

In its 130bhp TDi Sport guise, the SEAT Ibiza is already one very quick cookie...



## When fast is not enough

Ivor Carroll meets up with a reader who can't really explain why he got his Ibiza Superchipped...

**W**hat happens when you take a terribly quick turbodiesel car along to **Superchips** for them to make it quicker? And why would you do so anyway?

These were the questions burning on my mind as I drove our own terribly quick canary yellow SEAT Ibiza TDi 130 Sport up to **Superchips'** Buckingham headquarters. I was to meet *DC* reader Graham Turner, who, influenced... nay, mesmerized by our previous road test of the Ibiza, and subsequent recent long-term reports of our 'rampant rooster' or 'yellow peril', decided that this was the car for him.

So he bought one, and he is delighted to report that it transpired to be everything we

had said it was. So what was he doing, meeting me here at the **Superchips** base, if he was already so happy with his motoring lot?

"It's not to do with the **NEED** for more power," he explained, "rather the fact that I know it can be done, and that if I'm not availing myself of the upgrade, I feel I'm somehow missing out. The standard Ibiza is astonishingly quick and 'grunty', perhaps not astounding in terms of clock times, but phenomenal when it comes to overtaking and hillclimbing abilities. If it can go from fast to blisteringly fast, then I'll have some of that!

"I love the concept of the Q-car, where you're driving something that looks fairly humble – particularly if it's a diesel – but you can surprise wide boys on the road by

revealing that it's actually a heck of a lot quicker than the RS Escorts, Golf GTIs, BMWs and Audi A3s that they think are the ultimate. Quicker in terms of the real-world needs of motoring; quicker at the cut and thrust. It already leaves most of them for dust!

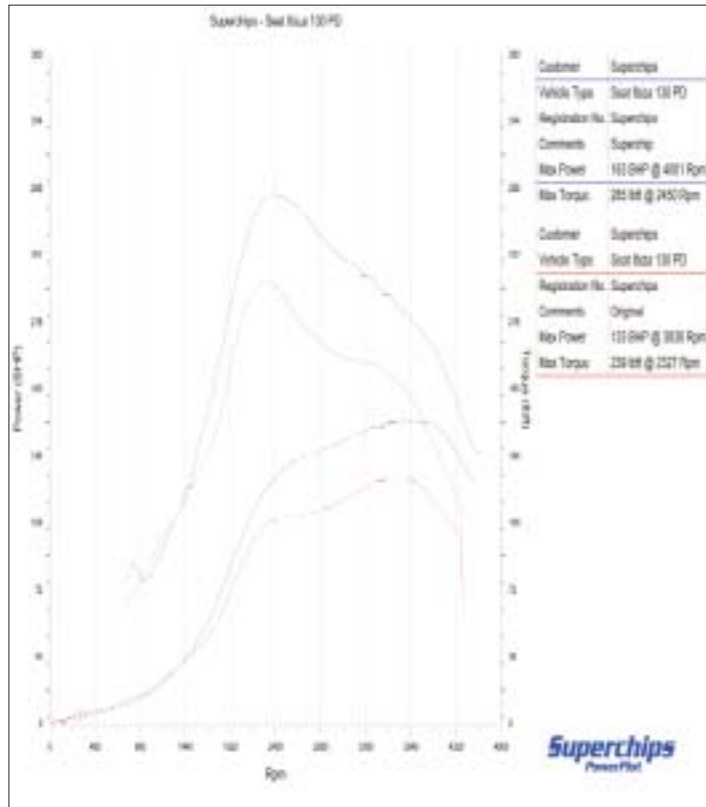
"Don't get me wrong though, I'm not a boy racer, and I firmly believe that performance should be used sensibly and appropriately. That's another thing I love: knowing that huge performance is there if I need it, but rarely making use of it. I'm also passionate about getting decent fuel returns from my car, and that's the main reason I chose a diesel. I wouldn't want to waste away the 50mpg potential my car realistically holds, by driving it too hard and too fast for too much of the time;

that's what young lads tend to do, and I grew out of that nonsense years ago."

Of course, as an ex young lad myself, I couldn't agree with him more.

**Superchips** have of course 'chipped' the VW Golf TDI 130 before now, and as the engine of the SEAT is theoretically identical, it's a tried and tested formula, and a new ECU map that's literally right of the shelf. Just reach up, blow off the dust, and install it. Actually, I'm lying, and it's not on a shelf, it's a file on a computer, waiting to be 'blown' to an EEPROM (just call it a 'chip').

I say the engine is theoretically identical, but even the motor of another Golf TDI 130 wouldn't necessarily be strictly identical, because of the



Tyres and rolling road share the punishment, while the workshop fills with the smoke from a roasted and purged exhaust

Power and torque production plotted against engine rpm are displayed on a monitor and also projected on to the wall



numerous, continuous tweaks that are made throughout production, the most numerous being to the engine management system. That is why **Superchips** actually has a handful of different upgrade maps ready for this engine, tied in to precise ECU serial numbers. The ECU of the SEAT is very conveniently located adjacent to the near-side front suspension turret, under the bonnet, and it's whipped out and prised apart in literally two minutes. On the ECUs of these Volkswagen Group TDIs, the chip holding the standard map needs to be de-soldered from the ECU baseboard, and a chip holding the new information is pushed. Similarly, it can be pulled out and replaced with one holding the original mapping information, if that's required later on.

But **Superchips** is at the forefront of this electronic upgrading game, and is

motivated by the concept of maximising upgrade convenience for both itself and the customer, which is why the company is currently developing a system for VAG TDIs that will allow upgrading (or restoration of original specification) via the car's diagnostic socket – so no messing around with soldering irons. And it won't be long now.

So the new map went in, and Turner's old bird was fired up. It's torturous stuff, you know, this dynamometer testing, because it requires the operator to fully load the engine and take it to its maximum revs in order to plot the torque and power curves. Consequently any soot left lying in the exhaust system is blown out in spectacular fashion, making it look as if the performance upgrade is over-fuelling the engine, so much black smoke is created.

But it's only transient, and once Graham's Ibiza had thoroughly cleared its throat, it was no smokier on full bore than any standard TDI engine would

be, though I can declare that it was somewhat chunkier in terms of engine delivery.

Interestingly, the pre-modification dyno test revealed the engine to be producing 145bhp at 3,838rpm, and a whopping 266 lb ft of torque at 2,286rpm, against the specified 130bhp (obviously) and 229 lb ft at 1,900rpm. That's one heck of a lot of energy ensconced in a three-door compact hatchback weighing just 1,192kg, and it's further hard evidence that these VAG diesel engines are very conservatively rated.

But wait for it... the post-upgrade stats revealed 172bhp at 3,756rpm, and more significantly, 302 lb ft produced at 2,450rpm. All in all, pretty astonishing really, and thank God the SEAT comes with traction control as standard.

Now let's look at the on-road timings, to put all those numbers into context. Before the treatment, the Ibiza – which had only done 4,200 miles, so was

probably still quite 'tight' – recorded 0-60mph in 9.6 seconds, 30-50mph (4th gear) in 6.7 and 50-70mph (5th gear) in 7 seconds dead. And after its injection of adrenaline... 0-60mph in 8.0 seconds, 30-50mph in 5.5 seconds, 50-70mph (and that's the really telling one) in 5.8 seconds. And don't forget that the lower down you get into the seconds figures, the more difficult it is to reduce them further, so these are actually pretty huge improvements in performance.

There's no guarantee that your own SEAT Ibiza would return these same blinding improvements, as every engine is different. But you can be pretty sure that if not quite as brilliant, it certainly wouldn't be far off. Was it worth the £511 all-inclusive fee (including engine warranty)? I leave it to Graham to answer: "Not 'arf!'"

**Superchips** can be found at [www.superchips.co.uk](http://www.superchips.co.uk), or contacted by phone on **01280 816781**.

