

Back to Work

Ian Lamming drives a workhorse with flair, Fiat's new Tipo

BOYS love to play and that never really changes as you grow up and older.

Girls are much more sensible, conscientious and hard working, but there are times when even us blokes have to knuckle down.

So while bazzing round in a super swish and rorty Abarth Spider was a whole of fun, the reality is that the 124 is never going to be anything other than a lovely play thing and the working man's model sits on the plinth next door in the showroom, in this case the Tipo.

Medium sized hatchbacks, until recently, were the mainstay of motoring in this country. They still would be were it not for the fact that we have goosed the atmosphere with our polluting ways, melted the icecaps and are now wading through a successive number of storms, each

with a ridiculous name, like Desmond or Doris.

As the water table now sits at the surface and above, we have swapped allegiances from the ubiquitous hatchback to the SUV.

But that's not to say the automotive industry isn't still churning them out with alacrity. Fiat's contribution to the sector sees the return of the Tipo name, so let's get on with the day job, rather than the day dream, and get it driven.

This family car includes a five-door hatchback and five-door estate, both offering class-leading levels of roominess and practicality.

Five engines are available, two diesels and three petrols, with the choice of automatic and dual-clutch transmissions.

Standard specification includes air conditioning, Bluetooth connectivity and DAB on all versions. Modern musts include numerous cabin compartments with a variety of shapes and capacities, easily reachable by driver and passengers, for smartphones,

games consoles, bottles and coins, with a USB port for charging and connecting devices.

Outside it looks smart and stylish with an aggressive grille and attractive rear end.

Proportions are good too and it looks eye-catching and smart enough to appeal and drag shopping eyeballs away from the Spider.

The interior is excellent too thanks to well thought out ergonomics, tactile materials and decent spec.

The 1.6 litre diesel is a tad rattly at tickover when you are standing outside the vehicle but not once you are tucked away inside. Its strengths lie in its smooth power delivery, excellent economy and surprising refinement.

Pick any Fiat and it will handle and the Tipo maintains that tradition to great effect. It smooths the bumps, is accurate to steer and grips very well indeed. It drives so much better than a workhorse should, but that's the Italians for you.



Fact File

- Fiat Tipo
- Engine: 1.6 diesel
- Power: 120PS
- Top speed: 124mph
- Combined MPG: 76.3
- Transmission: six speed manual
- CO2 g/km: 98