

Dripping with

Motor Madness



Ian Lamming drowns in the capabilities of Fiat's new pick-up

AT TIMES like these you need to know someone has your back.

As the heavens open, the deluge begins, stair-rods, deafening in their impact on ground and tin roof, are interspersed with claps of thunder and blinding lightning.

Very quickly, alarmingly so, Barnard Castle High Street becomes a river, a fast flowing torrent. It's fascinating and a little bit scary.

A small hatchback is battered into submission pulling off the road to wait for the storm to abate.

The goal for the test car is to defend its occupants from harm so it is hardly surprising that the Fiat does such a good job as it wears its name with pride – Fullback.

This is Fiat's latest venture into the world of pick-ups, a sector which has moved beyond the utilitarian world of farmers and builders to the leisure market.

Water, water everywhere, the wipers struggle to clear a view. The Fullback is now fording deep into the raging waters but everything is fine. The Fiat is blessed with a strong engine, and sits high above the surface.

There is the option of two, four or four-wheel-drive with low ratio so I know these wheels will keep turning and they do, magnificently and the Fullback exhibits its talents of being a team player.

The large load bay is open to the

elements and fills like a swimming pool, but it soon drains away as the storm eases.

As it does the pick-up returns to the comfortable SUV it undoubtedly is, well equipped, spacious and soundly built.

In the evening it even proves itself as a carriage of repute, transportation to a ball, complete with penguin-suited gentlemen and ball gown clad ladies. There is no shame arriving at an auspicious event in such an accomplished vehicle.

Fullback is just so flexible, in fact, as well as going on sale via the Fiat Professional dealer network, the pick-up range is also available through the Fiat passenger cars dealer network.

It is so easy to forget it is a pick-up at all. The rear camera ensures you remember its length when parking and as a means to travel long distances it is as good as any car.

The 2.4-litre common rail turbodiesel engine develops 180hp and a maximum torque of 430Nm which makes it a great drive. If you head to the beach or off-road the electronic selector allows drivers to engage the all-wheel drive system, with a choice of four modes, a central differential, supported by three electronically controlled clutch modes, managing torque transmission to the wheels in real time based on road conditions and speed.

A wealth of standard safety equipment

includes ABS with EBD, TSA (Trailer Stability Assist – a system which aids stability during towing), LDW (Lane Departure Warning), seven airbags and cruise control. Bi-Xenon headlights, front fog lights and LED daytime running lights.

The interior features leather seats, steering wheel and gear knob, automatic dual zone climate control and heated front seats, with six-way electric adjustment on the driver's side.

The infotainment equipment includes a 7-inch touchscreen with DAB CD/MP3 Radio, Bluetooth and USB port and satellite navigation.

Most manufacturers fully appreciate the potential of the latest generation pick-up and while Fiat has been leisurely to market, now it's here, it has the abilities to rain on the competition's parade.

Fact File

- Fiat Fullback
- Engine: 2.4 litre
- Power: 180HP
- 0-62mph: - secs
- Top speed: 111mph
- Combined MPG: 40.9
- Transmission: six-speed manual
- CO2 g/km: 186