

## Fiat Panda 1.3 MultiJet

By Jim Mc Cauley

As nose jobs go, you can't get better than on the new Panda which Fiat has successfully updated to give it a fresh and more assertive appearance. The simple concept of the flat-screen, hammock seating of the original model of 30 years ago has evolved to cater for 21st Century tastes, with a little more style while retaining a refreshing simplicity.



Available in a choice of two petrol engines and one diesel, test choice was the MultiJet diesel, its 1.3 litre engine producing 75 bhp and providing the economy that you seek in a small car.

The styling of the car offers occupants more space than in a traditional supermini with a higher seating position and versatile load carrying capability. The quirky, yet appealing, interior design is complemented by an interesting dash layout with a repeated

'square' theme featured across the instruments and controls, and repeated with a degree of practicality on the seatbacks.

On the road, and the willing diesel takes the Panda to 62 mph in 12.8 seconds with the potential to top 104 mph – slower on both counts than the sub one-litre turbo petrol version, but much more refined. Ride is firm and while acceptable to front seat occupants, brought adverse comments from those in the rear.

At night, superb headlights provide excellent spread and penetration, much better than expected from a supermini, while instrumentation is clearly lit without dazzle.

With regards to its load carrying capability, the optional flat folding front passenger seat helps to lengthen the available space extendible from the split folding rear seats adding to its versatility while standard side rails provide the basis for a series of roof mounted options.



On the economy front the car has an official combined fuel consumption of 72.4 mpg, with my return of 63 mpg over a week's driving confirming its meagre demand for fuel. With a CO2 emissions of 104 gms/km, the car is in Band B for zero car tax in its

first year and £20 per year thereafter. For company car users this equates to a Benefit in Kind rating of 12%.



Equipment-wise, the three-trim range comes with four airbags, central locking and electric front windows as standard while a number of extra items and add-on packs allow the owner to equip the car to individual requirements. All models also feature Dualdrive power steering which increases the power assistance for low speed manoeuvring in town traffic.

The 1.3 litre diesel model tested is listed at £11,100 and is in Group 8 of the ABI's 50 category listings for insurance purposes. Like all Fiat models, the Panda is covered by the company's comprehensive 3 year / 60,000 mile warranty.