



by Tony Soper

The Coupe was a pivotal car for Fiat, particularly in the United Kingdom. In 1995, after more than a decade of lacklustre and uninspiring products, they stunned consumers and manufacturers alike with the Centro Style-designed Pininfarina-built Coupe. It was so refreshingly different, it had a shape that provoked attention, abounded with innovative features, was finished in alarming colours and even its headlights seemed brighter than any other car - Fiats were suddenly funky again and buyers of Puntos, Cinqs, Bravas and Bravos were surely influenced by the trendy new image.

Early Coupes were fitted with the competent Lampredi-derived four-cylinder 16-valve twin cam, both turbocharged and normally-aspirated. In November 1996 the five cylinder 20-valve was squeezed in, and in turbocharged form this produced a frankly alarming 220bhp whooshing through the front wheels.

Four years on, with Fiat Coupes filtering through to second and third owners, a number of modified cars are beginning to appear. *Auto Italia* recently tested this uprated 20-valve turbo from Italian car specialist L&M International (Tel: 01494 538899) and we were impressed. L&M have attempted to refine the Coupe in three ways; more power naturally, but also better dynamic performance and improved appearance.

Looks are subjective, I think you either love or loathe the Fiat Coupe and this bodykit will not change your views. It undoubtedly makes



Controlled Aggression

the car look special, and consists of a front spoiler, side skirts, rear skirt and boot spoiler, with the whole ensemble following the raked grooves over the wheelarches. The 'look' is further enhanced by lowering the car by 40mm and fitting sinister, big 17" wheels finished in black and covered with sleek 245/40 Avon tyres.

The Bosch Motronic engine management system was reprogrammed, as well as the fitment of a freeflow exhaust and catalyst (CAT replacements are also available) together with a sports air filter to give a reliable 260bhp on this car, although increases

up to 300bhp are apparently available, (requiring a high flow aluminium intercooler assembly). It's a really nice engine conversion, so good it feels like original equipment. Accelerate from rest and the engine tugs hard, power builds at 3,000rpm and gets truly serious at 3,500-4,000rpm before



exploding up to 6,500rpm. This is accomplished with little lag and just a whiff of whistle from the turbo wastegate when you shift gear.

Power may corrupt, but a bit more is always nice and what harm could an extra 40bhp do - well, quite a lot actually, the Coupe Turbo with 220bhp is mad anyway,

so bumping it up to 260bhp could be a recipe for sudden death. L&M realise this and offer a number of packages to protect you from yourself. Tan-Ox brake discs are a good start, giving extra braking bite, and the adjustable Momo Corse strut brace looks cool and sharpens handling, which feels taut on this car with very little body roll and impeccable balance.

It's the Racelogic traction control system that's your real guardian angel; it claims "to reduce the chance of an accident and enhance acceleration, making the car more fun to drive and giving the driver ▶





Dark windows and black wheels give this personalised Coupé a sinister appearance. It goes well too.

new levels of confidence in pushing the car to its limits without overstepping the mark.

Fast acceleration should become rapid and repeatable, just bury the throttle and let the system do the rest. It constantly adjusts the power of the engine, searching for maximum grip. With the system fitted to a rear-wheel drive car you should be able to use full throttle around a corner with confidence that the rear end will not let go, and in a front-

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wheel drive car such as the Fiat Coupé push-on understeer is reduced, with the system setting the correct level of power. In wet and slippery conditions the system should really help, allowing you to accelerate as fast as the grip allows without wheelspin.

The system also has launch control, activated by pressing a button on the dashboard when the car is stationary. This brings in a secondary rev-limit (for example 4,000rpm), and the throttle can be fully depressed without over-revving the engine. The car is put into gear and the clutch engaged swiftly, while the traction control limits wheel spin for the perfect start. To allow for different driving styles or varying road conditions, a manual 5-position adjuster is provided to allow the driver customise the level of control.

L&M International have produced a most refined conversion in this Fiat Coupé, its fast, fun and safe. ■



EQUIPMENT PRICES

260BHP TUNING PACKAGE.

Reprogrammed engine management, tuned exhaust system, performance rear silencer with 3.8" x 3" chromed end pipe.

Sports air filter £918

EXTRAS

CAT replacement (racing/off-road use)	£150
Electronic traction control plus launch control	£995
Tar-Ox front brake discs	£299
Tar-Ox rear brake discs	£91
Front strut brace (adjustable) in red/aluminium	£236
High flow performance aluminium intercooler	£722
Front spoiler, rear spoiler, rear skirt, side skirts	£1,600
Lowered and stiffened springs (40mm approx.)	£250

PRICES INCLUDE FITTING AT L & M, AND DO NOT INCLUDE VAT

Other Coupé items available from L & M:

- Twin 76mm DTM rear silencer
- Racing clutch
- Adjustable sports suspension
- Anti-roll kit
- Steel Flex brake lines
- Aluminium Pedal Set
- High-Flow oil cooler
- Longer 5th gear (0.883)

