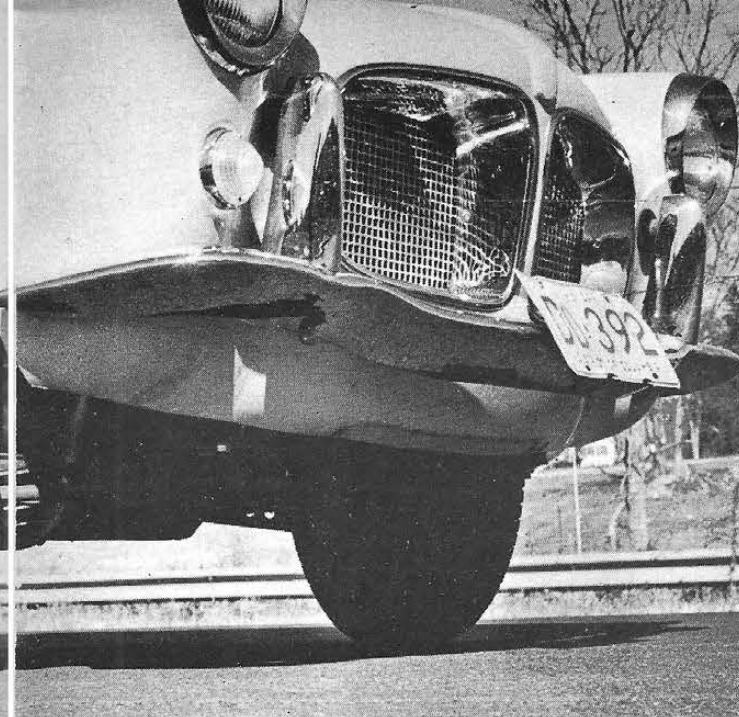
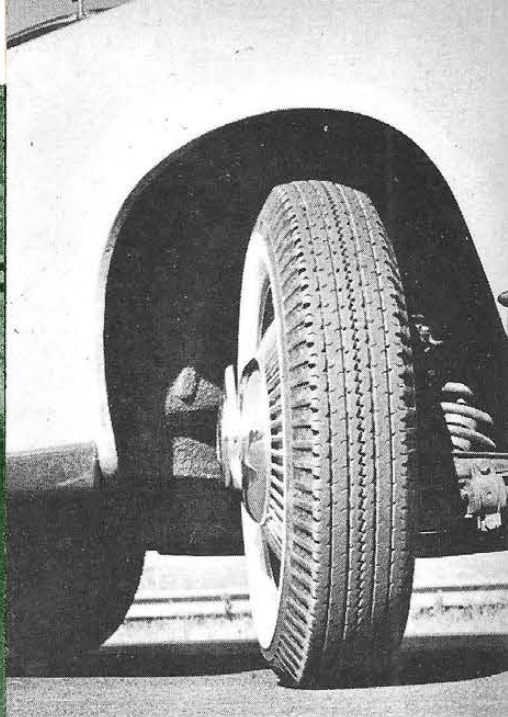




High style and a "boulevard look" hide some pleasant surprises. Underneath that long tail section is enough room for a week's worth of luggage for two.



*One of those rare cars that you appreciate more as each minute goes by...*

*Here's more good, solid engineering lurking under that pretty tinware. Independently suspended by wishbones and coil springs, front end rides rock solid on heavy shocks, stiff swaybar.*

## SCI ROAD TEST:

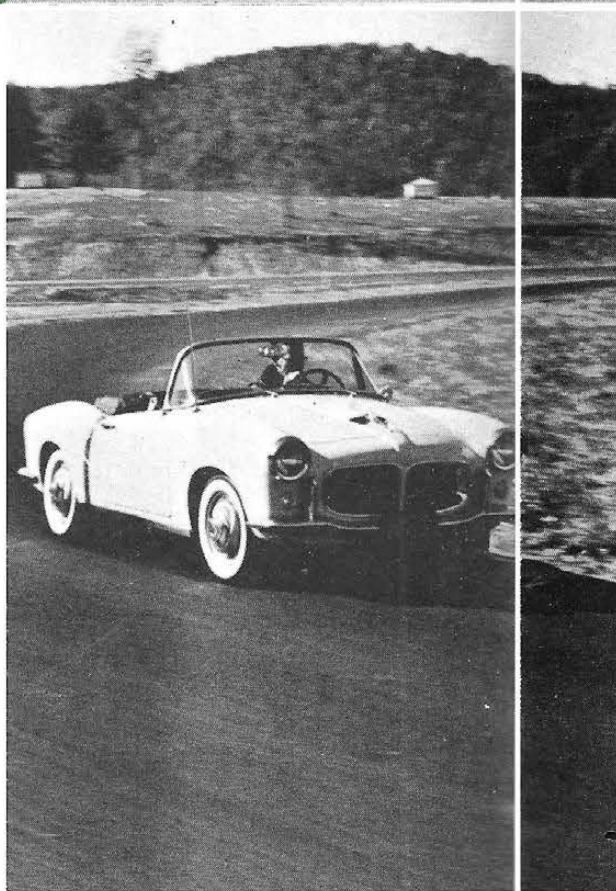
**S**URPRISING IS THE WORD for Fiat's new 1200 TV roadster (or convertible if you want to be a purist about it). Or perhaps "fascinating" would be a better word. The 1200 is one of those rare cars that you like better and appreciate more as each minute goes by.

At first glance it looks to be no more nor less than a pretty little convertible of the sort in which a fond father might send a favorite daughter to college — a car one doesn't have to worry about, something docile, cute but not exciting.

But first glances seldom tell the whole story — especially in the case of the Fiat 1200 TV roadster. The minute one gets into the car the first-glance impression begins to fade. The engine fires up at a twist of the key to a busy idle somewhere in the neighborhood of 900 rpm. A nudge at the throttle bounces it up with an exuberance that betokens plenty of breathing and a cam that has been ground to match. The exuberance is not belied by the initial

performance either; the car gets under way almost instantaneously without squatting or lugging, then runs up so quickly through the gears that the speedometer must be watched carefully to avoid running afoul of the man in the blue suit. In traffic the car can be darted in and out in a way that must seem miraculous to a man in something less lively and agile. Running up and down through the gears is sheer pleasure, the stick moving positively from gate to gate as easily as a toothpick in a butter pat. Low gear is not synchromesh but even a sloppy job of double-clutching gets you into Low at any speed up to about 15 mph.

Swift and agile though the car is in traffic, it is out on country roads that the 1200 TV comes into its own. Seemingly high and a bit too narrow to the discerning eye, at least from a technical point of view, the Fiat hands out another surprise in the form of handling characteristics that do its country of origin credit indeed. One



*Coming around a tight bend flat out in third gear, there's nary a trace of lean or slide discernible to the eye and only a modicum of tire noise.*

# FIAT 1200 TV Roadster

expects an Italian car to handle well (they have to handle; an Italian on his native heath has his right foot bolted firmly to the firewall at all times) but the Fiat's form of handling is on a high order indeed. On corners through which some truly *pur sang* automobiles drift and slide, the 1200 TV just motors through with barely a protest from the tires. It gets a bit eerie at times and frustrating as well. We took one of the turns on SCI's test circuit and bored through at what seemed to be an optimum speed for the car. It just marched through with as much aplomb as if it were being putted around a city park. Back we went some five miles an hour quicker. The same thing happened — not even a chirp from the rubber. Things like this tend to be frustrating — small, inexpensive convertibles aren't really supposed to hang onto the *pavé* like small *expensive* imports.

This particular machine had come to us through the kind offices of Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr. and it was earmarked as

his personal automobile. Regardless of the fact that there are no longer any Roosevelt connections in the White House, it just didn't seem quite diplomatic to take chances with Mr. Roosevelt's personal transportation. Still, there *was* that corner and the car was just too blasted impeccable. It was just too much. We took a full lap to wind up and went into the corner at as close to full bore as conscience and good sense dictated. Although, as the photos indicate, we got some semblance of drift this time the feeling in the cockpit was that of going around on the end of a string, one or more natural laws seeming to have been vetoed for the benefit of Fiat. Later, the Editor and Technical Editor took turns going for lap times, a procedure not normally followed when testing touring automobiles and anything not specifically sold as racing or semi-racing equipment. In full touring trim, with everything aboard, we were able without undue hurry to clock a steady 1 minute, 30 seconds. Not

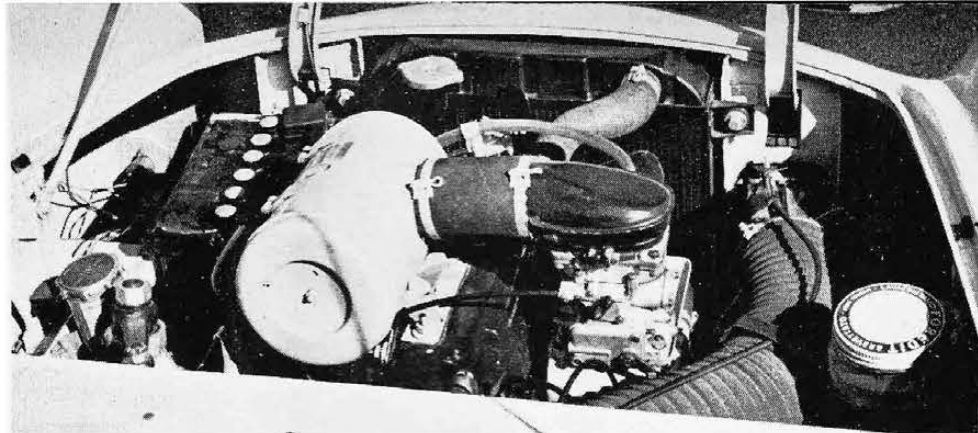
once during this period did the car feel extended either as to engine speed or road adhesion. This is not to recommend that Fiat 1200 owners do the same thing. First, we were on a race course noted for smoothness, not a public road, and secondly, this is a touring sports car, not a racing car even though it behaves very much like one. What we proved to our satisfaction, and we hope to prospective and present Fiat owners, is that the 1200 TV is as safe as houses even under violently abnormal circumstances that it was not really intended to meet.

Safety and lively performance are not the only attributes of the 1200 TV either. Luxury is perhaps its most striking facet and one most immediately apparent. The interior appointments are distinctly reminiscent of several convertibles costing twice as much and would do credit to the likes of Ferrari and Maserati. It isn't all mere trim either — there is a solidity to the car, an impression of all-of-a-oneness that



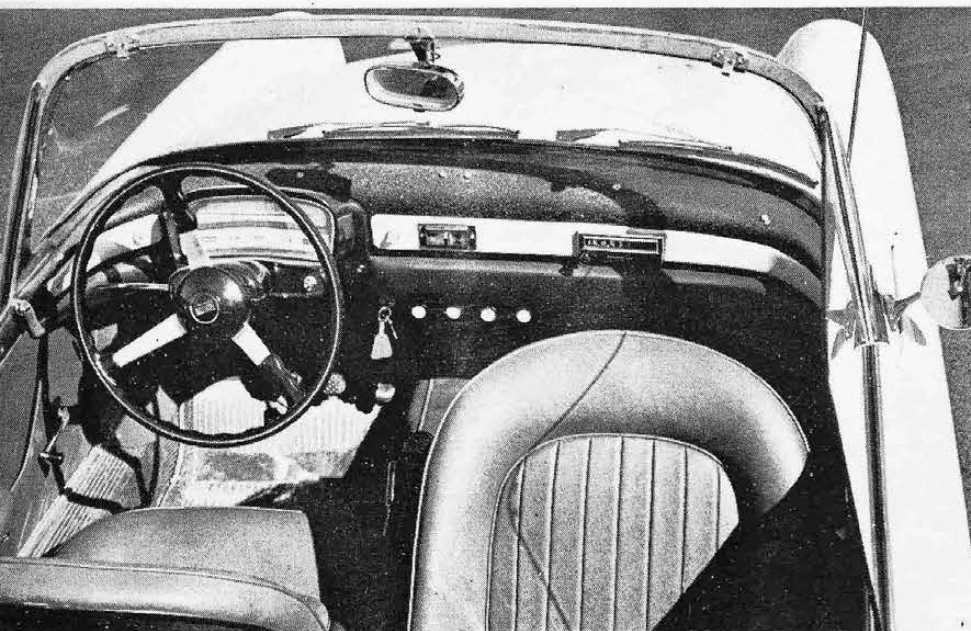
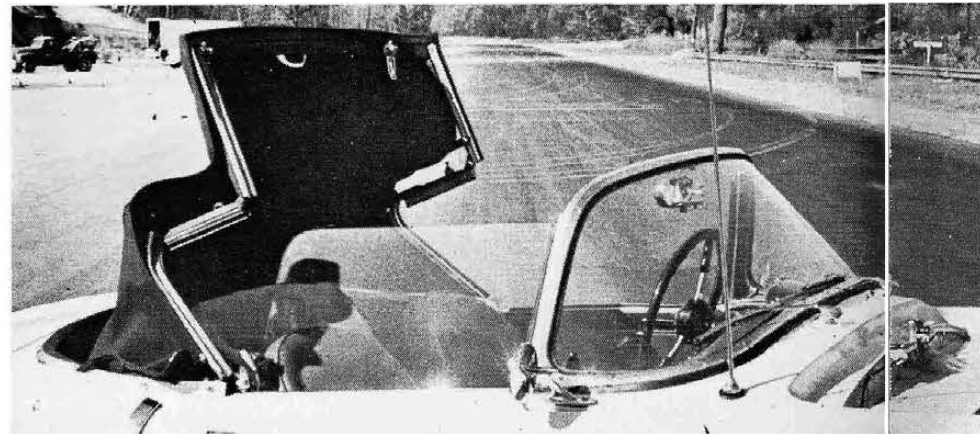
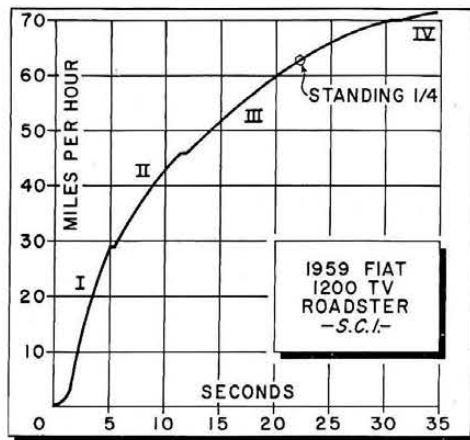
*Going into a long bend in top gear the car seems to cling to its line as though tied to the end of a string or as though a natural law were vetoed.*





Tame-looking 1221 cc rockerbox four with its single carburetor belies its appearance. Intelligent porting and a warm cam combine to let the engine belt out 60 SAE horses.

One of the luxurious touches on the 1200 TV Roadster is a top that folds or raises at a flip of one hand. Counterbalancing is absolutely correct.



Appointments within are neat and bear a feeling of luxury almost out of keeping with the price of the car. Both seats swivel outward and the passenger's seat will turn all the way around and lock facing backwards!

comes only with good, solid basic design. There is no feeling that knobs and other small controls will come off in your hand. The metal-spoked dished steering wheel is firm and comfortable and the gear lever has that firm, rock-solid feel associated with the gear changes of the more expensive Italian imports.

In all this welter of good workmanship and design there was one thing that was outstanding — the top. Raising or lowering the lid was a one-hand operation even while under way. Perfectly counterbalanced, yet light and simple, this is a top that other manufacturers would do well to look at long and seriously. Except for the tops on two specific German cars there is no easier roof to operate in the world — including push-button units. Another point worthy of mention is the swivel seats. The Chrysler Corporation introduced their turn-table seats with much fanfare early in the Fall — Fiat just installed theirs and let it go at that, neglecting to mention even that the seat on the passenger's side swivels completely around and locks into place facing backward!

## FIAT 1200 TV SPIDER

Suggested Retail List Price at  
 East Coast ..... \$2654  
 U.S. Importer: ..... Hoffman  
 443 Park Ave.  
 New York 21, N. Y.  
 or  
 9130 Wilshire Blvd.  
 Beverly Hills, Calif.

### PERFORMANCE

**TOP SPEED:**  
 Estimated ..... 85-90 mph

**ACCELERATION:**  
 From zero to ..... seconds  
 30 mph ..... 5.7  
 40 mph ..... 8.9  
 50 mph ..... 14.2  
 60 mph ..... 20.4  
 70 mph ..... 31.4  
 Standing ¼ mile ..... 22.3  
 Speed at end of quarter ..... 65 mph

**SPEED RANGES IN GEARS:**  
 I ..... 0-29  
 II ..... 8-46  
 III ..... 12-70  
 IV ..... 16-top

**SPEEDOMETER CORRECTION:**

Indicated Speed	Timed Speed	Indicated Speed	Timed Speed
30	26	60	54
40	36	70	63
50	44		

**FUEL CONSUMPTION:**  
 Hard driving ..... 25 mpg  
 Average driving  
 (Under 60 mph) ..... 30 mpg

### SPECIFICATIONS

**POWER UNIT:**  
 Type ..... Four cylinder, water cooled,  
 in-line  
 Valve Operation ..... Pushrod overhead valves, in-line  
 Bore & Stroke ..... 2.83 x 2.95 in. (72 x 75 mm)  
 Stroke/Bore Ratio ..... 1.04/1  
 Displacement ..... 74.5 cu. in. (1221 cc)  
 Compression Ratio ..... 8.0/1  
 Carburetion by ..... One Weber 36 DIM 7 dual-choke  
 downdraft  
 Max. Power ..... 55 CUNA (60 SAE) bhp  
 @ 5300 rpm  
 Max. Torque ..... 60 lbs.-ft. @ 3000 rpm

**DRIVE TRAIN:**  
 Transmission ratios  
 I ..... 3.38  
 II ..... 2.09  
 III ..... 1.38  
 IV ..... 1.00  
 Final drive ratio ..... 4.30  
 Axle torque taken by rear springs

**CHASSIS:**  
 Frame ..... Integrally constructed with body  
 Wheelbase ..... 92 in.  
 Tread, front and rear ..... 48½, 47¾ in.  
 Front Suspension ..... Coil springs, wishbones, anti-roll  
 bar  
 Rear Suspension ..... Rigid axle, semi-elliptic leaf  
 springs, anti-roll bar  
 Shock absorbers ..... Telescopic  
 Steering type ..... Worm and roller  
 Steering wheel turns L to L ..... 3  
 Turning diameter,  
 curb to curb ..... 34½ ft.  
 Brakes ..... Single leading shoe, front and  
 rear  
 Brake lining area ..... 153 sq. in.  
 Tire size ..... 5.20 x 14  
 Rim size ..... 3½J x 14

**GENERAL**  
 Length ..... 154 in.  
 Width ..... 57½ in.  
 Height ..... 50½ in.  
 Weight, as tested ..... 2320 lbs.  
 Weight distribution,  
 F/R as tested ..... 55/45  
 Fuel capacity ..... 10 U.S. gallons

**RATING FACTORS:**  
 Specific Power Output (SAE) 0.81 bhp/cu. in.  
 Power to Weight Ratio (SAE) 38.6 lbs./hp.  
 Piston speed @ 60 mph ..... 1840 ft./min.  
 Braking Area ..... 132 sq. in./ton  
 Speed @ 100 rpm in top gear 16.1 mph

Under the hood lurks the ubiquitous 1221 cc four-banger. That it has the same displacement as the small Simcas is no mere coincidence; both are developed from the 1100cc designed eons ago by Fiat, the same one worked on by such stalwarts as Gordini, Abarth, Cisitalia, and Stanguellini. In Italy it bears the same relation to the less pecunious brethren of sporting fraternity that the Chevrolet V-8 does in America. Similarly, it's dead reliable and is successfully subjected to much tuning by all and sundry. The less potent 1100 has a four mm smaller bore and a compression ratio one step lower (seven instead of eight) and only a single throat carb instead of the dual choke Weber. On the 1200 TV, this Weber breathes into a four-port manifold (aluminum but water-heated for quick warm-ups) and then into individual ports in the cylinder head. The latter, carrying overhead valves, is also aluminum. In horsepower, the difference is between 43 hp at 4800 rpm for our test car. These are both CUNA ratings which are stricter than SAE. By the latter standard, the 1200 rates 60 bhp. By either, it's a healthy little engine, but definitely not horsey enough to make a raceable proposition out of this fine handling roadster. Which is too bad.

During the 1,000 or so miles we were permitted to drive the car only two minus factors showed up, made more apparent than they would normally have been by the excellent overall quality of the car. First was a speedometer that was extremely optimistic at all speeds and the second was extreme tire-pressure sensitivity. Raising the pressure of the rear tires a pound or two over the threshold of 25 psi produced severe tail-hop on anything but the smoothest pavement. Pressures below this point smoothed everything out to produce that "painted on the road" feeling mentioned earlier. Other than these two minor factors nothing else could be found to complain about.

All in all, the Fiat 1200 TV Roadster is a safe car, a lively car, a luxurious car and most important of all, a fun car that can be taken just about anywhere with a week's worth of luggage for two stowed completely out of the way. We sincerely doubt that Mr. Roosevelt will have any difficulty in selling all that he can get the Fiat folks to produce. *jpc*