



## Go Figaro

**An increasingly regular, but still charming, Brighton sight – and it's great fun too**

You'd be forgiven for assuming that the car you can see on this page is (a) Italian, and (b) from the 1960s. You'll doubtless have seen them around Brighton, and possibly you'll have wondered why there are so many – the ratio seems a bit high for a classic car.

Well, that's because it isn't a child of the swinging Sixties. It is a (Japanese) Nissan Figaro, and it is a mere 16 years old. Produced as part of the 'Pike' series of retro designs constructed by Nissan in 1991, and hugely popular in their country of origin, the 'Figs' are now becoming rather fashionable on these shores, in particular the ones of trendsetting Brighton & Hove. This is thanks in part to Ross Davidson of AutoSupply UK, who import and sell the cars. "The Figaro has certain places that are its natural habitat," he says. "There seems to be greater receptiveness in Brighton. As with a lot of things the trend starts in the Southeast and moves outward." Indeed, Ross has shipped a car to the Bahamas, and gets enquiries from all over the UK and Europe.

The car itself does suit Brighton perfectly. Its quirky, even cute, appearance is, much like the city, slightly at odds with the norm. If ever a car was meant to be driven around the North Laine, this is it. And not just in terms of style. Its small frame, combined with a one-litre turbocharged engine, three-speed automatic gearbox and power-assisted steering, mean it is a delight to guide through twisty streets. Indeed, sitting behind the wheel is something of an event. Plush leather seats cosset your backside and the oversized white steering wheel brings a smile to your face. The nifty toggle switchgear has a rather strange effect, in that it turns using the hazard warning lights into a pleasurable activity. You soon

get used to a mixture of glances, conveying either curiosity or admiration, but always friendliness. It has a practical advantage too; think about it – could you find it in your heart to cut up someone driving this? Or not let them out at a junction? Thought not.

Clearly, this isn't a car built with performance driving in mind, and anyone looking to thrash around country lanes should probably look elsewhere. But perhaps surprisingly, the Figaro is comfortable at (modest) motorway speeds, and the prospect of a long-haul journey isn't too intimidating. Besides, there's a certain pleasure to be had when someone pulls up beside you at the traffic lights. You may well be left in the dust of Kev in his bespoiled Nova, but you will always look far, far cooler, especially in the summer when you can roll back the roof. It's really quite relaxing.

Japanese cars are renowned for their reliability, and with Nissan being no exception, there's little prospect of your Fig playing up. If you're still stressed about the prospect of buying an imported car, then Ross and the AutoSupply team make sure there's nothing to worry about. "We have people in Japan sourcing the cars for us. They make sure they are of the highest quality and a thorough inspection is carried out before they even leave the country," he points out. "When you work with one car as we do, you get to know it and you can sort out any problems before they happen." AutoSupply service Figaros as well as sell them, and with more than one per cent of all the cars Nissan built having been sold there, it's not really a concern as to whether they know their product.

So there you have it. The Nissan Figaro: it's quirky, characterful, modern, stylish and above all fun – it's Brighton on wheels.

Details: This Figaro and many others are available from AutoSupply UK, from £7995. Tel: 01273 565644  
www.autosupplyuk.com

Words: Mark Dishman | Pics: Ian Williams