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SPORTING FIESTAS



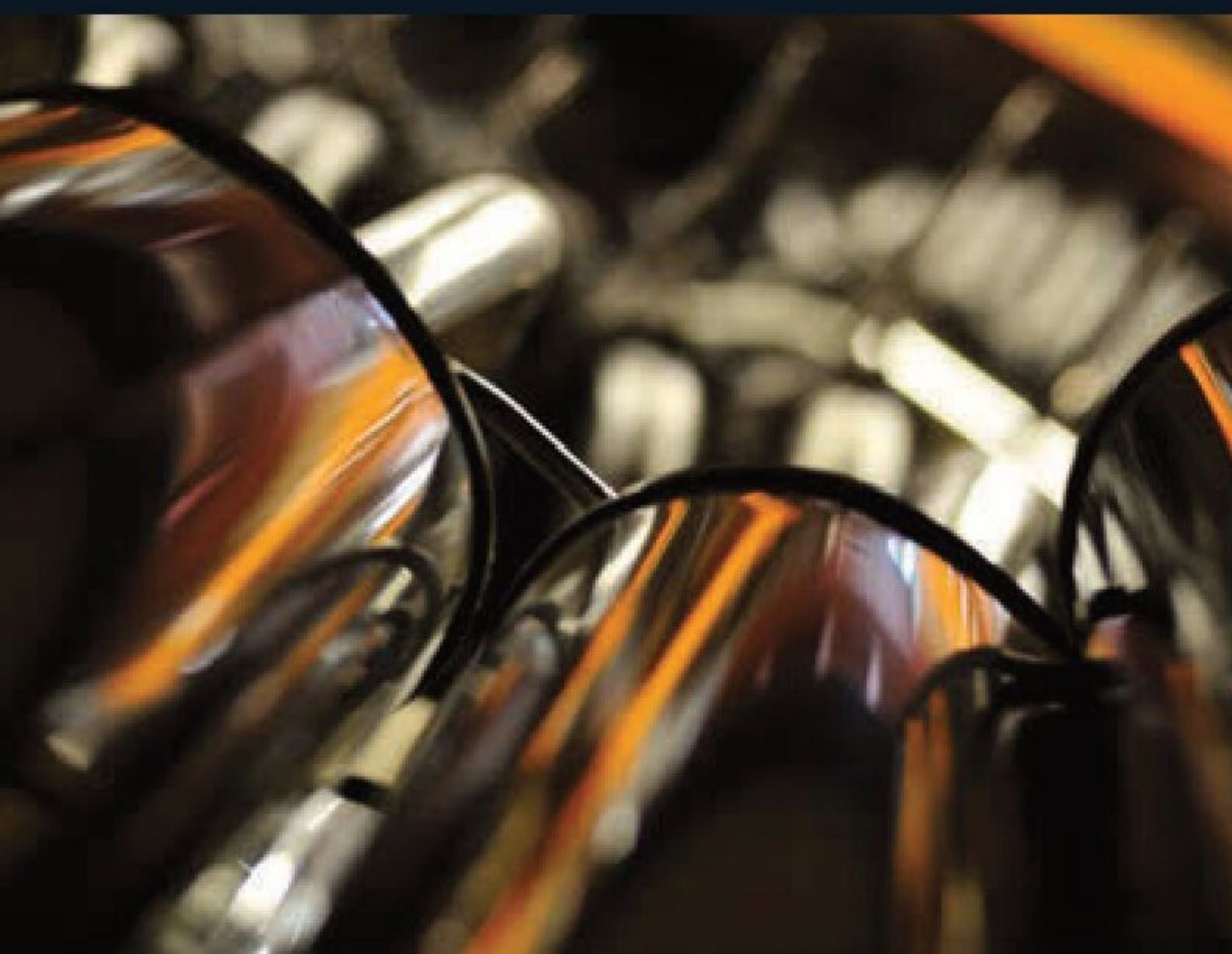
CELEBRATING
MORE THAN
FOUR DECADES
OF FORD'S
FEISTY HATCH

COLLECTOR'S EDITION



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FORD TUNING SPECIALISTS



Unit 7 Ivanhurst Industrial Estate
Wickford, ESSEX, SS11 7QY
01268 906380

✉ contact@ocmotorsport.co.uk



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CELEBRATING OVER FORTY YEARS OF FORD'S FEISTY HATCH

Kelsey Publishing Ltd, The Granary, Downs Court,
Yalding Hill, Yalding, Kent, ME18 6AL

EDITORIAL

EDITOR Jamie King

ART EDITOR Mark Field

SUB EDITOR Dan Williamson

CONTRIBUTORS Dan Sherwood, AS Design, Steve Saxty, Graham Robson,
Dan Williamson, Marc Stretton, Ade Brannan, Matt Woods, Dan Bevis, Jon
Cass, Daniel Goodyer

ADVERTISEMENT SALES

ADVERTISING SALES Talk Media Sales

01732 445325, info@talkmediasales.co.uk

MANAGEMENT

CHIEF EXECUTIVE Steve Wright

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER Phil Weeden

MANAGING DIRECTOR Kevin McCormick

SUBSCRIPTION MARKETING DIRECTOR Gill Lambert

RETAIL DIRECTOR Steve Brown

PRINT PRODUCTION MANAGER Georgina Harris

PRINT PRODUCTION CONTROLLERS Kelly Orriss and Hayley Brown

DISTRIBUTION IN GREAT BRITAIN

MARKETFORCE (UK)

3rd Floor, 161 Marsh Wall, London. E14 9AP

Tel: 0330 390 6555

DISTRIBUTION IN NORTHERN IRELAND
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NEWSPREAD

Tel: +353 23 886 3850

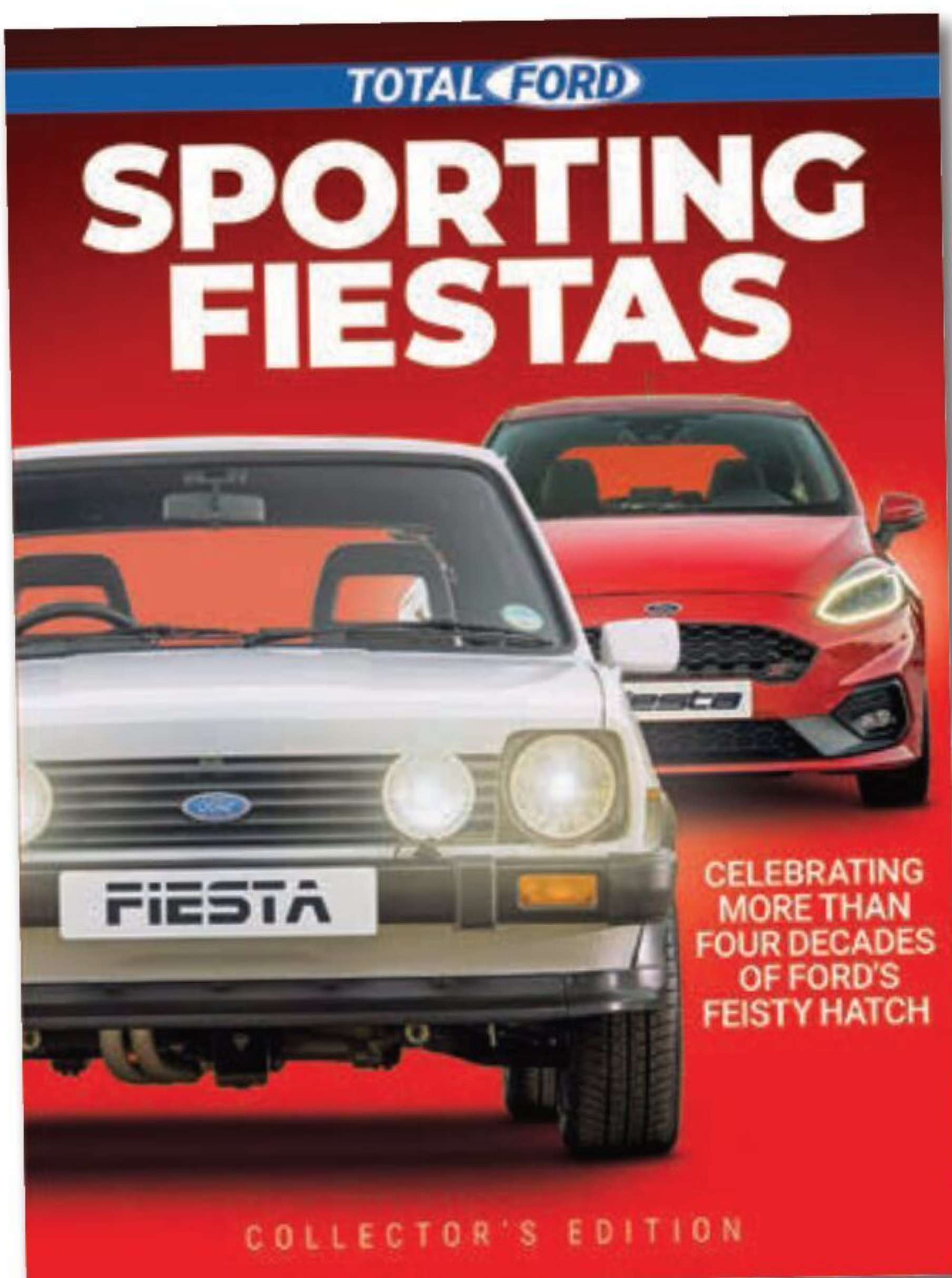
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WELCOME

Hello, and welcome to the second issue of our *Total Ford* series of collector's edition bookazines.

In this issue we're celebrating all things Fiesta – Ford's little front-wheel-drive hatchback that was designed to cater for the emerging European small car market.

Of course, with Ford fans already having a history of taking regular models and tuning the nuts off them, it wasn't long before demand for a faster version of the Fiesta saw Ford launch the Supersport model.

Our thirst for a sporty appearance was quenched, but we wanted something with the performance to rival the VW Golf GTI in what soon became dubbed the hot hatch market.

Ford's answer was to stick a tuned version of the 1.6-litre Kent engine into a Fiesta wearing the same chunky bodykit as the Supersport; the Mk1 XR2 was born.

And it changed the way we think about sporting Fiestas forever.

Can you believe that was more than 40 years ago? And the DNA of those early sporting models is still very clear to see even in the very latest 2021 machines.

Through the course of the last four decades, sporty Fiestas – wearing iconic badges like XR, RS and ST – have seen the meteoric rise of the hot hatch market before enduring a catastrophic crash thanks to the prohibitively expensive insurance premiums that followed.

But through thick and thin, a fast Fiesta has remained a constant on Ford's forecourts. The arrival of a new breed of sporty Fiestas in the 2000s rekindled our passion for performance, and the model has continued to evolve and get even better ever since.

In this 100-page collector's edition bookazine, we'll guide you through the whole story; from initial design to birth of the sporting models, through the highs and lows of the hot hatch era, right through to today's multi-award winning technological masterpieces. All backed up with beautiful photography and period archive images, supplemented by expert buying and tuning advice, and a sprinkling of some of the finest Fiesta feature cars for inspiration too.

Fans of a fast Fiesta, enjoy. ■

JAMIE KING EDITOR



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TOTAL FORD

SPORTING FIESTAS

CELEBRATING OVER FORTY YEARS OF FORD'S FEISTY HATCH



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Ford designers drew this sketch in 1972, adapting the Wolf into a production-viable car



Original Bobcat wind-tunnel model is the oldest surviving Fiesta in the world

CHAPTER ONE

THE BIRTH OF AN ICON

The Fiesta first appeared on our roads back in 1976, and it broke new ground for Ford. But how did it come about? And who designed it?

Words **STEVE SAXTY, DAN WILLIAMSON**

Exactly who designed the original Fiesta seems to have become a tale of myth and legend. So let's dive in and go back to 1971; Henry Ford II had pushed Ford of Britain and Germany to work together in 1969 but their forced marriage wasn't an easy one at first.

Yet the boss was insistent; France, Italy and Spain were dominated by small cars, and Ford needed one too if it was to compete across the entire continent. The British Ford engineers were fixated with rear-wheel drive because they could use the same powertrains across their cars and vans – and so a unique front-wheel-drive setup would be prohibitively expensive.

But Henry wasn't having any of it, and in late-1970 sent his number two, Lee Iacocca, off to bang heads and encourage the Europeans to see sense.

That October, Lee was scheduled to chair an important meeting at Ford's Dunton R&D centre in Essex about future products. He realised that he had lots of discussion papers, but no images of the sort of small car he wanted.

Designer Trevor Erskine was in the studio the night before the discussion and Lee, the second-most powerful man in the company, walked in and asked him to 'do a quick couple of sketches, something a bit Italian'. They helped everyone get a flavour of what the new car might be, but

nothing more. The hard work began in 1971 at Dunton under the leadership of design vice president Joe Oros, but few liked the heavy-looking cars that resulted.

FIAT RIVAL

By 1972, Iacocca was getting impatient: the Fiat 127 was on the road; it looked great, drove well and was front-wheel drive. Yet the Brits were still pushing for rear-wheel drive, and their designs had none of the flair of Erskine's quick sketches – or the Fiat.

Lee decided to resolve it once and for all by asking Ford's chief designer in Detroit, Gene Bordinat, to create two almost identical rear-wheel-drive and front-wheel-drive cars, dubbed Mini Mites. The rear-wheel-drive version looked very American and the other a little more European, but it was the third car that caused the biggest shock.

Argentine racing driver Alejandro de Tomaso had made his own sports cars, designed by the well-respected Italian studio Ghia; he liked it so much that he bought the company. When times were tough in the Seventies he sold Ghia to Ford.

The transaction meant Ford picked up two of Ghia's star designers, Paulo Martin and Tom Tjaarda, who Iacocca tasked to create something they dubbed simply the Blue Car. It was breathtakingly pretty, if far too small, and when it was lined up for market-research testing it trounced the competition.

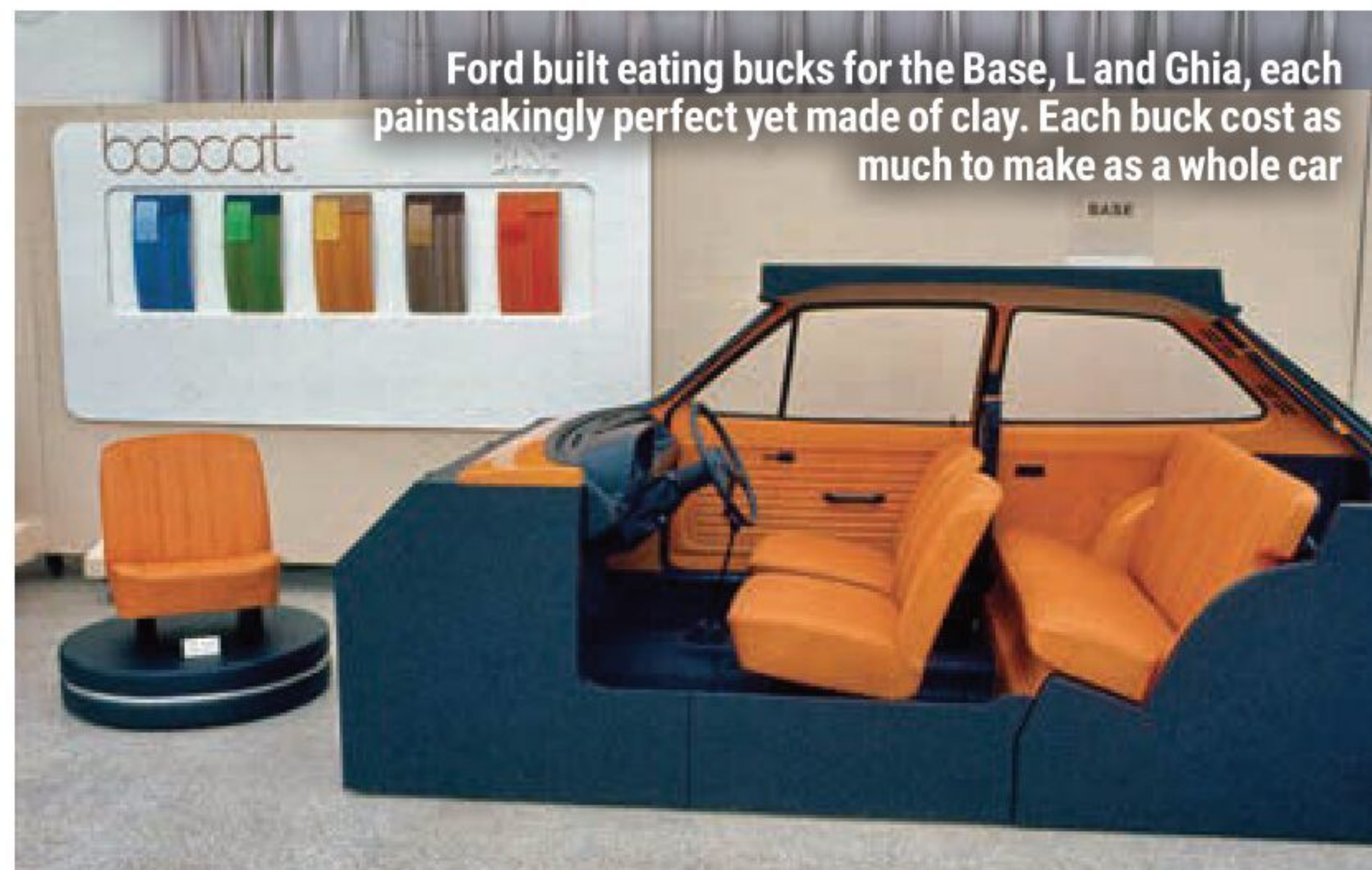
The early-1973 research was conclusive; Ford could create the prettiest car, and customers preferred the space of a front-wheel-drive Mini Mite over the rear-wheel-drive version. There



This 1970 full-sized fibreglass model featured a grooved side and a dropped bonnet that would feature on the final Fiesta



The German studio's winning design; voting was split 50/50, so the best of each was merged



Ford built eating bucks for the Base, L and Ghia, each painstakingly perfect yet made of clay. Each buck cost as much to make as a whole car



The first Fiesta? Not really. This 1975 full-sized fibreglass model was covered in Di-Noc plastic film to give the appearance of a painted car

“...BREATH TAKINGLY PRETTY, IF FAR TOO SMALL, AND WHEN IT WAS LINED UP FOR MARKET-RESEARCH TESTING IT TROUNCED THE COMPETITION”

was no turning back; Lee committed to making the prettiest small car of all.

TALKING ITALIAN

In spring 1973 things stepped up a gear – Tom Tjaarda at Ghia was asked to design a successor to the tiny Blue Car that was bigger and more Italian in spirit. The new design, called Wolf, nailed it.

The machine was a bit cramped in places, and too long in others, but it was clear that if Ford could make a production version that retained the Wolf's feel, then it had a potential winner.

But Ghia's job was to create concept cars, not to design production vehicles, so the Ford design studios were given the task of creating 'on package' versions of Wolf. The project, now codenamed Bobcat, was split between the British design studio led by Jack Telnack and Uwe Bahnsen who ran things in Germany.

The German design team included Klaus Kapitza, Boyke Boyer, Karl-Heinz Nottrodt, Horst Ziegner, Wouter de Vries and Gunther Heister. Between them they created a car that was judged

– by a single vote – to be the winner by Ford's 20-or-so bosses in October 1973.

There was still a lot of work to be done. The British design team created an award-winning interior during 1974 and helped their German colleagues to detail the production machine.

Astonishingly, the Bobcat ended up looking leaner, prettier and more like the Wolf than the slightly chubby-feeling German design or the serious-looking British proposal.

The small car was getting closer to production, but there were still many details that needed resolving: the tiny inset tail lights needed to bulge out to be visible from the side, a rear spoiler was moulded into the roof, and the Capri Mk2-style grille swapped for one featuring five slatted vanes. Each change seemed to add more character and, by the time it was finally research-tested, Ford knew it had a winner.

A simple design that stood the test of time: the finished Mk1 Fiesta



JOINT EFFORT

Many designers had their hands on the Fiesta, but each of them inched the car forward in a good way. Without Erskine's sketches there might not have been a small car.

Without Tjaarda's Wolf, the Fiesta might have been less Italian – and without the combined effort of the designers' Anglo-German collaboration, the car would not have been so stylishly European.

Ford's new baby was born under two very talented design parents: Uwe Bahnsen went on to run Ford of Europe design for ten years, and Jack Telnack subsequently led global Ford design for almost two decades.

The original Fiesta remains one of Ford's best-loved designs, but it owes its existence to one American forcing the Europeans to make the prettiest hatchback of all. ■

CHAPTER TWO

THE FIRST SPORTING FIESTAS

When the Fiesta was launched in 1976, Ford had no intentions of entering the hot-hatch market. But just five years later, the now-legendary XR2 arrived



Early Fiesta S with optional alloy wheels

S MODELS

The first sporting Fiesta was a typical stickers-and-stripes exercise, with just a puny 52bhp 1.1-litre or 65bhp 1.3-litre Valencia engine under the bonnet.

But at least the chassis was beefed up, with uprated springs, rear anti-roll bar and brake servo. Bodywork had basic black trim,

rectangular halogen headlamps, reversing light, heated rear window, and decals with an S motif. Sporty cabin had Cadiz (deckchair) cloth trim, reclining seats, four-spoke steering wheel, centre console, glovebox and soft-feel dash with rev counter. Chevron cloth came in 1978, swapped for Windsor check in 1982, along with A-frame headrests and red instrument surround. The original 4.5x12in wheels were replaced by black versions in 1981 and 5x13in steels in 1982.

1100S

YEARS PRODUCED 1976 to 1983

ENGINE CAPACITY 1117cc

POWER 52bhp

0-60 17 seconds

TOP SPEED 86mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £2680

1300S

YEARS PRODUCED 1976 to 1983

ENGINE CAPACITY 1298cc

POWER 65bhp

0-60 13.7 seconds

TOP SPEED 94mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £2844



Supersport was Super S in some European markets



XR2 was designed by SVE to be quick and cheap



SUPERSPORT

The Fiesta Supersport is certainly a fast Ford superhero; it was the first Ford hot hatch, it was the forerunner to all quick Fiestas – including the current ST – and its styling has never been bettered. It is seriously cool.

The Fiesta Supersport was launched on 18 July 1980, based on the regular 1300S, with the same sports suspension, servo-assisted front disc brakes, four-speed gearbox and 1298cc Valencia engine; boasting a twin-choke Weber carburettor it gave 65bhp, meaning a top speed of 98mph but a nevertheless-respectable jog to 60mph in 13.7 seconds.

Not that it really mattered, because the Supersport turned the granny-spec Mk1 Fiesta into a truly macho machine.

Ford's Series-X catalogue donated polyurethane spoilers and wheelarch extensions, underpinned with classic RS-type four-spoke 6x13in alloy wheels. A choice of four body colours – Diamond White, Sunburst Red, Black or Strato Silver – was complemented

by bold side stripes, blacked-out window surrounds, bumper overriders and circular driving lamps.

Reclining front seats in checked red or grey Carla cloth continued the Supersport theme into the cockpit, where the rev counter, four-spoke steering wheel, sports gearknob and centre console (with clock) were shared with the 1300S.

A pair of option packs added a little luxury: the Climate Control Pack included tinted glass, gradient-band tinted windscreen and opening front quarter windows, while the Executive

Pack added headlamp washers, Ford RST21P push-button radio, and removable glass sunroof. Both packs are desirable today.

By spring 1981 and 3000 sales (built in Spain and sold throughout Europe, some badged as Super S) the Supersport was gone – soon to be replaced by the original XR2, taking obvious influence from its predecessor.

Today, the Supersport demands equal enthusiasm among collectors and fast Ford fans alike – adored as fantastic fun and forerunner to every subsequent Blue Oval hot hatchback.



SUPERSPORT

YEARS PRODUCED 1980 to 1981

ENGINE CAPACITY 1298cc

POWER 65bhp

0-60 13.7 seconds

TOP SPEED 98mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £4499



XR2

After the Supersport proved that a feisty Fiesta was a viable, money-making proposition, Ford's Special Vehicle Engineering (SVE) operation conjured up the XR2 with the simple aim of making it capable of over 100mph and affordable to boot. And on its September 1981 launch, Ford's entry to the growing hot hatch market ticked all the boxes.

Following the age-old adage of there's no substitute for cubes – and being the cheapest way to bless the XR2 with the desired turn of speed – Ford took inspiration from its Stateside offerings and shoehorned in the Federal engine found in all US-bound Fiestas. Based on the 1598cc Kent motor, the XR2's engine was easily tweaked with the go-faster additions of the GT-specification cylinder head and camshaft. Topped with a 32/34 DFT Weber carburettor, the Crossflow produced 83bhp – enough to push the

XR2 to a top whack of 105mph and cover the 0-to-60mph sprint in 9.4 seconds.

To keep it all in check, Ford raided the parts bin for the ventilated front discs and servo of the Escort 1.6, while the back brakes benefited from larger 19mm wheel cylinders. Crisp, precise handling came courtesy of revised suspension geometry, new damper settings and a stance that was an inch lower than that of the XR's cooking counterparts.

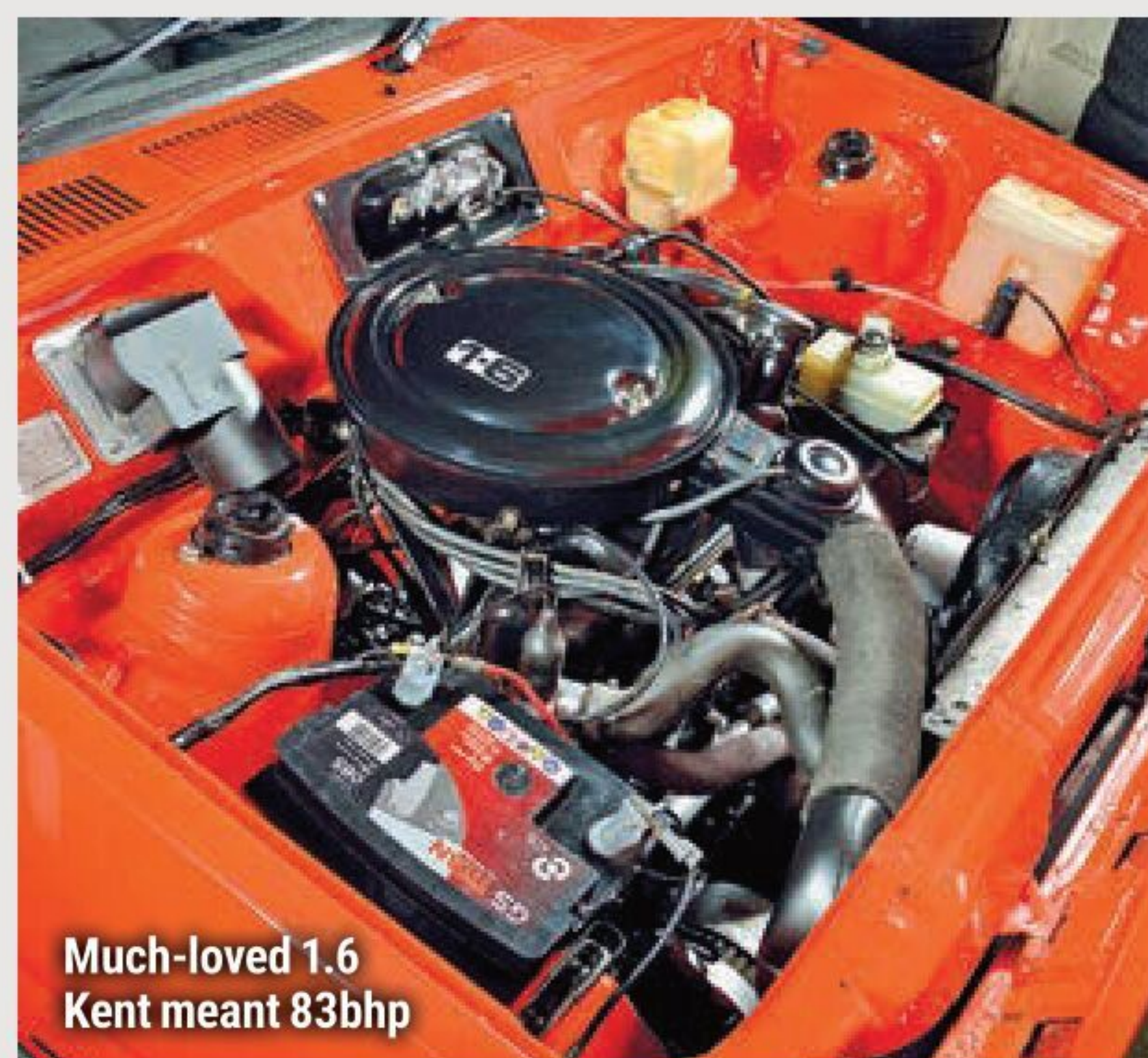
The flagship Fiesta's exterior was just as sporty as its performance, the additions of a rubber bodykit and spoilers creating a chunky, purposeful look. Completing the XR2's visual identity were shaded body decals, 6x13in pepperpot alloy wheels, twin spot lamps and US-type circular headlamps.

The interior wasn't quite as radical, but there was no mistaking the sporty nature of the XR2 through the fitment of attractive Storm cloth-trimmed sports seats, two-spoke steering wheel, 140mph speedometer and rev counter.

Best of all, the XR2's fine package cost no more than £5500, meaning its great drive was complemented with excellent value.

Unsurprisingly, by the time it was ousted by the introduction of the Mk2 Fiesta, over 20,000 XR2s had chirped their way off dealers' forecourts.

What's more, the XR2's as popular today as it was back then. Prices might be rocketing – some examples being advertised for well over £20,000 – but for a classic Ford that really does have the X-factor in every sense, Ford's original fast Fiesta takes some beating. ■



Much-loved 1.6 Kent meant 83bhp

XR2

YEARS PRODUCED 1981 to 1983

ENGINE CAPACITY 1598cc

POWER 83bhp

0-60 9.4 seconds

TOP SPEED 105mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £5500





KEEP IT IN THE FAMILY

With three generations of Blue Oval lovers in the family, father-and-son Fiesta fans Barry and Kyle Ayres are following in their father's (and grandfather's) footsteps...

Words and photos DAN SHERWOOD

When you see the passion that the male members of the Ayres family have for their classic Fords, you wouldn't bet against being able to cut them open to find the Blue Oval running through them like the letters in a stick of Southend rock.

With each of three generations owning their own slice of old-school cool, you can see how the

fondness for the brand has trickled down over the years, reinforcing the premise that families who restore together stay together. Or something along those lines anyway.

As the youngest member of the clan, 24-year-old Kyle started his own Ford obsession with the immaculate red Supersport replica you see on these pages.

"I'd grown up with both my dad and grandad

owning Fords, and seeing the pictures of their old Mk1 Escorts and XR3s made me want one even more," says the Whittlesey-based retro nut. "So when it came time for me to start looking for my first car – a few months before my 17th birthday – it was definitely a classic Ford that I was looking to purchase."

Having taken a shine to the Mk1 Fiesta Supersport (a car that at the time could



be purchased for around £3000), Kyle did the diligent thing and checked the potential premiums with his insurance broker to see what he'd be forking out for if he could find a suitable car. Unfortunately, the quotes were coming back way to hot to handle, and Kyle had to set his sights a little lower for his first car.

He says, "With a genuine Supersport out of the window, the next best thing was to build a replica, which led to me buying a 1980 1.1 GL as a base for £600."

The condition of the car was pretty decent for its age – likely helped by the fact it was an unfinished project that had been off the road for the last eight years – and the previous owner had fitted new front wings and front panel. The original sills, rear arches and boot floor were also intact, helped largely by the Ziebart rust protection applied from new.

Kyle, who's a trained bodywork technician, wasted no time in starting his project. He says, "I worked on it at my then-current workplace, Storey's Accident Repair Centre, where I stripped it and started sanding and repairing any defects on the bodywork ready for paint. I also sent the bumpers away to be blasted and powder-coated black, followed by a set of Supersport wheels I'd acquired, which would be painted silver."

Once the car's bodywork had received its fresh coat of red paint – from Kyle's own skilled hand – it was returned to the Ayres' driveway, where he continued its transformation with a set of Supersport arch extensions and rear spoiler.

Kyle says, "The arches, spoiler and sticker pack really set the car off and look great with the four-spoke RS wheels. And, because I'm a fan of the rally-look, I complemented the styling with a quartet of Cibie spotlights."

But as cool as the exterior looked, Kyle couldn't live out his Supersport fantasies with the stock GL interior, so a set of XR3i seats was sourced and retrimmed, along with the GL rear bench, in Supersport checked fabric.

Kyle says, "The car looked mint, and was a dead ringer for a Supersport – until you popped the bonnet or tried to give it some beans..."

Coming with a 1300 Kent Crossflow engine, Supersports were not the fastest Fiestas ever built, but they were a great deal perkier than a boggy 1.1-litre GL, so after a couple of years

RED Mk1

ENGINE 1660cc, four-cylinder, race-built XR2 Crossflow, race cam, double valve springs, ported and polished head, Ashley four-branch manifold with Sportex stainless-steel exhaust system, twin 40 Weber carburettors, Colin Reay alloy radiator, Facet fuel pump, red silicone hoses

PERFORMANCE 130bhp

TRANSMISSION Mk1 XR2 four-speed gearbox, Stage 1 uprated clutch

SUSPENSION Outlaw 35mm lowering springs and XR2 dampers, Outlaw lower rear arms, Outlaw polyurethane bushes

BRAKES XR2 callipers, drilled and grooved discs, EBC Greenstuff pads

WHEELS & TYRES 6x13in four-spoke Supersport alloys with 175/60x13 Yokohama A539 tyres

EXTERIOR Three-door shell, Ziebart rust-proofing from new, full respray, Supersport wheelarches and spoiler, Supersport stripes, Cibie spotlights on custom brackets, all original panels other than new wings and front panel

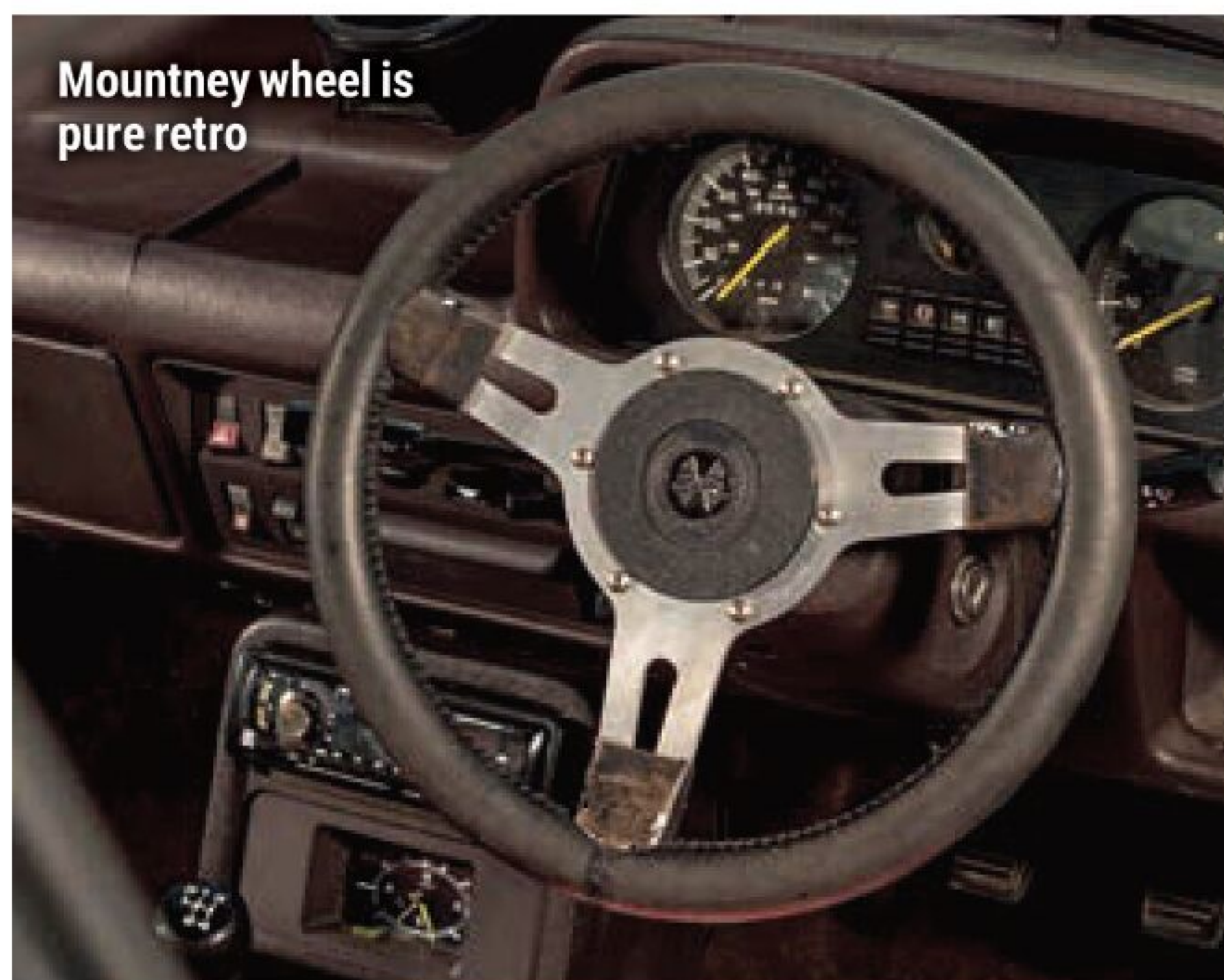
INTERIOR XR3i front seats and standard GL rear seat retrimmed in Supersport fabric, fan-over-ride switch, fire extinguisher, Mountney steering wheel, Supersport instruments, Sony speakers on rear parcel shelf, rear seat belts, Bluetooth stereo, Sony 6x9s, Fire & Ice amp and sub

Race-spec Crossflow would embarrass many a modern Ford



Who's the daddy?





Mounthey wheel is pure retro



Seats were retrimmed in sporty checked cloth

of ownership – when his insurance premiums began to drop – Kyle made the swap to a more powerful 1.3-litre lump.

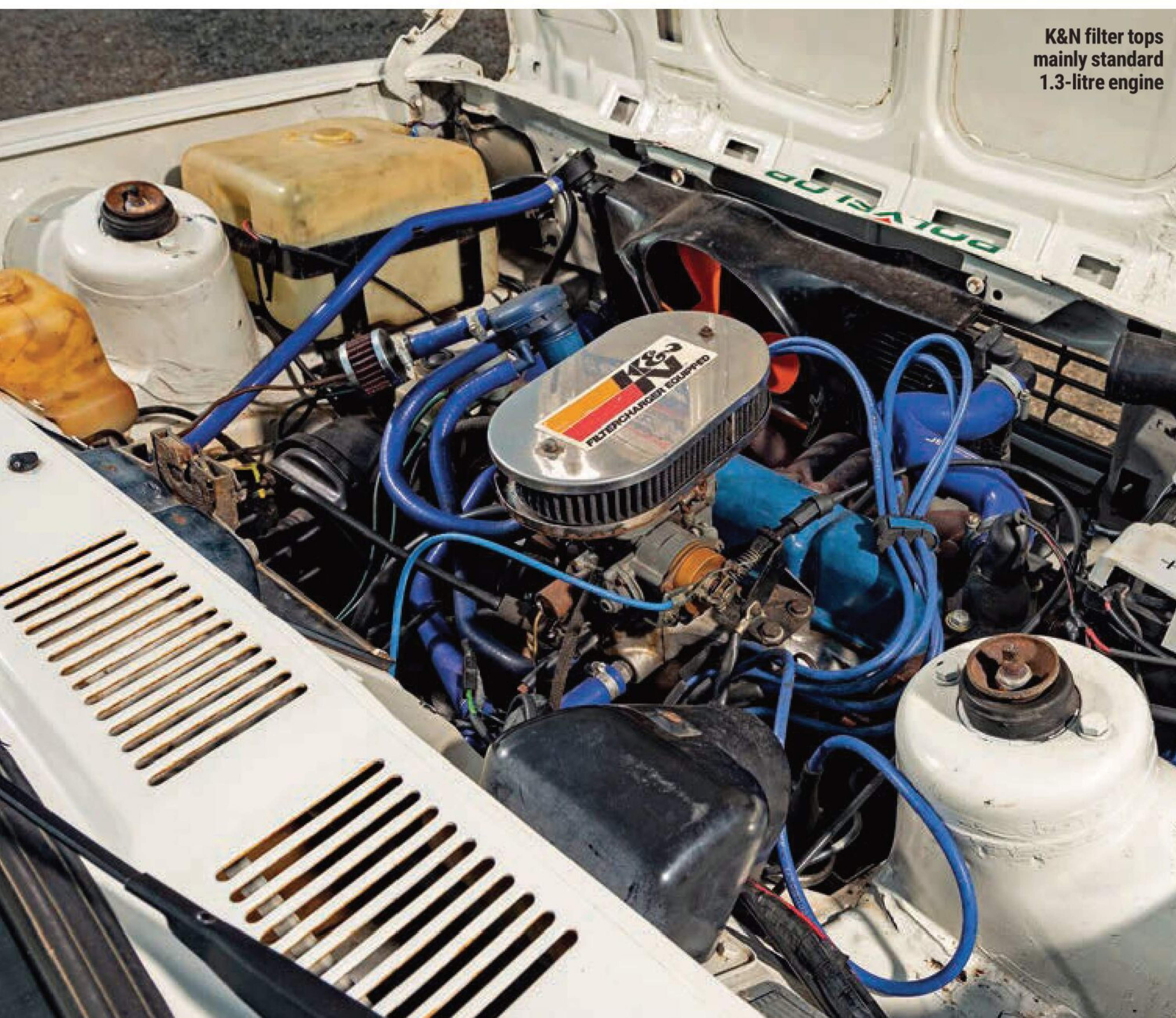
Kyle grins, “The 1.3 was definitely quicker, but I still wanted more, so after a few years I bit the bullet and went for a 1660cc race-built XR2 crossflow – running a race cam and a pair of Weber 40s.

“Packing around 130bhp, it’s more than double the power of a stock Supersport now, so Dad has to really keep his Fiesta on the boil if he wants to keep up.”

Kyle’s dad, Barry, may need to use all his experience behind the wheel to keep pace with his power-crazed offspring, but he has the upper hand when it comes to originality, as his car is the real deal. →

“PACKING AROUND 130BHP, IT’S MORE THAN DOUBLE THE POWER OF A STOCK SUPERSPORT NOW, SO DAD HAS TO REALLY KEEP HIS FIESTA ON THE BOIL IF HE WANTS TO KEEP UP”





K&N filter tops mainly standard 1.3-litre engine



The fascia of Fiestas past



Standard Supersport seats

Barry says, “Ironically, after all these years inspiring my son and nurturing his love of old Fords, it was actually him and his car that influenced my decision to buy this one.

“I’d got used to seeing the Fiesta on the driveway and enjoyed seeing its progress as Kyle completed the build, so when he finished it and starting using it as his daily, I missed seeing it. So I decided to buy one of my own.”

Obviously, aged 45 at the time, Barry had no issues insuring a genuine 1.3-litre Supersport, so he went out and bought this white example for a cool £1200.

“It was pretty rough around the edges,” he chortles. “In fact, it was so rusty it was practically falling to bits. It needed a thorough restoration to get it back up and running again, including a new floorpan, boot floor, wheelarches and front panel.”

In order to restore the Supersport’s former glory, Barry got hands-on with a MIG welder, a task he’d never undertaken before, but as there was so much welding required, by the time the shell was finally ready for paint, he had become quite the expert.

Barry adds, “Once the shell was shipshape again, Kyle painted it in the spray booth at his new job at Spyder Cars. He did a good job, although he keeps bugging me to let him redo it, as his skills have improved since it was done.”

Being keen to do as much of the build as possible himself – with help from Kyle and

his painting skills, of course – Barry was in no rush, and did it in stages as and when he could spare the time and money, preferring to do jobs right rather than rush them. Things like the retrimmed seats, refurbished wheels and an extensive engine rebuild added even more time and cost to the build, but really give the kind of quality finish that both cars exhibit in spades.

But don’t let that fool you into thinking this perfect pair of flawless Fiestas are hidden away and only used when the sun has got his hat on, as, although neither car is a daily driver, when the father-and-son duo do decide to unleash their beasts, there’s no holding them back.

Barry says, “We’ve had a great time restoring and modifying the cars and we’ve got no plans to get rid of them. In fact, we’re keener than ever to get out there more and enjoy them.

“Of course, this inevitably means further work will be required to keep them in tip-top condition, but then that’s half of the experience with classic cars, isn’t it?”

And we suppose they’re right. What fun is having a concours classic that you’re too scared to drive and enjoy? Surely it’s better to build a car that you can use and abuse, and simply relish the love and attention they need to keep them that way.

It’s certainly an ethos that has worked for the last three generations of the Ayres family, and, if Barry and Kyle have anything to say about it, it’s a trait that’s set to stay. ■

WHITE Mk1

ENGINE 1.3-litre, four-cylinder, Kent Crossflow engine, Ashley stainless-steel exhaust system, blue silicone hoses

PERFORMANCE 65bhp

TRANSMISSION Standard four-speed gearbox

SUSPENSION Standard Supersport sports suspension and OEM rear anti-roll bar

BRAKES Standard Supersport

WHEELS & TYRES 6x13in four-spoke Supersport alloys with 185/60x13 Toyo Proxes CF1 tyres

EXTERIOR Standard Supersport with Executive Pack sunroof, headlight washers and opening quarter lights

INTERIOR Standard Supersport with period rear shelf speakers



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The second prototype – a Ghia with the chrome replaced by S-type black to match the unique bumpers. The circular lights and grille, with offset Ford badge, were from the North American Fiesta. The Series X plastic wheelarch flares were painted silver to complete the RS style of what might be the best-looking Mk1 Fiesta ever made

FIESTA RS?

Had it gone into production, the Fiesta RS would have been super-equipped – and super-expensive. This is what we missed out on...

Words **STEVE SAXTY**

Ford may have been late to arrive at the hatchback party in 1976, but the Fiesta's Italian-style looks were an instant hit.

The new car had been conceived with four trim levels; Base, L and XL targeted groups like young families and single buyers, while for older, slightly wealthier buyers there was the Ghia. Absent from all this was a sporty model, simply because the car was originally intended to use a just pair of 950cc and 1100cc engines.

But Walter Hayes – Ford's PR supremo and instigator of the Cosworth DFV programme – was a Ford board member who had the close ear of Henry Ford II. He reasoned that, for pennies extra, the 1.1-litre engine could be enlarged to

1.3-litres to create a sporty Fiesta that offered huge profit and image potential. Walter won his point and, late in the day, the XL was killed off in favour of the 1.1-litre S and joined – almost a year after launch – by a 1.3-litre option.

The first Fiesta 1300S models, with a none-too-feisty 65bhp, were not fast, but they looked good and sold well during 1978.

It was the time when Ford's Motorsport team was reaching the peak of its championship-winning years with the Escort, but the clock was ticking – Ford knew the next Escort would also shift to front-wheel drive like the Fiesta.

Ford's Cologne-based Motorsport team, run by Mike Kranefuss, decided to test the water with three Group 2 Fiestas driven by top-level stars of





rallying like Ari Vatanen and Roger Clark on a limited series of 1979 events.

SPEZIAL ORDER

These rally-prepared Fiestas were powered by highly-tuned, twin-carb versions of the 1.6-litre engine used exclusively in the North American Fiesta. Kranefuss's team was located across the street from the main factory, next to the pilot plant that made Ford's prototypes. This good fortune allowed them to make race cars and limited runs of Spezial RS-style left-hand-drive models – machines like wide-arched RS2000s and 3.0S Capris. The Spezial cars, built in tens rather than hundreds, featured unique RS-branded interiors and components plundered

from the growing range of RS Accessory parts. The Fiesta was the obvious base for the next Special – the team was about to rally it and the S model was still new on the market. The RS Fiesta, or at least a limited-run, RS-type special was on its way.

Three prototype cars were created: a white S and two silver Ghias, each a little plusher and more complex than the last. The two metallic cars were powered by a twin-carb conversion based on the Group 2 rally car's engine.

The third vehicle was the definitive concept car that looked production-ready; but it was not to be. Every RS trinket had been thrown at it: unique interior, special exterior and that engine conversion, so – perhaps inevitably – the →

“EVERY RS TRINKET HAD BEEN THROWN AT IT: UNIQUE INTERIOR, SPECIAL EXTERIOR AND ENGINE CONVERSION... BUT NOBODY WAS GOING TO BUY THIS EXOTIC MACHINE AT SUCH A HIGH PRICE”



This 1981 shot shows Scheel seats in the Escort RS1600i and Capri turbo, while the Fiesta made do with standard seats



The third prototype was based on another Ghia – this time with Bitter Chocolate interior. The Scheel seats were behind a three-spoke RS wheel and a fancy hi-fi



The third prototype was badged SuperRRR, based on a 1.1 Ghia with Series X twin-carb kit, painted bumpers and rear spoiler

projected cost had rocketed to almost twice that of the 1.1S. The hand-built car looked fantastic but nobody was going to buy this exotic machine at such a high price.

Things got bleaker still when the rally cars proved to be disappointing. The Fiesta RS was doomed, and the decision was made to donate the third car to Germany's *Auto Motor und Sport* magazine as a prize. Like the two other prototypes, the car vanished without trace.

RS IN PIECES

The idea of the Fiesta RS was too good to disappear, though. Almost all of its components, including the engine kit, those wonderful seats and bulging wheelarches were made available

as Series X accessories. Yes, the wealthy Fiesta enthusiast could have built themselves a 95 per cent replica of the Fiesta RS-that-never-was.

Competitors' hatches were hotting-up by 1980, and a sporty Fiesta was needed fast; the answer was the Supersport. It might have been little more than a striped-up 1300S with RS wheels, arches and spoilers but it sold like warm cakes.

The definitive hot Fiesta finally happened a year later, when the XR2 arrived – an RS in spirit but not in price. Ford had nailed it; the car looked great, went well and, best of all, it was affordable because the XR's costs had been reined in.

Its RS predecessor could have been one of the greats – but the Fiesta RS just tried too hard and its exotic parts cost too much. ■



Under the bonnet of the embryonic Fiesta RS was a 1.3-litre twin-carb Kent engine, here shown alongside the Vatanen rally car that used a highly-tuned version of the 1.6-litre engine



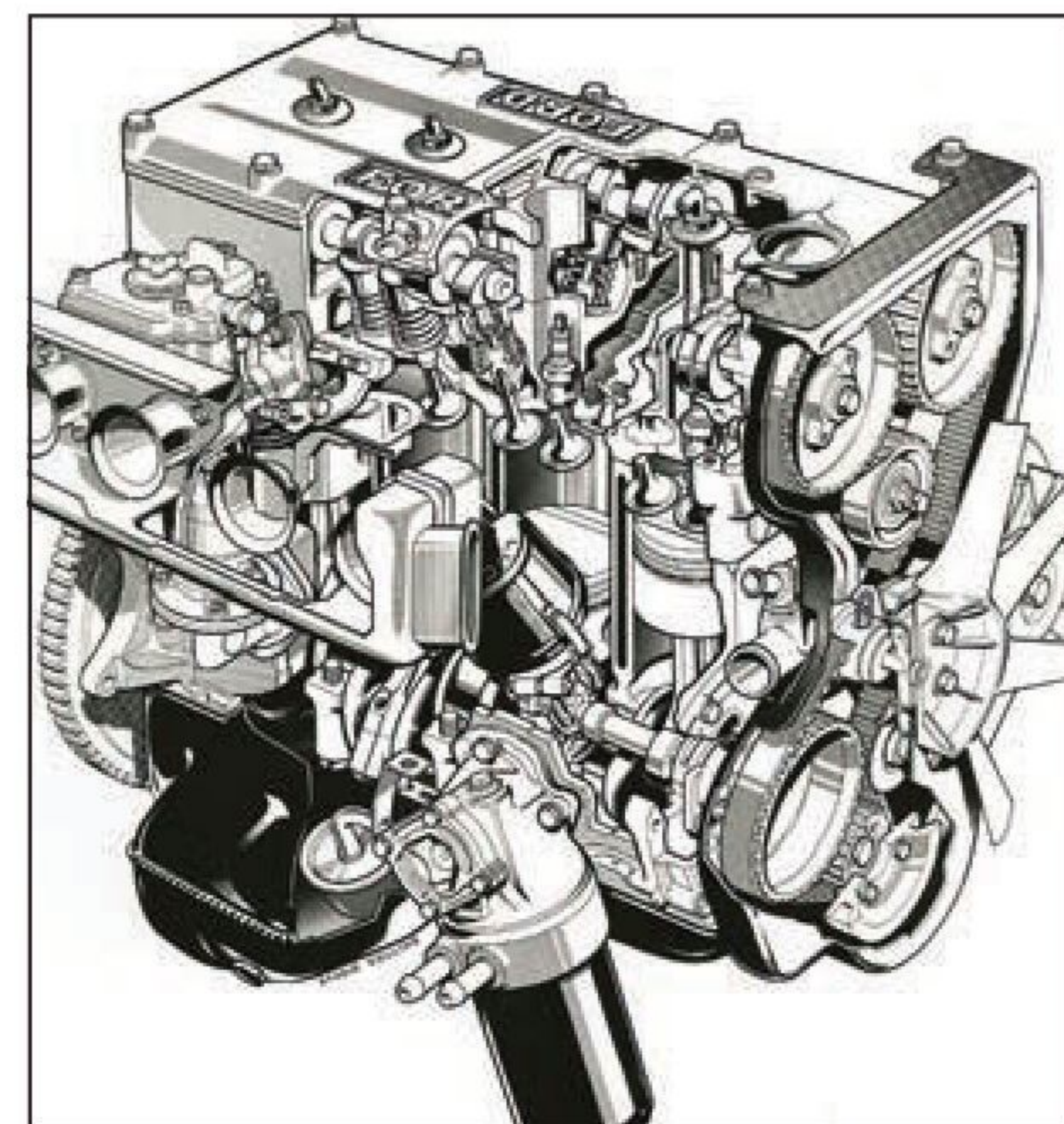
The first Fiesta modified by Ford Motorsport was this 1.1S in 1976. Note the retrimmed Scheel bucket seats and boxy arches, covering 7x13in RS wheels



Crushed velour fabric, big speakers and Fischer C-Box cassette storage



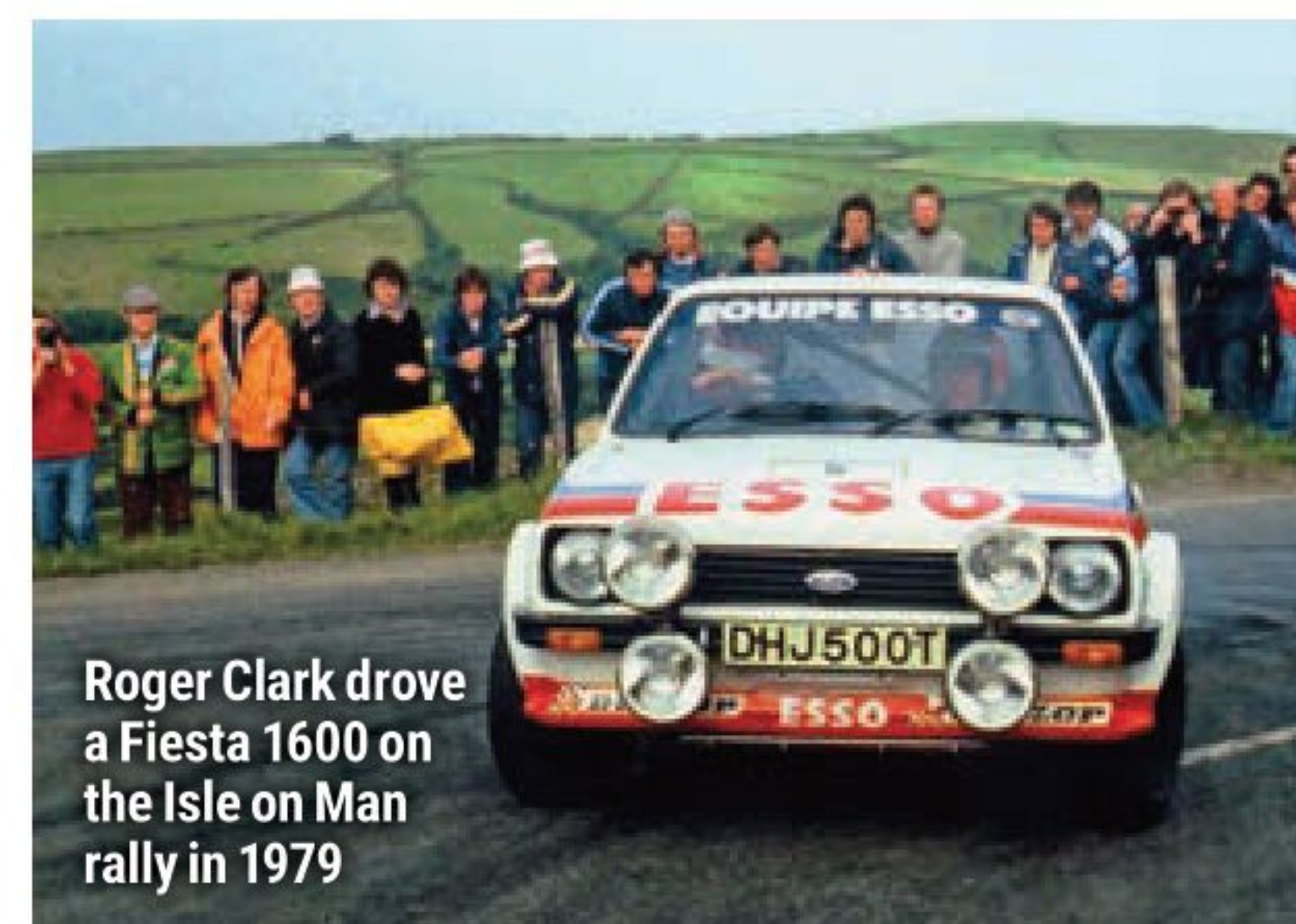
Roger Clark and Ari Vatanen both rallied the Fiesta, but the little hatch lacked grunt compared to the 250bhp Escorts the pair were used to driving



The Fiesta was first intended to have a 1.7-litre BDA, with later hopes of a 2.0-litre version producing over 180bhp



Ari Vatanen drove this car in the Monte Carlo in 1979



Roger Clark drove a Fiesta 1600 on the Isle of Man rally in 1979

FIESTA BDA

The Ford Fiesta was, and still is, a fantastic car. The Cosworth-developed BDA engine was a world-beater. So, what would happen if the two were to meet? We nearly found out...

Words GRAHAM ROBSON

By 1979, Ford's works motorsport team at Boreham had been campaigning Escorts for more than a decade and would soon need a successor; it was in a frantic atmosphere that the search for a new theme began.

It was in this period that the development of three different machines – one being the famous FiEscort (a mixture of Fiesta and Escort architecture), one being the first attempts to produce an Escort RS1700T, and a third being an unlikely little car that everyone knew as the Fiesta BDA.

We all know what happened to two of those projects; the FiEscort was abandoned at a very early stage, while the RS1700T dragged on for three years without ever coming close to production. But what about the Fiesta BDA?

Boreham started out with high hopes, first of all producing a Group 2 Fiesta 1600 package, complete with 150bhp (Hart-tuned) Crossflow engine – which Roger Clark and Ari Vatanen drove with honour on the 1979 Monte Carlo rally. Roger then continued to struggle with two cars

in the British Rally Championship of that year.

In the meantime, a combination of Boreham's John Griffiths and Bill Meade, recently retired driver John Taylor, and the enthusiastic rally team at Haynes of Maidstone started building a Fiesta with a 16-valve BDA engine installed. Tim Brise and Phil Short would crew the car in un-homologated form to see what could be gained.

To save mountains of time and money, it was decided to retain the Fiesta's transverse-engine and front-wheel-drive layout, along with the Fiesta chassis platform, front and rear suspension (as evolved in the 1979 Clark/British Championship examples), and four-wheel disc brakes. The novelty was that the aluminium-blocked BDA was to be used – originally in 1.7-litre form, and later in full 2.0-litre guise.

Right away, power outputs of more than 180bhp were projected. This, in those days, was an unheard indulgence; at the time, Fiesta road cars were only producing 65bhp. The Escort RS1800 had only 120bhp, which Ford's dealers had always considered ample for a small car.

Not only that, but they had always struggled

to sell RS1800s, and were unhappy about the challenge of selling the expensive Fiesta BDAs that might follow.

This car, frankly, was never a success; it was something of a beast to drive and suffered from several seemingly-inevitable gearbox and driveshaft failures. Then, in mid-1980 there was a decisive back-to-back test day on a forestry stage in mid-Wales; the latest version of the Haynes car (now complete with a 230bhp 2.0-litre BDA engine) was matched against a works Escort. Even though Stig Blomqvist and Ari Vatanen drove both cars on that day, the Fiesta BDA was always completely outpaced by the old Mk2 Escort – by up to 2.5 seconds-per-stage mile, which was a very convincingly wide margin indeed.

Today, that all sounds unfathomable (current FWD road cars can handle serious amounts of power with relative ease) but for Boreham and the RS dealer chain of the day, it seemed inevitable that they could never provide a winning package, and the Fiesta BDA project was quietly cancelled. ■

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Mk1 XR2 was a mighty package – now seriously desirable

BUYING & TUNING

MK1 XR2

Here's our top tips on how to buy the first properly fast Fiesta – and then make it even faster

BUYING

Enter XR2 ownership with your eyes open. The Mk1 is a bona fide classic and needs all the appropriate checks.

The bodywork is all-important because it could well resemble a teabag. Have a good look underneath, followed by the inner and outer sills, inner wings and suspension turrets, rear suspension mounts, door pillars, front wings,

VITAL STATISTICS

MADE 1981 to 1983

POWER 84bhp @ 5500rpm

TORQUE 91lb.ft @ 2800rpm

0-60 9.4 seconds

TOP SPEED 106mph

front panel, rear quarters, doors, windscreen pillars, tailgate and boot floor.

You'll also need to ensure you're buying a proper XR2 rather than a replica, so double-check the VIN with the chassis stampings (if still there) and make sure it's a facelift bodysell with two-bolt bumper mounts, oval-shaped (rather than flat) strut top mounts and strengthening plates on the front chassis rails.

Interior trim can be tatty (cracked dashboard, collapsed seats, knackered door cards) and hard to replace, but worry less about mechanical issues. The gearbox could be notchy and noisy, the engine smoky and rattly, the suspension tired, and the brakes may feel useless. But it's an old car, and it's simple to fix.

TUNING

Decades of motorsport success make the Mk1

XR2's 1.6-litre Kent (Crossflow) motor easy and cheap to upgrade. It will gain power and driveability with a better air filter and exhaust, followed by a high-lift cam, and ported/gas-flowed head with bigger valves and uprated springs; the result will be well over 100bhp, and plenty more if you swap to a pair of 40mm Webers rather than the single carb.

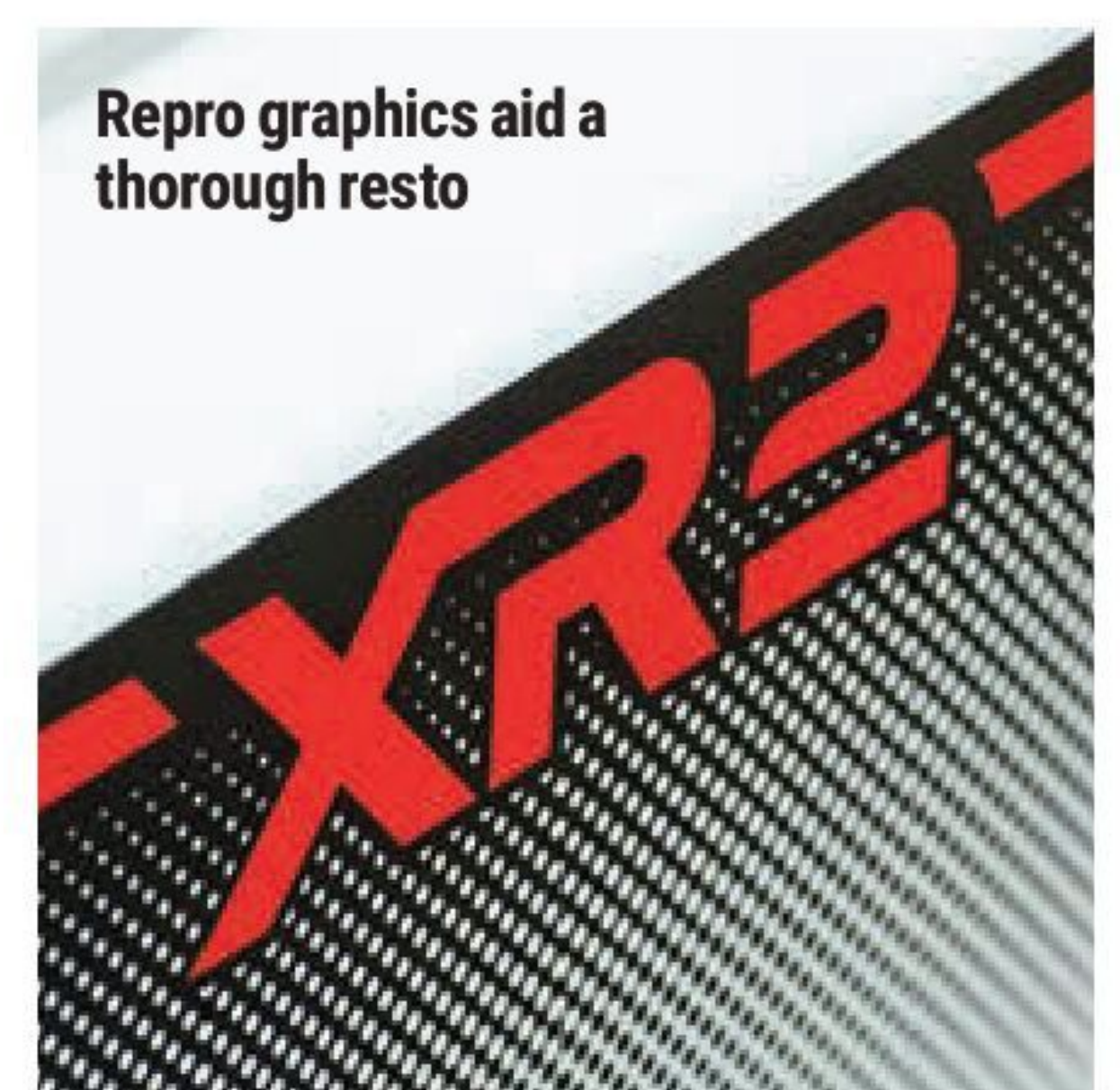
Fit a lightened and balanced 1700cc bottom end with high-compression pistons, consider 45mm carbs, and you'll see 150bhp-plus. Ideal for a Mk1 Fiesta.

For more, sensible money looks to a CVH conversion (possibly RS Turbo-powered) because it's easy to install using Mk2 Fiesta components. After which, a world of ZVH and Zetec options are available, albeit with the potential of devaluing a genuine XR2.

The stock Mk1 gearbox will take abuse,



Pre-historic Kent Crossflow is relatively hardy but easy to fix



Repro graphics aid a thorough resto

TECH SPEC

ENGINE 1598cc, four cylinder, eight-valve (overhead valve) Kent, GT camshaft, Weber carburettor, Ford electronic ignition, four-branch exhaust manifold

TRANSMISSION Front-wheel drive, BC four-speed manual

BRAKES 239mm front discs, 178mm rear drums

SUSPENSION Gas dampers, uprated springs, anti-roll bar, beam rear axle

WHEELS & TYRES 6x13in alloys, 185/60HR13 tyres

INTERIOR Sports cloth-trimmed seats, rev counter, two-spoke steering wheel

EXTERIOR Fiesta Mk1 three-door, black front and rear spoilers, wheelarch extensions, colour-coded door mirrors, round headlamps, front driving lamps, XR2 graphics. Optional sunroof



Mint cabin is crucial for a high-priced XR2

although five-speed conversions (from a Mk2 XR2) have always been popular; unfortunately, they require chassis chopping and welding.

Mk1 suspension is easily improved with lowering springs and meatier dampers, and poly bushes tighten the chassis – but don't overdo it or you'll make the Fiesta too rigid for the road.

Brake upgrades are generally made with better pads in the standard callipers, which do a decent job. For larger stoppers you'll need bigger wheels, so an upgrade to 15in rims opens a world of affordable options from other Fords. ■



Genuine XR2 shell has spare wheel bulge beneath the back bumper

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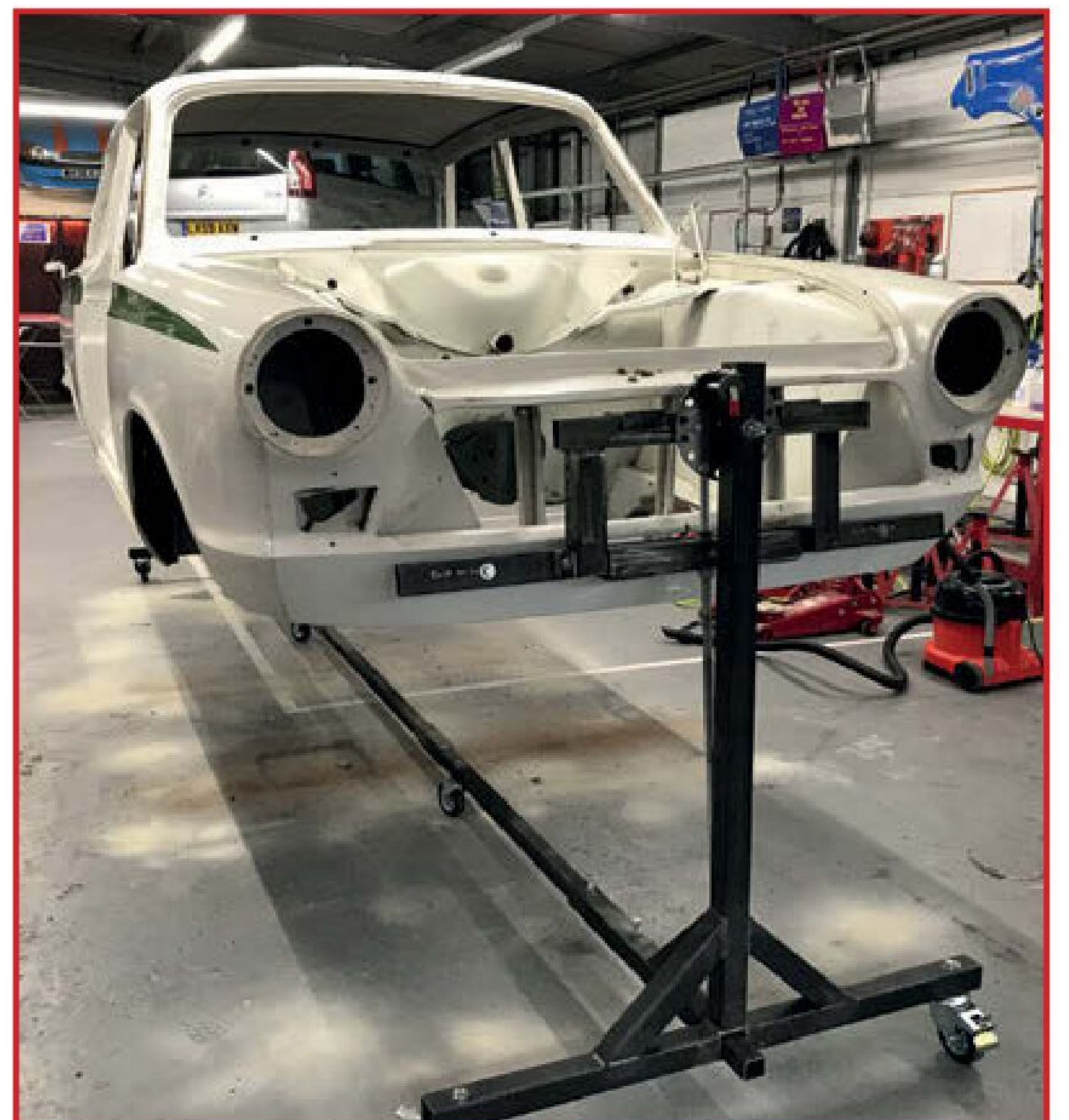
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Early Mk2s had charcoal cabin



XR2

It's cute, it's chuckable and, with a little tuning, the Mk2 Fiesta XR2 can also be an absolute blast on any racetrack or B-road. Can you believe this Blue Oval go-kart is nearly 40 years old?

The second-generation XR2 appeared in June 1984, repeating its predecessor's recipe of chunky styling and oversized engine. Instead of the fuel injection found on sporting Escorts, Ford gave its hot Fiesta the Weber carburettor-fed 1597cc CVH from the original XR3. Its 95bhp might seem puny by today's standards but 112mph and sub-nine-second 0-to-60mph sprint put it almost on par with Peugeot's lauded 205GTi. The XR2's handling was similarly set up, with precise steering, lowered springs and Girling gas dampers.

But it was in the styling stakes where the XR2 stood out, with bulbous plastic spoilers and wheelarch extensions covering meaty 6x13in wheels; steels were standard but most cars were equipped with optional pepperpot alloys.

The Spanish-built XR sold in the tens of thousands until being discontinued in 1989, with mild changes along the way. The charcoal-coloured cockpit was replaced by pale grey/blue in autumn 1986, and engine output was cut at the same time, with Ford switching to the lean-burn CVH and low-emissions carb.

Initially a tuner's favourite, the XR2 gradually fell out of fashion. But now it's back: a forerunner in the current classic hot hatchback upsurge.

XR2

YEARS PRODUCED 1984 to 1989

ENGINE CAPACITY 1597cc, CVH

POWER 95bhp (93bhp post-1986)

0-60 8.9 seconds (9.3 seconds post-1986)

TOP SPEED 112mph (109mph post-1986)

PRICE WHEN NEW £5731

CHAPTER THREE

THE SECOND COMING

After the first-generation XR2 proved a huge hit in the early Eighties, Ford repeated the recipe for the second half of the decade with the Mk2 Fiesta

1.4 S

Ford's knack of building a sporty base model using stickers and spot lights continued as the Mk2 Fiesta 1.4 S – a budget-priced delight in its day, but overshadowed by the XR2 today.

The 1.4 S arrived in February 1986, taking advantage of the new 1392cc CVH powerplant – mated to a five-speed gearbox – to add more oomph. Yes, the 1.4 was also offered in L or Ghia guise, but such models didn't boast the S's XR2-style bumpers with red inserts, funky two-tone paint, twin driving lamps, and

sports suspension with rear anti-roll bar. Not forgetting, of course, a big S logo on the tailgate.

White wheeltrims covered 5x13in steels, while the cockpit housed a high-spec dashboard with rev counter, XR2 steering wheel, overhead digital clock, full-height door cards and basic seats with Shadow Quartz cloth. A pop-up sunroof was optional.

April 1987 brought XR2-type wheel covers and new Raven Tracer upholstery, after which the 1.4S remained in the range until the Mk2 gave way to the Mk3 in March 1989.

A maximum 102mph and measly 74bhp might seem puny by modern standards, but the 1.4 S's character was pure no-frills fun. ■



1.4 S

YEARS PRODUCED 1986 to 1989

ENGINE CAPACITY 1392cc, CVH

POWER 74bhp

0-60 10.8 seconds

TOP SPEED 102mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £7134



At first glance, it looks like a well-restored XR2. But there's more to Dean Flowers's Fiesta than meets the eye...

Words **MARC STRETTON** / Photos **ADE BRANNAN**

SPLIT PERSONA



LITY

W

ith a car-history tally of over 100 modified motors, mechanical engineer Dean Flowers from South Wales likes to chop and change (and chop and change) the metal around him. Although he's currently down to just five vehicles these days, his keeper for the past handful of years has been this show-winning Mk2 Fiesta XR2.

Dean says, "My first car was a Mk2 1.1 Fiesta Festival, which was replaced by the time I was 18 by a Sapphire Cosworth. So it's a nostalgia thing, back to my early driving days with this top-of-the-range Mk2."

What came to Dean for £800 back in 2013 was an almost bare rolling-shell with no interior and lots of other parts missing. There was a Fiesta RS1800 Zetec balancing on the engine mounts, but it was filthy and, due to a lack of bonnet, the plug-wells were full of water. Things didn't look good...

As the story goes (well, the small amount of history Dean can gather), the Fiesta was restored while in the ownership of an Audi master tech about ten years ago; that's probably why the repairs are virtually invisible and the decade-old respray was still pretty much perfect. The car had then gone to a new owner, who was slowly stripping it and selling off the parts. Dean jumped in about halfway through this process.

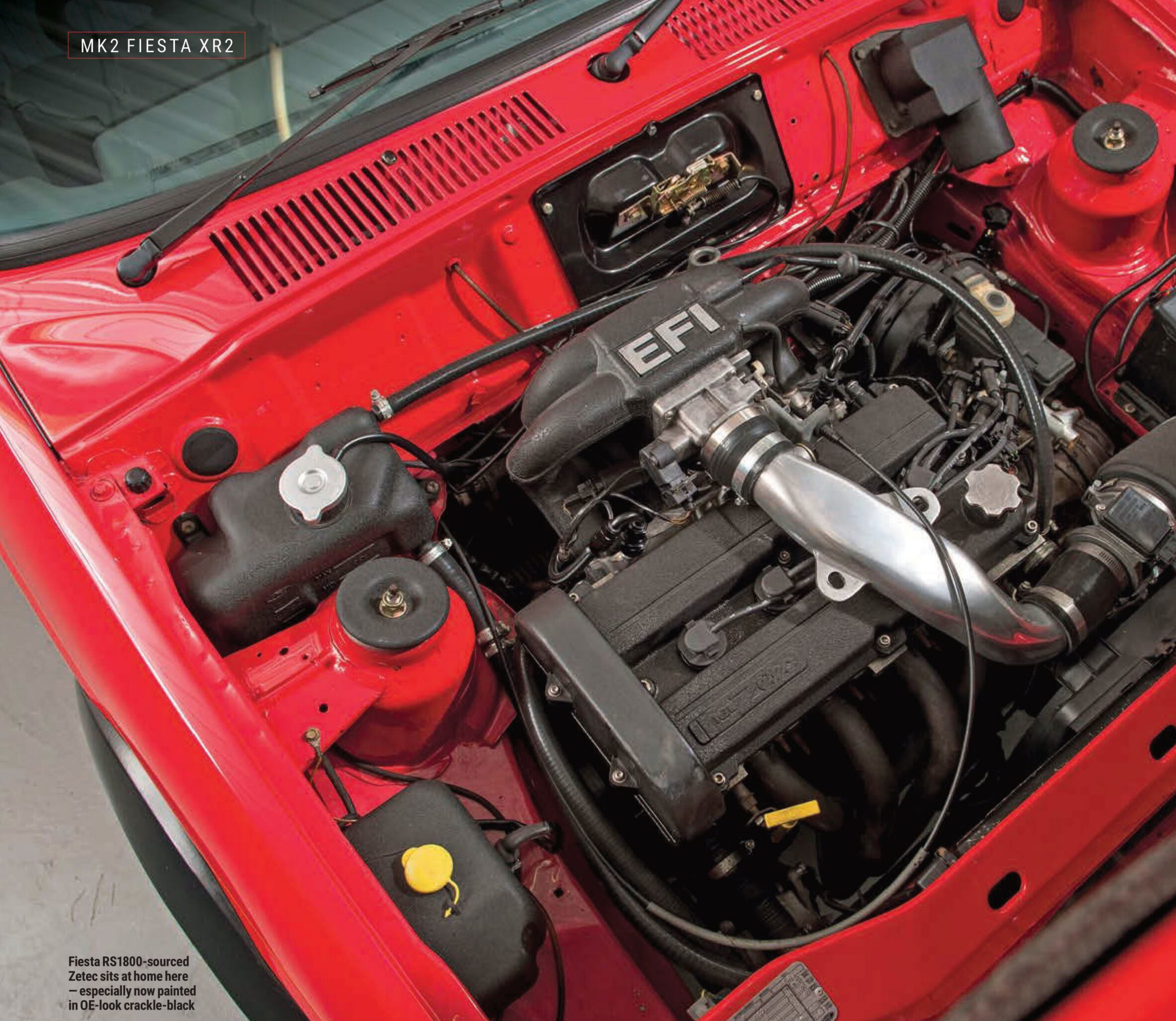
First task, then, was to locate replacements for the flogged-off components – lots of them. Through www.xrtwo.com, Dean struck the mother-lode by finding an XR2 concours fanatic, who had a garage full of spares and was stripping out the complete interior of his multiple-prize-winning Fiesta because he'd found a better set to put in there. The only trouble was, the guy was in Norfolk, which is a fair slog from Wales.

Dean says, "He had lots of the bits I needed, but he wouldn't sell me anything that was not manufacturer-correct for my D-reg car. So, although he had a black boot carpet that I'd have been happy with, I couldn't buy it. The same applied to several trim bits, too. But overall I can't moan, as I came away with most of what I needed in one hit."

He continues, "When you're trying to replace parts from a stripped car, you also have to run the risk of dealing with internet idiots. I've bought plenty of bits twice because pieces that are advertised as from an XR2 turn up and are from the standard Fiesta range.

"And don't get me started on what some people's idea of mint or perfect is. I've had plenty of scrap turn up."

With the XR back together it was time to concentrate on the engine. Surprisingly, the al-fresco existence for the 1800cc Zetec hadn't done it much harm, and with a good clean →



Fiesta RS1800-sourced Zetec sits at home here – especially now painted in OE-look crackle-black

it was worth giving a go. The trouble came when getting the thing to fire up – because it wouldn't. All was checked where the Zetec's loom had been spliced into the Fiesta's wiring, and that was correct, according to the manuals.

"A guy called Chris Elsmore who has a converted Mk1 Fiesta fixed the problem in the end," Dean reports. "Turns out the loom I had

"YOU HAVE TO RUN THE RISK OF DEALING WITH INTERNET IDIOTS... AND DON'T GET ME STARTED ON WHAT SOME PEOPLE'S IDEA OF MINT OR PERFECT IS..."

was knackered anyway. Oh and the ECU was fried, so I really hadn't had that much hope."

Wiring repairs and an Escort GTi ECU got the motor fired up, but Dean plans an engine change and electronics upgrade at some point, as the state of health of the RS1800 motor is still fairly dubious. With a tubular manifold, Magnex stainless system and induction upgrades the Zetec is good for about 130bhp at the moment, but it's a worry how long those horses will stay out of the knacker's.

The Fiesta made its way back onto the road a few years ago and was enjoyed for the summer, but then Dean's business interests in the US and China were going well enough that he had to make several long trips.

Knowing that a Stateside visit was going to stretch on for months, he handed the keys of the XR to Torques Performance in Crickhowell, near Abergavenny, for a makeover to turn his →

MK2 FIESTA XR2

ENGINE Mk3 Fiesta RS1800 silver-top Zetec, Magnex four-branch manifold and system, injection fuel tank and pump, cone free-flow air filter, Torques Developments braided fuel lines

TRANSMISSION Standard RS1800 IB5 gearbox, Puma short gear linkage

SUSPENSION GAZ adjustable coilovers front and rear, poly bushes throughout

BRAKES Factory XR2, Torques Performance bias valve and braided lines

WHEELS AND TYRES Custom-built 6x15in pepperpot split-rims by Voodoo Motorsport, with 195/45R15 Toyo Proxes tyres

INTERIOR Standard Mk2 XR2 dash, seats and door cards

EXTERIOR Restored 1987 Mk2 Fiesta XR2, repainted Rosso Red with matching underside



Underside finish is as good – if not better – than on top



One-off pepperpot 15in split-rims were made by Voodoo Motorsport



Dealer sticker adds sleeper appeal

WHAT IS RETRO?

As with any car-style fashion, there's not one simple formula for what does or doesn't constitute a particular genre, but Dean's Fiesta is kind of what the retro movement is about. Retro cars usually have a heavy bias towards standard when it comes to bodywork, paint and interiors, and engine upgrades are based towards more modern levels of performance rather than massive power and noise. Ride height comes into things in a big way, with suspension settings getting the cars low to the ground, and trying out new concepts – Dean's crazily bling'd fuel tank and crinkle-finished components, for example – are things to aim for. Probably the most important factor is getting some wheels that induce swear words, dribbling (hopefully not on the rims themselves) and massively envious looks. Shows for retro cars are becoming mainstays of the calendar, with the Retro Rides Gathering at Shelsley Walsh, Retro Show at Santa Pod, Oh So Retro near Margate and Ultimate Stance at the Telford International Centre rapidly becoming Meccas for scenesters. And, of course, you'll see a lot of retro action at all the best Ford events – like the Classic Ford Show and Ford Fair.



MK2 FIESTA XR2

good car in to a show-stopper.

The underside was completely stripped of all the old underseal, one tiny patch of welding was needed (highlighting what an excellent shell Dean had bought in the first place) and it was replaced by a new durable coating painted in body colour. The suspension and braking was overhauled, poly bushes went in throughout and, as Torques specialise in high-pressure hosing, all the fuel and brake lines have been upgraded to the highest spec.

There were a lot of tricks done to make the Fiesta stand out too: plenty of the surfaces were crinkle-coated (including some plastics, which is not an easy process to get right), a brake bias valve was added, and then a brand-new injection-spec fuel tank was bare-metalled, painted, lacquered and topped with a ceramic coating. "I reckon that's the best fuel tank I've ever seen," Dean boasts.

With all these features on an otherwise standard-looking car, Dean's XR2 was heading well up the course in the latest retro stakes. But all good retro mods need one thing over all others – a stunning set of wheels. And this Fiesta is no exception, with its one-off custom pepperpot split-rims.

Dean says, "I bought six 15in BBS RZ barrels for £60, some 0.5in lips – which were cheap too as no one wants them – and five 13in pepperpots for just £40.

"The lot was handed over to Voodoo Motorsport for construction, and the results are 6x15in rims that probably owe me about £1000



Fiesta's bodywork was restored before Dean got hold of the XR2, but he's taken it to the next level

all-in – well worth it for the attention they get."

Dean adds, "The Fiesta was bought as a fun car, and it's driven around 1000 miles a year to shows in all weathers." Proof, if needed, that this XR2 has not turned into a pampered, trailered and covered show pony.

"I do have help in the cleaning department though, as my work neighbour is BMC AutoPerfection. They detail the car for me in a deal that includes me letting them use the Fiesta as a demo vehicle – which is pretty good, as their

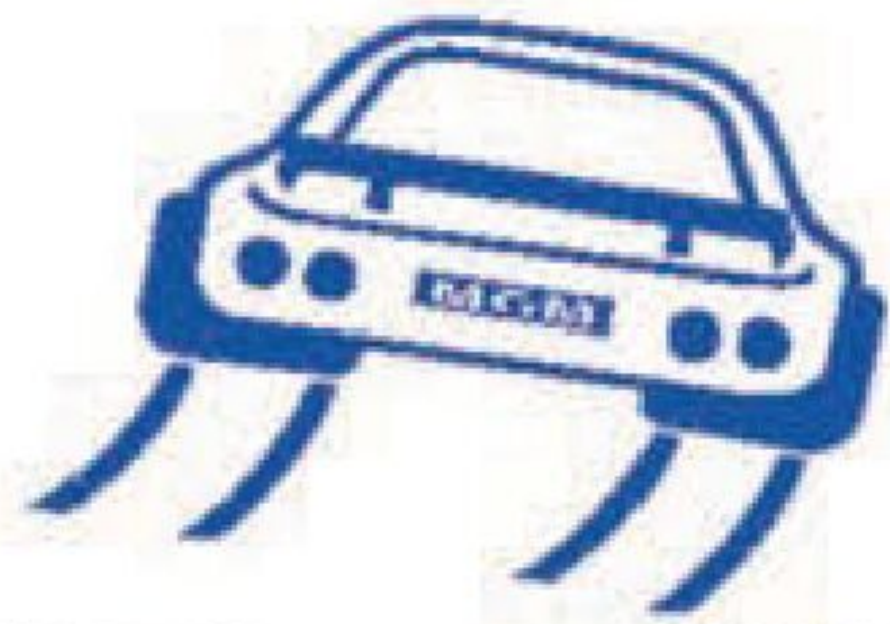
client list is made up of Ferrari, Porsche and other supercar owners."

That's quite some acknowledgement of the quality on show here, just in case these pictures don't make it abundantly clear... ■

THANKS Torques Performance (www.facebook.com/torquesperformance), BMC AutoPerfection (www.facebook.com/bmcauto perfection), Voodoo Motorsport (www.voodoomotorsport.co.uk) www.xrtwo.com, Chris for the electrics, ECU and wiring.



Concours competitor supplied much of the factory-original XR2 trim



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CVH XR2 XR3 etc	£2,195	£2,395	£2,795	£2,995	£695	£795	£1,195	£1,295
CVH Escort /Fiesta Turbo	£2,395	£2,695	£3,050	£3,295	£695	£795	£1195	£1,295
Zetec E1.6 1.8 2.0	£2,195	£2,395	£2,995	£3,295	£875	£1,095	£1,495	£2,450
Zetec S1.25/1.4/1.6	£2,195	£2,395	£2,995	£3,295	£995	£1,095	£1,695	-
2.0 DOHC 16V	£2,395	£2,650	£3,195	-	£995	£1,250	£1,795	-
OHC 1.6 2.0 Pinto	£2,095	£2,325	£2,695	£2,995	£695	£795	£1,195	£1,295
V4 Essex 1.7/2.0	£2,150	£2,450	£2,750	£3,050	£795	£895	£995	£1,150
V6 Essex 2.5/3.0	£2,295	£2,550	£2,895	£3,195	£995	£1,095	£1,195	£1,295
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BUYING & TUNING

MK2 XR2

The Mk2 XR2 redefined the hot hatch in the Eighties, and is now highly sought after by collectors and enthusiasts alike. Here's our buying and tuning tips...

BUYING

A master in the art of corrosion, the Mk2 XR2 is prone to rotting pretty much everywhere – the bulkhead, inner wings, battery tray, strut tops, floorpan (especially the chassis rails and in front of the petrol tank), sills and wheelarches (behind the bodykit), slam panel, wings, tailgate, door bottoms, hinges, bonnet, scuttle panel, around the fuel filler, inner arches and boot.

VITAL STATISTICS

MADE 1984 to 1989

POWER 95bhp @ 6000 rpm

TORQUE 98lb.ft @ 4000 rpm

0-60 9.3 seconds

TOP SPEED 109mph

XR2s built in 1986 and '87 were particularly susceptible, but most have long since departed.

Some have been reshelled, so make sure the numbers match between VIN plate, log book and floor beside the driver's seat. Fake XR2s built from Populars are common – and less valuable.

Mechanically the XR2 is straightforward, but the CVH engine isn't durable, so avoid nasty noises and smoking from the exhaust – blue suggests worn pistons, bores or valve guides, and steam means head gasket failure.

Check the gearbox too. The standard shift is vague, but crunching synchros (notably on second or third) mean the gearbox needs a rebuild, as do any rumbling sounds.

TUNING

With light weight and basic mechanicals, the Mk2 XR2 is ideal for a hardcore-nutter-massive-

power conversion. Its stock CVH powerplant formed the basis for the later RS Turbo, along with huge modification potential.

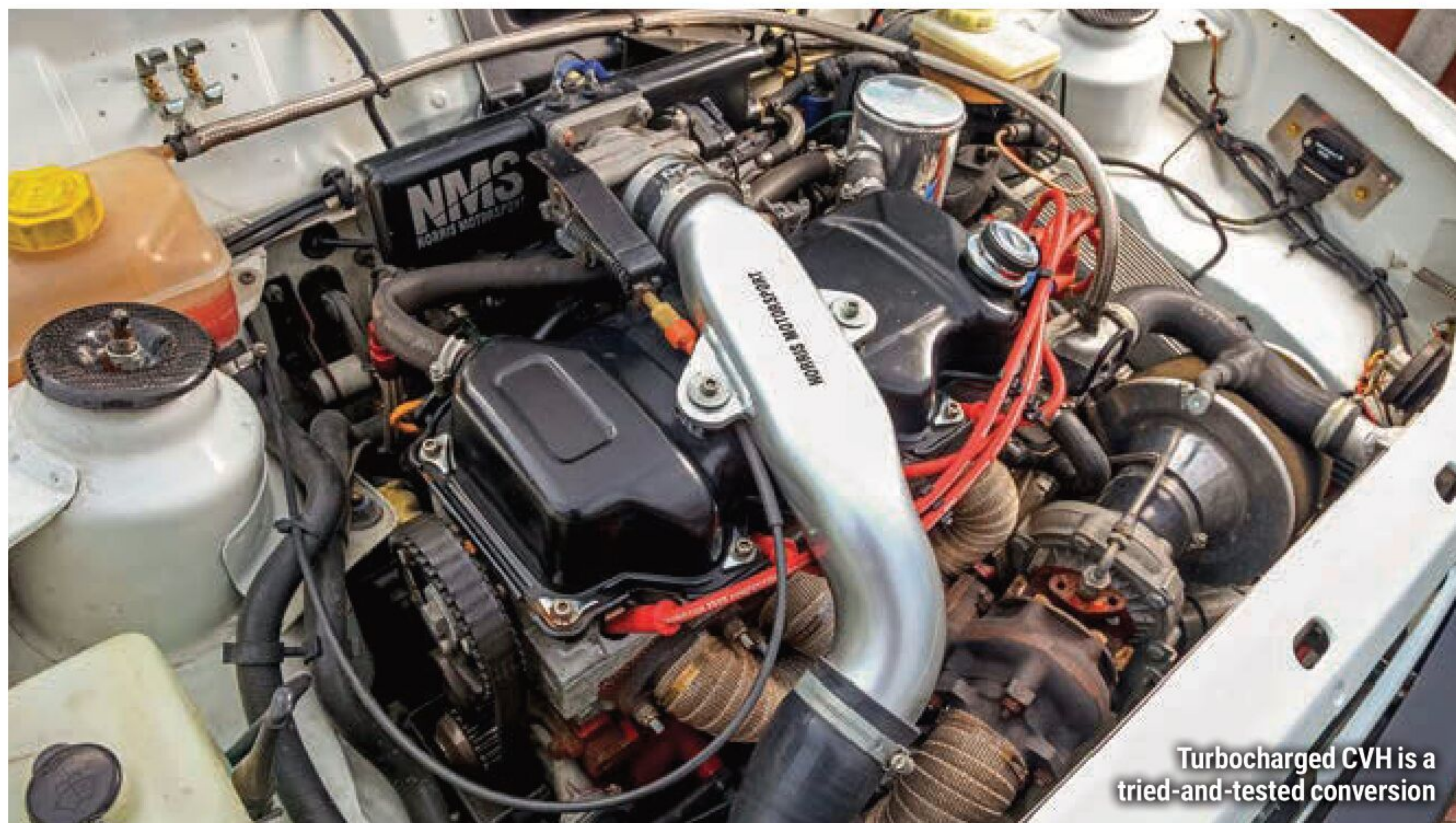
Even basic tuning is rewarding, with a four-into-two-into-one exhaust manifold and system, high-lift camshaft, ported big-valve head and twin Weber 40 or 45mm carbs meaning around 140bhp. With a forged, high-compression bottom end, solid lifters and wackier cam, a genuine 160bhp is achievable.

Much more is possible with forced induction. It's easy to drop in a complete Escort/Fiesta RS Turbo setup, giving over 130bhp as standard. Adding a larger intercooler, injectors, turbo, chip and cam results in 200bhp, while forged internals and Cosworth management mean you can double that figure – especially if you go ZVH or full Zetec turbo.

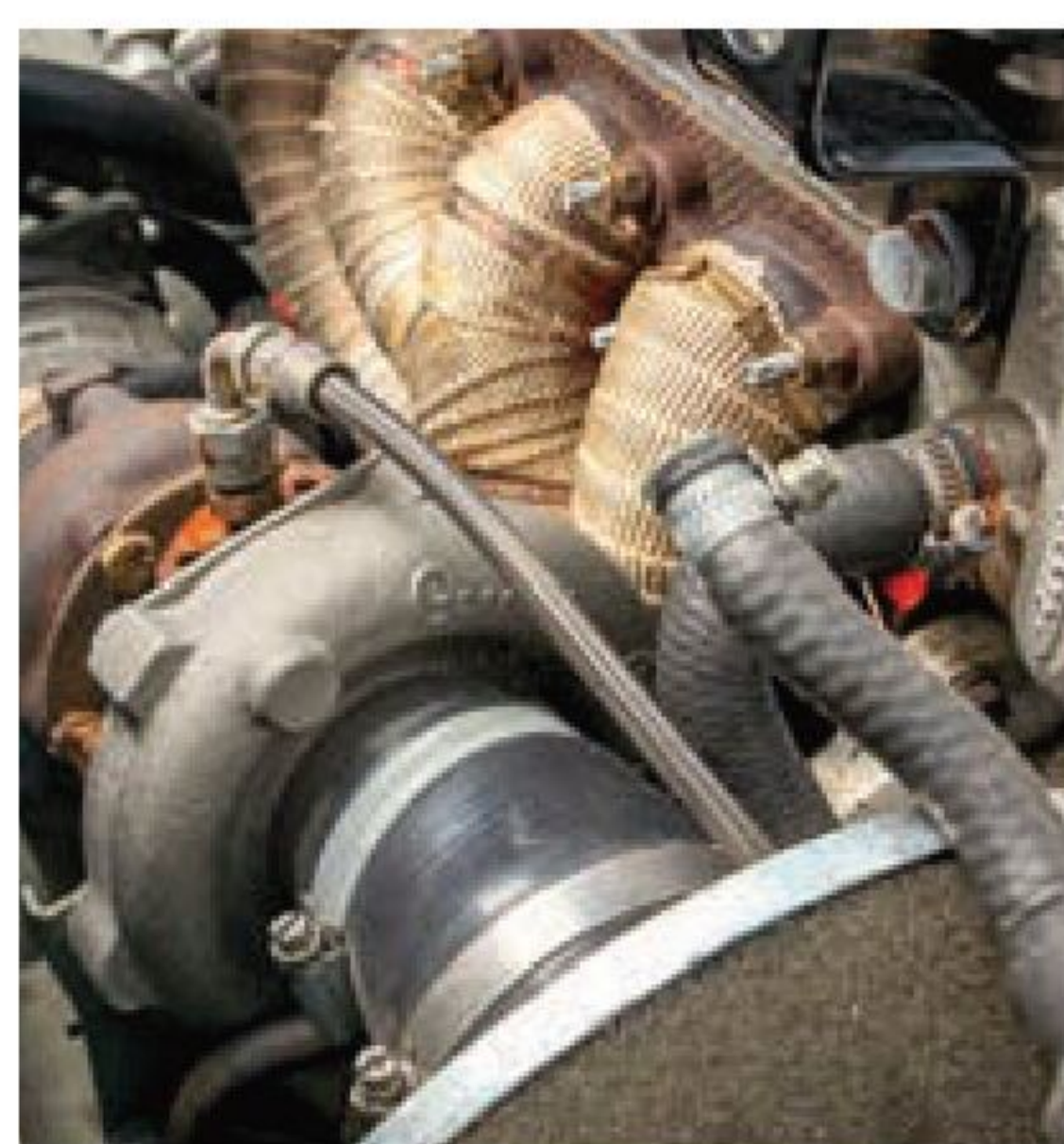
You'll need an uprated gearbox, of course.



XR2s look best when modified to retain their original chunky styling



Turbocharged CVH is a tried-and-tested conversion



Taller rims allow bigger brakes

TECH SPEC

ENGINE 1596cc, four cylinder, eight-valve CVH, cast-iron block, alloy head, single overhead camshaft, Weber carburettor, Ford electronic ignition

TRANSMISSION Front-wheel drive, BC five-speed manual

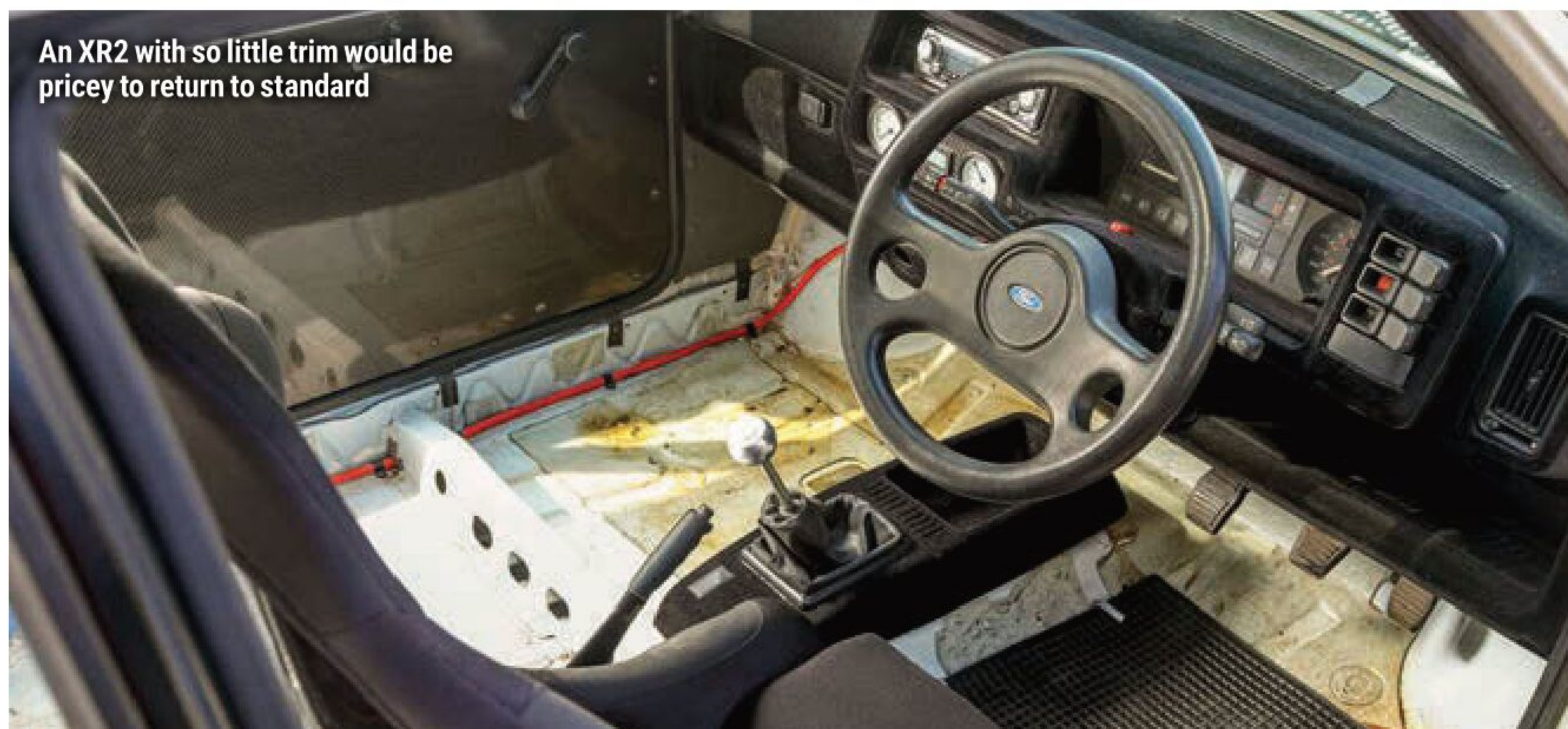
BRAKES 240mm front discs, 178mm rear drums

SUSPENSION Gas dampers, uprated springs, five-link beam rear axle with 14mm anti-roll bar

WHEELS & TYRES 6x13in steels, 185/60HR13 tyres, optional alloys

INTERIOR Cloth seats, soft-feel steering wheel

EXTERIOR Fiesta Mk2 three-door, black front and rear spoilers, side skirts and wheelarch extensions, front driving lamps



An XR2 with so little trim would be pricey to return to standard

An Escort RS Turbo Series Two transmission includes a limited-slip differential but an IB5 or MTX75 with ATB diff is ideal for big power.

Suspension-wise, if you've upped the power, coilovers and a 50mm drop are ideal, along with polyurethane bushes and strut braces. For track use, adjustable arms and Panhard rod and/or beam are readily available.

To stop the lot, adding a Mk1 Mondeo brake servo and master cylinder can be followed by Mk5 RS2000 260mm discs (for 14in wheels) or Mk1 Mondeo V6 brakes with 15in rims and 195/45x15 rubber. ■



Mk2 XR2s are terrible rotters – so beware!

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NAUGHTY NINETIES

By time we entered the Nineties the hot-hatch craze was in full swing, and the Mk3 Fiesta had a number of performance models in its stable



Sporty with a capital S – in budget-Ford fashion

XR2i

October 1989 saw the launch of the Fiesta XR2i, the fuel-injected hot hatch arriving ten months after the debut of the Mk3. Truth be told, the XR2i's long overdue appearance was no mistake, Ford intentionally choosing to keep the limelight on the lesser, cooking models. Shrewd marketing meant that performance Fiesta fans

knew that the XR2i was in the pipeline, though, and when it did surface, it certainly looked to be worth the wait.

A chunky bodykit added plenty of purpose to the Mk3 shell, and although alloy wheels weren't standard, Ford compensated the XR buyer with a striking quartet of driving lights grafted into the front bumper.

Thankfully, the XR2i had enough grunt to justify its sporty exterior. Once again, the 1596cc CVH motor was entrusted to power the

XR-badged Fiesta, but adding the extra poke needed to haul the heavier shell was the addition of fuel-injection. Rather than simply lifting the motor untouched from the Escort XR3i, Ford instead opted to refine it with its own system utilising Weber injectors and EEC-IV engine management. The camshaft and manifold specifications were altered to suit and, in real world terms, it added up to a top end of 119mph and 0-to-60 mph in 8.9 seconds.

Factor in the sharp-looking Zolda interior trim, plus a good spread of standard equipment, and the XR2i was very nearly the real deal – the only criticisms being aimed at its slightly soft handling and slow steering.

Still, arguably compromised driving dynamics aside, the XR2i was every inch the smash that Ford had hoped. It got better in later years with the addition of the 16-valve Zetec motor and much stiffer suspension, but if you want to keep it real and retro, then the original CVH-engined XR2i is the one to have.

XR2i 8-VALVE

YEARS PRODUCED 1989 to 1992

ENGINE CAPACITY 1596cc, CVH

POWER 108bhp

0-60 8.9 seconds

TOP SPEED 119mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £9995

XR2i 16-VALVE

YEARS PRODUCED 1992 to 1993

ENGINE CAPACITY 1796cc, Zetec

POWER 104bhp

0-60 8.9 seconds

TOP SPEED 113mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £10,495



XR2i (right) was the first sporty Fiesta with fuel injection



1.6 S

Ignore the XR2i. Forget the RS1800. In terms of 1990s' Fiestas, the basic 1.6 S was the purest of all, following traditional Sport fashion of an oversized engine in a simple body, with little more than spot lamps to show its fun side.

Essentially Mk2 XR2 oily bits in an updated shell, the 1.6 S was Ford's high-performance variant when the Mk3 Fiesta arrived in April 1989. Rumours reckoned the S was built just to use up redundant 1.6-litre CVHs, yet 108mph and 0-60mph in 9.3 seconds were close behind the (later) XR2i, thanks to the S weighing 55kg less. It had sports suspension, tailgate spoiler, plus (from November '90) XR2-type 5.5x13in steels and red stripes in the bumpers, and it was sad to see the 1.6 S deleted in August 1991. Other Fiestas were faster but the S echoed what we've always loved about sporty Fords.



1.6 S

YEARS PRODUCED 1989 to 1991

ENGINE CAPACITY 1596cc

POWER 89bhp

0-60 9.3 seconds

TOP SPEED 108mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £8238

Three-spokes, bonnet vents and green bumper inserts identified the RS Turbo



RS TURBO

Right now, the fast Ford world is crying out for a turbocharged Rallye Sport Fiesta – yet it's 30 years since Ford actually built one.

Launched in April 1990, the aptly-named Fiesta RS Turbo aimed to spice up Ford's image after criticism of XR2i, meanwhile replacing the outgoing Escort Series Two RS Turbo.

Ford's Special Vehicle Engineering (SVE) division took charge of blending both machines, focusing on driver enjoyment to produce something special. Admittedly, the new Fiesta didn't exactly deserve its RS name (in overseas markets it was badged Fiesta Turbo) because it wasn't developed for motorsport, but that at

least meant SVE could tweak the specification to improve road manners.

The Escort's 1.6-litre CVH received a revised cylinder head and much-improved electronic fuel injection with modern Ford EEC-IV management. No longer needing a big turbo for homologation, a tiny T2 was fitted to reduce lag, along with new intercooler. Power rose to 131bhp, while the Fiesta's smaller body meant 0-to-60mph in 7.9 seconds and 129mph top end.

The Escort's LSD was dropped but SVE instead added quicker steering and uprated suspension, offering anti-lock brakes as an extra. The Fiesta also gained bigger, three-spoke, alloy wheels than its XR2i sibling – one of only a few clues to

set it apart from the XR2i, others being bonnet vents and green bumper stripes rather than blue. Even the interior was XR2i-based, boasting little more than a pair of Recaro seats.

RS TURBO

YEARS PRODUCED 1990 to 1992

ENGINE CAPACITY 1596cc, CVH turbo

POWER 131bhp

0-60 7.9 seconds

TOP SPEED 129mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £11,950

RS1800

Fifteen years after being put out to grass, the RS1800 name made a welcome return in May 1992. Things were vastly different second time around though, the hallowed title applied to a front-driving Fiesta rather than a made-for-rallying, rear-drive Escort.

But the fast Fiesta did share two similarities with its namesake: one, it was well worthy of the RS badge and two, it also featured a twin-cam powerplant.

Destined to replace the raucous Fiesta RS Turbo but sold alongside it for six months, the RS1800 was fitted with the same 1.8-litre Zetec that had been shoehorned in the new XR2i 16-valve. Naturally, the RS had to be a bit livelier to justify the extra cost, so the RS1800's 1796cc motor was tuned to 128bhp – the extra power coming mainly from a remapped ECU, reprofiled camshafts and the 2.0-litre Zetec throttle body. And the changes were well worth it, the RS1800 sprinting to 60mph in 8.1 seconds, covering the standing quarter in 16.5 seconds and topping 127mph.



RS1800 (front) looked almost identical to the XR2i (rear)

RS1800

YEARS PRODUCED 1992 to 1995

ENGINE CAPACITY 1796cc, Zetec

POWER 128bhp

0-60 8.1 seconds

TOP SPEED 127mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £12,712



Si bumpers smoothed and updated the ageing Mk3 Fiesta styling

Si

At the start of the Nineties everyone wanted a hot hatch, but by the end of the decade nobody could afford to insure one, causing manufacturers to rethink their performance model strategy.

Ford was no different with its Fiesta and,

thanks to rapidly rising insurance costs, sales of hot hatchbacks like the XR2i and RS1800 plummeted. The bean-counters axed the two models, but the marketing bods knew a sporting variant was still essential to the Fiesta line-up.

Concocted to be an insurance-friendly warm hatch, the Si (short for Sports Injection) was conveniently launched at the same time as the introduction of the revised Mk3 bodyshell.

While it looked little different, the shell was

Si

YEARS PRODUCED 1994 to 1996

ENGINE CAPACITY 1597cc, Zetec (1391cc, CVH)

POWER 89bhp (74bhp)

0-60 11.2 seconds (12.8 seconds)

TOP SPEED 109mph (104mph)

PRICE WHEN NEW £10,275 (1.6)

awash with the latest safety updates and its unique identity was created by smooth, rounded bumpers with integral 10cm fog lamps, front arch mouldings and rear tailgate spoiler (with or without high-level brake light), and lattice-style full-size wheeltrims.

Powering the Fiesta was either the 74bhp 1.4 CVH or the newly-introduced 1.6 Zetec, which although lacking the XR2i or RS1800's outright urge still made for an enjoyable drive. This was enhanced with the fitting of stiffened suspension, while the 1.6 went one step further with vented front disc brakes, enlarged rear drums and thicker 16mm front anti-roll bar.

But the Si's interior was met with perhaps the best reaction, being a refreshing break from Fiesta mundanity. It featured attractive Raven Jigsaw-patterned seats (wing-backed on the 1.6), matched to fresh dark trim, a new centre console, handbrake and gear gaiters and an airbag-equipped steering wheel. ■

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THE STORY OF...

THE FIESTA RS

More than 30 years after it was launched, we look back at the highs and lows, not to mention huge smiles, associated with Ford's Rallye Sport Fiestas...

Words **GRAHAM ROBSON & JAMIE** / Photos **FORD ARCHIVES**

For those of us old enough to have been invited to drive the first cars, we remember the launch of Ford's Fiesta RS Turbo very clearly. It wasn't just that it was the first-ever turbocharged Fiesta, but the unfortunate fact that it arrived in the spring of 1990 when the British car market was just about to take a sharp downward turn.

Insurance companies were beginning to raise their premiums, expressly to hurt affordable little performance cars like this. Why on earth, some wondered, had Ford launched such a quirky little car at a time like this? And why could the Blue Oval not hold back until it saw how things might change?

Ford UK was in the middle of its own upheaval at the time. A new-generation Fiesta, the Mk3, had recently been launched in 1989. And in many ways this model was a very different sort of all-can-do family hatchback compared to its predecessors. Not only that, but the Fiesta's bigger brother, the Mk3/Mk4 Escort, was just

about to be dropped after a ten-year career. Meanwhile, the four-wheel-drive Sapphire RS Cosworth had just arrived and was being expected to sell for £25,000 a throw.

Even so, it is worth recalling that although the Escort RS Turbo had been a commercial success, at that point there appeared to be no intention of marketing a similar package in the forthcoming Mk5 Escort; Ford had hopes of doing even better with a new model, subsequently launched as the front-wheel-drive RS2000.

I GOT THE POWER

Up to this point the Fiesta had never seriously been marketed as a high-performance little car. Special Vehicle Engineering (SVE) had done its best with the original Kent-engined XR2 and the CVH-engined Mk2 that followed, but Ford hadn't set out to offer direct competition for cars like the VW Golf GTI or Peugeot 205 GTi. Now, perhaps, was the time...

When the Mk3 Fiesta was introduced in April 1989 it displaced the entire original range, so



there was always likely to be a significant delay before any high-performance derivatives would be added. Accordingly, it would be a year before Ford was ready to unveil the Fiesta RS Turbo, by which time the warm-hatch Fiesta XR2i was already well-established.

The RS Turbo would eventually prove to be a short-lived model in Fiesta guise. That wasn't Ford's original intention, but with the brand-new 16-valve Zetec engine on the way (a major investment by any standards), the Turbo would



Green stripes, stickers and three-spoke alloys identified the RS Turbo

be replaced by the Fiesta RS1800 after only two years. Nevertheless, it was the fastest-ever Fiesta of the period (the later RS1800 would not be quite as powerful), and it was the only one that would ever carry the RS and Turbo badges at the same time.

The easy (and not-at-all-accurate) way to describe this car would be as a Mk3 Fiesta with a 1980s'-style Escort RS Turbo engine and all the XR2i trimmings. But that would be oversimplifying a speedily developed – and rather more focussed – model.

First, when the new Fiesta RS Turbo was being put together, we should credit the SVE team for making the most of the engine they were given. Although it was already known that the turbocharged CVH unit was capable of producing shedloads of power (Richard Longman's Datapost racing Escorts had already proved they could use reliable 250bhp versions of the 1.6-litre engine), it was also known it was in its tenth production year, that millions of the base engine had been built at the Bridgend factory, and that plans were already afoot for many of the facilities to be pushed aside to make way for the

introduction of the all-new Zetec 16-valve twin-cam power unit.

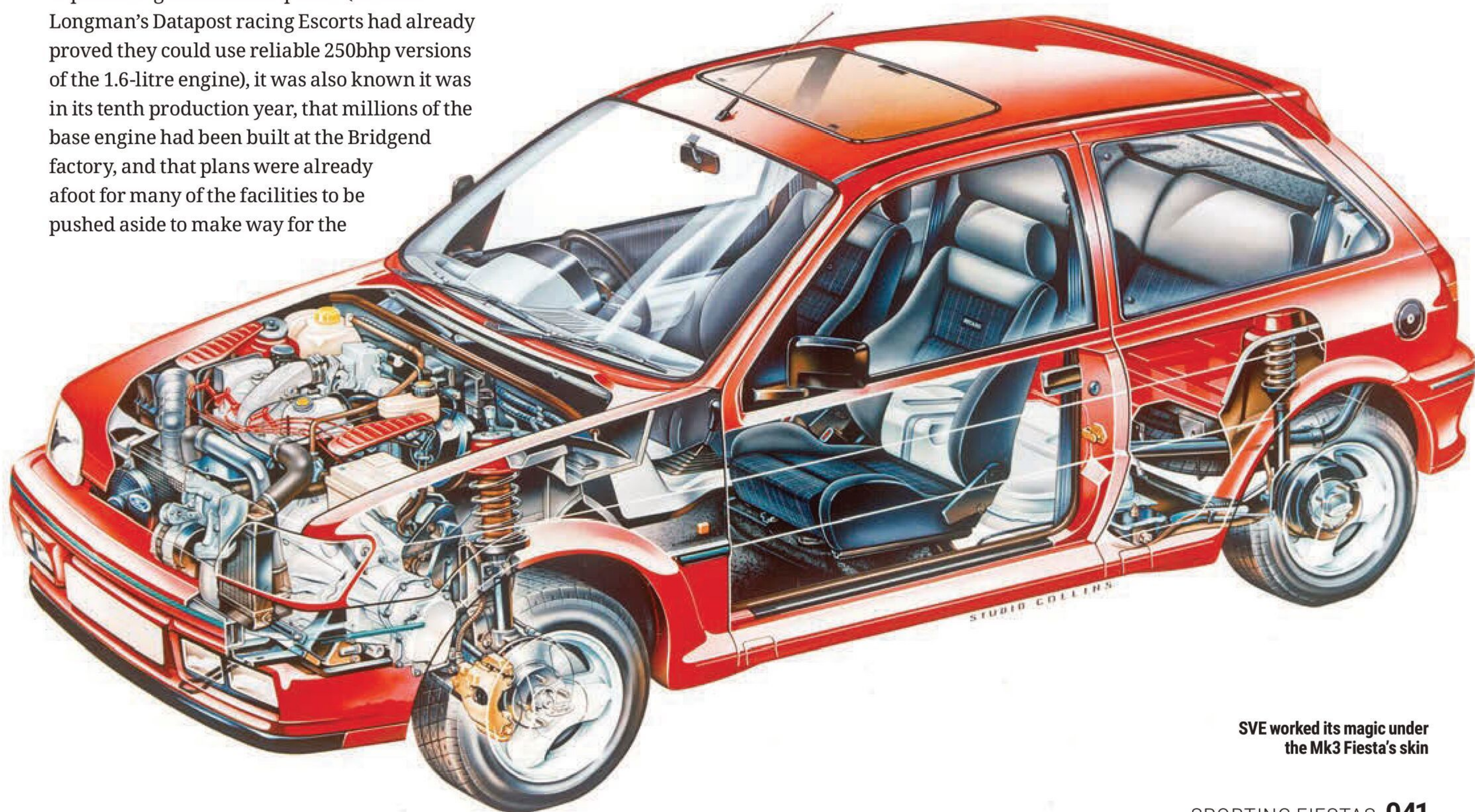
Their job, therefore, was to confirm that a further-developed version of the turbocharged CVH could be neatly slotted into the latest Fiesta engine bay with few difficulties. Although the engine was closely based on that of the Escort RS Turbo (which was about to go out of production in the summer of 1990), it was further developed, both to make it more suitable for the small platform of the Fiesta and to be more fuel-efficient. Accordingly, it had been provided with a smaller Garrett T02 turbocharger (the Escort used a T03 turbo) and there was a sophisticated Ford EEC-IV engine management system offering electronic fuel injection too.

Not only that, but the inlet and exhaust

manifolds had changed, and there was a new type of intercooler. Clever electronic control meant the torque curve was claimed to be flat from 2400rpm through to 4500rpm.

GOOD VIBRATIONS

SVE also worked its magic on the settings of the existing steering and suspension package, but clearly the team had concentrated more on enhancing the handling performance than on the refinement and comfort of the existing installations. To those of us who enjoyed driving the press cars very rapidly on the scenic roads of Scotland during that spring weekend in 1990, the Fiestas seemed to be very lively and fast, but not the sort of machines that Uncle Fred and his wife Mabel would have enjoyed on a gentle →



SVE worked its magic under the Mk3 Fiesta's skin

trip down to the seaside. Not that SVE cared too much about that; it was fast Ford enthusiasts who were its prime targets.

Even so, once the first production examples began to find their way into showrooms, and their characters were analysed in mundane press reports, there were occasional complaints that on this occasion Ford might have erred on the side of making it all too stiff. Certainly, this was the hardest-riding Fiesta ever, which was sometimes nicknamed the turbo-roller-skate and got a street-racer's reputation almost at once. Spring and damper settings were firmer than on any other Fiesta, the steering was higher geared (though still not power-assisted), and there was now an anti-roll bar at the rear.

One of the UK's largest motoring magazines reported its findings from the press launch as follows: 'A bonus is the strong grip and cornering ability: enough to ensure rapid progress and a racing pulse. But that is not enough. Nor is it any sort of excuse for having to endure a bone-jarring ride, or steering that is dull and flawed. The RS Fiesta is a crude performance machine that offers no finesse...'

RIDE ON TIME

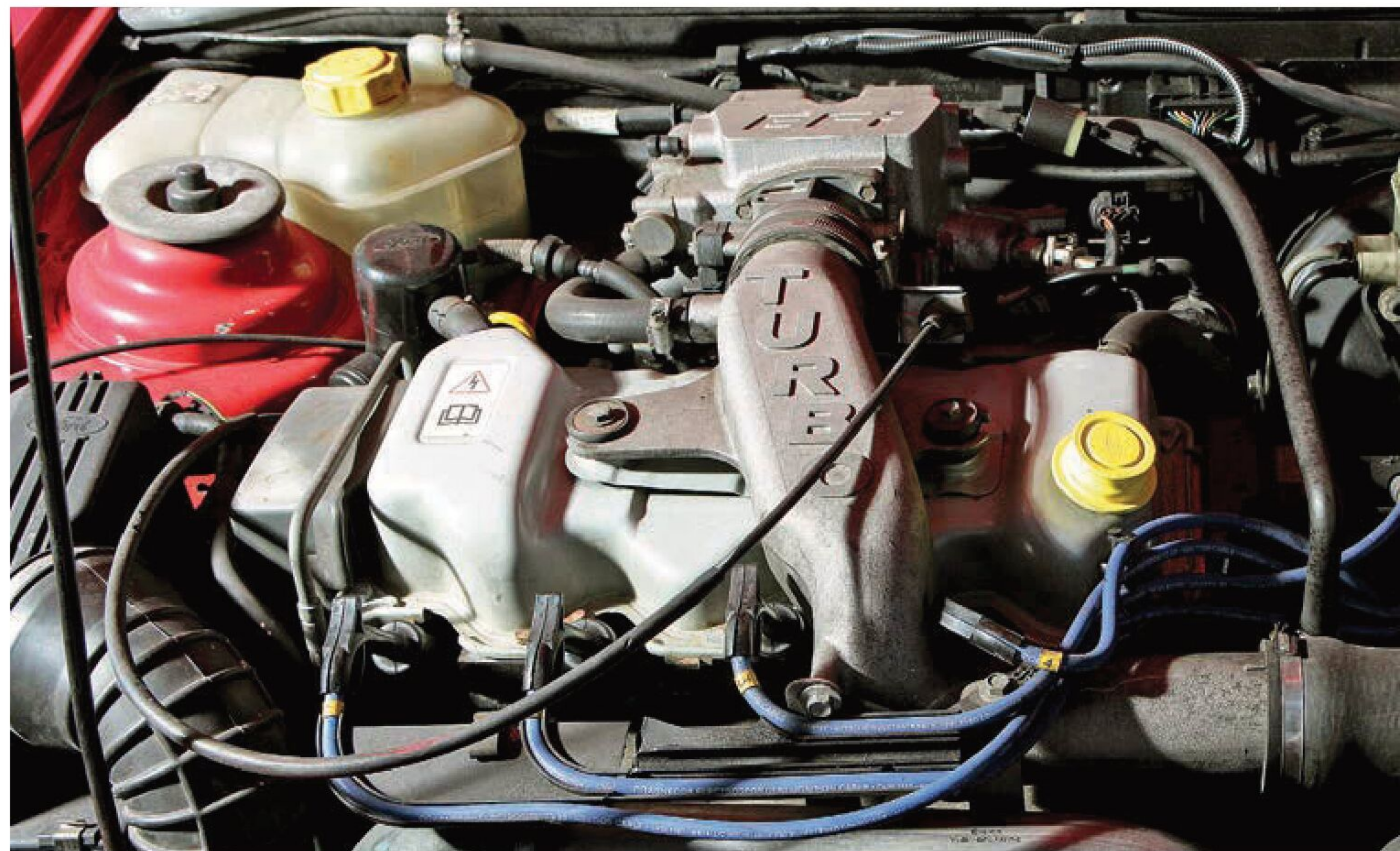
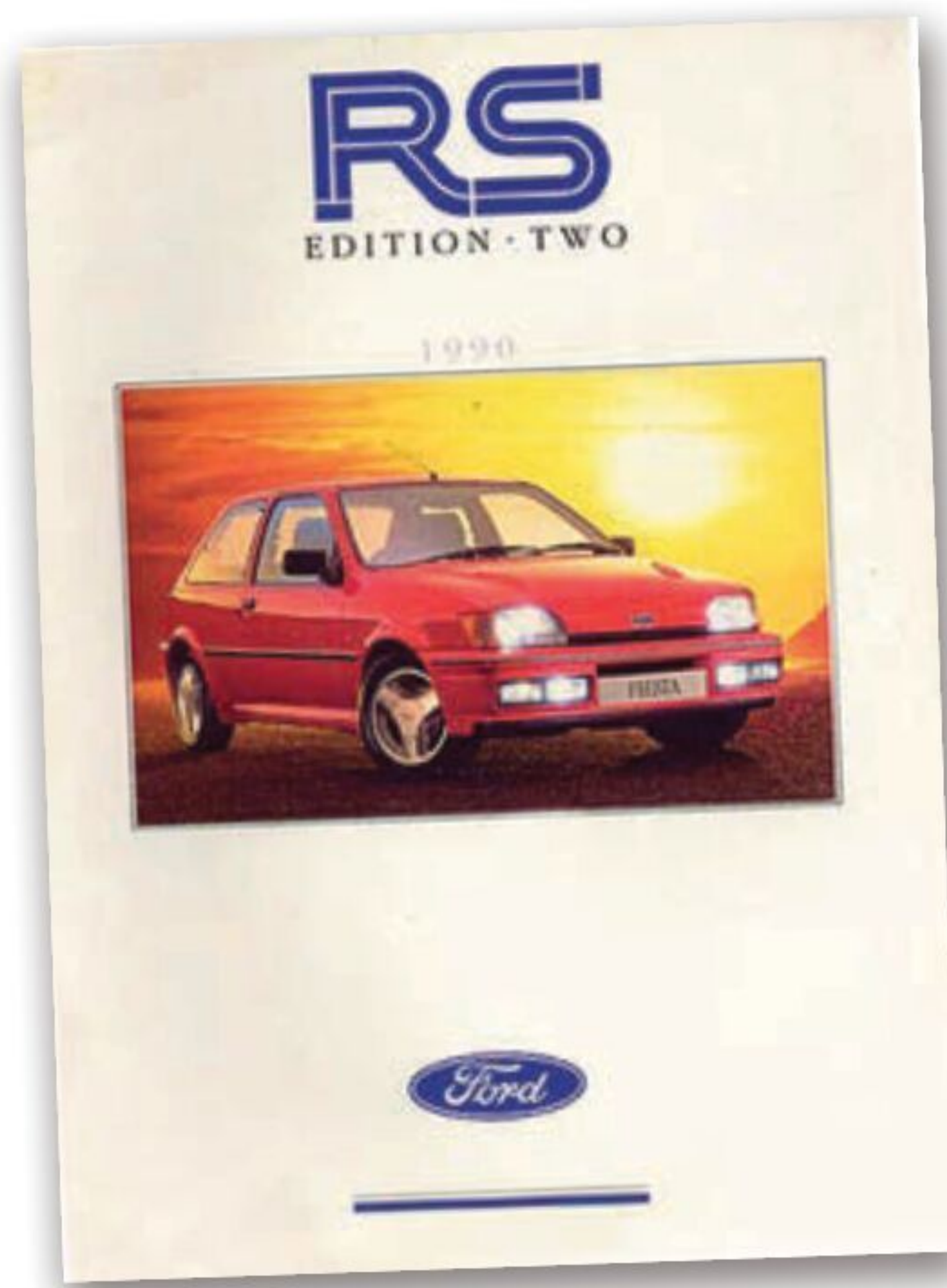
Ford in general, and SVE in particular, were not happy with such responses, but they had to live with them for a time. On the other hand, they were proud of the visual and equipment package that was on offer. Inside, Recaro front seats made all the difference, along with a special, chunky three-spoke steering wheel, electric windows, central locking and a sunroof.

As far as sporting Ford enthusiasts were concerned, the way to identify an RS Turbo from any other of the new-generation Fiestas was not only to recognise the four low-mounted driving lamps and fog lamps (which were shared with the same-generation XR2i), the three-spoke alloy wheels, and the green stripe on the bumpers and around the car at mid-door level, but the inclusion of cooling louvres in the bonnet. If you opened the bonnet, the first thing shouting at you was the Turbo lettering cast onto the inlet passages atop the engine cover.

If the economic times had been different, the RS Turbo would almost certainly have sold better. But the UK market was already beginning to sink towards recession, the climate against frivolous hatchbacks seemed to be fading, and the ever-cautious Ford company bosses didn't seem to be too confident about promoting this model too obviously. With an all-out campaign to launch the next generation Escort (which was due in months) and a growing problem in selling costly Sapphire Cosworths, you couldn't really blame them.

MO' MONEY, MO' PROBLEMS

In the summer of 1990, Ford enthusiasts expecting to buy champagne performance for



"CERTAINLY, THIS WAS THE HARDEST-RIDING FIESTA EVER, WHICH WAS SOMETIMES NICKNAMED THE TURBO-ROLLER-SKATE AND GOT A STREET-RACER'S REPUTATION ALMOST AT ONCE"

beer money were no doubt disappointed by the price of £11,950, which was £1100 more than that of the XR2i, twice as much as an entry-level 1.0-litre Fiesta Popular, and almost the same price as a 1.9-litre Peugeot 205 GTi. Anti-lock brakes, by the way, were a novelty, but cost an extra £435 if specified.

Yet the RS Turbo was genuinely a very rapid little machine, whose overall appeal was only blunted by the rock-hard ride. It was, after all, the fastest Fiesta ever put on sale, and it was positively bristling with character.

Its top speed – 129mph, according to independent tests – was 11mph faster than the XR2i. And that made it the second-fastest car in the Ford range at the time – only the Sierra Cosworth 4x4 was quicker. So it was more than

competitive with any hot hatchback in its class. Not only that, but it could reach 108mph in fourth gear and it could sprint to a quarter mile in 16.1 seconds, all with a 24-to-26mpg everyday fuel consumption figure.

If you didn't mind the ride, it was an absolute hoot to drive, for there was nothing better than those Recaro seats to give great car control. And, more than some of its rivals, it was still a genuine four-seater hatchback with plenty of stowage space and a well-planned interior.

MOVING ON UP

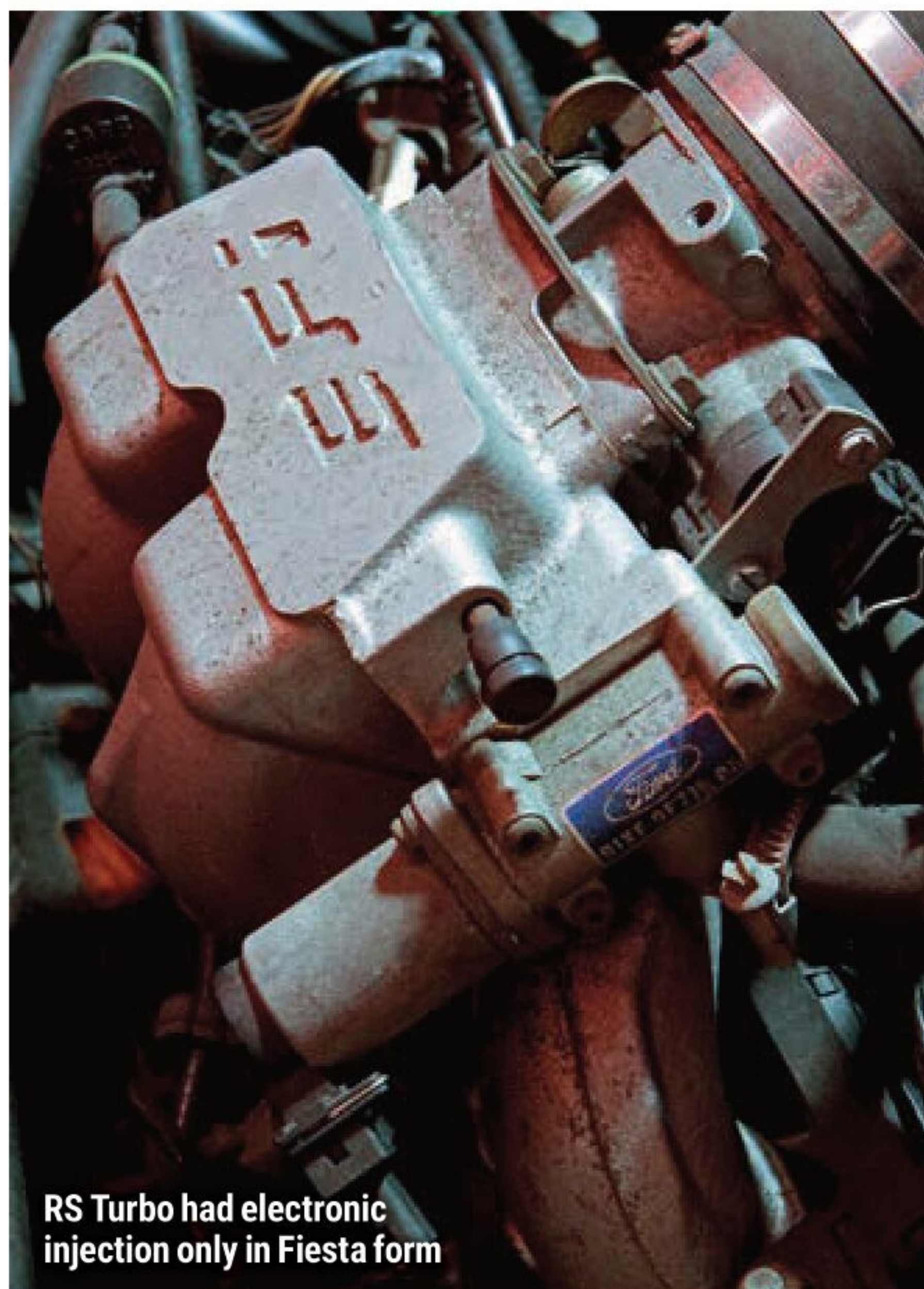
Like other fast Fords of the period, the RS Turbo suffered from the insurance industry's contemporary vendetta against high-performance cars (and hot hatchbacks in



Fiesta RS1800 looked even less exuberant



Turbocharged CVH was developed from the outgoing Escort



RS Turbo had electronic injection only in Fiesta form



Recaro seats and three-spoke wheel were firm, familiar and fabulous

particular), but there is also no doubt that its hard-riding reputation did not help either.

So, in May 1992, 15 years after the Mk2 Escort RS1800 had ceased production, the moniker returned to the fold on the back of the latest sporting Fiesta.

Intended as a replacement for the RS Turbo (although the RS1800 was built alongside the RS Turbo for six months) the new fast Fiesta was Ford's way of shaking-off the boy-racer image of the Turbo-tagged models.

Yes, the RS1800 lost torque compared to its blown predecessor, but it gained displacement and valves when the rev-happy 1.8-litre Zetec was stuffed under the bonnet. The result was a mere 3bhp loss, but the instant lag-less power delivery and revised gear ratios made the RS1800 a very rewarding car to drive.

The RS1800's Zetec unit was heavily based on the new XR2i, but reprofiled cams, a larger throttle body and different ECU tune meant that power had jumped to 130bhp – enough to hit 60mph in 8.1 seconds and carry on to a top speed of 127mph.

Unlike its turbo'd cousin, the RS1800 didn't make a fuss about its performance abilities. The only exterior features to distinguish the RS from any run-of-the-mill Mk3 Fiesta were polished RS2000-style alloys, a subtle bodykit, colour-coded spoiler, and, of course, the RS boot badge.

This was a deliberate ploy from Ford, which, at a time when insurance premiums were at an all-time high, wanted to play down the fact it had just released another hot hatch.

RETURN OF THE MARQUE

Unhappily, just when the RS Turbo and the RS1800 seemed ready to fight back, they were both totally overshadowed by the exuberant arrival of another new, this time ultra-fast, Ford – the Escort RS Cosworth.

Still, the fast Fiesta recipe was there and ready to go as soon as the market (and insurance companies) were ready. After a few lukewarm years during the late 1990s and early 2000s, the first Fiesta ST resurrected the formula of a big, powerful engine in a fantastically nimble little Fiesta chassis.

The following Mk7 and Mk8 STs added turbocharged boost to the Fiesta once again, and have gone on to prove incredibly successful and capable little cars, but is there any headroom in the latest platform for Ford to turn things up a little and reintroduce an RS badge to the Fiesta?

Ford has flirted with the idea since the Mk1, and perhaps came closest with the Mk6, but looking at the tuning potential of the Mk8 Fiesta already being exploited, could that provide the perfect platform for a new RS Fiesta?

In other times the answer would almost certainly be yes, but with the imminent arrival of fully-electric cars we're unlikely to see the Rallye Sport badge again any time soon. ■



BUYING & TUNING FIESTA RS TURBO

The hardcore Mk3 may be hard to find today, but once you've got an RS Turbo it's just as easy to tune as it's always been...

BUYING

There's a lot of junk around, so don't pay over the odds. Make sure you're buying a real RS rather than a tarted-up XR2i – it's just a standard Fiesta shell, so check the chassis number matches the VIN tag and V5, and ensure all the standard kit is in place, including bonnet vents, rear spoiler, electric front windows, glass sunroof, opening rear quarter windows and rear anti-roll bar.

Corrosion is a Fiesta killer, so search around

VITAL STATISTICS

MADE 1990 to 1992

POWER 131bhp @ 5500rpm

TORQUE 135lb.ft @ 2400rpm

0-60 7.9 seconds

TOP SPEED 129mph

the bulkhead, battery tray, door pillars, floorpan, footwells, inner and outer sills, rear wheelarches, fuel filler cap, tailgate and base of the windscreen.

Avoid a knocking engine (could be a worn cam or crank bearings), blue exhaust smoke (which could be burnt valve stem seals, knackered pistons and/or rings or blown turbo) or white smoke/steam and water/oil mixing (head gasket failure).

Transmission trouble is pricey to put right. A notchy or floppy change could be a tired linkage (cheap) but beware of clutch slip, growling from the gearbox or driveshafts, or crunching from worn synchros.

TUNING

Power is easy to find. Basic tuning means a bigger exhaust, air filter, beige injectors and chip. Adding a 2.5 bar map sensor and custom

map allows more boost but it's not cheap – the cash is better spent on an aftermarket ECU or Cosworth management.

With an uprated cam, solid lifters, meatier intercooler and a T3 turbo, an RS Turbo can make 220bhp on standard internals. Fitting a forged bottom end and a T34 means 300bhp, while an aftermarket inlet manifold and more boost will lead to even bigger figures.

But the Fiesta CVH cylinder block is weak, so you're better off with a ZVH (Zetec block and CVH head) or full Zetec with turbo conversion – either way, 500bhp is possible.

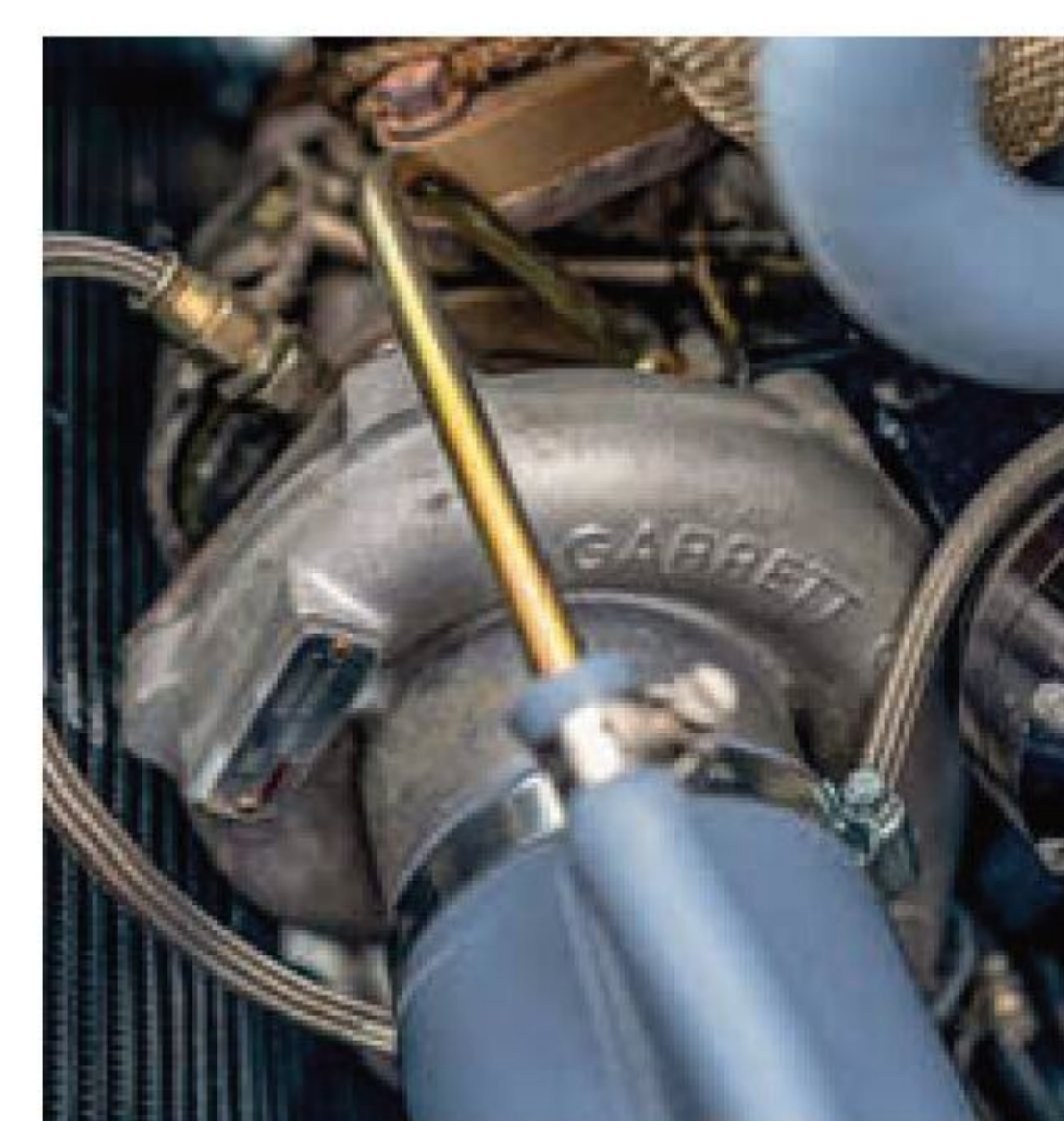
The Fiesta lacked the Escort RS Turbo's limited-slip differential, so it's a worthy upgrade for a standard car. But for more than 200bhp a Quaife ATB is the better option. Either way, you'll need an AP or Helix four-paddle clutch. For a stronger gearbox, select an IB5 or Mk5 RS2000's MTX75.



Admittedly, the Fiesta RS Turbo didn't look this tough when it left the factory



RS Turbo is famed for big-power potential



TECH SPEC

ENGINE 1596cc, four-cylinder, eight-valve CVH, Ford EEC-IV management, Garrett T02 turbo, intercooler

TRANSMISSION Front-wheel drive, B5 five-speed manual

BRAKES 240mm front discs, 203mm rear drums, optional ABS

SUSPENSION Gas dampers, XR2i front springs, 16mm/20mm anti-roll bars front/rear, unique front wishbones and ball joints, 12mm lower/stiffer rear springs

WHEELS & TYRES 5.5x14in alloys, 185/55VR14 tyres

INTERIOR Recaro front seats, leather steering wheel and gearknob

EXTERIOR Fiesta Mk3 three-door, body-colour bumpers, wheelarch extensions, skirts, bonnet louvres and tailgate spoiler, black side mouldings with green inserts, electric front windows, glass sunroof



Staying stock isn't as crucial for the Mk3 as earlier sporty Fiestas

Suspension upgrades are easy – polyurethane bushes, lowering springs and good-quality dampers, or coilovers make a massive improvement. For track days, adjustable top mounts and twin rear anti-roll bars work well.

Bigger brakes are also critical. Cosworth 4x4 or Fiesta ST150 front stoppers will fit behind 15in wheels, while Focus ST170 300mm anchors are ideal if you go up to 16s, using ET35 offset and 195/45x16 tyres. ■



Lowered ride height makes instant improvement

Daniel Whitmarsh's Fiesta RS1800 is a sublime exercise in stealth. Sure, it's got the RS badge acting as a harbinger of mischief, but to the average passer-by this shiny black pocket-rocket will slip straight under the radar. A tidy example of an early-1990s hatchback, nothing more.

Which, of course, is exactly what he wants you to think. Because, while this may appear at first glance to be a largely stock Fiesta, the lengthy spec list says otherwise. Indeed, this is one of the most comprehensively modified and intriguingly complex Mk3s we've seen – and



with a keen focus on Nürburgring assaults and B-road blasts, it's certainly not been buffed to a mirror sheen solely to net concours trophies. The flawless OEM aesthetics are merely a secondary bonus after the primary scramble for horsepower and handling prowess.

What's most endearing about this project is that there's so much of Daniel's blood and sweat interwoven into its very fabric – in some cases, literally. This is a guy who has, through necessity, taught himself to fix his cars, which led him down the path to fixing them in a go-faster sort of way. →

STILL WATERS RUN DEEP

On the surface, a tidy Mk3 Fiesta. Underneath, one of the highest-spec RS1800s we've seen. It's powerful, intelligent and very secretive...

Words **DAN BEVIS** / Photos **MATT WOODS**



FIESTA RS1800

ENGINE 2.1-litre Zetec (86.2mm rebore), ported, polished and refaced head, balanced combustion chambers, Piper 270BH camshafts, Piper vernier pulleys, ARP pulley bolts, refaced block, ARP stud kit, Wössner 12.0:1 high-compression pistons, PEC H-beam conrods, ARP 2000 Series conrod bolts, uprated tri-metal big end bearings and main bearings, balanced crank, alloy crank pulley, alloy alternator pulley, baffled sump, Will Pedley Racing crankcase breather, Forge oil separator, Motul 300v 5w30 racing oil, Vibra-Technics engine mounts, high-torque starter motor, Jenvey twin-45mm super-light throttle bodies, 45mm Jenvey ram pipes, Pipercross air filter, Jenvey inlet manifold (ported, polished and matched to head), Ferriday thermal inlet gasket, Pico 330cc injectors, FSE Power Boost valve, uprated Sytec fuel pump, OBX Racing 4-1 tubular manifold (ported, polished and matched to head), DEI heat-wrapped downpipe, Magnex de-cat pipe, Magnex cat-back exhaust system, Davies Craig electronic water pump and temperature control ECU, Pacet Profan, Roose Motorsport silicone hoses, blanked-off Zetec water pump, Bailey alloy header tank and uprated pressure cap, MSD ignition coil pack, Magnecor KG85 competition ignition leads, Denso iridium spark plugs, Emerald K7 ECU, AEM wideband lambda kit, max 8000rpm

POWER 206.5bhp

TRANSMISSION RS1800 gear ratios, Stage 1 RS Turbo LSD, TTV Racing Supalite 2.9kg flywheel, ARP flywheel bolts, Helix Racing 184mm billet alloy clutch, six-paddle unsprung friction plate, uprated IB5-spec bearings, uprated viscous limited-slip diff, B&M quick-shifter, Vibra-Technics gearbox mounts, Fiesta Mk3.5 gearbox fin (directs air over gearbox for better cooling), Fiesta Mk3.5 adjustable clutch pedal

SUSPENSION Spax adjustable dampers, Fioflex polyurethane top mounts, -50mm lowering springs, Powerflex Black Series front ARB bushes, Powerflex Performance Series rear ARB bushes and rear beam bushes, billet alloy drop-links, Compbrake track-rod ends, OMP rear strut brace, front track increased by 10mm, rear track increased by 24mm

BRAKES Escort RS Cosworth front callipers and grooved discs, EBC Yellowstuff pads, stainless steel braided lines, RBF 600 racing fluid

WHEELS & TYRES 6x15in Mk5 Escort RS2000 wheels, 195/45x15 Yokohama S-Drive tyres

INTERIOR Stock RS1800, CG Lock seat belt stabiliser, RS decal on rev counter

EXTERIOR Fiesta Mk3.5 wing mirrors, clear indicators, RS Turbo pop-out rear windows, front grille removed



Escort RS2000 15in rims are oh-so-subtle increase over stock 14s





More than 200 snorting, normally-aspirated ponies



Vibra-Technics mounts hold everything in place and help save weight

WEIGHT-SAVING

Daniel's approach to shaving grams from the RS1800 and beefing up his power-to-weight ratio borders on the obsessive – as he says: "I wanted the car standard-looking, so I can't remove the interior. So, in a bid to save some weight I had a lot of mass machined from the front engine mounts; the rear one I had made from billet alloy, and I replaced another mount for Vibra-Technics to save another kilo. A smaller battery saved another 4kg over standard (and it's not even a racing battery), and mass was removed from the gearbox mounts. I fitted the black-top cam cover as it's a kilo lighter than the aluminium silver-top one, the inner cambelt cover is made from fibreglass, and I replaced as many bolts as possible with titanium ones. I changed the fan for a lightweight motorsport one, and I even replaced the horn to save 100g..."



Jenvey 45mm throttle bodies are key to the Zetec's impressive power

"ORIGINALLY I WANTED TO KEEP IT AS A 1.8, WHICH I TUNED TO AROUND 170BHP. BUT ONE SUNNY TRACK DAY AT SNETTERTON SAW THE END OF THAT"

This RS1800 is the ultimate manifestation of his hard-earned knowledge.

Daniel explains, "My first car was a Mk4 Escort, which melted a piston shortly after I fitted a K&N air filter and raced it down the dual carriageway. I didn't have the money to get it fixed by a garage, so I bought a Haynes manual, sourced a replacement engine from a scrappers, and swapped it over myself. That didn't last, so I did a 1.8-litre Zetec conversion on twin 40DCOE Webers – *Fast Ford* magazine featured this car in September 2003.

"After that I had a red Fiesta RS1800, which I bought with a blown engine; I bought a recon engine and fitted it, then sold the car and bought another RS1800 in Tourmaline Green, but the car was so original – mint, showroom condition

– that I couldn't modify it. It was too good. So, I sold that too..."

Following this series of adventures, Daniel bought his dream car, an Escort RS Cosworth Lux in Auralis Blue.

He says, "I absolutely loved it. It broke on a weekly basis though – snapping driveshafts, clutch cables... It blew the turbo, even the alarm broke. I was forced to sell it when I was made redundant and decided to go back to college."

The devil makes work for idle hands, and while at college Daniel's car-buying brain-lobe started to itch. And guess what: he fancied another RS1800. So he scoured the classifieds, stalking Auto Trader and biding his time, as by this point he'd become something of an aficionado of the model: Daniel knew →

exactly what he wanted, and that was an early-model example with Recaros, manual steering, no ABS and a heated front screen.

In time, his patience was rewarded, as a perfect candidate popped up in Bridgend – owned by the same lady from new, with just 58k on the clock. He grins, “I basically bought it over the phone, and drove straight there the next day.”

Now, like we say, our man’s become a bit of an RS1800 geek over the years, and he had a very clear idea of the direction he wanted this project to take. The over-arching concept was to keep it as standard-looking as possible, so that only other similarly geeky Ford fans would spot what had happened. Take the wheels, for example – they look just like the original RS1800 rims, but they’re actually from a Mk5 Escort RS2000, as they’re slightly larger and wider (in order to fit bigger brakes behind) while effectively looking exactly the same. Cunning as a fox, this one.

The bigger brakes in question have been pinched from an Escort Cosworth, while the clear indicators and wing mirrors once called a Mk3.5 Fiesta home. See, this is all granular stuff, strictly for the hardcore. The pop-out windows came from an RS Turbo, and the rear lights are something most people really would miss – the left cluster is Euro-spec and the right is UK-spec, to eliminate the asymmetric reversing lens.

Daniel says, “Originally I wanted to keep it as a 1.8, which I did initially and tuned it to around 170bhp. But one sunny track day at Snetterton saw the end of that engine, as I didn’t have a baffled sump, and after a day on track it lost oil pressure for a second, which took out the big end bearings.

“As the oil looked like brown metallic paint, I decided to get a new engine, so obviously went for 2.0-litre. I wasn’t in a rush, so I did everything I could to the engine – every nut, bolt and component is brand new. The block, sump, crank and head are the only original bits, but I had them machined, refaced or reconditioned; the crank was balanced, the head was ported, and the sump was baffled. I went for larger pistons and a rebore to 2.1-litres, and raised the compression ratio from 10:0:1 to 12:0:1.”

This work, extensive though it is, turned out to be just the beginning, as you’ll have spotted if you’ve cast an eye over the spec box and found yourself tumbling down a rabbit-hole of aftermarket improvements. The spec of this Zetec really is mind-blowing, and it’s all added up to a proven 206.5bhp on the rolling road.

“I really wanted to go the NA route, as everyone else seems to be obsessed with turbos,” Daniel says. “And I don’t think you can beat a high-revving nat-asp engine for sound.

“I also worked at making the engine more efficient with regard to mechanical losses and so to increase power at the wheels. So I balanced the whole engine, fitting lightweight cam, crank



Just a mint Mk3 posing for pics...



All the needles go well off the clock

and alternator pulleys, fitted an electric water pump and removed the engine-driven one, and added a lightweight race flywheel with billet alloy race clutch, which is also smaller in diameter to further reduce inertia.”

With the engine coming together beautifully, Daniel turned his attention to the transmission. The gearbox had been making suspicious noises, so he stuck it in first for a hard launch to see if anything would break and, yes, sure enough, it did. It blew itself to pieces. Which gave the perfect excuse to rebuild it with fresh internals, along with an RS Turbo LSD, as well as adding yet another frisson of RS nerdery, in the form of a Mk3.5 gearbox fin, which directs air over the ‘box for better cooling. Serious stuff, right?

The interior is similarly stealthy, as it looks effectively stock. Well, it is stock, really, but any of you who’ve poured hours of effort and pocketfuls of cash into a bespoke engine will know the importance of keeping an eye on its vital signs. Daniel didn’t want to fill the Fiesta with gauges and give the game away, so what was the solution?

He says, “I wired in an OBD loom to the ECU, so I can use a wireless OBD dongle to transmit all the info to my phone, which I put into a cradle

for the track.”

It’s details like this that really make the car – he’s been uncompromising in approach, and it really shines through.

Daniel says, “I try and drive the car as much as possible. I’m not one to lock it away if might rain. I use it on track, and I’ve taken it to the Nürburgring a couple of times. I basically want the car to look standard on the outside, but underneath everything is purely track-focused. And the car gets the most attention at the ‘Ring – you can be parked next to a supercar, yet there’s a crowd around the Fiesta.”

And that, arguably, is the one place where the element of stealth falls apart. Anyone who assumes this is merely a polished shopping car needs to glance over its lap times – this car is, in essence, the ultimate evolution of the RS1800’s potential. Although that’s not to say Daniel doesn’t have plans for its future: ‘ultimate evolution’ is a flawed phrase, and this Fiesta is just going to keep on getting better. ■

THANKS “Matt Woods Photography, Gareth at Scholar Engines, John at Emerald, Greg and Dave at Hangar 111, and the lads for always being on hand to help out – Gav, Dom, Dan, Ben, Tim, James and Adam.”

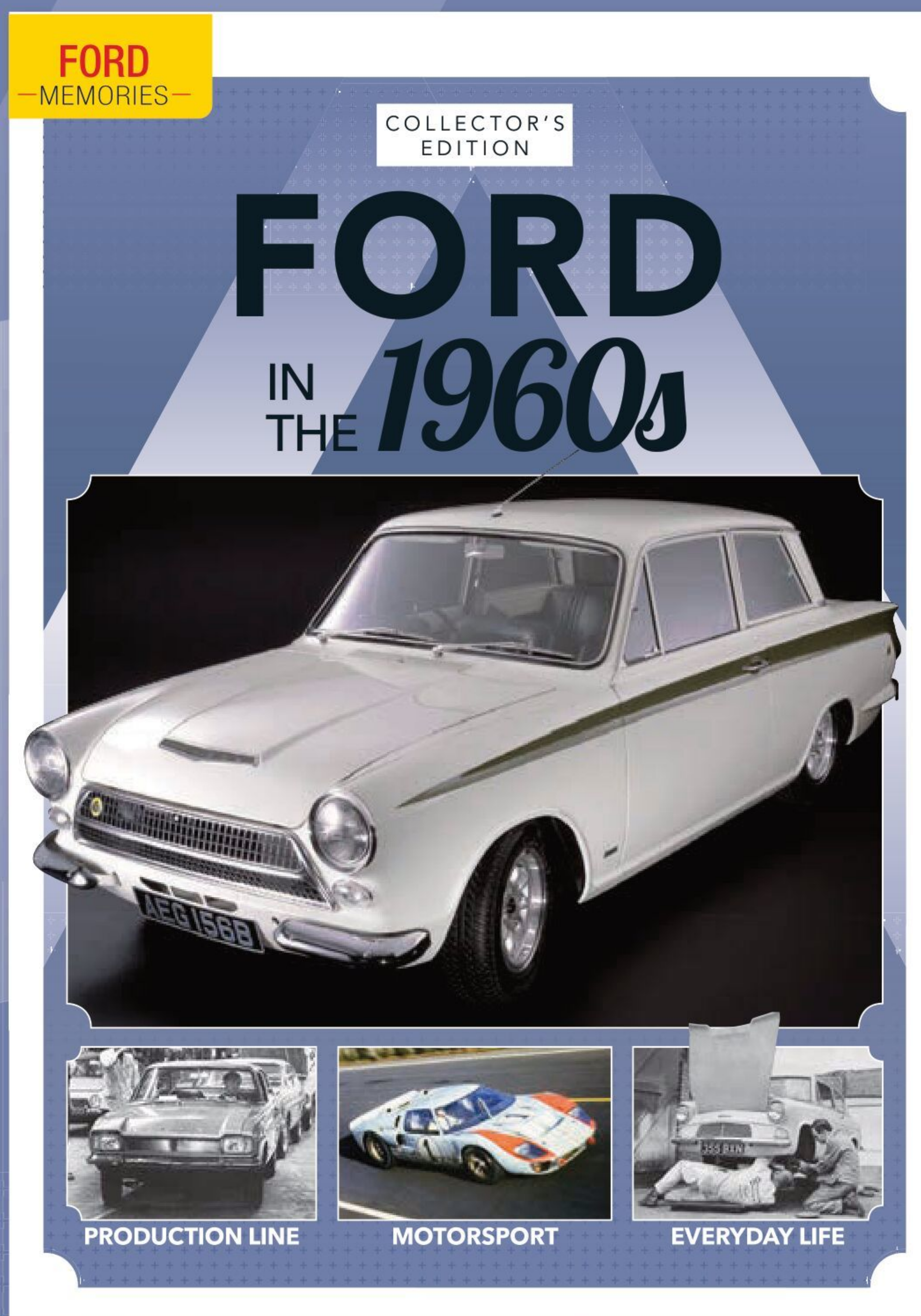
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SPORTING FIESTAS

1976



1100 S
PRODUCED
1976-1983

1980



1300 S
PRODUCED
1976-1983

1981

MK1 XR2
PRODUCED
1981-1983

SUPERSPORT
PRODUCED
1980-1981



1984

MK2 XR2
PRODUCED
1984-1989

1.4 S
PRODUCED
1986-1989



1989

1.6 S
PRODUCED
1989-1991



1990

XR2i
PRODUCED
1989-1992



1992

XR2i (16v)
PRODUCED
1992-1993



1994



RS1800
PRODUCED
1992-1995

Si
PRODUCED
1994-1996



1999

MK5 ZETEC-S
PRODUCED
1999-2002



RS TURBO
PRODUCED
1990-1992

TIMELINE 1976-2020

2004

MK6 ST(150)
PRODUCED
2004-2009



2008

MK6 ZETEC-S
PRODUCED
2004-2008



2011

S1600
PRODUCED
2011



2013

MK7 ST
PRODUCED
2013-2018



2014

ZETEC S RED/BLACK EDITIONS
PRODUCED
2014-2016



2016

ST200
PRODUCED
2016-2017



2017

MK8 ST-LINE (140PS)
PRODUCED
2017-present



2018

MK8 ST
PRODUCED
2018-present



2019

PERFORMANCE EDITION
PRODUCED
2019



2020

ST EDITION
PRODUCED
2020





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Header Tank

Intercooler

Boost Pipe Kit



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Fiesta ST MK8

CHAPTER FIVE

WARM HATCHES

After the insurance hike killed off the hot hatch craze, performance models took a back seat at turn of the century. Still, the Mk5 Zetec-S gave us something to smile about



1.4 Si

YEARS PRODUCED 1996 to 1998

ENGINE CAPACITY 1388cc Zetec SE

POWER 88bhp

0-60 10.8 seconds

TOP SPEED 113mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £11,975

1.4 Si

At the tail end of the Nineties, Ford revised the Fiesta shape to create the new Mk4 model. In truth, it was still a Mk3 underneath, only rounder and smoother to fit with Ford's styling cues at the time, and the interior was more up to date than the dull Eighties' plastics of the Mk3.

But it never really captured the public's imagination and was eventually replaced with another redesign (although still largely based on the Mk3 platform) with the Mk5 in 2000.

After high insurance prices had well and truly killed off the hot hatch craze, Ford never gave us a proper sporty Mk4 Fiesta. The best we got was the 1.4 Si; with 88bhp and top speed of 113mph, it was something of a comedown after the turbo-tastic Mk3 era.

But there was a hidden gem that arrived with the Mk4, as it was the first time we saw the modern, light, and efficient Yamaha-designed Zetec SE range of engines.

While the Mk4 Fiesta was a success with regular motorists, Ford soon realised it had missed out on an entire market who actually enjoyed driving and wanted a little performance to enjoy. So, a new trim level was created for the arrival of the Mk5 Fiesta: the Zetec-S.



ZETEC S

The Mk5 Fiesta Zetec S is almost certainly the easiest Blue Oval you can buy, own and tune on a small budget. With a tight chassis, lively performance and affordable insurance, it's an ideal entry-level hot hatch that any Ford enthusiast can enjoy.

Launched in March 2000, the Zetec S was Ford's way of spicing up the somewhat underwhelming Fiesta Mk5 – itself only an updated version of the ageing Mk3. True to form, Ford's resourceful engineers used simple styling tweaks and parts-bin goodies to create a rather special little machine.

Under the bonnet was a rev-happy 1596cc Focus-sourced Zetec SE engine, packing 101bhp to provide a 113mph top speed. It was mated to a close-ratio IB5 gearbox, snappy final drive ratio and uprated underpinnings – including lowered suspension, sportier steering and beefier brakes.

The Zetec S rolled on 6x15in alloys in multi-spoke style to echo the Racing Puma and Mondeo ST200 of the same era. The bodywork also bore a striking family resemblance, dressed in pumped-up bumpers and offered in a distinctive choice of colours, including the sporty-Ford favourite, Imperial Blue. Meanwhile, the cabin gained matching leather steering wheel and sports cloth trim.

Production was shorter than you might think,

ending in April 2002. Even so, the Zetec S quickly gained a dedicated following of owners and tuners, who are still developing products, fitting ever-more-powerful engines, and basically perfecting the breed to this day. It's a great entry point to Ford ownership and tuning. ■

ZETEC S

YEARS PRODUCED 2000 to 2002

ENGINE CAPACITY 1596cc Zetec SE

POWER 101bhp

0-60 10.2 seconds

TOP SPEED 113mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £10,820 to £11,170

PURPLE HAZE

What do you get when you mix red and blue? If you're anything like Ed Spencer, the answer is a startling blur of horsepower...

Words **DAN BEVIS** / Photos **ANDY SAUNDERS**



The red versus blue debate is one that's been posing an interesting head-scratcher for generations. We're not talking politically, but psychologically; whereas so much of life is black-and-white, there's a lot more to think about when you consider red and blue. And not just in terms of that old Milky Way TV advert...

When it comes to sports, video games, even the plumage of birds, there are key characteristics that define each one; reds tend to be more aggressive and dominating; blues are wilier and sneakier.

So how does this translate to the cars you see here? Well, Ed Spencer's pair of outstanding Mk5 Fiestas turn the rules of nature on their head: the blue car is the aggressive one, the red's impressively stealthier. Both enjoy amusing power and smart engineering solutions, and you wouldn't bet against either in a straight fight. But just what are we actually looking at here?

For starters, what we have is an unassailable Mk5 Fiesta Zetec S enthusiast – as Ed explains: “I've owned Mk5s since I was 19. My first was a 1.25 Freestyle, before stepping up to Zetec S at 23. I started modifying it into a decent road car with

a Ford Racing Puma (FRP) engine. But in 2010 it caught fire and left little but a few salvaged or unfitted parts and a cheque from the insurer. I was gutted, but I soon saw the bright side...”

Around this time, Ed found himself wanting to learn more about working on cars and, having done a few track sessions at Ford Fair, all of the pieces started to slot into place. He wanted to build a track car. A really good one.

He recalls, “I bought the blue car from a forum member, and immediately took it apart in preparation for the roll cage. It had all the wrong mods, but it was a clean shell, which is what I



“A SAVED EBAY SEARCH BROUGHT UP A JOB LOT OF FRP PARTS, INCLUDING THE WIDE-TRACK KIT. THEY NEEDED REFURBISHING, BUT I TOOK THE CHALLENGE AND STARTED CUTTING UP THE ARCHES TO MAKE IT ALL FIT”

was really after. I towed it up to Manchester for the fitting, and while this was going on I sourced a donor Puma conversion kit and sent it off to Lightning Motorsport to rebuild my FRP engine. The gearbox I had was bought new from Ford, and thankfully hadn't been fitted to the old car before the fire.”

As the build progressed, it became increasingly obvious that the iconic Racing Puma was to serve as more than merely inspiration for the track Fiesta; indeed, the exercise inexorably morphed into one of squeezing an entire FRP into the Mk5 shell,

more or less, which is an idea so impressive that you can't help but applaud it.

With the roll cage fitted, Ed then spent the next two years methodically piecing the car together in his garage, debuting at Ford Fair back in 2013 (albeit not totally finished at that point). The spec is formidable: the FRP engine sports a Lightning Motorsport baffled sump, a Zircotec-coated Janspeed stainless exhaust manifold mated to an Alison Automotive exhaust system, Mocal oil and power steering coolers, and a Direnza Mk7 alloy radiator – all the key upgrades to ensure reliability and an

absence of histrionics on track.

The Racing Puma also donated wishbones, knuckles and track rods to the chassis, which work hand-in-hand with Gaz GHA coilovers, and the brakes are impressively serious: Hi-Spec four-pot fronts, FRP rear disc conversion, and a Mk2 Mondeo V6 servo and master cylinder.

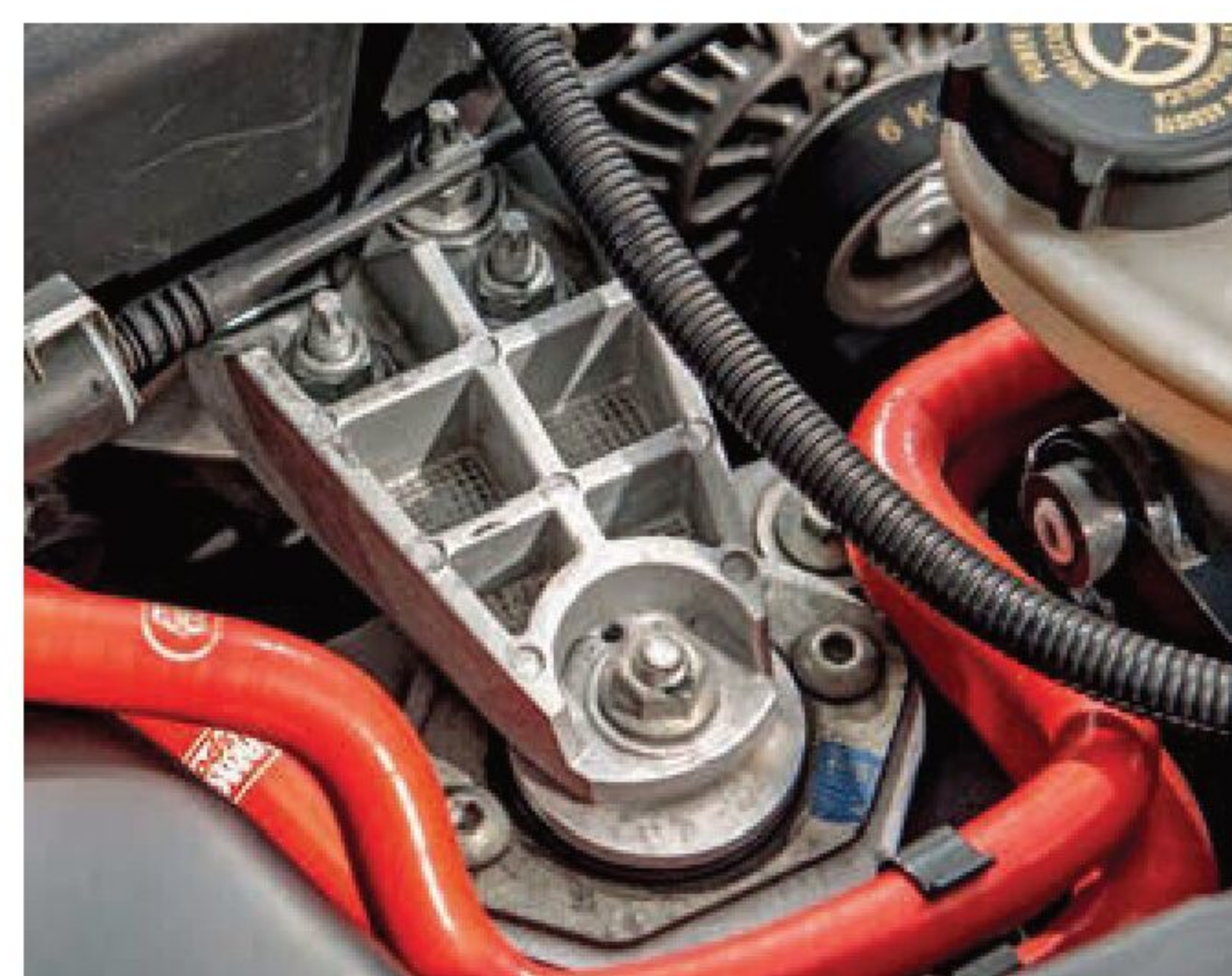
Ed elaborates: “I drove it for a couple of years, improving as I went, until a saved eBay search brought up a job lot of FRP parts, including the wide-track kit. They needed refurbishing, but I took the challenge and started cutting up the arches to make it all fit. →



FRP-inspired Mk5: the car Ford should have built



Full FRP engine pumps out a useable 156bhp



IMPERIAL BLUE ZETEC S

ENGINE FRP-spec Puma 1.7, Lightning Motorsport baffled sump, Zircotec-coated Janspeed stainless exhaust manifold, Alison Automotive exhaust system, Mocal oil and power steering coolers, Direnza Mk7 alloy radiator

POWER 156bhp (131bhp at the wheels), 124lb.ft

TRANSMISSION FRP LSD gearbox, Helix organic clutch, FRP driveshafts

SUSPENSION Gaz GHA coilovers, Powerflex poly bushes, FRP wishbones, knuckles and track rods, 30mm rear axle spacers

BRAKES Hi-Spec four-pot front disc and callipers, FRP rear disc conversion, Mk2 Mondeo V6 servo and master cylinder, DS2500 pads all round, Goodridge hoses

WHEELS AND TYRES 7x15in Ford Racing Ka wheels (road), 6x15in Speedline 1721 wheels (track), Yokohama AD08R tyres

INTERIOR Custom Cages UK Fiesta Mk3 multi-point roll cage by Shawspeed, Ford Racing Sparco PRO2000 seats, Sparco harnesses, OMP steering wheel, lightweight dash, T7 heater, Stack oil gauges, Scangauge, wink mirror

EXTERIOR Wide-arch kit, FRP splitter, single wiper conversion, Ultra head/tail lights



Note the exhaust's FRP-type tip



Roll cage means business



Proof that a track hack can be stylish and tidy too

“I’ve been running the car like this for four years now; it’s had a different set of arches each year, but I’m getting closer to something with form and function. It’s a never-finished project, but that’s what I enjoy – I have the freedom to do whatever I like to it, and learn more as I go.”

Ed’s considerable natural flair for engineering was truly flourishing with experience by this time (and it’s also worth noting that he took a night class in automotive mechanics to further his skill set), and it

was perhaps unsurprising that he’d have a hankering for another project to run alongside this one. It had to be a Mk5 Fiesta, naturally, but it would have an entirely different focus: a stealthier aesthetic, with some truly surprising modern firepower hiding within.

Ed says, “I wanted more power, and the more I looked at the EcoBoost engine, the more I convinced myself to try-fit it.

“I didn’t want to experiment on the track car though, so I found a standard Zetec S for sale

“I DIDN’T WANT TO EXPERIMENT ON THE TRACK CAR, SO I FOUND A STANDARD ZETEC S TO USE AS A TEST-BED. IT WAS A LITTLE ROUGH AROUND THE EDGES, BUT A GOOD BASE TO WORK WITH”

on eBay to use as a test-bed. It was a little rough around the edges, but a good base to work with.”

Ed’s a methodical worker who likes to take a measured scientific approach rather than charging into a project like the proverbial bull in a china shop, so instead of a full Mk7 ST drivetrain swap he opted to start with just the engine. With this in mind, the IB5 gearbox was retained, and with a bit of planning and lateral thinking he was able to mock up the EcoBoost in the engine bay using largely stock fixings for an OEM appearance.

Things ramped up a level as Ed started to draw up brackets in CAD – something he’d never tried before, but he watched a few tutorials and got stuck in; he then 3D-printed his design as a mock-up to check it’d fit.

As you’re probably beginning to realise, there aren’t many things this guy won’t have a go at, just to see if he can. It’s an admirable approach.

He says, “My friend Lee, who also owns a Zetec S, then stepped in and took the final model on to the CNC machine to be made for real, for which I can’t thank him enough.

“I’ve tried to keep the conversion simple, so it uses the Mk5 power steering pump in place of the ST’s air-con pump, and I’ve removed the electric thermostat system and retro-fitted the Mk5 housing in its place.

“The ECU is another item that makes it possible; it’s an SCS Delta GDI4 unit, and they rework the Ford engine loom to run without the need for any other ST parts. They also supply a throttle pot that allows me to keep the standard throttle cable but drive the EcoBoost’s electric throttle body. It’s almost a turn-key kit, and is pre-mapped for the stock turbo.”

The exhaust proved to be an entertaining challenge, as there wasn’t much room for →



Sweet and standard Zetec S. Or is it..?



It is in here...



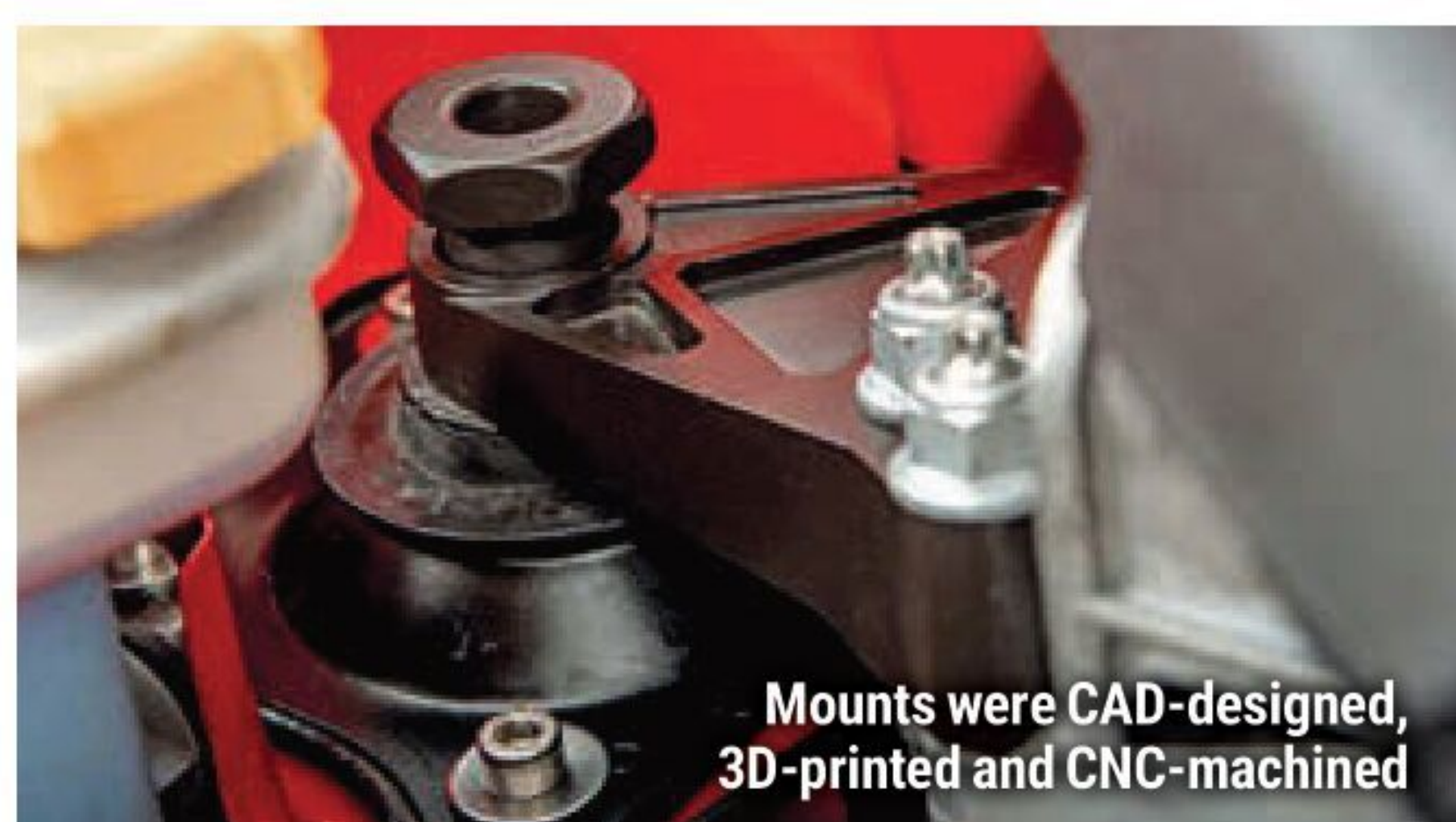
...but they’re not stock stoppers



The red car and the blue car had a race. But we honestly don't know who'd win



SCS Delta GDI4 ECU controls the modern direct-injection EcoBoost



Mounts were CAD-designed, 3D-printed and CNC-machined

the downpipe, but Infinity Exhausts was able to make up a custom 2.5in turbo-back system that works perfectly with the setup.

With the stock turbo and standard engine, the car's running around 220bhp – although Ed suspects this is right at the edge of the operating window for that IB5 'box; once he's sorted out a new transmission arrangement then 280-to-300bhp will be just a hybrid turbo away.

"I've pretty much left the rest of the car stock, for purposes of nostalgia," he grins, "but I've gone through the running gear refreshing everything, to make it feel new and safe to drive. Now the car runs and drives, I'm gently putting it through its paces to see how it handles the EcoBoost – I have a few upgrades planned, including a Puma 'box with Quaife LSD, which is waiting to go in."

The ultimate goal is to transplant the EcoBoost

engine into the blue car, although Ed's got a fastidious programme of testing lined up before that happens: he'll be stretching the red Fiesta's legs at Brands Hatch and Cadwell Park to ensure everything's proven for durability.

So, you see, this was never about having two concurrent projects – the blue car is the linchpin, the red car is the test mule... Although, given the endeavours and adventures Ed's enjoyed with both, you can understand how he'd lavish equal affection on each.

There is no red versus blue debate here; playing the long game, Ed's got an idea in his head to fuse both together. Aggression and sneakiness, working in perfect harmony. ■

THANKS "Thanks go to Mum, Dad and Lyn for supporting me, and Jess, Lee, George, Curt and James for their help."

COLORADO RED ZETEC S

ENGINE 1.6-litre EcoBoost, SCS Delta GDI4 ECU, ST Fabrications intercooler, modified Ramair intake, Walbro fuel pump, Protec fuel pressure regulator, GFB DV+, VW Golf header tank, Mocal power steering cooler, Direnza Mk7 alloy radiator

POWER 220bhp (owner's estimate)

TRANSMISSION IB5 gearbox, Helix paddle clutch

SUSPENSION Gaz GHA coilovers

BRAKES ST150 front brakes, Mintex M1144 pads, U5M braided hoses

WHEELS AND TYRES 7x15in Speedline 2114 wheels, Michelin Pilot Sport 3 tyres

INTERIOR Stock Zetec S

EXTERIOR Stock Zetec S



Red stuffed his face with a Mk7 ST's innards

OWN THE ROAD

TUNING & PERFORMANCE



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BUYING & TUNING MK5 ZETEC S

The hottest Fiesta at the turn of the century wore an unfamiliar badge, but the Zetec S is a bargain buy with bags of tuning potential...

BUYING

The Mk5 bodyshell is related to the Mk3, so expect rust in many of the same spots. Check the rear wheelarches, sills, doors and rear quarters where they meet the back panel. Then search everywhere else...

Engine issues are a real possibility, with the Zetec SE prone to using oil through leaks or excessive breathing; walk away from a car with signs of heavy oil consumption and/or smoking.

VITAL STATISTICS

MADE 2000 to 2002

POWER 101bhp @ 6000rpm

TORQUE 107lb.ft @ 4000rpm

0-60 10.2 seconds

TOP SPEED 113mph

Early engines are a worry (crank bearing failure was common at around 50,000 miles, requiring a rebuild), and identified by a bare alloy cam cover; the better post-2001 Zetec S (known as the phase two) had a black plastic cover instead. Other phase two revisions included darker grey trim, wheels without centre caps, and an internal boot release.

Avoid a Fiesta with gearbox problems. Noise or notchiness suggests worn synchros, and a slipping clutch is easy to spot. But don't worry about a rattle at idle that disappears when you press the clutch (it's probably the clutch release bearing), or a sloppy change, which is probably caused by a worn linkage.

TUNING

Surprisingly tuneable, the Zetec SE rises to 130bhp with a four-into-two-into-one exhaust manifold and system, along with high-lift cams

and a remap.

The silver-top cylinder head needs to be replaced with a black-top version, after which throttle bodies can be fitted. With stronger rod bolts and valve springs, 150bhp-to-180bhp is possible, especially when accompanied by a gas-flowed, big-valve head.

An engine swap could be better for you – the 123bhp Puma 1.7-litre motor drops straight in – but over 200bhp is possible using forged rods, pistons and wilder cams.

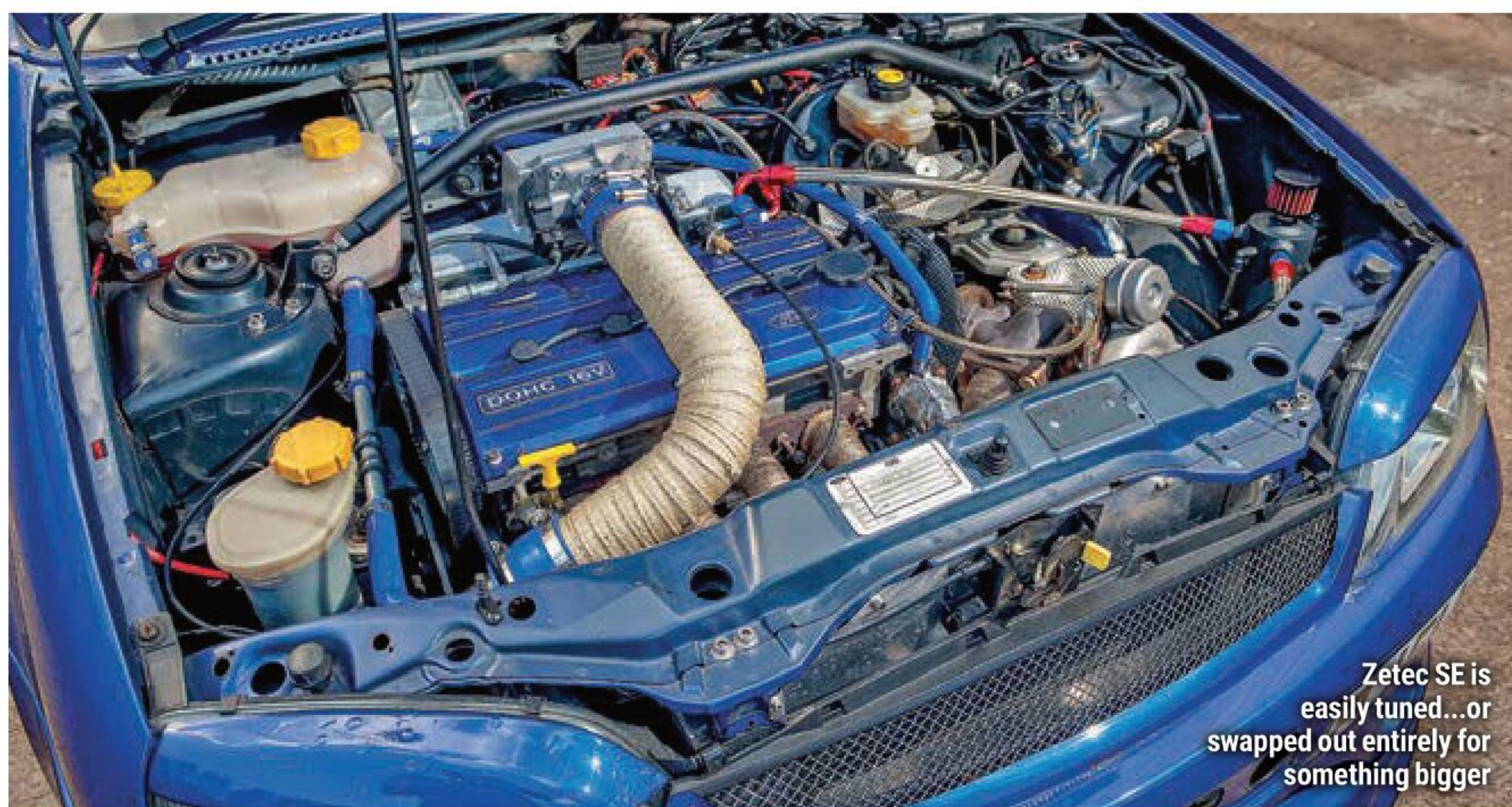
Turbocharging an otherwise standard engine produces similar figures. Kits are available off-the-shelf, while 330bhp is possible on forged internals and a GT28 turbo.

There's also a variety of engine transplants for the Fiesta Mk5 – from the RS Turbo's CVH to the Mk1 Focus RS motor or even an EcoBoost. Your budget is the only limit.

The Zetec S's standard gearbox is tough;



Fiesta Zetec S makes a brilliant track hack



Zetec SE is easily tuned...or swapped out entirely for something bigger



The Mk5 Fiesta - fun for every occasion...

TECH SPEC

ENGINE 1596cc, four-cylinder, 16V Zetec SE, Siemens fuel injection, Ford EEC-V management

TRANSMISSION Front-wheel drive, B5 five-speed manual with sports ratios

BRAKES 258mm front discs, 190.5mm rear drums, ABS

SUSPENSION Gas dampers, lowered coil springs (13mm front/10mm rear), uprated rear beam, uprated PAS

WHEELS & TYRES 6x15in alloys, 195/50x15 tyres

INTERIOR Sports front seats, white dials, leather steering wheel and gearknob

EXTERIOR Fiesta Mk5 three-door hatchback, mesh grille, body-coloured bumpers, skirts and tailgate spoiler

the clutch can handle 140bhp, but a limited-slip differential is recommended (an ATB or an RS Turbo series two's viscous diff). The Puma 1.7 transmission is a good alternative –especially the LSD-equipped Racing Puma ‘box.

Polyurethane bushes improve the Zetec S's sharp handling, while lowering springs on uprated dampers are almost essential. Add strut braces and rear axle spacers for track work.

Bigger brakes are important too. Mondeo V6 Mk1/2 or ST150 fronts are a cheap upgrade, while Focus ST170 discs and callipers (with Focus rear discs) are ideal behind 16in wheels. ■



Mk3 origins mean Mk5 body can rot

CHAPTER SIX

PERFORMANCE REBORN

We thought all hope was lost for fast Fiestas after the Mk3's demise, but the ST gave the Mk6 model genuine performance credentials, and was supported by a new Zetec-S version too



ZETEC-S

At the same time as the ST was stealing all the headlines, Ford also launched another sporty Mk6 model, the Zetec-S. With the same stylish appearance, the ZS looked very similar to the ST but a under the bonnet lived a 1.6-litre

ZETEC-S

YEARS PRODUCED 2004 to 2008

ENGINE CAPACITY 1596cc, Duratec

POWER 99bhp

0-60 9.9 seconds

TOP SPEED 114mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £11,595

Duratec rather than the full-fat 2.0-litre. It served up a respectable 99bhp which meant this cheaper-to-run Mk6 could still reach 114mph and hit 60mph in under ten seconds.

The brakes and suspension were toned down from the ST to offer a more civilised everyday package, but still more than enough to provide an entertaining drive.

The regular Zetec-S came well equipped as standard, but various special editions added all the options, funky colours (yellow, green, or red depending on Anniversary, Celebration, or Red Editions), chequered roof, and were limited to just 400 cars each.

For younger drivers who couldn't afford the insurance on an ST, or for those requiring better fuel economy, the Zetec-S made a lot of sense.



Zetec-S was fun, if not fast





Bold GT40-style stripes were a popular ST option



Mk6 ST was also known as the ST150 thanks to its 150PS powerplant



ST

Hailed as the spiritual successor to the much-missed XR2, the original Fiesta ST appeared in winter 2004, a time when we'd all but given up hope of another hot small Ford.

But there was no need to worry because the fiery new Fiesta was TeamRS's first production car, packing 150PS/148bhp (thus the ST150 nickname) from a two-litre Duratec powerplant tuned with a variable intake and free-flowing exhaust.

The result was a load of naturally-aspirated grunt, along with 129mph top end and 0-to-60mph acceleration in 7.9 seconds.

An uprated gearbox with lightened flywheel and quickshift enhanced flexibility, while lowered suspension and sharper steering meant big grins on the back roads. Even the brakes were beefed-up, with rear discs and ST170 fronts.

Best of all, the Fiesta ST looked fantastic. A set of multi-spoke 17in alloys were added beneath a funky new bodykit and roof spoiler. A choice of fashionable colours was boosted by the option of GT40-type decals along the sides and over the top.

Inside, the ST150 had half-leather trim and a sporty steering wheel. It worked a treat.

November 2005 brought a mild facelift, adding soft-feel dashboard and goggle-eyed headlights. Summer 2008 saw the ST500 arrive:

painted Panther Black with silver stripes, black rims and carbon fibre-pattern trim, just 500 of these UK-only editions were built.

Superb to drive and simple to tune, the ST remains a firm favourite of those looking for cheap fast Ford thrills. ■

ST

YEARS PRODUCED 2004 to 2009

ENGINE CAPACITY 1999cc Duratec

POWER 148bhp

0-60 7.9 seconds

TOP SPEED 129mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £13,595

DOUBLE STANDARDS

With a custom turbo and loads of supporting mods, Nathan Birch's Fiesta ST kicks out more than twice the original power output – a mighty 333bhp on low boost!

Words and photos JON CASS



W

hen the Mk6 Fiesta ST first hit the showrooms in 2005, it was seen as a real breakthrough for Ford.

There hadn't been a hot Fiesta for far too long, but the Blue Oval had finally come up with the 150bhp Fiesta ST.

The feisty Fiesta delivered in every area, and many reckoned its capable chassis could handle plenty more power. Little wonder, then, that we're still seeing freshly-built Mk6 STs with

more than double their original power output under the bonnet.

For Nathan Birch, it happened to be his dad's car that gave him the inspiration to use a Mk6 ST as a project base.

He remembers, "I'd had a Polo TDi for my first car, then moved on to a 1.2 Corsa SXi, which I began to modify – as you do when you're 17.

"Around that time my dad bought an immaculate one-owner-from-new Frozen White

Fiesta ST and I fell in love with it straight away."

Nathan knew full well at the time there was no way he could afford to insure even a standard Fiesta ST, but two agonizingly-long years later, he found the costs to just about be realistic.

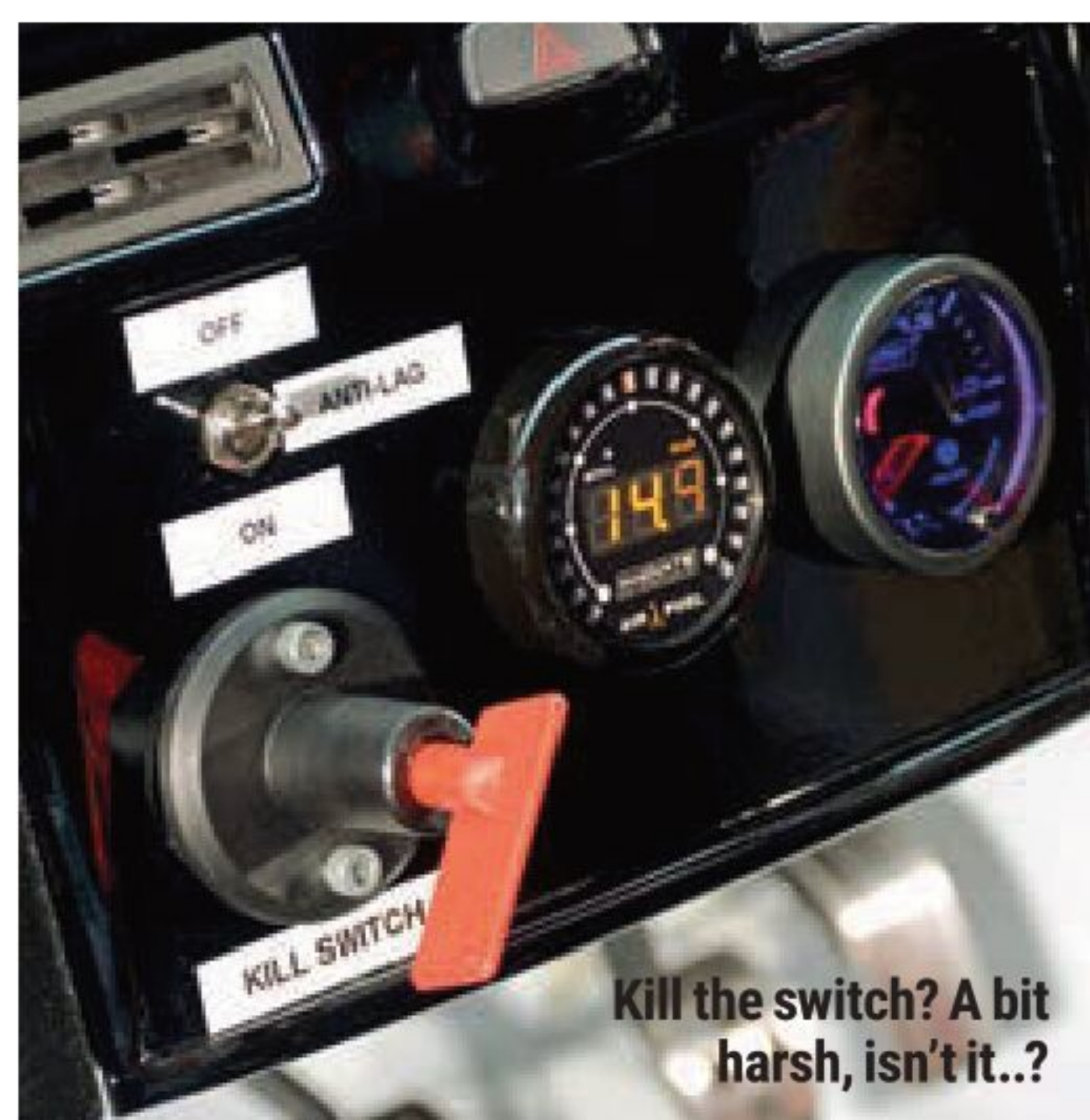
He recalls, "My dad had decided to move on to another car, I knew I had to buy his Fiesta – it was a now-or-never opportunity."

As you'd expect, the ST didn't remain standard for long, and the mods soon began. —>





Red on white – about to take flight



Kill the switch? A bit harsh, isn't it..?



Gearbox has been replaced with stronger MTX75



Race prep factor 100

Nathan laughs, “I couldn’t help myself. Within a couple of months I’d fitted AP coilovers, 20mm rear hub spacers and a rear anti-roll bar, which made the car handle like it was on rails.”

Nathan then moved on to power, with a Milltek exhaust, K&N filter and 60mm throttle body all added. He says, “It helped the engine breathe a little better and there was now an addictive burble from the exhaust, along with a few pops and bangs.”

Nothing unusual so far, you may think – just a scattering of well-selected mods to enhance the performance of an already nimble ST... But that was soon to change.

Nathan says, “I had a ride out in a mate’s turbocharged Fiesta. I was instantly impressed and knew straight away which direction to take my own car.”

MK6 FIESTA ST

ENGINE 2.0-litre Duratec, TD05 hybrid turbo, GEMS stand-alone ECU (with launch control and anti-lag), forged rods, forged pistons, Newman cams, heavy-duty bearings, high-pressure oil pump, ARP main and head bolts, uprated copper head gasket, Ferriday thermal inlet gasket, 19-row oil cooler with thermostat sandwich plate, 660cc injectors, Airtec intercooler, Airtec alloy radiator, 2.5in alloy boost pipes, HKS sequential dump valve, 60mm throttle body, Cosworth inlet manifold, performance silicone hose kit, relocated power steering, sump modified for turbo oil return, custom 3in side-exit exhaust, Pipercross air filter, Magnecor HT leads

POWER 332.9bhp and 260ft.lb at 0.9 bar (mapped by DWR performance)

TRANSMISSION MTX75 gearbox conversion, Quaife limited-slip diff, six-paddle racing clutch, lightened flywheel, braided clutch pipe, raised gearstick, Vibra-Technics engine mount, custom gearbox mounts

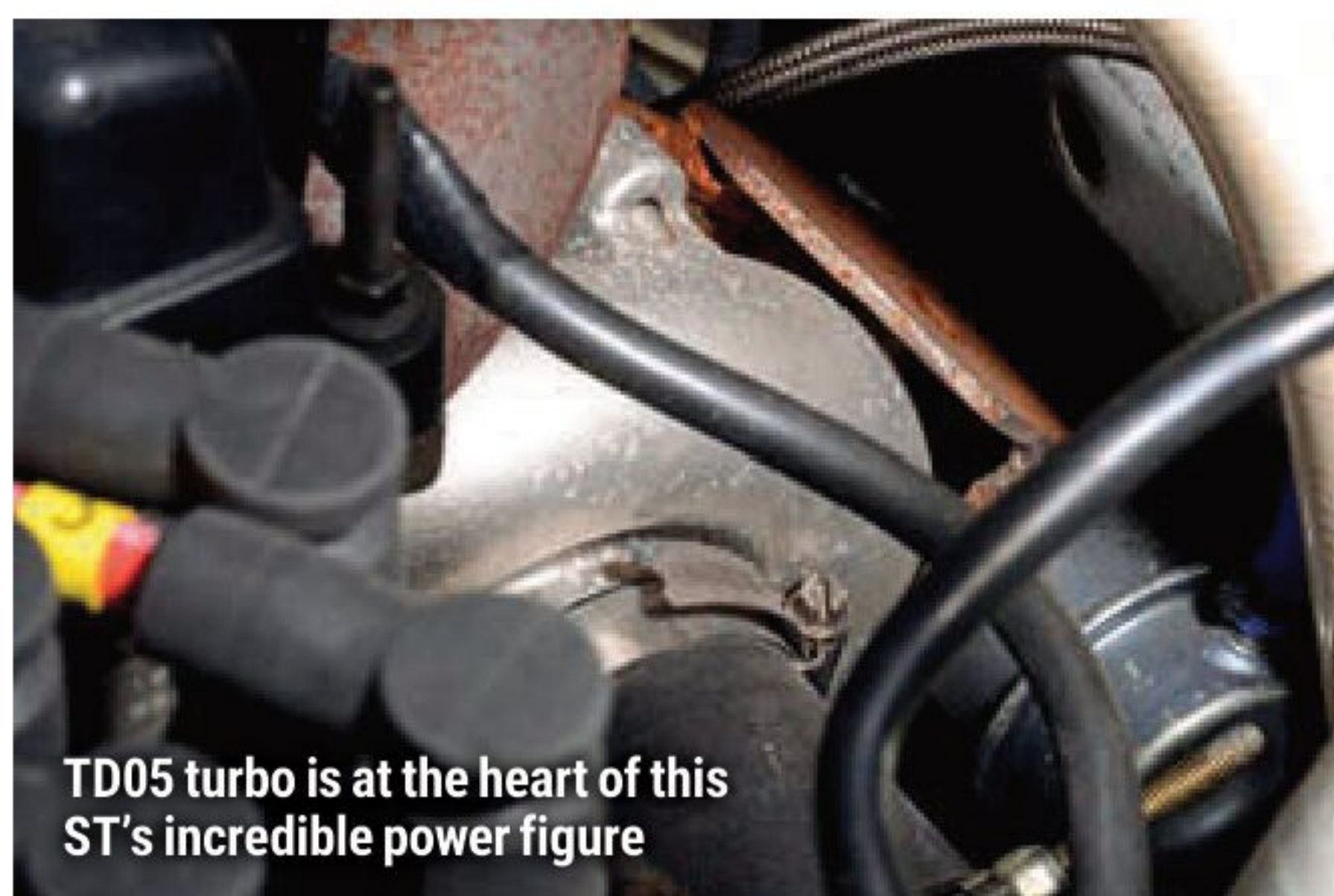
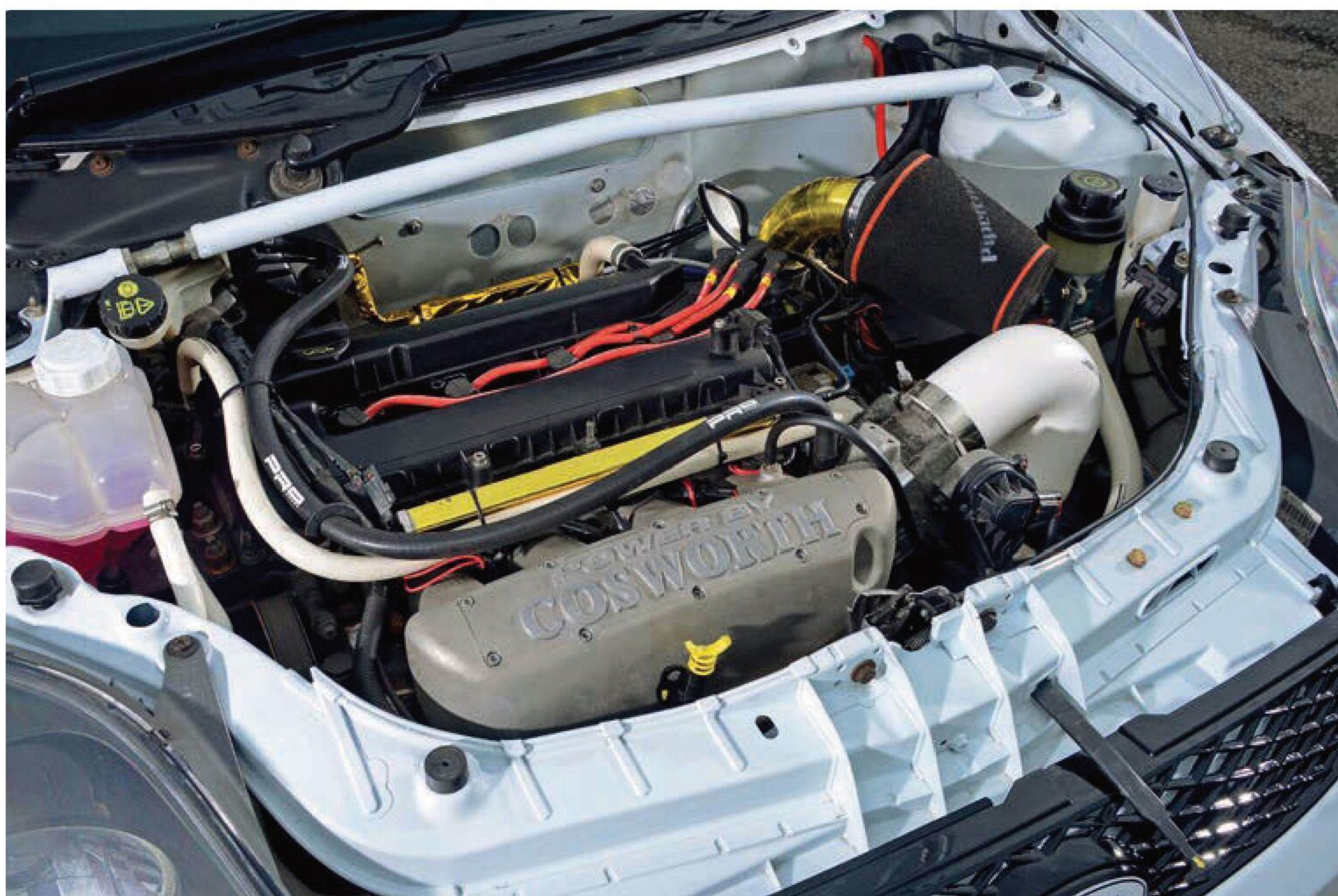
SUSPENSION AP coilovers, OMP front strut brace, Whiteline adjustable rear anti roll bar

WHEELS AND TYRES 7.0x16in Team Dynamics Pro Race 1.2 alloys, Federal 595 RSR tyres

BRAKES Focus ST170 300mm front brake conversion, ST170 280mm rear brake conversion, Ferodo DS2500 pads, J-hook discs, braided lines

EXTERIOR Fiesta ST bodykit, smooth front bumper, smoothed rear diffuser, TRC front splitter, TRC bonnet lip, gloss black plastics, window tints, Airtec sun strip, DJ Auto Lighting halo headlights, red pin-striping, wind deflectors, quick-release bumper

INTERIOR OMP six-point roll cage, Sparco Pro-2000 bucket seats, Sparco four-point harnesses, interior fully painted in Frozen White, quick-release 300mm OMP steering wheel, battery relocated to behind passenger seat, fire extinguisher, custom door panels, flocked dash, fully stripped out, oil temp/oil pressure/boost/AFR gauge and kill switch in custom centre console



“THE TURBO ITSELF HAS TO BE MY FAVOURITE MOD; THE SOUND IT MAKES IS UNBELIEVABLE – IT’S LIKE A JET FIGHTER TAKING OFF, AND YOU GET THAT SAME FEELING OF BEING PINNED BACK IN THE SEAT AS IT KICKS IN”

In the short term, the change to forced induction had to wait, Nathan initially electing to enhance the subtle ST's exterior.

At first glance, there don't appear to be any dramatic changes to the body other than the TRC front splitter and bonnet lip. Look closer, though, and you'll soon spot the smoothed quick-release front bumper and smooth rear bumper. That's in addition to the gloss black trim, window tints, halo headlights and wind deflectors, which all help to make this Fiesta stand out from your average ST.

By then, Nathan had full intentions of doubling the car's original power output, so he decided to upgrade the brakes in readiness. At the front there are now ST170 300mm discs, and at the rear 280mm discs and callipers from the same donor. These not only improve

the stopping power, but also look pretty cool between the spokes of those hard-as-nails 7x16in Team Dynamics Pro Race 1.2 rims in contrasting bright red.

With the chassis and brakes capable of handling a lot more power, Nathan began to make a start on his long-anticipated turbo conversion. The rebuilt 2.0-litre Duratec now benefits from forged rods and pistons, Newman cams, ARP bolts, uprated bearings and high-pressure oil pump. That's in addition to the uprated head gasket, 660cc injectors and 19-row oil cooler – aided by the clever cooling duct located in the front bumper.

In fact, everything has been upgraded in some way, even down to the Cosworth inlet manifold, silicone hoses, relocated power steering and an unusual – but cool – side-exit exhaust.

Helping to keep the engine temperature happy there's now an Airtec alloy radiator and intercooler in place, which also helps enhance the already aggressive front end. These additions all look good and help give the engine bay plenty of sparkle, as well as performance kudos, but the main ingredient is neatly tucked away, hidden at the back of the engine: the TD05 hybrid turbocharger.

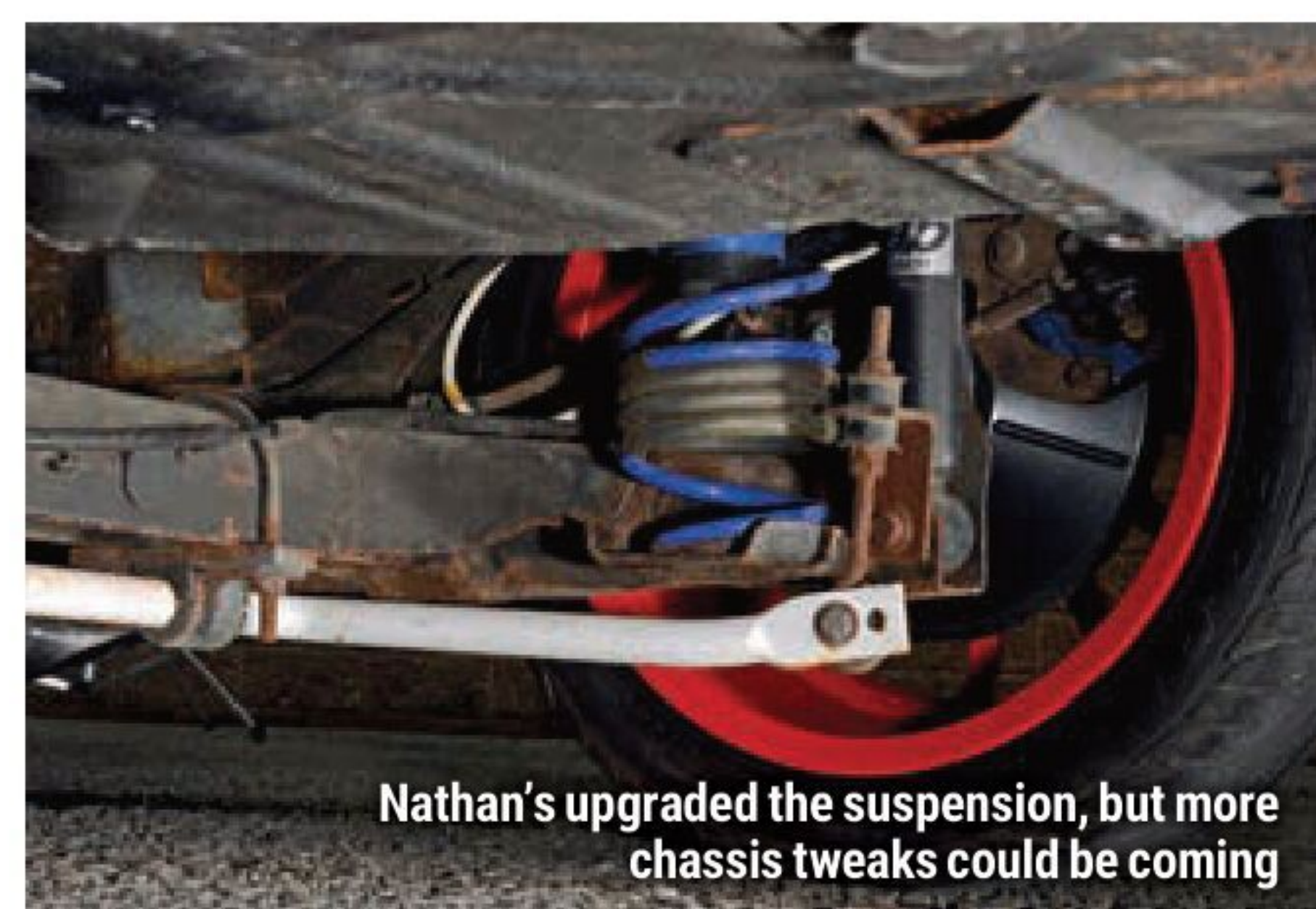
Fitting it was far from plain sailing, though, and certainly not just a case of bolting parts onto a rebuilt engine and turning the key.

Nathan says, “After initially having the engine rebuilt with the turbo, the car kept stalling. After seeking advice from a couple of specialists, they couldn't find the cause.”

A switch to a GEMS stand-alone ECU was suggested, but the problem still persisted. →



With full OMP cage and Sparco buckets, this is one track-ready Fiesta



Nathan's upgraded the suspension, but more chassis tweaks could be coming

"I decided to go through everything in the car and began swapping parts one by one with my Fiesta ST track car, which I knew ran okay," Nathan explains. After months of head-scratching it turned out to be a faulty throttle body causing the stalling issues.

"I was over the moon I'd found out what it was, and ordered a new 60mm throttle body and booked the car in for mapping with Darren at DWR Performance," Nathan smiles. The result speaks for itself, with an impressive 332.9bhp at 7070 rpm on the rollers – and that's with only 0.9-bar of boost.

Swapping the original gearbox for a stronger MTX75 unit, along with an LSD at the same time, also seemed like a sensible approach. Unfortunately, problems arose once again. This time the slave cylinder gave up the ghost after just 200 miles.

Nathan says, "It happened loads of times. I was close to giving up on the whole idea and stripping the car for parts, but I'm glad I didn't."

In the end, Nathan decided to find the root of the cause and took the car to his mate's garage. "We could remove and refit the gearbox with our eyes closed by then, but this time stripped it totally down and spaced the slave out from the gearbox as it appeared to be over-stroking." According to Nathan, this isn't a common

problem, and after remaining in the garage all night ensuring the internals remained as they should, it seems to have disappeared. Phew!

That left just the interior to sort, and after pouring many hours and wages into the rest of the car, he wasn't going to start cutting corners here. A full six-point OMP roll cage dominates, and the Sparco Pro-2000 bucket seats with four-point harnesses are in keeping with the functional theme.

Nathan says, "I knew I'd have my work cut out when it came to the interior, as I'd never used a welder before. Luckily, Carl at Raven Blasting Cleaning was on hand for a spot of teaching and pointing me in the right direction."

The quick-release 300mm OMP steering wheel looks right at home, and Nathan's also flocked the dash, added gauges, and his own custom-made door panels and centre console. All elements of refinement have disappeared, even down to the lack of stereo, heaters and air conditioning. This ST is all about saving weight and going as quickly as possible, after all.

Incredibly, other than the engine rebuild, wiring, and the help we've already touched on with the welding and gearbox, everything you see has been carried out by Nathan himself. And when you factor it all in, that's a huge amount of work, especially juggling building this project

around a full-time job.

He says, "The first time I took my mate out in the car just after it went back on the road, his words were 'you have built a beast'. And that was just at 300bhp, before I'd fitted the stand-alone ECU.

"The turbo itself has to be my favourite mod; the sound it makes is unbelievable – it's like a jet fighter taking off, and you get that same feeling of being pinned back in the seat as it kicks in."

Despite every aspect of this build having been covered, Nathan's keen to make a few changes. A full poly bush kit and a swap to BC Racing or Meister R suspension is likely, which should help add some camber at the front.

There may have been a few setbacks along the way, but Nathan shows no signs of slowing down. In fact, the last we heard, Nathan had started doing a few drag days in the Fiesta, and a recent engine build had hopes of achieving over 500bhp – proof that fast Fords just keep on getting faster. ■

THANKS "My parents for putting up with me and using their garage while building the car, Darren at DWR Performance for mapping, Carl and Gary at Raven Blast Cleaning for all their help. Also Rob for staying out and helping sort the gearbox issue with me. And everyone else who helped the build."



Would a Mk6 Fiesta RS
have been a success?
Of course it would!



THE NEARLY-RS

Ford fans have long been crying out for RS versions of the Fiesta, and in 2003 we very nearly got another

Ever since the launch of the first Fiesta right back in the Seventies, Ford fans have wanted an RS version of the Blue Oval's small car. Early attempts showed Ford had all the right ingredients available to build a cracking hot hatchback – as we've already seen on page 18 – but at twice the price of the regular model it was a non-starter; its fate was then sealed with the success of the XR2.

But ideas of a Rallye Sport Fiesta never went away, and with the Mk3 we were treated to two models to wear the iconic badge. The cars were fantastic but Ford's timing wasn't, with the RS turbo and RS1800 arriving just in time for rising insurance premiums to kill the hot hatch market dead.

Yet every time Ford announced a new generation of Fiesta the rumour mill went into overdrive about the promise of a hardcore new RS version incoming.

In 2003 we were teased with images of another RS concept, this time based on the Mk6 Fiestas that Ford used in the Junior WRC series, a feeder to the main WRC program. The legendary Rallye Sport moniker had been absent from the back of a fast Ford since the Escort Cosworth days of the Nineties, and demand for a return was strong.

For knew this, and was already working on the first new RS for over a decade, the Mk1 Focus RS. At the same time, British designer Chris Clements was inspired by

the JWRC cars and, with designer Lee Moran, penned a Mk6 Fiesta called the Rallye Concept.

Utilising the JWRC's wide-arch bodykit, the design used the hardcore equipment of the rally cars but with a much tidier fit and finish more akin to road car. It was a kind of halfway house between fully-fledged motorsport machine and finished road product, like a ready-made track car, if you will. It looked stunning and was understandably well received.

Well enough that Chris was encouraged to design another concept, one that would take another step closer towards the road-car market. The resulting RS Concept car was less extreme than the Rallye Concept, but it was also much more realistic and looked as though it was ready for full-scale production from the off.

The first concept was this hardcore rally-inspired design, but you can see how it could have evolved into a road-going RS



Although early engineering development had started on the project, we'll never know for certain what Ford would have stuck under the bonnet if the Mk6 RS had become a reality. We can only make an educated guess at either a slightly less powerful version of the turbocharged 2.0-litre from the Mk1 Focus RS, or less likely but still feasible, a more powerful version of the Duratec found in the Mk6 ST.

Either way, it would have sold in huge numbers just from its appearance alone. Sadly, the issue of price proved the final stumbling block once again. A Fiesta RS would need to be cheaper than the Mk1 Focus RS, but there simply wasn't enough wiggle room for Ford to build a Fiesta RS, sell it for less than £20,000, and still make a profit, so it never happened. ■



BUYING & TUNING MK6 ST

The first ST reignited our passion for fast Fiestas, and can be picked up cheaply today. Here's how to grab a bargain, and then make it even better

BUYING

Tatty STs are common, so shop around. Look for a post-November 2005 model with extra standard kit, and pay extra for leather trim or option packs. Most desirable of all is the Panther Black ST500, with silver decals and carbon trim.

High mileage isn't an issue, but avoid an ST that's been abused. Nasty engine noises are the biggest worry, with crank bearing failure causing knocks from the bottom end. That's bad

VITAL STATISTICS

MADE 2004 to 2009

POWER 148bhp @ 6000rpm

TORQUE 140lb.ft @ 4500rpm

0-60 7.9 seconds

TOP SPEED 129mph

news. A whirring PAS pump is probably on its last legs.

The gearbox can feel jerky from cold - that's normal. A floppy clutch pedal could be caused by a loose washer, but clutch slip will be pricey to repair. Be sure to take a test drive.

Suspension problems include collapsed bushes and broken springs, so listen for clonks and rattles. Rumbling noises are likely to be from worn wheel bearings.

Rust is also a problem, so check the wheelarches (notably the rears but also the fronts), door bottoms and passenger footwell. Interiors are often rattly, and seats sag, while electrical equipment may fail - check the heated windscreen works, along with the auto wipers and lights.

TUNING

Tuning potential is massive. An induction kit,

sports exhaust and remap will gain 20bhp over standard, while uprated camshafts and an aftermarket inlet manifold and plenum - with a custom map - can see more than 190bhp.

Throttle bodies take the ST150 above 200bhp, although it's not a cheap or simple conversion. To make the most of them, it's also wise to go for a ported cylinder head, heavy-duty valve springs, higher-lift cams and a high-compression, forged bottom end. The American Ford Ranger 2.3 block is also an option, which can be used with the standard ST ancillaries; fully fettled, it can approach 300bhp.

Forced induction is popular for the ST150, with supercharger conversions running fine on the factory internals and ECU, meanwhile doubling the original power output. Turbo kits work well too.

The IB5 gearbox will cope with most upgrades, but the clutch will retire at



Duratec is capable of massive power



Half-leather ST seats were standard

TECH SPEC

ENGINE 1999cc, four-cylinder, 16V Duratec, variable intake system

TRANSMISSION Front-wheel drive, Durashift five-speed manual, short-throw shift

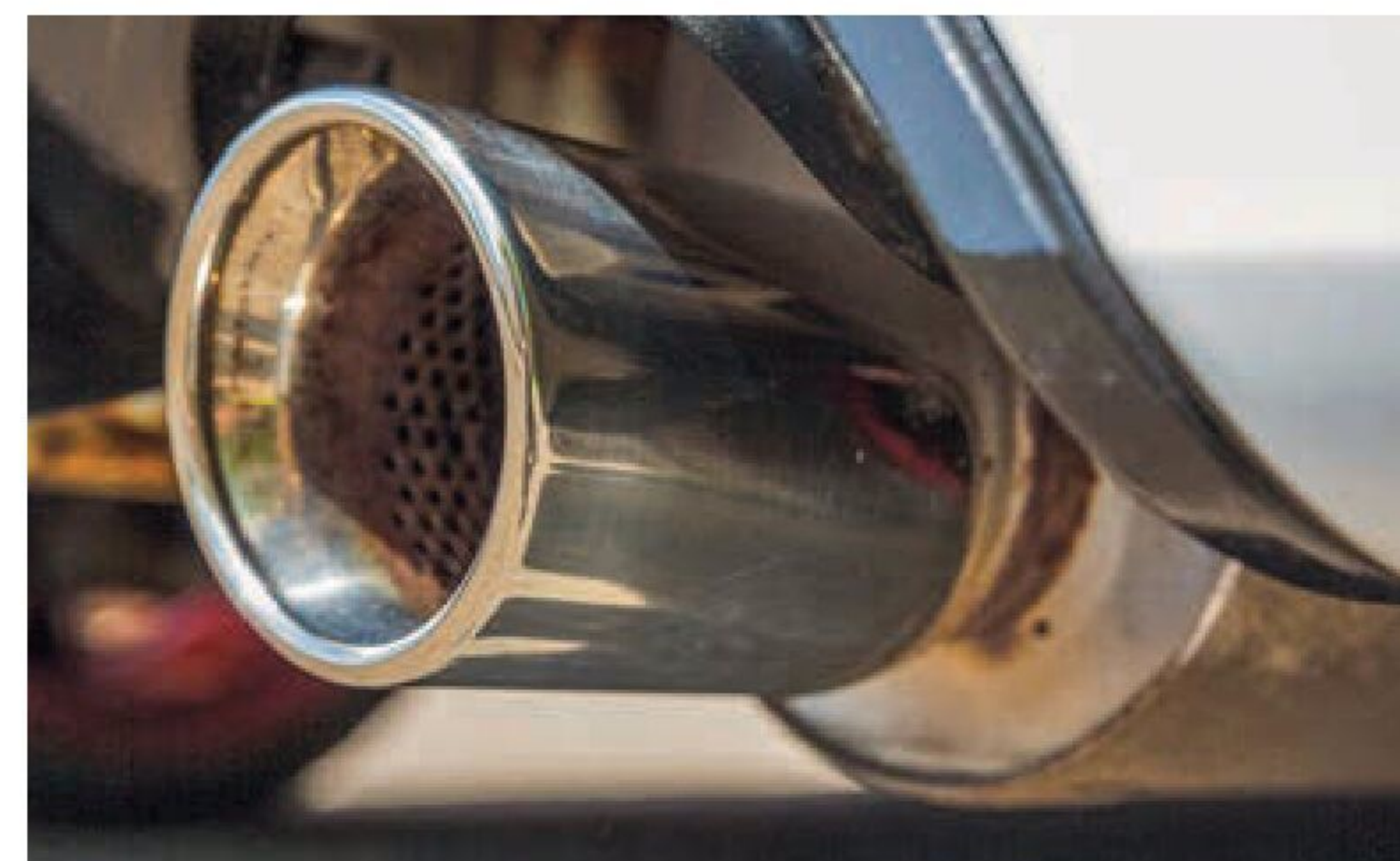
BRAKES 258mm front discs, 203mm rear discs, ABS, ESP, optional EBA

SUSPENSION Uprated dampers, stiffened and lowered coil springs, revised knuckles, short-ratio steering rack, stiffened rear beam

WHEELS & TYRES 7x17in alloys, 205/40ZR17 tyres

INTERIOR Part-leather ST sports front seats, sports gearknob, leather steering wheel

EXTERIOR Fiesta Mk6 three-door, colour-coded bodykit comprising front bumper, skirts and roof spoiler. Optional styling (stripe) packs



Boxy Mk6 shape still looks good today



200bhp and the differential needs to be swapped for an ATB. For even bigger power, fit an MTX75.

Handling upgrades aren't essential, but lowering springs improve the ST's stance. Coilovers are ideal for track machines, while polyurethane bushes, rear wheel spacers and a rear anti-roll bar upgrade make sense for fast road use too.

Stock ST brakes are good when used with decent pads and braided hoses, although Focus ST170 300mm front discs and callipers look better – as do Focus RS Mk1 Brembo callipers, which fit behind standard 17in alloys. Nice. ■

CHAPTER SEVEN

PERFECTING THE RECIPE

With the Mk7, Ford perfected the sporting Fiesta package, and the range-topping ST model soon became one of the best Blue Ovals of all time



S1600

After the Mk6 ST ceased production in 2009 and before the Mk7 ST arrived in 2013, there was a four-year period without a proper hot Fiesta again. The mild Zetec-S model plugged the gap temporarily with its 118bhp 1.6-litre naturally-aspirated Ti-VCT engine, but

it was the limited-edition S1600 model that was the sportiest Fiesta you could buy at the time. Just 500 were built, and the same 1.6-litre engine now produced 132bhp thanks to a revised air intake, free-flowing exhaust, and an extra 300rpm (rev limit now 6800rpm). The S1600 also benefited from closer gear ratios, which meant it wasn't dissimilar to drive compared with the Zetec S, but felt livelier at lower engine speeds.

The S1600 was only available between February and June 2011, but in July 2011 Ford launched another limited-edition, the Metal. Boasting the same retuned 132bhp engine as the S1600, this time production numbers were limited to 1000. The lairy stripes and racy white wheels were gone in favour of more toned-down styling, but performance was on par with the S1600. Sales continued until October 2012, just before the ST's arrival.



Rally-inspired S1600 was limited to a build of 500



MK7 S1600

YEARS PRODUCED 2011

ENGINE CAPACITY 1596cc Ti-VCT Duratec

POWER 132bhp

0-60 8.4 seconds

TOP SPEED 121mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £15,785



Three cylinders of frantic fun





ST

Will the ST180 be remembered as the greatest-ever Fiesta? Ford's fastest Mk7 may now have ended production, but it's still some of the best four-wheeled fun money can buy.

It's also a truly fabulous fast Ford, boasting terrific performance, massive tuneability and immense driveability – not to mention an affordable price and almost flawless reliability.

Never mind the official figures of 182PS (180bhp) and 0-to-62mph in almost seven seconds. The Mk7 ST's little 1.6-litre EcoBoost engine packs a 197bhp punch of 15-second overboost on full throttle, and its phenomenal handling waves a back wheel to all the French

pocket rockets left trailing behind.

Launched in January 2013, the ST180 was designed by Ford TeamRS to be a full-on driver's car. It boasted lowered suspension, a revised rear beam, modified steering knuckles and sharpened-up electric power steering. Similarly, computer wizardry was employed to mimic a limited-slip differential – in Fordspeak a torque vectoring system.

Sexy 17in alloy wheels were stuffed beneath an ST bodykit with black mesh grille, and the ST was available in a selection of funky colour schemes – including Race Red, Spirit Blue and Molten Orange.

The ST's cabin was equally sporty, with Recaro front seats and ST-badged adornments, while a choice of specifications enhanced the kit. The ST-1 wore plain upholstery, while ST-2 meant part-leather trim. An ST-3 was added to the line-up in March 2014, gaining sat nav and cruise control.

July 2016 brought the 197bhp ST200, followed in September by UK availability of five-door ST-2s and ST-3s. There was even a limited run of non-Ford endorsed M-Sport Edition STs available through a close network of M-Sport approved dealers.

Still one of the best hot hatchbacks money can buy



MK7 FIESTA ST

YEARS PRODUCED 2013 to 2018

ENGINE CAPACITY 1596cc EcoBoost

POWER 180bhp

0-60 6.9 seconds

TOP SPEED 137mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £16,995

ZETEC S RED/BLACK EDITIONS

Small is beautiful – and on the scale of diminutive hatchbacks, Ford's finest hour is surely the three-cylinder Fiesta 1.0, packing huge potential from a puny 999cc powerplant.

The EcoBoost engine was introduced into the Fiesta range for its November 2012 facelift (on sale from January 2013), when all Mk7s received a new grille, headlamps, tail lights and a revamped interior. Initially the 1.0 was offered in 100PS (98bhp) form as a Zetec, Titanium or high-spec Titanium X. A 125PS (123bhp) equivalent was also available in the Titaniums, plus a funky Zetec S three-door, which boasted stiffer suspension, 16in alloy wheels, deeper bumpers, black mesh grille, side skirts, rear

spoiler and a racy interior with contoured seats.

In August 2014 a pair of hotter models appeared, known as the Red Edition and Black Edition thanks to contrasting paintwork (Red with Panther Black roof and door mirror caps, or Black with Race Red bits) and black-painted 17in alloys. Revised ECU software gave 138bhp, 155lb. ft torque, 125mph and 0-to-60mph in 8.7 seconds.

The 140PS tune became available in the regular Zetec S from May 2015. June 2016 saw the Zetec S give way to the ST-Line, including the 1.0 EcoBoost in 100, 125 and 140PS varieties, and also offering a five-door bodystyle. Black and Red Editions remained in 140PS form.

With an amazing chassis, minimal running costs and massive tuneability, only the much-

hyped media coverage of catastrophic so-called EcoBoost engine failures could put you off. Don't let it.

ZETEC S RED/BLACK EDITIONS

YEARS PRODUCED 2014 to 2016

ENGINE CAPACITY 999cc three-cylinder EcoBoost

POWER 138bhp

0-60 8.7 seconds

TOP SPEED 125mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £16,545

M-SPORT EDITION

Not officially a Ford product, but one of the rarest and sportiest Fiestas ever built was the M-Sport Edition. Based on the entry-level ST-1 in either Frozen White or Spirit Blue (at a £245 premium), the M-Sport Edition sprinkled some WRC magic onto a road car. Power was increased to 197bhp (212bhp on overboost) via Mountune's fully-warranted MP215 package, while a Quaife ATB diff meant all of that power could be fully utilised. The OZ 17in alloys, funky new WRC-style rear spoiler and custom M-Sport graphics gave it rally-car kerb appeal. Buyers could add even more spec too: Eibach lowering springs, Alcon big brakes, M-Sport induction kit, and a Chris Tullett Exhausts rear box were all on the options list. And, as nice touch, M-Sport's Malcolm Wilson personally signed each car, his signature found under the sunvisor.



M-Sport edition from the stable of Ford's WRC Fiestas

M-SPORT EDITION

YEARS PRODUCED 2015 to 2016

ENGINE CAPACITY 1596cc EcoBoost

POWER 197bhp

0-60 6.5 seconds

TOP SPEED 143mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £21,600



ST200 is still very much in demand among fast Ford fans



ST200

To celebrate the Fiesta's 40th anniversary, Ford launched a limited-edition ST200 model of the Mk7 in 2016. Initially planned as a limited run of 400, but later increased to a production figure Ford hasn't disclosed due to

early demand, the ST200 took a top-spec ST-3 model and added unique Storm Grey paint and an exclusive set of alloys.

Based on the later Mk7 ST, the ST200 featured softer rear springs, softer roll bars, stiffer rear beam, and stiffer front springs compared with the first regular STs, but so did all post-autumn 2015 models.

The ST200 does benefit from increased



ST200

YEARS PRODUCED 2016 to 2017

ENGINE CAPACITY 1596cc EcoBoost

POWER 197bhp

0-60 6.5 seconds

TOP SPEED 143mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £22,895

performance over the regular ST, though, mainly thanks to a power increase from 180 to 197bhp (now 212bhp on overboost) by using a similar upgrade to Mountune's MP215 kit (now called MT215). It is possible to give a regular ST the same levels of kit and performance as the ST200, but that unique colour and limited-production run means the final fast Mk7 will always be a sought-after fast Ford. ■

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Subtle styling tweaks don't give away how savagely quick this lairy little animal really is...

Words DANIEL GOODYER / Photos AS DESIGN

WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

The Fiesta ST180 is an eye-catching little car, there's no doubt about that. It benefits from sharp lines, an aggressive front end, and pumped-up arches that give the hot hatch real presence out on the road. It's reminiscent of a shrunken Focus RS. With less bodywork between the features, you can argue it looks even more exaggerated than its bigger brother.

This example, owned by Malcolm Witts, looks even better. Finished in Spirit Blue, Malcolm's pride-and-joy has been improved with a set of front and side splitters from Triple R Composites that underline the ST's chiselled looks.



They're relatively small pieces of trim, though. More noticeable is the pair of RS vents in the bonnet. Or the gloss black roof and door mirrors, which have both been wrapped to achieve a stealthy transformation.

With the standard 17in alloys still on the car and a sensible 20mm drop on lowering springs that protects the ride quality, Malcolm's Fiesta looks better than a standard ST but without being too obvious about it. Nothing here is too brash or in-your-face.

But what you can't miss is the red MJP lettering bursting out of the front grille. And if you need an even bigger hint, the logo on

the mud flaps spells out the secret behind this Fiesta's pace: MJ Performance.

Based in Plymouth, MJ Performance is developing an enviable reputation for releasing every drop of potential from the Fiesta ST180. The firm's Little BeAST development car is always getting treated to new performance parts for testing, on the road and the track. Usually with resident test-driver Rich 'Psycho' Sanders behind the wheel.

It was during one of these demonstrations that Malcolm realised his ST was capable of so much more, when MJ's Martyn Jones took Malcolm out in the Little BeAST for a quick spin.

It was an eye-opener.

Malcolm remembers, "I pulled into MJ Performance on that November morning in 2017 with a completely standard car. A couple of hours later, I'd booked it in for a full Revo Stage 3 conversion." Not a simple bolt-on part here or there, but a full turbo-swap transformation. "That's how impressed I was," he adds.

Malcolm has upgraded the car in several big hits, rather than drip-feeding parts onto the car. The initial transformation included a Revo S242 hybrid turbo, Revo induction kit with K&N filter, Pro Alloy Stage 3 intercooler with crossover pipe and turbo elbow, and a full Milltek non- →



ST180 cabin needed no improvements

MK7 FIESTA ST

ENGINE 1.6-litre EcoBoost ST180, Revo RT330 turbo with a GFB recirculating dump valve, Milltek sports de-cat exhaust, four-branch MJP Simpson Racing tubular exhaust manifold, Pro Alloy Stage 3 front-mounted intercooler with MJP boost pipe kit, MJP intake using Mountune airbox, 3in heat-wrapped hard pipe and K&N filter, NGK spark plugs for cooler running, gold heat wrap throughout under bonnet, rear torque mount; Pro Alloy baffled sump, Mishimoto baffled oil catch can, blue silicone hoses, Revo Stage 3 software with SPS switch

POWER 330-340bhp (owner's estimate)

TRANSMISSION Fiesta ST six-speed manual gearbox and clutch; KAAZ plate-type LSD

SUSPENSION OE dampers with H&R lowering springs (-35mm). Since photoshoot replaced with H&R coilovers

BRAKES Front: Revo big brake kit using four-pot callipers with 320mm discs; rear: factory ST rear discs with SCC Performance grooves; Ferodo DS2500 pads

WHEELS Original ST 17in alloy wheels with 20mm H&R spacers all round

EXTERIOR Roof and door mirrors wrapped in gloss black, Triple R Composites front and side splitters, RS bonnet vents, Heko wind deflectors

INTERIOR OE ST180 spec



A wild beast in its natural habitat



With about 340bhp from a 1.6, you've gotta love the little EcoBoost



Subtle hints at the back



Big (bhp) clues up front

“THERE’S NO WHEELSPIN, UNDERSTEER OR TORQUE-STEER; THE NOSE OF THE CAR TUCKS WHERE YOU WANT IT AND WHEN YOU UNWIND THE STEERING IT JUST GRIPS AND GOES”

resonated stainless-steel exhaust system with a Milltek sports cat.

To match the extra power, an updated lower engine mount was fitted, along with a short-shifter to reduce any lag between gearshifts. Malcolm says the improvement was massive.

“It was so much faster,” he beams. “Pressing the accelerator pedal became quite addictive.” Barely a month passed before Malcolm was back at MJ Performance for another hit.

This time around he went for the Performance Pack, which included the TRC front and side splitters, MJ Performance mud flaps, H&R lowering springs, a Mishimoto oil catch can and, perhaps most importantly of all, a KAAZ limited-slip differential – a plate-type LSD that instantly tamed the extra power.

Malcolm noticed the car drove completely differently with the KAAZ distributing power between the front wheels: “It pulls the car round

the corners. Yes, it definitely helps put the power down in a straight line but I notice it most when negotiating a roundabout in a hurry. There’s no wheelspin, understeer or torque-steer; the nose of the car tucks where you want it and when you unwind the steering it just grips and goes.”

Malcolm drove around with a big grin on his face throughout 2018. Then Revo introduced the RT330 upgrade, a conversion described as ‘the ultimate turbo upgrade option for the Fiesta ST’. Inevitably, one made it onto the Little BeAST.

It’s worth pointing out here that there is another Fiesta that has influenced Malcolm’s tuning route. The MJ Performance media man Tim Delbridge has a Fiesta that echoes the spec of Little BeAST. Both Tim and Malcolm took the plunge and went for the RT330 package at the same time, with Malcolm becoming the first MJ Performance customer to have the conversion, in September 2018.



The RT330 is built around a completely redesigned hybrid turbo. It features optimised compressor and turbine wheels with bespoke housings that are unique to this turbo. It's a much bigger turbo than before, and Malcolm immediately felt the difference.

He says, "With the S242 setup, the throttle response was instant. I really liked that. But the pay off was it died off a bit at the top end. The RT330 turbo pulls much harder and all the way to the redline too. There is a slight pay off in terms of response, but I certainly wouldn't call it laggy – and the power it produces is well worth it, in my opinion."

Up until now, it may seem like MJ Performance simply fits Revo gear and enjoys the results. There would be nothing wrong with that, of course, but it's not the case. Quite the opposite, in fact. Martyn and his team are constantly looking to develop bespoke performance parts for the ST, often with high-level partners they trust. A very good example of this process is the MJ Performance exhaust manifold that feeds the RT330 turbo in Malcolm's car.

It was developed in partnership with Simpson Race Exhausts, a big-time player who creates metal works of art for high-end motorsport customers, including BTCC teams.

Tim at MJ Performance says, "We trailed the Little BeaST up there and it took Matt Simpson and his team around three months to develop the perfect manifold for us; it's a four-into-one design, with equal-length primary runners. We carried out a before-and-after test on the Little BeaST at Stage three spec; the manifold alone gave us an extra 25bhp at the wheels."

It's also worth pointing out how much heat-wrapping MJ Performance carried out under the bonnet, to match the manifold – although you can't miss the shiny covering over the firewall,



Reflective heat management gets the gold medal

scuttle panel and ECU housing anyway. To compliment the extra power, Malcolm also went for a Revo big-brake kit that partners four-pot callipers with 320mm discs and Ferodo DS2500 pads. On the rear, MJ Performance added a pair of discs provided by SCC Performance.

A month-or-so later, more unique MJ Performance parts made their way under the bonnet. The team replaced the Revo induction kit with a system they developed with local specialist Pro4M Engineering. The original airbox is mounted around the back of the engine, behind the inlet manifold. MJP's version uses a front-mounted cold air feed connected directly into a Mountune closed airbox, with a large K&N panel filter inside. The 3in pipe is covered in gold heat-wrap, to prevent heat-soak.

Pro4M Engineering also helped MJ Performance develop a large-bore boost pipe. That may not sound important, but all these smaller upgrades add up to have a big impact.

Tim explains, "The standard pipe from the turbo into the intercooler often knocks about under extreme driving. So we designed our own that's also a bigger bore. It's connected to a double-decker style intercooler in Malcolm's car, made by Pro Alloy. We have a good relationship with them and really like their products. It's



Big brakes give stopping power to match the grunt

listed as a Stage 3 intercooler and works really well at this power level."

How much power, exactly? A conservative 330bhp, quite possibly more. Not bad for a little 1.6-litre EcoBoost in a small hatchback, eh? Especially as it can actually put the power to the road, thanks to the KAAZ limited-slip diff.

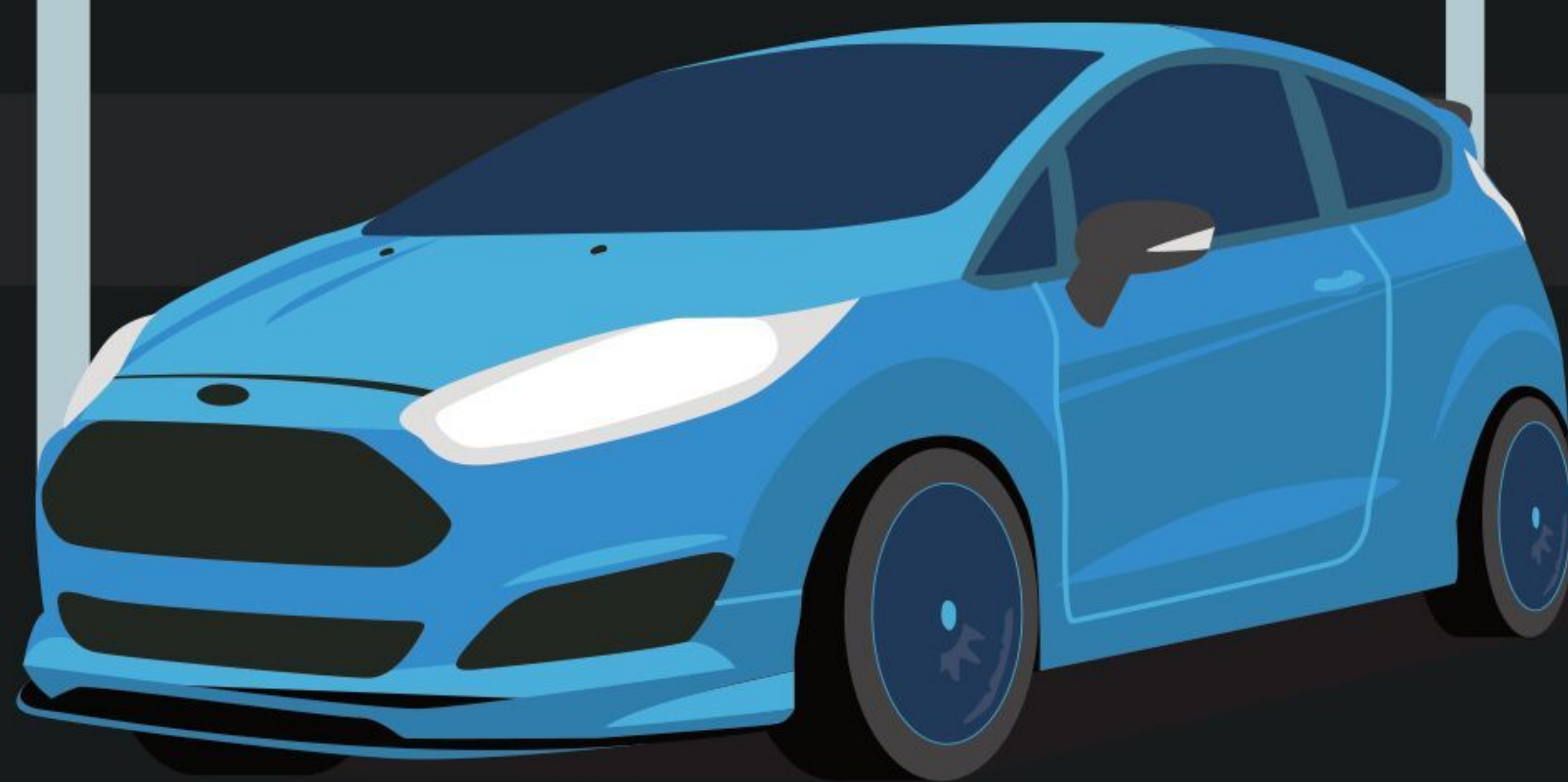
So, is Malcolm happy with the car now? Yes, he's absolutely over the moon. But there's always room for improvement...

Since our photoshoot, Malcolm has been back to MJ Performance for new suspension. The lowering springs have been replaced with a set of full H&R coilovers. And the result surprised him: "It's made the ride more compliant. I did wonder if it would improve the handling at the expense of comfort but it rides even smoother now. Perhaps it's because the spring rates and damping are matched better than the standard dampers and lowering springs were?"

It's clear that Malcolm is open-minded about future upgrades, although he's rapidly running out of things to do.

He'll never grow tired of upsetting drivers of bigger cars, though, especially ones with German badges on the front. They might underestimate this Fiesta because of its subtle styling, but they'll only do it once... ■

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It doesn't take much to make an ST180 look tough

BUYING & TUNING

MK7 ST

The multi-award-winning Mk7 ST isn't just one of the best Fiestas money can buy, it's easily the most tuneable too...

BUYING

Now superseded by the latest Mk8 version, the Mk7 ST180 makes a fantastic second-hand buy. Choose your spec carefully – the ST-2 and ST-3 are better value than the poverty model. And shop around for the best deal – there are loads out there at wildly differing prices.

Beware of a dodgy past. Invest in a history check, and make sure the VIN and V5 match the sticker on the driver's-side B-pillar, stamps in the floor, tag on the nearside dashboard, and ECU (through a code reader). Avoid accident-

VITAL STATISTICS

MADE 2013 to 2017

POWER 180bhp @ 5700rpm

TORQUE 177lb.ft @ 5000rpm

0-60 6.9 seconds

TOP SPEED 137mph

damaged cars; look out for creases or splits in the floorpan and inner wings, mismatched paintwork, poor panel gaps and such like.

You shouldn't spot any rot, but examine the rear wheelarches and door bottoms. Barter hard if you see scratches, dents, kerbed alloys or a tatty interior.

Any ST180 should drive like new. There should be no clutch slip, and no nasty noises in neutral, which point to release bearing problems. Some STs have blown their clutches and gearboxes at low mileages, so most of all listen for whining under load at low revs, which goes away when coasting.

TUNING

The ST180's 1.6 EcoBoost is a gem, capable of 220bhp from a remap alone. Start adding a few hardware upgrades, though, and the little Fiesta can really start to punch above its weight. And the really good news is there are loads of tuners offering a selection of modifications for the

latest ST, so you really are spoiled for choice.

Typically, replacing the stock airbox with a performance alternative (induction kit, or high-flow airbox as per the Mountune upgrades) will be your first port of call, followed by a free-flowing exhaust (and 200-cell sports cat if you want to keep things legal). An uprated intercooler and charge pipe upgrade come next, and should see 230-to-240bhp with ease.

For more you will need to replace the stock turbo with something bigger. A hybrid is usually seen as the first step, and there are plenty to choose from. This will take the power to around 270-to-300bhp depending on supporting mods, and many tuners consider it the perfect level for the feisty Fiesta.

For anything over 300bhp you'll be looking at a full turbo swap, but prices rapidly start rising. However, with the right bits in place it is possible to double the factory power output with bolt-ons alone; some tuners report over 400bhp while still running stock internals.



TECH SPEC

ENGINE 1596cc, four-cylinder, 16V EcoBoost, Ti-VCT, Borg-Warner KP39 turbocharger, 52mm throttle body, Bosch management, 55mm exhaust

TRANSMISSION Front-wheel drive, Getrag Ford Durashift B6 six-speed manual

BRAKES 278mm front discs, 253mm rear discs, ABS, EBD and EBA

SUSPENSION Uprated dampers, 15mm lowered coil springs, revised steering knuckles, revised rear torsion beam, ESC, recalibrated electronic power-assisted steering

WHEELS & TYRES 7.5x17in alloys, 205/40x17 tyres

INTERIOR Recaro front seats (part-leather on ST-2/ST-3), leather steering wheel, ST-3 with climate control and cruise control

EXTERIOR Fiesta three-door hatchback, bodykit including bumpers, skirts and rear spoiler



ST-2 and ST-3 add more goodies

The good news is the rest of the car seems to be able to cope admirably; even at higher levels of tune the standard gearbox and clutch seem to work well. Switching to performance suspension is worthwhile, though, and a simple lowering kit is all you really need – it even helps eliminate some of the crashy ride of the stock setup. Coilovers are great for track users but are probably a step too far for everyday use.

The stock brakes are fine for a mildly tuned ST, but with so many big brake kits available it does make sense to fit bigger discs and callipers, especially as the stock 278mm discs look lost behind the standard 17in alloys. ■





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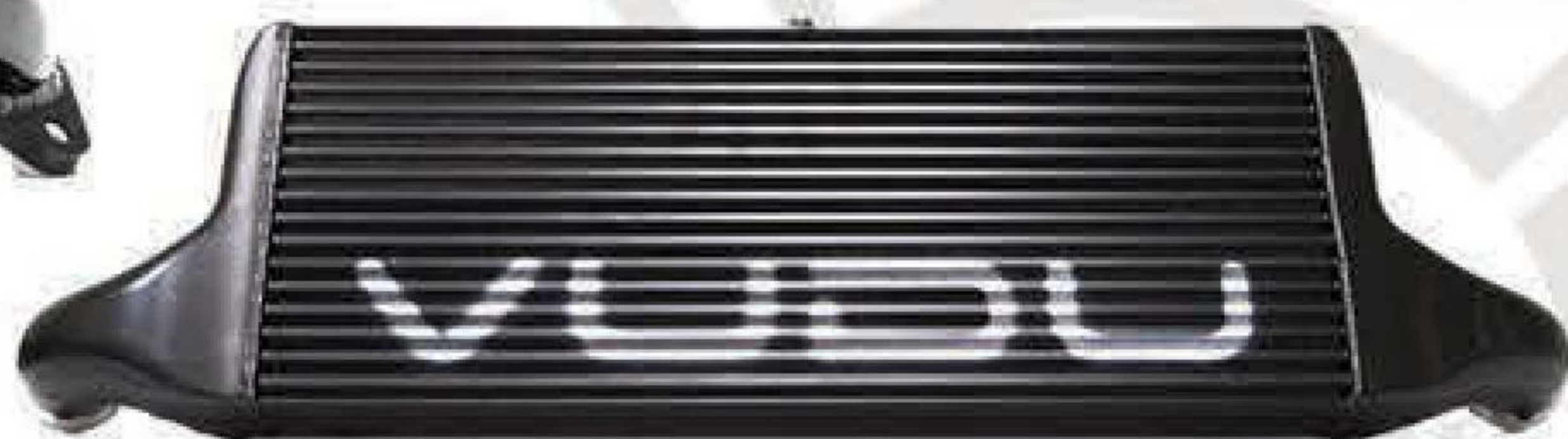


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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE NEW ARRIVAL

The latest generation of sporting Fiesta is arguably the best yet: powerful, economical, easy to tune, and immense amounts of fun to drive

ST-LINE

The sport flagship model, like the full-fat ST, always comes after the regular trims levels have been introduced, so it's no surprise to learn the ST-Line version of the Mk8 Fiesta was on sale before the range-topping ST arrived.

Die-hard performance enthusiasts waited for the 'proper' ST, but the little 1.0-litre Mk8 further built on the foundations laid by the Zetec S, Red and Black, and latterly ST-Line versions of the Mk7. With 138bhp (easily tuned to around 170bhp with bolt-ons), and a 0-to-60mph time of just 8.7 seconds, coupled with the same sporty styling as found its big brother, the ST-Line is an ideal first car for young drivers – they will never know the indignity of driving their mum's base-spec model with beige interior and mismatched plastic wheeltrims.

Fiesta Mk8 is surely the prettiest small car on sale today



ST-LINE

YEARS PRODUCED 2017 to present

ENGINE CAPACITY

998cc three cylinder EcoBoost

POWER 138bhp

0-60 8.7 seconds

TOP SPEED 125mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £18,270

ST

The Mk7 Fiesta ST180 was always going to be a hard act to follow, but Ford managed to pull it off with the latest Mk8 ST.

Like all recent Fiestas, the styling is funky and fresh, while inside Ford has continued to up its game, and the interior has a real quality feel (unlike flimsy Fords of the 1990s) combined with the latest tech. On the handling front, the Mk8 takes over where the Mk7 left off; that is to say it's taught, precise, positive and huge amounts of fun.

But what about the engine? Well, despite losing a cylinder and 100cc capacity, the Mk8's 1.5-litre EcoBoost does a good job of producing the same numbers we were used to from the Mk7. Only it feels more torquey – possibly because the three-cylinder doesn't like to rev quite as freely as the old 1.6-litre EcoBoost, but probably more to do with the fact the Mk8 actually produces more torque as standard – 214lb.ft, which is the same as the Mk7 ST200.

Despite the smaller capacity and being a cylinder down, if anything the rumbles and

crackles from the Mk8's exhaust, coupled with that extra torque, make it feel faster under real-world driving conditions.

And then we get to the Mk8's party piece – the Performance Pack. For an extra £850 Ford adds a proper Quaife ATB limited-slip diff, launch control and shift lights; it makes a huge improvement to how the car feels to drive.

Following recent Ford tradition, the regular ST model has been supplemented by a series of special editions. First was the Performance Edition in 2019, costing £26,285; finished in Deep Orange, the model added the Quaife ATB previously available as an option, adjustable coilover suspension and new ten-spoke 18in lightweight alloy wheels. Production was limited to just 600 cars.

The Performance Edition was followed by the ST Edition in 2020, costing slightly more at £27,080. The car wears the same performance upgrades as the orange ST but is now finished in Azura Blue, with production limited even further to just 300 cars. And, recent spy shots that we're not allowed to publish have revealed a Mean Green Fiesta ST testing in Belgium, so we might not have seen the end of the Mk8 ST specials just yet... ■

ST Mk8 continues where the Mk7 left off – fabulous fun



ST

YEARS PRODUCED 2018 to present

ENGINE CAPACITY

1498cc three-cylinder EcoBoost

POWER 197bhp

0-60 6.3 seconds

TOP SPEED 144mph

PRICE WHEN NEW £20,215



MK8 FIESTA ST: THE VERDICT

Has more tech blunted the latest Sporting Fiesta's edge, or made it even sharper? We jump behind the wheel and put in the quality miles to find out

Words **DAN TRENT** / Photos **FORD**

Pretty much however you quantify it, the latest Fiesta ST is an improvement over the car it replaced. The engine is smaller and more efficient but matches the old one for power and torque; it's a bit bigger, so there's

QUICK SPEC

1.5-litre three-cylinder, 200PS [197bhp], 214lb.ft, six-speed manual gearbox with optional limited-slip differential, three driver modes, optional launch control and flat-shift functions, 17in alloys with 205/45R17 Michelin Pilot Super Sport tyres (205/40R18 on ST-3), 0-62mph in 6.5 seconds, top speed 144mph, price from £18,995 (ST-1 three-door)

more space inside; the toy count has gone up; there are token tenths off the 0-62 time and a few more mph on the top end. Then there's the new technology, up to and including the driver modes, launch control, optional Quaife limited-slip differential, self-adjusting frequency dependent dampers and intriguing sounding 'force vectoring' rear springs.

So, it goes. But is the latest Fiesta ST actually the best Sporting Fiesta yet? That's not something you can measure by comparing numbers on a spec sheet. It's something you can only find out by going for a long drive, preferably with lots of open roads, hairpin bends and plenty of opportunities to drive it like a bit of a job away from wagging fingers and speed cameras.

You probably already know the basics, but to

recap, the Mk7's 1.6-litre, four-cylinder EcoBoost is gone and replaced by a 1.5-litre, three-cylinder equivalent. In one of those funny little coincidences, the stats are 200PS/197bhp and 214lb.ft, or exactly the same as the old engine on overboost. Funny that, eh?

Despite putting on 101kg at the kerb and being a little bigger in every dimension, the new ST nails 0-62mph in 6.5 seconds and tops 144mph.

The moment you get in, you feel the interior quality is definitely up a notch and from ST-2 upwards the 8in SYNC3 touchscreen reduces the clutter of the outgoing car; the ST-3 gains nav and other functionality. Recaros are standard on all models and are just the right side of cosy, while the wheel pulls out close into your chest. Meanwhile, the stumpy gear lever has decent weight and a short throw around its six ratios.



Cabin quality is up

The engine fires up with a naughty little rasp and you immediately pick up on that off-beat, three-cylinder noise. It's thankfully a little more exotic sounding than a Smart car, the visible flap on one of the two pipes and extra piped-in amplification upping the excitement when required. Thankfully, the latter sounds natural enough not to be intrusive. From the outside or with the windows down it sounds even better, the crackly exhaust note overlaid with an exciting whistle of turbo that's still sociable – even when you give in to temptation and drive around in a gear or two lower than necessary.

Throttle response can't match the old 1.6-litre EcoBoost though, the loss of a cylinder and greater dependence on the turbo inevitably meaning a softer pedal, even in the Sport or Race modes. The exhaust manifold is integrated into the cylinder head to shorten the gas flow and improve response but there's no escaping the fact you need a moment for the boost to build. It feels like there's more inertia in the engine too, which makes rev-matching your gearchanges easier but robs it of that zing some earlier sporting Fiestas had. →



“IN ONE OF THOSE FUNNY LITTLE COINCIDENCES, THE STATS ARE 200PS/197BHP AND 214LB.FT, OR EXACTLY THE SAME AS THE OLD ENGINE ON OVERBOOST. FUNNY THAT, EH?”

Cylinder count is down

It gets more interesting in the handling department. The steering is super-fast, the rack ratio going from 13:69:1 to just 12:1 and giving the car a real sense of pointiness. If you had the same on the outgoing ST it'd probably feel a little on the nervous side but the more sophisticated spring and damper setup makes sense of it, and instead the latest version manages to be more refined and comfortable without giving anything away in agility.

Some of that sporting Fiesta rawness has been lost, though, which will either be a good or a bad thing depending on your viewpoint. Certainly, where previous models feel always on their toes and ready for a scrap the latest ST has a broader range of ability and greater sense of refinement, which will increase the potential audience for sure. At the risk of alienating the enthusiasts?

Well, it would if the playfulness had also been dialled out. Thankfully, it hasn't; the fast steering paired with the stiffest rear torsion beam ever used on a Ford Performance product. And you don't need to be a suspension engineer to know what the combination of a pointy front end and stiff rear does to the handling balance.

Those (wrongly) equating a Quaife differential with the wheel-grabbing antics of the first Focus RS will be relieved to find there's next to no interference to the steering from the throttle, and the Fiesta can be driven fast, smoothly and safely without any dramas.

What if you want to concentrate on 'fast' and have some fun, though?

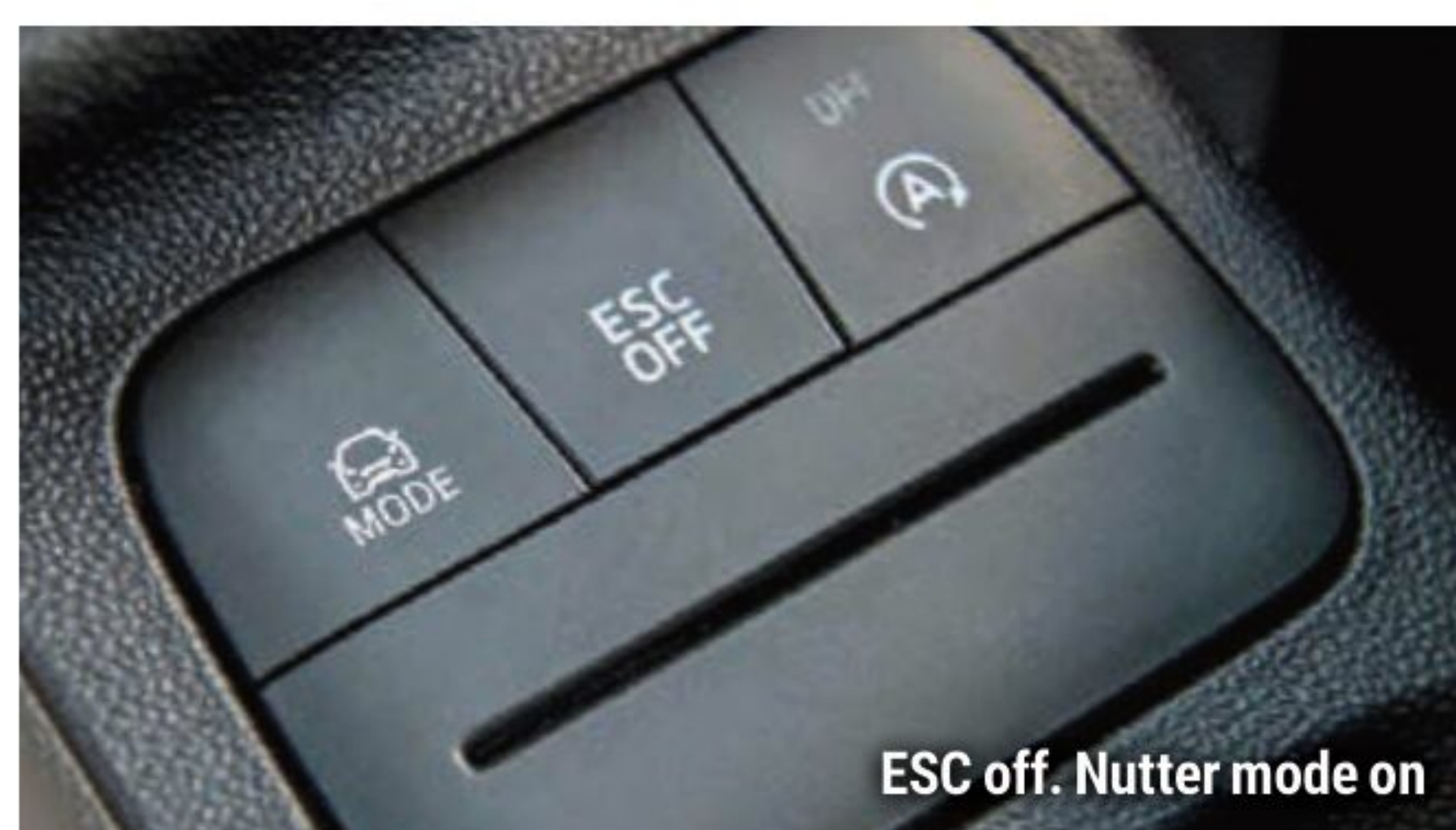
Sport mode unleashes some amusing pa-pa-pa-PAP! theatrics from the exhaust as you come off the throttle, a little more weight to the steering and a slightly sharper throttle. In Track mode you lose traction control, and the stability control is at its 'wide-slip' mode; there's fully off if you want to go full hero too.

With the roads a bit slithery you can really start to play, even in Sport mode with everything on. Barrel into a corner on the brakes and you'll feel the back end start to swing round just a smidge – not so much that you're throwing on corrective lock but enough to tell you the car is ready to play.

Such is the beauty of this setup that you're not throwing huge steering inputs at everything but instead controlling the angle of attack through throttle and brake, which is exactly what you'd hope for in a sporting Fiesta.

That stiff rear axle means some very old-school cornering stances are easy to achieve, the ST ready to cock a wheel in the air without too much provocation while the clever rear springs keep everything tidy and on track.

The supporting role of the Quaife diff in stabilising the front end is also easily overlooked, its design meaning it makes a difference even when you're off the throttle. So, your assurance is high on corner approach, the car can easily be pivoted to get the front end



pointing where you want it to go, and all the encouragement you need to get on the power nice and quickly is there.

This inspires drivers' confidence. Confidence that when you get on the gas on the inside of a steep hairpin with the inside front wheel hanging you're still going to get drive torque to pull you through. Confidence that in a fast sweeper you can get on the power way earlier than you'd expect and, if you hold your nerve, feel the front end hold its line like a ditch-hooking rally pro. Confidence that you can do all this and be flat to the floor without any fears you're going to be wrestling the steering wheel for a say over which hedge the car is then going to punt itself through. Basically, if you're on the power and the front end is pointing where you want it to go, then all is good.

Fast and a bit unruly is something of a fast Fiesta trademark, and the Mk8 ST can still do that if you want, but you also have the option of

being smooth without attracting attention from onlookers inside or outside of the car. If you do want to create a bit of a stir at the lights there's always the Performance Pack's launch control, easily accessible from the steering wheel menu and a simple case of flooring the throttle, holding the car against the electronically controlled rev limiter and then side-stepping the clutch. It's pretty brutal, but it's a novelty you'll enjoy playing with. Likewise the flat-shift function that lets you keep your foot flat on the power when you change up and holds the revs against an electronic limit that sounds more than a bit like anti-lag. This is obviously cool.

Achieving this balance in character was something of a challenge, and while dialling out some of that lift-off oversteer may have yielded faster lap times around the Nürburgring at the hands of a pro driver, it would have also robbed the Mk8 ST of some of its playfulness when not doing a timed lap around a racetrack. It's not as



tied-down as it could be, but that's intentional to have a sense of fun and excitement.

Experience from behind the wheel suggests Ford nailed this balance, with cornering speeds increasing as the roads dry and tyres squeal. But still the ST can't be fazed, as happy with three wheels on the road as it is four, flattening mid-corner bumps and staying playful and communicative whatever your skill level.

In conclusion, this is a more sophisticated ST and a more mature sporting Fiesta. Both of those might sound like alarm bells for fans of a car with a reputation for being neither, but the good news is this new fast Fiesta maintains its spirit while opening up to an even wider audience.

Previous models made a virtue of being a little one-dimensional, and that rawness remains as appealing as ever. Sensibly, Ford knew which elements to keep and which to improve, the result being the same ST spirit. Just a bit more so. ■

“WHILE DIALLING OUT SOME OF THAT LIFT-OFF OVERSTEER MAY HAVE YIELDED FASTER LAP TIMES AROUND THE NÜRBURGRING, IT WOULD HAVE ALSO ROBBED THE MK8 ST OF SOME OF ITS PLAYFULNESS...”





TUNING THE MK8 ST

The latest sporting Fiesta already has the best performance figures straight from the factory, but it's so easy to improve, it's almost rude not to...

Taking a sporting Fiesta and making it faster isn't something new. In fact, it's something owners and enthusiasts have been doing right from the launch of the very first performance Mk1s, and it's a tradition that is very much still alive today.

Not only is it alive, it's also thriving; improving the performance and styling of the latest fast Fiesta is easier than ever before.

Building on the massive Mk7 Fiesta ST tuning scene, the foundations for improving the performance of the Mk8 ST were already in place even before the car was launched, with numerous specialists all quick to get to grips with the upgrades. Today we're well catered for; whether it's just a stealthy, simple first stage remap or a full-on big-turbo, big power monster, there are specialists ready to deliver.

Of course, the sweet spot for most enthusiastic owners is somewhere in between those two extremes, and the exact mods you opt for will

depend ultimately on what you want: B-road bruiser, track-day racer, or show stunner.

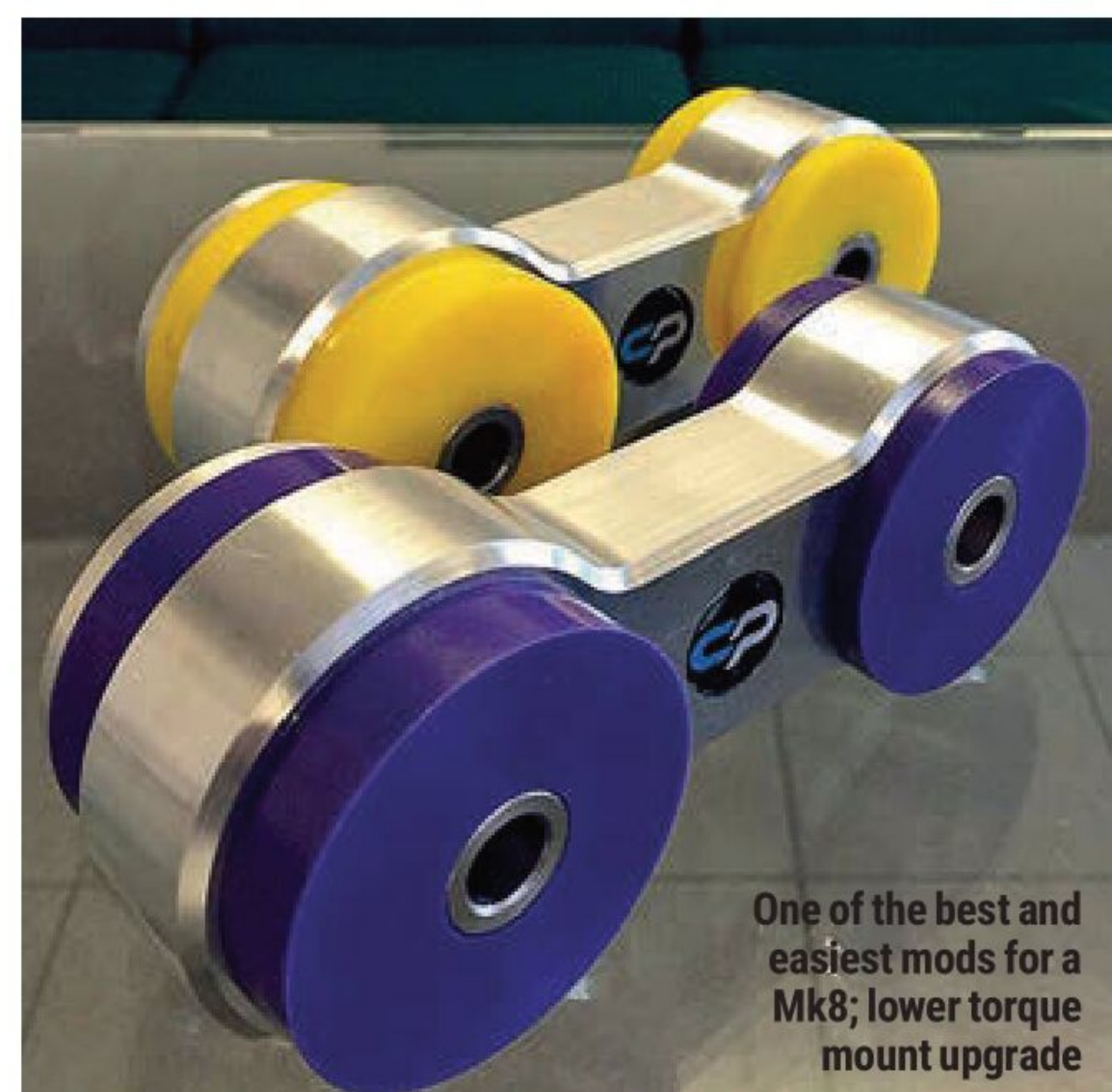
But the good news is there's loads of options, and here's just some of the mods we'd recommend for tuning the Mk8 ST...

PERFORMANCE TUNING

Your first step should be a performance remap. Even if you're keeping the car totally stock elsewhere, a first-stage software upgrade (that requires nothing more than a decent panel filter in the stock airbox) will really bring the ST to life, offering sharper throttle response, better pulling power, and ultimately a decent dollop of extra bhp too.

The only caveat is choose a calibration from a reputable company – do your homework and choose from the many respected Ford tuners in the scene, and you'll enjoy all the benefits without any compromise. At the same time, we'd suggest fitting an upgraded lower torque mount to reduce engine movement and the likelihood

Big brake kit offers the ultimate in stopping power



One of the best and easiest mods for a Mk8; lower torque mount upgrade

of wheel hop under hard acceleration.

That will quench your thirst for a while, but those looking to take engine tuning to the next level will start reaching the limits of the factory hardware pretty quickly. The fundamentals of air filter and exhaust upgrades come next, and are quickly followed by a performance intercooler to keep the charge air temps under control. The Mk8's 1.5-litre EcoBoost also struggles with restrictive pipework, so a high-flow throttle elbow, induction hose and boost pipework will make a notable difference with a suitable second-stage remap. After that, you're into the realms of bigger turbos that will take power well into the 300bhp range.

HANDLING & BRAKING

The Fiesta has always been famed for its playful handling, and the Mk8 continues that tradition. But, as ever, the excellent base Ford gave us can be improved upon. The first step,

"FIESTA TUNING IS THRIVING; IMPROVING THE PERFORMANCE AND STYLING OF THE LATEST MK8 ST MODEL IS EASIER THAN IT EVER HAS BEEN BEFORE"



Performance hardware to remove restrictions to airflow allows a second-stage software upgrade to really unlock the power potential on the 1.5-litre EcoBoost



and more than enough for most users, is a set of lowering springs. These work with the standard dampers to provide OE levels of comfort but with a meaner stance that offers reduced body roll, better turn-in, and an all-round sharper handling experience. They're not expensive, and make a huge improvement to how the car looks, as well as how it drives.

For more serious drivers, or those venturing on track a few times a year, coilovers might be a better option. Indeed, the Performance Edition, and ST Edition come from the factory with adjustable coilovers for that very reason. The compromise in ride quality might not be ideal for all owners, but they'll certainly see your lap times tumble on track.

A good set of polyurethane bushes and chassis

stiffening braces take things to the next level before we begin to enter uncompromising, stripped-out race car territory.

One area that can be improved without any negative side-effects is the brakes. Start by replacing the OE-spec pads with some quality fast-road upgrades – which can be accompanied by uprated discs and brake lines to provide a noticeable performance overhaul of the standard stoppers.

But the ultimate in braking means swapping the factory calliper for something more manly. That doesn't always mean having to go massive, though, as a decent 300/330mm brake kit works wonders on the little ST.

STYLING

The ST already looks sharp, but those aggressive looks can be beefed up even further with some well-placed subtle upgrades. The ever-popular lowline splitter kits work well on the Mk8 to accentuate its sporting credentials, and pair up with lowering springs to give a ground-hugging race car-like stance.

But it's always wheels that are a game changer. The stock ST alloys are fantastic, but if you want to make your Fiesta stand out from the crowd, then a new set of alloys is the way to do it. If you choose wisely, you can also save yourself a good few kg over the stock rims, and have even more clearance for bigger brakes. ■



From mild to wild, the 1.5-litre EcoBoost responds well to tuning upgrades



Subtle splitters give the ST a more aggressive appearance



Performance exhaust not only gives the ST the bark it deserves, it helps unlock power and torque

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Who says electric Fiestas have to be boring? This rallycrosser with 600bhp and 800lb.ft certainly isn't!

CHAPTER NINE

THE FUTURE FIESTA

After four decades of success, what will sporting Fiestas of the future look like?

Over the last 40-odd years we've seen plenty of changes to the motoring industry; through the hot-hatch boom of the Eighties, to the ridiculous insurance premiums of the Nineties, to the rebirth of performance models in the Noughties, right through the modern machines of the Tens and Twenties. And the sporting Fiesta has always remained a constant throughout – fair enough, some have been hotter than others, but there has always been a performance-oriented model to quench our insatiable thirst for Ford's pocket rocket.

But on the cusp of an electric revolution, and with manufacturers focussed so intently on reducing emissions above all else, does that spell the end for the sporting Fiesta?

Not at all! While we probably won't see many more petrol-powered fast Fiestas, there'll almost certainly be hot-hatch versions of electric cars in the not too distant future. But petrolheads don't despair; this is merely another, different

exciting chapter in the sporting Fiesta's story.

And for a quick glimpse of what might be possible, we only need to look at the current motorsport series of today. Take, for example, the British Rallycross Championship, where an all-electric version on the Mk8 Fiesta is competing successfully against its petrol-powered counterparts. With an estimated 600bhp of electric power, not to mention over 800lb.ft of instantaneous torque being sent to all four wheels thanks to three 150Kw motors (two rear, one front), the STARD-built electric rallycross Fiesta is capable of the same lap times as the fire-breathing, turbocharged, race-fuelled monsters we're more accustomed to seeing. It's equally as exciting to watch too.

Now, we're not saying that the road-going Mk9 Fiesta will have 600bhp and 800lb.ft, in the same way that the current ST doesn't share the same anti-lag-equipped 380bhp engine found in the Fiesta WRC car. But when this motorsport-based technology filters its way down to the



No fuel tank, just a boot full of batteries



road-car market, as it ultimately will, it will open a whole new world of possibilities to the fast Fiesta enthusiast. If we think the Mk3 Focus RS was radical with its Drift button, just imagine switching all the car's electric power to the rear wheels when you want some fun. Or having an equal 50/50 split for loose surfaces. Or having rear-drive on entry to a corner to initiate some sideways thrills, followed by constantly variable four-wheel drive to prolong the drift. All this, and more, is made possible by the use of electric motors. And then there's the instant torque and savage acceleration on offer too.

And don't think electric motors will mean the end of Fiesta tuning. It won't. There will always be someone who wants to go faster than the next guy, and there will always be someone nearby with a laptop willing to make that happen. The game may have changed, but the players will remain the same. We wouldn't bet against the next sporting Fiesta carrying an ST-E tag, and we can't wait to see how it all unfolds. ■

SPORTING FIESTA SPECIALISTS

Need help? There's an army of Fiesta specialists out there ready to assist...

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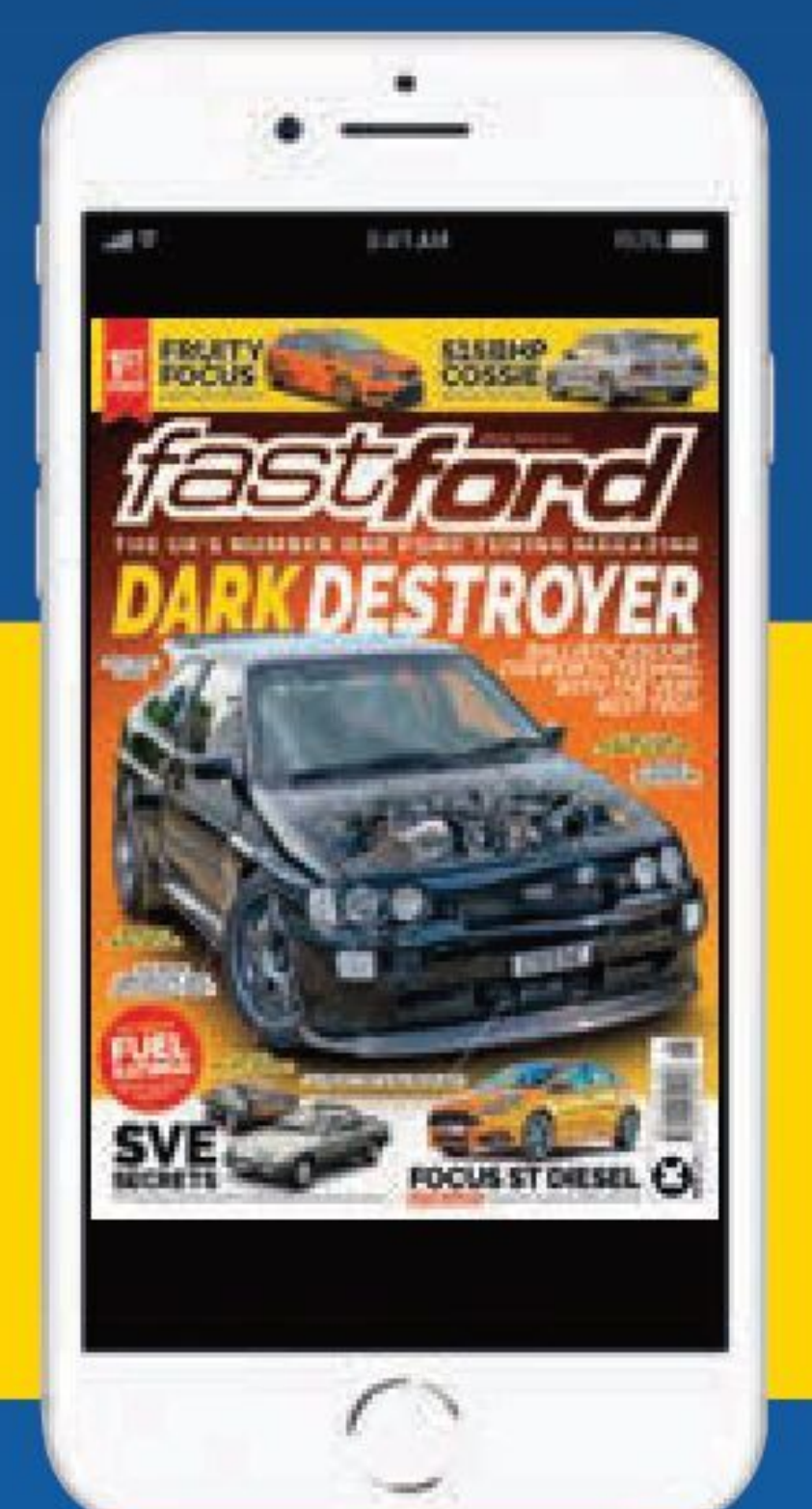
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