy is tops. Handling is safe and viceless yet also very enjoyable. Accommodation, braking, gearchange and instrumentation are other good points. The ride is rather firm, however (if well controlled), and the engine is disappointingly noisy when revved (though cruising is refined).