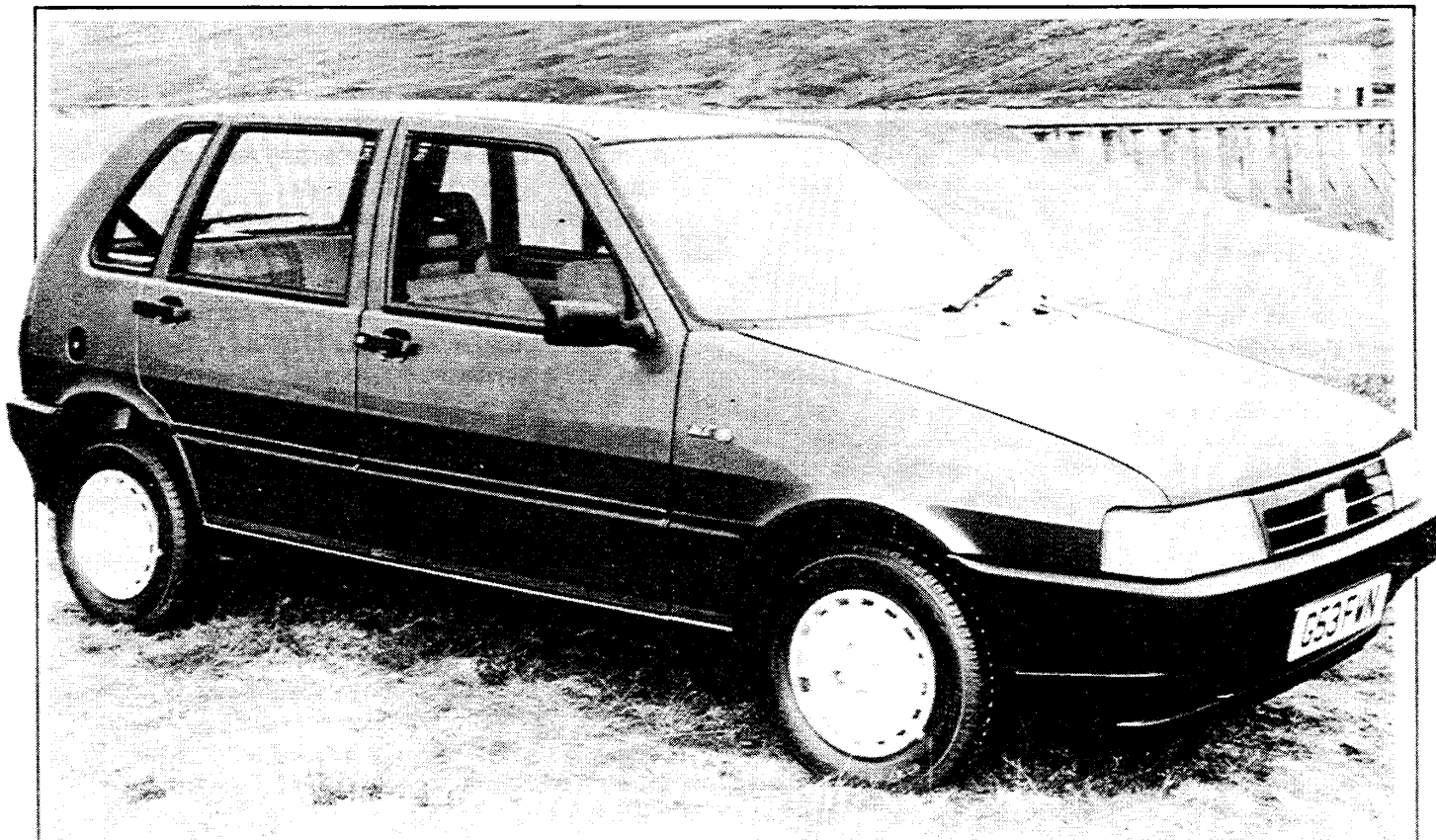


Fiat Uno 60S (FIRE)



DESPITE BEING Europe's best-selling small hatchback, the Uno has never quite made it in our book. Too many irritating details undermined its brilliant space utilisation and driving pleasure for our liking.

Now the Mark 2 has arrived and the FIRE engine has extended beyond the 45bhp versions and been enlarged to 1108cc/57bhp as well. The 70 retains the older power unit, and even the 60 Selecta has to stay with the older design as well, so an Uno 60 has two different engines, depending on which transmission you choose.

Inside, the facia is completely revised – gone are the awkward 'paddle' switches (and good riddance!), but also lost is the handy mobile ashtray-cum-waste bin. Smart displays, repositioned minor controls, redesigned seats and stylish new door trims and armrests are all recognition features.

Outside, the changes are subtle and, at the rear, lean towards the Tipo's round-backed practicality. So, do the Uno's manners live up to its massive sales success in Europe?

AT THE WHEEL

– driver appeal?

Our low-mileage test car had a really obstinate gearshift – it felt as if the synchromesh was designed to make gearchanging more difficult rather than the converse. This seems to be a continuing, variable problem with the Uno – some are awful, other are just tetchy. The 70 versions now use the Tipo's far superior gearbox and the sooner this extends further down the range the better.

The clutch and new engine installation are impeccable, however. There are no unseemly snatches or jolts in slow-moving traffic and mechanical refinement is really impressive these days, especially on a motorway.

Tyre rumble is still rather prevalent and the doors creaked incessantly on our car, although we were inclined to think that this was caused by the rubber seals fretting on the frames. The new facia – on an eight-rubber-block mounting – is suitably silent, however.

Easy starting with a quick return of the manual choke is pleasing, but there's a tendency for the engine to stumble when accelerating gently – it's worst when cold, but never completely absent.

This new 60 uses a single, rather than a double, venturi carburettor and has slightly longer-legged gearing as well. The predictable happens: it's slightly slower on acceleration, but shows a small but useful further improvement in fuel consumption over the old version we sampled last year. It's interesting to compare both with the original 55S statistics recorded in 1983:

	New 60S	Older 60S	55S
Max speed (mph)	95	95	92
30-70 mph through the gears (sec)	15.8	15.3	16.9
30-70 mph in 5th/4th (sec)	36.2/24.8	33.5/23.0	45.7/28.5
Typical mpg overall	46	44½	43

So, all in all, we were well satisfied with the new engine and think it deserves a better gear-box to go with it!

The minor controls comprise three stalks, with the smaller left one for indicators feeling rather stiff and more confusing than the Tipo's two-stalk layout. Still, it adds up to a real improvement; working the horn (at the wheel centre) and flashing the headlamps are far less fraught now.

On-the-stalk wash and wipe arrangements could be refined still further, though – there's no 'overplay' after the washers have stopped, and to clear the tailgate glass properly, one has to grope for an additional fascia button. And why do the lights dip when the lighting stalk is moved upwards? – up-for-up, down-for-down would be more logical.

The bold, clear displays include sensible tell-tales for the choke and heated rear window, but the speedo, though reasonably accurate (74mph indicated at 70), still has markings that favour 20, 40, 60mph rather than our UK speed limits. We like the big left footrest beside the clutch and although the wheel rim feels tacky, it is sensibly positioned in relation to the seat and pedals. Surprisingly, the new seats retain coarse backrest rake adjustment, rather than the Tipo's perfect 'any spot you choose' arrangement. They are more softly padded and certainly better than before, offering excellent lateral location, but only just enough lumbar support on longer runs.

The Uno's steering remains superb – light and yet with excellent feel, it shows the way for bigger and burlier cars when bend-swinging or when merely parking. There's moderate roll and stable nose-drift that builds up progressively in faster cornering, with no nasty sting in the tail when you lift off the power at the limit of roadholding.

SPACE AND COMFORT

– popular with passengers?

Little changed so far as we could judge, the Uno's ride progresses from 'quite jittery' in the one-up condition, through 'rather pleasant and composed' when a little more weight is aboard, to 'becoming soggy' when fully laden.

What it does offer in convincing fashion is more room than most rivals. It's not difficult to get in and out of the three-door model, as a matter of fact, but the five-door (as tested) is practical for even the more infirm rear passengers. It's also improved in terms of seat angling and posture comfort in this new version. Although little altered in size (kneeroom is slightly compromised) the back seat *feels* a better place to be in the latest car, with nicer door pull/armrests.

The tailgate rises higher and the low sill, good closure grip and easy-to-stow load cover are all thoughtful details, but the 60S has no boot lamp. Inside, oddments stowage is fine, except that parking coffee mugs can be a problem.

Sadly, Fiat, the pioneers of standard in-car entertainment in cheaper cars, no longer provides anything at the list price. Our car's S spec omits a sunroof and central locking, too, although the former is available on the options list.

Four-shot ventilation works well, however, as does the heater, but the latter remains afflicted with a crude, slow-to-respond water valve temperature control behind the impressive control cluster. This, and the tendency to leak cold air to the footwells when the directional control is set to screen, proves very irritating.

LIVING WITH THE 60S

– how reassuring?

The brakes are a shade over-servoed, but pedal progression and 'feel' are now vastly improved, and fade reveals itself only under more arduous conditions. Although these brakes are not as good as those of last year's test car when applied in panic, ultimate stopping power is still just about average. Even so, it needs some skill or familiarity to avoid skidding.

There's still an exposed fusebox under the fascia, but otherwise the interior is thoughtfully padded and the roof and side header rails are particularly well done. Adjustable shoulder mounts for the front seatbelts are now provided, with rigid centre clasps mounted on the seat runner and moving with it, for accurate belt-routing. There are inertia-reel rear belts, but no tidy stowing for the short buckles. Also missing are head restraints and front seat reinforcement padding.

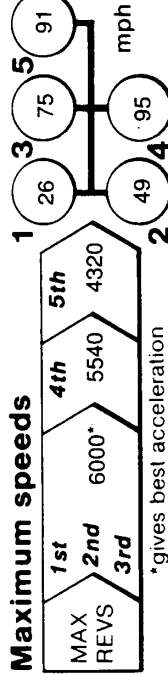
PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

STANDING START	0-30mph	0-60mph	¼ mile
	4.1	14.3	19.7

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH GEARS		2.4	5.7	10.2	15.8
IN 5th GEAR		8.9	17.2	25.8	36.2
IN 4th GEAR		5.6	11.1	17.4	24.8

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5th/4th SPEED RANGES		19.5/12.6	16.9/11.8	17.2/11.1	19.0/13.7

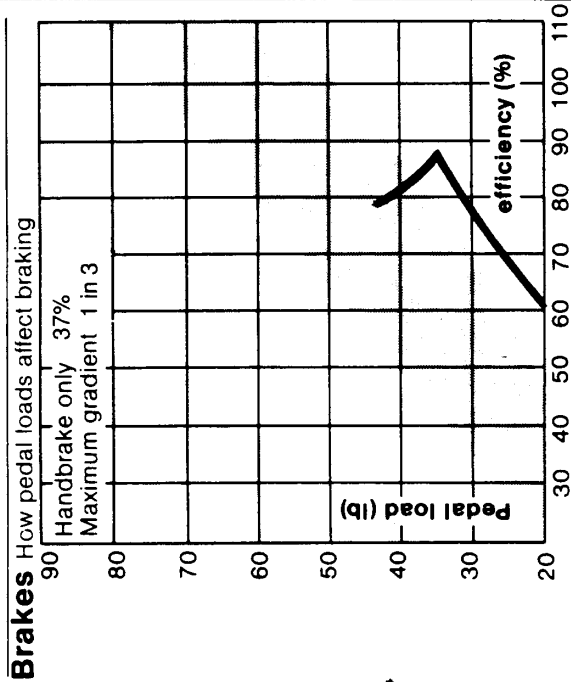


FUEL CONSUMPTION

Grade for tests: 95 octane unleaded

Normal range	mpg
hard driving, heavy traffic	37
short journeys in the suburbs	36 1/2
motorway - 70mph cruising	47
brisk driving, mixed roads	47 1/2
gentle driving - rural roads	53
Typical mpg overall	46
Realistic tank range*	35 litres/355 miles
*based on gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience	

SAFETY



% efficiency expressed as a % of gravity. Ideal car's braking performance falls within shaded zone - above, too heavy; below, too light

Fade test

How hard use or water affects braking. (Ideal brakes show no change)

Pedal load needed for 75% stop (lb)	At start of test	28
	After constant use	32
	After severe use	62
After watersplash		33
Number of stops to recover		2

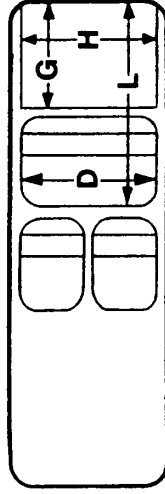
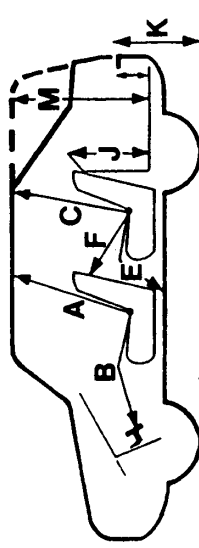
Check list

Steering	true 'feel' of road?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Brakes	powerful?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	sensible effort?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	fade resistant?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Belts	front - effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	convenient?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	rear - effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	convenient?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Head restraints	front - effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	rear - effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Interior	thoroughly padded?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fuel	shielded filler?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	protected tank?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

WEIGHTS and MEASURES

Outside (ft and in)

Kerb weight	15 1/2 cwt	Overall length	12ft 1 1/4 in
Overall width	5ft 1 1/2 in*	Overall height	4ft 7 3/4 in
Wheelbase	7ft 9 in	*with mirrors folded	



Inside

A Front headroom	37 1/2	G Load length	24 1/2
B Front legroom (min - max)	33 1/4 - 40	H Load floor width (min - max)	36 1/2 - 49
C Rear headroom	35 1/2	J Load height	20 1/2
D Rear seat width (between armrests)	47 1/2	K Sill height (inner/outer)	7 1/2 / 27 1/2
E Typical rear legroom*	39	L Load length	43 1/2
F Typical rear kneeroom*	26 1/2	M Load height (to tailgate hinge)	35

Typical represents the mean measurement behind the driver's seat set at 39in legroom and the passenger's seat set at 41in

Security is provided by separate keyholes on two front doors, tailgate and fuel cap. A stiff latch is provided to override the tailgate lock, so contents are not secured from the interior.

Opening the bonnet is eased by a bright red safety latch that appears when the interior trigger is operated. Under-bonnet accessibility is improved over the previous layout, especially on the left-hand side – the FIRE engine is quite diminutive and ancillaries are easy to get at.

Service times are suitably reduced, too – at an average of two hours and a bit per 12,000 miles, this is an hour less than before (an oil change is required at half time, as well).

To allay the old fear about Fiat body rot, the Uno is well coated underneath, and a six-year anti-perforation warranty also gives reassurance. However, annual inspections are required to keep it in force (unlike Ford and Vauxhall) and you'll be charged an hour's labour, plus the cost of cleaning off the mud, if you don't let the Fiat dealer charge you for servicing it at the same time. All Fiats now have AA membership benefits for 12 months from purchase.

The still-further improved fuel consumption puts the Uno 60S almost on level terms with the 45S – and with extra performance when required. The tank range is quite generous and filling is easy to within the last few litres.

VERDICT

We've always admired the Uno's clever packaging – the Fiat designers unashamedly recognise that building taller means more room inside, for a given outside length.

The new seating increases comfort as well as space, while the car's driver appeal has been enhanced by the improvements to the cockpit and front seats.

Not all the changes have been entirely successful, however, and we couldn't live with the gearchange on our test car – it completely blighted an otherwise enjoyable, game little car; we would have felt much happier with the Selecta!

The Uno continues to improve, but not enough to give it our number one spot in the small-car league, even though the 60S has a lot going for it.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

ENGINE

Type and size front-mounted, transverse 4 in line; water-cooled. 70mm bore x 72mm stroke = 1108cc. Iron block and alloy head; 5 main bearings

Compression ratio 9.6:1

Valve gear belt-driven overhead camshaft actuating 2 valves per cylinder via bucket tappets

Fuel system one single-throat multi-jet carburettor (with manual choke) fed by mechanical pump from 42-litre (9¹/₄-gallon) tank, with low-level warning lamp. Fuel required: leaded or unleaded – 95 octane minimum

Maximum power (DIN-net) 57bhp at 5500rpm

Maximum torque (DIN-net) 64 lb ft at 2900rpm

TRANSMISSION

Clutch diaphragm-spring, single dry plate; cable operated. Pedal load/travel: 20 lb/5in

Gearbox 5-speed (all synchromesh) and reverse. Ratios: first 3.91, second 2.06, third 1.34, fourth 0.98, fifth 0.78 and reverse 3.73:1

Final drive 3.73:1 to front wheels

Mph per 1000rpm 21.51 in top, 17.15 in 4th

Rpm at 70mph 3255 in top gear

CHASSIS

Suspension front: independent MacPherson damper/struts, with coil springs and lower wishbones. Rear: torsion beam dead axle with trailing arms and coil springs. Dampers: telescopic all round

Steering unassisted rack and pinion with 4 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 31ft between kerbs, with 60ft for one turn of wheel

Wheels 4¹/₂in steel with 155/70SR13 radial tyres (Kleber C2 on test car)

Brakes 9in plain discs front, 7¹/₄in drums rear with vacuum servo

HOW IT COMPARES*	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Maximum speed (mph)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel overall (mpg)	Brakes best stop (%g/lb)	Maximum legroom – front (in)	Typical leg/kneeroom – rear (in)	Steering turns/circle (ft)	Overall length (ft/in)
Fiat Uno 60S	1108/57	95	15.8	36.2/24.8	46	87/35	40	39/26 ¹ / ₂	4/31	12' 1 ¹ / ₄ "
Ford Fiesta 1.1LX	1118/54	91	19.1	41.0/27.5	45 ¹ / ₂	86/50	41	37 ¹ / ₂ /28 ¹ / ₂	4 ¹ / ₄ /32 ³ / ₄	12' 3 ¹ / ₂ "
Vauxhall Nova 1.2L	1196/55	94	16.5	†–28.2	44	96/55	40 ¹ / ₂	37/25	3 ³ / ₄ /32	11' 10 ¹ / ₂ "
Peugeot 205GL	1124/55	95	15.1	39.0/24.5	43	96/40	41	36 ³ / ₄ /26 ¹ / ₂	3 ³ / ₄ /33 ¹ / ₄	12' 1 ³ / ₄ "
Citroen AX 11TRS	1124/55	97	14.2	31.6/22.1	47 ¹ / ₂	97/60	40 ¹ / ₄	36/25 ¹ / ₂	3 ¹ / ₂ /30	11' 6"

* all 5-door models

† 4 speed