

THE ITALIAN JOB

*From the outside, the five-door Fiat Bravo 1.6 MultiJet 105 Dynamic Eco mates smooth, naturally aerodynamic lines with pronounced, muscular wheel arches to create an elegant and sporting design, says **Tim Barnes-Clay***

Inside, the mid-sized Italian hatchback offers spacious accommodation and high-quality build allied to a comprehensive equipment specification. What's more, the Bravo's cabin is very practical, with a useful storage drawer under the front passenger seat, a refrigerated compartment, door pockets, a centre console with space for bottles, documents, maps and coins, compartments on the fascia for keys and sunglasses, and a large glovebox. At the rear, a 60:40 split/folding rear bench offers seating for three, and can be folded flat to increase the Bravo's load-space. Also both outer rear seats include very safe ISOFIX mountings for a child seat.

Behind the wheel, the driver's instrument binnacle flows seamlessly from the soft-touch, carbon-look upper fascia and features deeply recessed dials with backlit graphics. A clear central multi-function display gives access to a range of menu options in a choice of nine languages. In addition, careful consideration has gone into the placement of the gear lever, steering column mounted switchgear and all other centre console based functions, to ensure optimum ease of access with minimal driver distraction. The combination of a height-adaptable driver's seat with lumbar support, and a rake and reach adjustable steering wheel, gives you a flexible driving position as well as good all-round visibility. The seats are also exceptionally



comfortable; this is because they are packed with foam that adapts to the shape of your body.

On the road, the Bravo is nippy around town and, because of its comfortable seats and relatively powerful engine, long distance driving is a doddle. The 1.6 MultiJet diesel engine fitted to the model on test here, develops 105 bhp and comes with a manual six-speed gearbox which helps reduce noise at motorway speeds and facilitates reduced fuel consumption.

In addition, the special eco-package, which was fitted to my test car, uses special measures to optimise aerodynamics. It incorporates low rolling resistance tyres and 'taller' gear ratios, and returns outstanding fuel consumption and CO2 figures: 62.8 mpg in the

combined cycle (an increase of five mpg on the standard 105 bhp 1.6 MultiJet) and CO2 emissions of just 119 g/km. That's pretty cheap motoring for both private and company car drivers.

Loading up the car is pretty easy, thanks to a deep well-shaped boot. It's not massive, but it'll probably take a small folded pram and it'll definitely swallow the weekly shop. You may struggle to fit everything in if you're going away with the family on holiday though, because with kids in the back you're not going to be able to fold the rear seats down to increase boot-space.

Finally, and probably most importantly, Fiat's Bravo has a maximum five-star rating for adult occupant protection. The gruelling Euro NCAP crash test programme gave the Italian motor five stars for adult

occupant safety, three stars for child protection and a further two for pedestrian protection. In fact, the Bravo recorded 33 points out of a possible 37, placing it among the leaders in its category in terms of passive, active and preventive safety. ●

PROS 'N' CONS

Comfortable ✓
Nippy ✓
Economical ✓
Limited load-space X

FAST FACTS

Max speed: 116 mph
0-62 mph: 11.3 secs
Combined mpg: 62.8
Engine: 1598 cc 16v diesel
Max. power (bhp):
105 at 4000 rpm
Max. torque (lb/ft):
214 at 2000 rpm
CO2: 119 g/km
Price: £18,200