



Daihatsu Cuore



FOLLOWING HARD ON THE HEELS OF the Move, Cuore (it means "heart" in Italian and is pronounced Koo-oray) will look more like *déjà vu* to some people with longer memories. Remember the Domino – later Mira?, well here it is again in its latest guise, with the same three-cylinder, 847cc/42bhp engine and the same packaging. In fact, Move is essentially the same car beneath its mini-MPV bodywork.

Just as with our encounter with the Domino 10 years ago, we again marvel at the back seat space and the ease of entry, especially on the five-door Cuore Plus. There's room for not much more than a Tesco-shopping trip behind, mind you, but when it's two aboard, the 50/50 split-back seats flip forward to open up a proper (if stepped) carrying platform.

Seat support all round is as impressive as the dimensions in our table – both front and rear occupants (including the driver) feel up to longer trips as a result. Road manners reveal prominent wind noise and a fretful, unyielding ride (especially unladen), but the Cuore becomes mechanically quieter and smoother, the faster you go. Past 50mph, its tendency to mechanical imbalance, gear whine and gruffness is left behind. Cornering is safe and sound, but the unassisted steering, though reasonably accurate and unstrained, lacks the verve of a Metro or Mini.

The driving position is better than on any other car this small, however, and really helps to mitigate the other dynamic shortcomings we've mentioned. The gearchange is a delight, the pedals well spaced and

only poor positioning of some minor controls grates. Heating and ventilating match bigger-car standards, except that you can't get screen and face-level vents working simultaneously. All aspects of vision – whether over-the-shoulder or through the front wiper arcs – couldn't be better and in cramped traffic conditions, you really do feel that threading through tight slots is so much easier than in bulbous modern cars that all seem to come with hidden extremities these days. We would cheerfully trade electric windows for remote control door mirrors, however – a case of wrong priorities, we think.

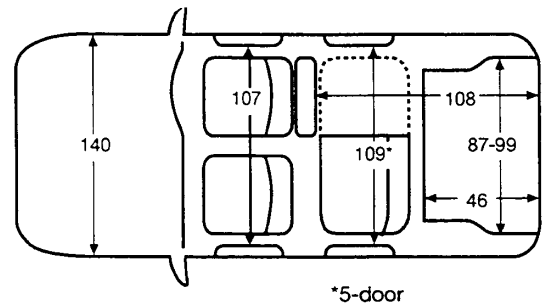
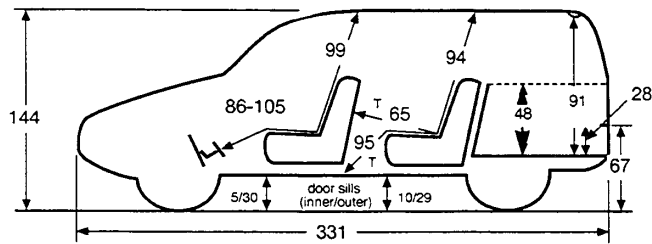
What kind of performance and fuel economy is it reasonable to expect? Well, when we last track tested a Domino (with only minor variations in power, weight and gearing) we saw 30–70mph in just under 23sec, an 85mph top speed and averaged just under 50mpg; we see no reason why this Cuore shouldn't do as well. This would represent an all round advantage over the Cinquecento S (though not the Sporting) and emphasises that this Daihatsu is serious about fuel saving, especially.

VERDICT

It's the combination of lots of people-space inside, with its need for little kerb space outside, that's the Cuore's greatest asset. Curious how this design, essentially revamped from yesterday, looks increasingly suitable for tomorrow's increasingly congested roads.

MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres



T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants

Likes . . . and gripes

Good views out, including mirrors . . . but no interior levers

Rear glass wiper and heating comprehensive . . . but poor switch position and no intermittent wipe

Pristine, neat engine bay . . . but battery gets too warm

Knife-through-butter gearchange . . . but transmission whines

Clear and comprehensive displays . . . but poor oddments stowage provision

FACTS AND FIGURES

Body styles	three- and five-door hatchbacks – same length
Engine	847cc/42bhp transverse three cylinder – six valves with multi-point injection; 32-litre fuel tank (Coming later: four cylinder, turbo-charged 660cc/16 valves with four-wheel drive – called Avanzato)
Transmission	five-speed manual, front-wheel drive – no automatic; 18.5mph per 1000rpm in top gear
Suspension – front	independent coil spring/damper struts
– rear	independent semi-trailing arms and coil springs
Steering	unassisted rack and pinion
Wheels	4in steel with 145/70R12 tyres
Brakes	solid discs front, drums rear with vacuum servo