

Frivolity with serious intent

Occasionally, a vehicle comes along which stretches the rules of what belongs in the pages of CM. One such vehicle is the Felicia Fun, but it is officially a goods vehicle, complete with reclaimable VAT, and it's available now at your local Skoda dealer.

■ Based on the Skoda Pickup/Volkswagen Caddy twins, the Skoda Felicia Fun's most notable feature is the addition of two seats to the rear. It is only available in yellow, with matching body kit and alloy wheels. Although the Fun in its present form is targeted at the "lifestyle" market, it is not without serious intent; Skoda UK says it will consider making the extra seating optional on the basic Pickup given sufficient demand.

The Felicia Fun's party piece is provided by the ingenious mechanism at the rear of the cab which allows the seating capacity of the pickup to be doubled. A latch below the rear window releases the bulkhead, which is then pivoted up and back, and secured to a pair of catches on the rear suspension turrets.

Tilt-and-slide

The seat cushion is then pivoted into place to complete the operation; we timed the whole process at less than seven seconds. Access to the rear seats, which have pukka three-point inertia-reel seat belts and head restraints, is via the tilt-and-slide passenger seat.

In two-seater form, the load-space is 1,430mm long, with a pallet-friendly 1,020mm between the arches. The load-space and tailgate are lined with wooden ribbing, and four hefty lashing points are meant to be fitted, but we could only find two in our test vehicle. With the rear seats erected there is 960mm of loadspace at floor level, which can be extended by dropping the sturdy tailgate. With a 75kg driver on board, the claimed payload is 530kg.

Within the Skoda commercial vehicle range, the Felicia Fun is unique in having a 1.6-litre petrol engine, instead of the 1.3 petrol and 1.8 diesel engines used by the other variants. Combined with the well-chosen ratios of the five-speed gearbox, it provides the Fun with lively performance. Skoda claims a 0-100km/h acceleration time of 12.5 seconds.

Handling and overall drivability is very nimble, but the package is let down by the brakes which, although powerful enough, have a long pedal travel and a generally uninspiring feel. The cab, including the well-engineered rear seat conversion, is commendably free of rattles. Rigidity in the area of the conversion is helped by the substantial roll protection structure, although there is a price to be paid in terms of reduced three-quarters visibility.

It's safe to say that the



It's a conventional pickup (left) or Felicia Fun's bulkhead unlocks to become extra seats.

Felicia Fun's interior styling will not be to everyone's taste, particularly the "Frog Prince" logo which forms the pattern on the cloth facings of the yellow leather trimmed seats. The yellow leather theme extends to door panels, steering wheel, gear lever and sun visors, while the instruments are silver on yellow.

Colour scheme

Forgetting the colour scheme (if you can), the interior is attractively styled, and the controls have a high-quality look and feel. The only exceptions are the door pockets, which are not only made of rather thin plastic but are too close for comfort to the manual window winders. The list of equipment includes driver's airbag, high-spec Blaupunkt radio/cas-

ette player, fog lamps and variable intermittent wipers.

Despite the Felicia Fun's target market, it has received HM Customs and Excise blessing for the VAT on the basic pre-tax price of £8,592 to be reclaimable by business users. Included in the price is a three-year unlimited distance warranty with AA roadside assistance and a three-year 45,000-mile service and maintenance package. These should ensure that it attracts some interest from image-conscious commercial users wanting a versatile half-tonne load carrier with occasional passenger carrying ability. Only those with a sense of humour need apply, though.

□ by Colin Barnett

SPECIFICATIONS

Engine: Four-cylinder transverse petrol with multi-point injection.

Capacity: 1,598cc.

Power: 75hp (55kW) @ 4,500rpm.

Torque: 135Nm (99lbft) @ 3,500rpm.

Transmission: five-speed synchro driving front wheels.

GVW:
1,555kg.

