**LIVING WITH FIESTA - A LITTLE HISTORY WEEKS 4 & 5****by Sally Webster**

Thanks to Kim and Janet you've been introduced to the 1.4 L automatic model of Ford's latest 'hot hatch' which Janet aptly named the SBC: Small Black Car.

Sure, it's a little more expensive than the SBD –Small Black Dress- but Ford would love to see it just as coveted as every other classic compact item a girl's just got to have.

Back in 1909 Henry Ford is recorded to have said of his first Model T that 'you can have it in any colour as long as it's black.' This year Ford Australia boss Marin Burela described the new Fiesta as the most important vehicle to wear the blue oval badge since the model T.



Comments like that plus its status as Britain's best selling small car in 2008 begin to tell us what all the fuss is about.

The first Fiesta was born in 1976-the Mk 1. Years later you'd see that model tearing around in perhaps red with white racing stripes, the beloved steed of many a young boy racer. A number of other small cars were spawned around that time too including the Volkswagen Golf (although this is now a lot bigger – Ed) and the Mini. Competitors now are the likes of the Mazda 2 and the Holden Barina.

What catalysed the move to smaller family cars was the 1973 energy crisis resulting in public demand for vehicles with much lower fuel consumption. And here we are again in 2009 addressing similar issues for more evolved and dangerous reasons; hence the banding around of Euro NCAP stamps for the correct fuel emissions and ambitious fuel consumption figures.

Now in its 7th generation, this Fiesta is slightly longer than previous models which is probably a good thing given the abundance of options fitted into the car. Previously Kim pointed out her satisfaction with all the techno-savvy components and especially the phone keypad conveniently placed to the left of the steering wheel.

Personally the dash-a design inspired by a mobile phone keypad itself- is a little over exciting for me but I couldn't live without the multi-function steering wheel for sound control.

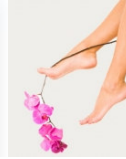
**Ladies ONLY****LIVING WITH FIESTA - A LITTLE HISTORY WEEKS 4 & 5**

Even if there does appear to be a menagerie of controls here there's something very pleasant about the look and feel of the materials used in the soft-touch dash - an Apple inspired idea offered in a range of colours. It's refreshing when the small, affordable car segment usually sports interiors filled with cheap, hard plastic. Terrible for nails.

As with any product, first impressions last. It's one thing to impress us with colour optioned interiors but what can they dazzle us with for the outer shell? Steer away from the greens girls, but if you've ever fancied the powdery pink of say, the Honda Jazz, you'll have fun with the bold palette of the Fiesta; it includes Hot Magenta, Morello or Colorado Red but my favourite is Frozen White.



The next instalment will address how Fiesta's sporty body work keeps pace with a working mothers frantic day in and out of the city.

**Ladies ONLY****Living With.....the Ford Fiesta****Weeks 2 and 3****By Kim Kendall**

I was very excited to be able to test drive the Ford Fiesta while our editor was overseas.

The black Fiesta Zetec arrived with low profile tyres and spoilers which made me think “wow” when I first laid eyes on it.

Being a mother of two, my requirements in a vehicle are quite simple, safety (i.e the usual, airbags, ABS, ESP etc), plenty of boot space and leg room, and seating for more than two rear passengers.

The other requirements are obvious - the car needs to look good and have a decently powerful engine to help me manoeuvre through suburban traffic and on the motorway.

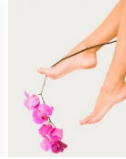
The Fiesta automatic is supplied with a 1.4-litre petrol engine, rather than the 1.6-litre engine in the manual version. I found it to be somewhat lacking in power for its size. One of my friends suggested I “drive it like I stole it.”

I live in a hilly suburb and the Fiesta automatic tends to run out of breath even when I had the pedal to the floor, unless I timed the acceleration right. One of the benefits of the Fiesta 1.4 is that you can choose whether to fill up on 91 octane or the more expensive super. Maybe putting in a tank of super will give this car a bit more oomph? [not so's you'd notice – Ed.]

The dashboard is definitely the stand-out feature of the Fiesta. I had to find my way around the console (due to a missing car manual) but by pushing all the buttons found the controls very easy to work. This car is aimed at the technically savvy market but even I (a techno-phobic) could work out how to use the menu, Bluetooth connectivity and plug in my iPod. I absolutely love the telephone key pad on the driver's left-hand side. This is definitely a selling point as far as I am concerned.

Another detail that I really like is the ability to raise or lower the driving seat, as mentioned later, this is quite important for we vertically challenged people. When I raised the seat I didn't feel so much like a boy racer sitting on the floor and got a far better view of the road.

However, I did face a couple of obstacles in my first week...



Ladies ONLY

Living With.....the Ford Fiesta

Weeks 2 and 3



First obstacle: My children are avid snow skiers and have a weekly lesson in Silverdale. We also carry an extra child with us to the lessons.

I decided to pack the car to see whether I was going to be able to fit all the ski gear, school bags and still manage to get the children in. I had to remove the parcel tray and take down the single back seat. I was able to lay the skis down on top of the flat seat and I then placed two boot bags beside the ski bag.

Unfortunately there was only room left for a clothing bag. This meant that I wouldn't be unable to get school bags in when I collected the children.

My other concern, was that I would then have two children squashed onto the remaining double seat - which is okay if they like being cuddled up together (by the way sisters don't) - and one would have to ride shotgun. Not good for safety or sanity.

So alas, I had to get all the gear out of the car and repack into one that had a lot more room.

When I went to pull the boot door back down, I realised that I had to stand on tippy toe in order to reach the door to bring it down. The car was parked flat in my garage. One thing I think would improve this problem is a grab strap for shorter people to be able to pull the door back down.

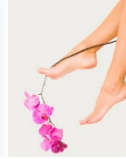
Second obstacle: If like me you are used to popping the petrol cap open from the comfort of inside your car, you will be disappointed. I spent half an hour parked out on the road looking for a petrol door release button - (as mentioned earlier I had not been supplied a manual for this vehicle).

In sheer desperation I telephoned Ford to ask them how to open the petrol cap, only to be advised I needed to get out of the car and press it. Needless to say I felt like a bit of an idiot!

When I eventually got around to opening the petrol cap I saw that it would be practically impossible to siphon out any petrol due to a closing mechanism covering the hole which can only be opened on insertion of petrol pump. Very clever.

So my time has come to a close and I hand over to the 'other family' the one with the two teenage boys to see how they fare in the Fiesta. Sorry to see it go? Yes I am, it grew on me despite the obstacles - one which you won't repeat!

Thanks to all at Road-Tests.com, and Ford New Zealand, for this opportunity.

**Living With.....the Ford Fiesta Zetec****Week 1****It's small and fun(ny)**

Here it is; the very car...black. What is it that all press cars seem to be black these days? Is it to do with the general state of the global economy?

Whatever it is the last batch of cars into Road-Tests.com have all been black – and so is this little darling of a car that has come to us for 12 wonderful weeks... Now just so you (and Ford New Zealand) are aware we will be taking it in turns to drive and provide the reporting. Me – and the Road-Tests.com male editor – are aware for a couple of weeks, it's OK we are married, so the other Ladies will be using the Fiesta as their everyday car while we're away. And they are looking forward to it.

Which Fiesta did we get – apart from it being black? The 1.4L automatic version, and very dinky it is too. Already christened SBC (Small Black Car) the Fiesta has been with us for about a week now and we're still finding things on it that we either enjoy, or really would rather was better.

Sadly our time will be short with SBC but that won't stop me from finding out if the voice command actually works – or if I can work it... then there's parking it, using it and a whole host of other enjoyable things we reckon the all new Fiesta will provide.

First impressions are favourable, although there is a hint of concern at the lack of grunt...we'll take a look at how it performs when it moves across to the other ladies. In the meantime its fun to have anew funky car to enjoy, especially as I really like compact style cars, OK read small!

That's it for this time, over to Kim and then there will be more when I get back...