



Skoda picks up spirit of fun

Skoda Felicia Fun

PRICE £9999

ON SALE Now



The closest Skoda has come to fun in recent years is being the subject of an endless supply of jokes; not that the company has found any of them particularly funny. But with the appearance of the mature and impressive Octavia, Skoda jokes should now be consigned to the past.

But perhaps not, because the company has just introduced something that is guaranteed to have the average pedestrian in stitches. It's called the Felicia Fun, and it has a very neat trick up its sleeve. Look past the garish warpaint and there seems to be an ordinary two-seat pick-up lurking underneath. But wait, because by pulling a handle the entire rear bulkhead can be lifted to create an extra row of seats, landau-style, out in the open.

The Felicia Fun was first seen at the Geneva Motor Show two years ago. Most

thought that would be the last time it was seen as well, but Skoda had other ideas. The Fun went on sale in the Czech Republic at the end of last year and has since gone on sale in Germany. Skoda UK must be feeling suitably brave at the moment, and is planning to import 300 units, carrying a price tag of £9999.

The Fun is basically a Skoda

pick-up in drag – but what drag it is. The tone is unremittingly yellow (the only colour available) but there are a number of different hues on offer, ranging from mustard to lemon. Yellow alloy wheels are standard, and there's a plastic bull bar at the front and an odd spoiler arrangement at the back.

Power comes from the 1.6-litre four-cylinder Volkswagen-

sourced engine which is already used in the Felicia and will also appear in the Octavia. It produces 75bhp at 4500rpm and 99lb ft of torque down at 3500rpm. With a kerb weight of only 950kg to shift around, the performance isn't too shabby. Skoda claims figures of 12.5sec to 62mph and a top speed of 100mph.

On the road it feels quite pacy, although the engine can be a touch raucous if extended. But it still feels very much like a van to drive. Problems are encountered when it comes to cornering – there is loads of body roll and the steering is a worry as it's difficult to place the car with any accuracy.

The ride is no better, but might well improve when the car's weighed down with half a tonne of clobber. Presumably lifestyle clobber. But that would do the already wayward body control no favours, which is adversely affected by the lack of a solid rear bulkhead.

But its dynamic failings don't do a great deal of damage to the appeal of this car – and it



Any colour you like as long as it's yellow; delicate trim limits load carrying





Much of the garish cabin trim is leather; odd frog graphic appears on seats

does have appeal. A quick glance at the interior will soon have onlookers entranced; again there's yellow everywhere and a lot of it is leather, including the thick steering wheel, gearknob and gaiter, handbrake and plush seat trim. Best of all, there are super-padded leather door trims, suitable for any van driver to



VW four also used in new Octavia

rest his elbow. Yellow also covers the instruments and sun visors.

Most puzzling of all is the frog graphic plastered all over the seat trim and on the B-pillars. Skoda insists that there is no hidden meaning and it's just a bit of fun.

But back to those clever seats. The rear bulkhead requires a bit of effort to heave into position, and is best done while standing in the load area so everyone around can see exactly what you're up to. Once in position it locks solidly, and the rear seats flip down into position. They are quite thinly

padded, but rather comfortable. And by far the most enjoyable place to be.

Access to the rear is from the passenger side only; for some reason the driver's seat doesn't tip forward. But anyway, it's much more fun to ignore the doors altogether and just scramble over the rear sides and drop into the seats. In the back it stays relatively bluster-free, although it is tempting to strain your neck to try and get the full wind-in-your-hair effect.

Boot space is massive whether the seats are present or not, but it's not exactly secure. Practicality is also limited due to the paintwork. It would be a shame to scratch that fine

yellow finish, which severely limits its appeal as a working vehicle. Same applies to the wooden slats; they're great aesthetically, but not particularly practical. And the wood looks like it comes from a Fisher Price forest.

The Felicia Fun can't be taken seriously. It has a neat seat layout, but the standard pick-up is three grand cheaper at £6849, so what kind of buyer is the Fun going to appeal to? Skoda admits it



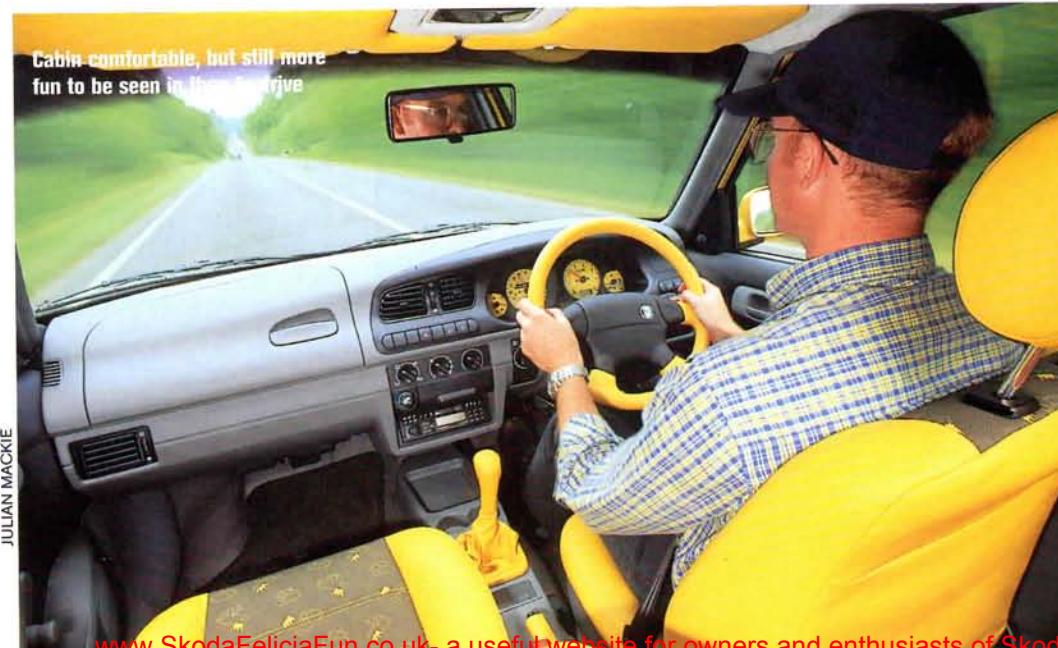
Pull a handle and rear seats appear

isn't sure. It is certainly not a vehicle for shrinking violets, and no self-respecting tradesman would be seen dead in it. But it's still fun. Not fun to drive, but fun to be with and be seen in. No longer the butt of jokes, it seems Skoda has a sense of humour all of its own.

Oliver Marriage



Despite the light-hearted looks, handling still feels disconcertingly van-like



JULIAN MACKIE

FACTFILE

FELICIA



SKODA FELICIA FUN

HOW MUCH?

Price £9999

On sale in UK Now

HOW FAST?

0-62mph 12.5sec

Top speed 100mph

HOW THIRSTY?

Urban 31.7mpg

56mph 46.3mpg

75mph 32.5mpg

HOW BIG?

Length 4115mm

Width 1635mm

Height 1390mm

Wheelbase 2450mm

Weight 950kg

Fuel tank 42 litres

ENGINE

Layout 4 cyls in line, 1598cc

Max power 75bhp at 4500rpm

Max torque 99lb ft at 3500rpm

Specific output 47bhp per litre

Power to weight 79bhp per tonne

Installation Transverse, front, front-wheel drive

Made of Alloy head and block

Bore/stroke 76.5/86.9mm

Compression ratio 9.8:1

Valve gear 2 per cyl, sohc

Ignition and fuel Electronic ignition, multi-point fuel injection

GEARBOX

Type 5-speed manual

Ratios/mph per 1000rpm

1st 3.46/5.2 2nd 1.95/9.3

3rd 1.31/13.8 4th 0.97/18.6

5th 0.75/23.9 Final drive 3.83:1

SUSPENSION

Front MacPherson struts, coil springs/dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear Trailing arms, torsion beam axle, coil springs/dampers

STEERING

Type Rack and pinion, power assisted

Lock to lock 3.1

BRAKES

Front Ventilated discs

Rear Drums

Anti-lock Not available

WHEELS AND TYRES

Size 5.5Jx13in

Made of Alloy

Tyres 165/80 R13

All manufacturer's claims

VERDICT

Unique rear seat set-up and outrageous paint scheme make Felicia Fun a real attention-getter, but poor ride and handling betray commercial origins.