

Ruby! Ruby! Ruby! aka "Slippers"

Thanks to the motoring press, I knew the car-makers of Turin were going to re-invent the iconic Cinquecento (good article in issue 168 of Top Gear Magazine) and I'd found my dream car. Then 500 hours into 2008, we attended the launch party at our local dealership on a storming January night and saw the first cars whilst eating an Italian pasta buffet and watching the London launch party being streamed to the showroom. It really was love at first sight. Back then a plain red was available, with a pearlescent I wanted due out in a year's time (when the convertible version would be launched). So I started driving lessons and now four years later my order went in late August 2011. Car was due in 12 weeks (late Nov) but she arrived in October, six weeks early. "Ciao Rubina! Bellissimo cinquecento!" my Italian friend exclaimed whilst giving her a pat.

I agree that she's an "Everyday Masterpiece" and I do "Enjoy Going to Work" in her. Many colleagues recognise mine as one they've seen on the roads, so they're keen to see inside one. If not cuted-out by the exterior, (men: "it's a bit of a girl's car though" – so, er, do I look like a man? Oh never mind...) then the tech & interior impresses them instead, and they seem surprised.

When you're washing Ruby, people notice and say how nice she's looking. This phenomenon was noticed straight away, people don't just say hi as they pass, they actually have a conversation with you. Best example of this so far, was the woman who passed by moaning: "I wish my husband would at least give the car a wash just *once* in a while" with a sigh. Then she actually did a double-take, came back to check and said "ooh, yes it is, it's one of those Fiat 500's; they're such lovely little cars!" and then wandered off again sounding more cheerful.

My first car was a Peugeot 106 which we did up for me to practice in - and she now belongs to the Curley One (Great little car, so she's still loved and with us). I've been getting used to Ruby's quirks since I've had her. Things like: the indicators – they either pop off too quickly and the crack sound is disconcerting when held down - like they're about to break off. Or, they stay on too long and are so quiet (unlike the 106) that I sometimes forget they're still on. Slippers has big blind spots, but the massive mirrors really help there. Noting angle of a corner *before* going round it helps too, so no curbed alloys for me. Done 800 miles now and can feel she's still bedding in. Not yet taken her on the motorway, but we see plenty out having a joyride. My sunroof helps makes dull days into "la dolce vita" days and although I feel the cold, I just hate dry, heated, suffocating cars. So coat and scarf it is, and I open the roof daily. Really smooth and quick opening mechanism. The red/black fabric seats seemed to soak up rainspots so now have (airbag compatible) covers on them. Only have two mysteries so far: i) how exactly *did* a pint of water end up in the boot?? (the boot liner has already paid for itself there) and ii) is a climate control question – (so need a look through manual first to see if the demisting delay is normal).

My new hobby is: "detailing". Slippers arrived 2 days before my birthday. So on my birthday itself a friend of hubby's came by to see her, only intended staying for ten minutes but ended up staying for our "detailing party". I bought a Meguiars kit so we were ready and Ruby now has an adopted uncle. As an ex-valet he cast his eye over her and taught me how to remove scratches (x7 found under his keen eye – probably the pre-delivery chamois man's "once-over" we think) and we all helped speed-detail her, followed by a polish, then a wax-on-wax-off. Wow, wow, wow, what a difference hours later! PS sssh, but friend is (gasp!) a Mini owner. He even admired the decent "clunk" of Ruby's derriere over the "tinny" sound of his boot closing.

Stats:

-  1.2 Lounge, Petrol, Manual transmission
-  15" Multispoke alloy wheels
-  Winter Slippers fitted this weekend – 14" steels with Goodyear UltraGrip 8's
-  500 Sport version door sill plates (b'day)
-  Black ambience
-  Cannon 500-fit rubber floormats (b'day)
-  Climate Control

-  Fiat boot organiser box in red (b'day)
-  Fiat Boot-Liner tray
-  Fiat Rear Mudflaps – with shine product applied they look like you're viewing the rear tyre.
-  Fiat red key cover (b'day)
-  Meguiars products
-  Osram Night Breaker Plus bulbs
-  Ragamuffin Red Pearlescent paint
-  Red/Black cloth seats & ActionSport black/red covers (airbag compatible)
-  Side protection strip with chrome 500 Logo
-  Skydome opening roof
-  Valve Covers – red aluminium (99p from This is IT! bargain store)

Waving Report (as requested by another member)

Since being an owner myself I'm pleased to report my efforts in actively promoting "smiling and waving" at fellow 500 drivers in my area. It took 15 "goes" before I got one back though. It occurs to me now that I may have innocently frightened a few Abarth men in the process - who can't actually recall knowing me... So just to clarify – no, you weren't drunk, I don't know you from "Adam", I don't want a date, I just like your car, and hope a wave cheered your day. Best wave I had back was from a fellow red, a C with black roof – whilst both directions were on a red light. A lady with dark hair tied back like mine and also in a black jacket also had that "snap!" moment – so we both pointed, waved "hi" and both sides grinned our heads off and bounced in our seats. I could see drivers behind me and her at the lights also "got it" and this bit of mime theatre made the queue laugh along with us too. A moment of pure comedy.

Scrapbook

Snapped after arrival at the dealership, whilst awaiting pre-delivery inspection. Paintwork was just electric under sudden sun. Curley One admitted he was very impressed with R-Red in the "flesh".

Digi-cams cannot pick out this shimmer, unfortunately.

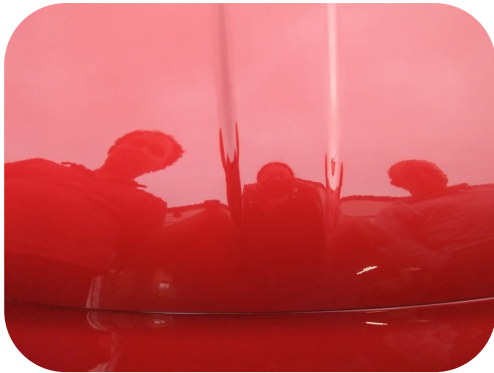


Those in the dealership who'd never seen R-Red "live" thought I'd been sent a Pasadoble by mistake. The worst possible scenario and order would have been rejected. It was such a stormy summer this year, that the effect was simply invisible when she arrived! Effect seems to be embedded into a lower layer of paint so only seen in bright light, direct sun, or street/security lamp. You could argue that not seeing a metallic all the time, isn't value for money. If this light-play seems a little "magical" to you though, then Ragamuffin is worth the extra. I'm also hoping the pearlescent paint will be a little stronger over the years too, as Ruby's "a keeper".



Interior here – much as you'd expect really, my mats were a birthday pressie & fit very well.

Some reflected glory...



"Team Ruby" after my birthday detailing party. We didn't go for Supagard, we went for Meguiars and d.i.y.

Colour so much deeper and denser afterwards as was the gloss.

...Took hours, but totally worth the effort.

My satin red key cover
- another useful birthday pressie.



After a second waxing two weeks later,
had to take another photo – wow again.

It is indeed, "really nice to get some sky" – sun, moon, stars & air. Love my sunroof, really adds to the driving experience, but do get seat covers on during autumn leaf-fall, as leaves and twiglets get in and wedge in the passenger seat gap and seats soak up drizzle instantly.





Glitter cup holder
inserts - twinkle
in the
interior light
when it's dark;
a craft moment.



In the boot...

-  Fiat boot liner tray; covers the carpet.
-  Fiat red box (also available in black) arrives flat; simple "assembly" via velcro sides. Adjustable divider + useful strip of press studs at opposing end.
-  Onboard detailing kit/cloths and gloves.
-  Collapsible sided 16litre baskets - with handles.

The End, of the beginning...