

# 24 HOURS WITH

## ... a JBA Falcon

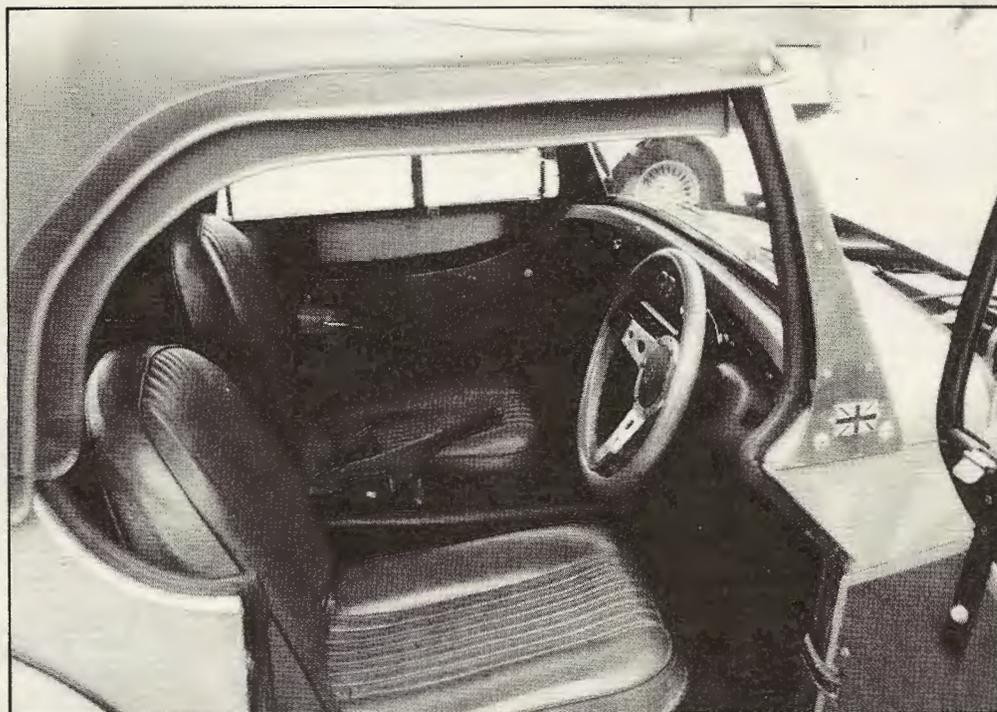
**Much given to swiping manufacturer's demonstration vehicles when his wife takes the Vauxhall Nova keys, Pen Roberts recently conspired to spend 24 hours with a JBA Falcon.**

**S**ome while ago I casually asked Dave Ashley (the A in JBA) if I could borrow one of the three demo cars that they were running at the time, to which he replied, 'Yes, anytime'. It has taken me ages to actually get around to it and if I actually thought I could physically give my rear end a good kicking then I would. The reason is that I now know what I have been missing. I also know why the editor of this magazine rolls his eyes heavenwards and clasps his hands in a semi-religious manner anytime anyone mentions the JBA Falcon. (He likes it as well).

It was a pleasant enough day when I arrived at the JBA factory in Standish near Wigan, and after a brew and a chat with the chaps I was handed the keys to a blue, V6 powered Falcon and told to be on my way.

I had just stepped out of the 'Black Toad', otherwise known as the Vauxhall Nova 1.2L. I once asked a company if they would do me a shetland jersey with the legend Vauxhall Nova 1.2L in gold writing just above the left nipple, as they had sent me a press release featuring photographs of butch, well groomed chaps wearing this sort of pullover with the likes of Porsche, Ferrari, Sinclair C5 etc. on them. I was really surprised when they slammed the phone down...

I had to get to our new editorial offices in Leeds which meant at least three motorways and being a bit hesitant about hurtling along in manufacturers' lovingly



built demo cars, I decided to go for a quick acclimatisation period. I needn't have bothered. On entering the Falcon I was surprised at the high degree of comfort and ergonomic design, everything was in its correct place, even the seat belt. Pretty good I thought starting the V6. I actually had to look at the rev counter to see if the engine was ticking over, a quick blip of the throttle shook the car a bit and a powerful swooshing sound came from the twin exhausts.

Before setting off I checked out the seals of the doors and sidescreens, I needn't have bothered with that either,

they were excellent.

I set off. After nearly 500 yards I forgot that I was driving a kit car. This doesn't normally happen, but in the case of the Falcon, I felt totally relaxed, that is not to say that I can compare it to the Vauxhall Nova, but I knew then and there that I could go just as far in the Falcon as I could in the Nova.

After a short time on the legal limit on the motorway, I began to have trouble with a pursuing Volvo. I'm sure you have come across this sort of idiot before. He was attempting to overtake me in the outside lane while I was also overtaking in the same

lane. Not really wishing to break the law, I was doing around 70 mph with this lunatic flashing his lights and blowing his horn. Having got totally fed up with all this, not to mention the fact that this bloke was about 3 inches off the rear bumper, I just floored the accelerator and left him for dead.

I must have been doing 115 mph when I finally slowed and I can state categorically that the Falcon was rock steady and caused no anxious moments.

The only thing about this particular car is a strange sort of undulating feel at low speeds, which I cannot



account for. To be truthful, the suspension is probably a little soft to be performing heroics through corners but it does go through them very well, as once you get the car squatting down with the tail out it does not give rise to uneasy moments and it can be controlled without dramatics.

Arriving home on a very pleasant evening, I decided to try to fit the family into the car to see if the Falcon was of a practical nature as regards the family man. My two sons eagerly jumped into the back which was carpeted, and made themselves comfortable amongst my cameras and tripods, etc.

My wife joined me in the front and we set off for some of the more pleasant countryside surrounding my new house. I have to say that with the extra weight in it the Falcon still handled well and we soon discovered that one could carry on a perfectly normal conversation at 70 mph.

It would be easy to fit a bench seat or even a couple of small individual rear seats as there is plenty of space behind the passenger area.

Admiring and jealous glances are a feature of driving a Falcon although it is not an outrageous looking car. It has a nice blend of ancient and modern. An

early start the next morning to visit BRA at Doncaster meant a fast and very pleasant drive through the Pennines. Due to the 3 litre Capri gearbox that is employed in the car, first and second tend not to be used much as the torque emitted by the V6 is more than sufficient to pull from very low revs in third gear. This is ideal when hurtling up and down hills and also for getting past lorries and general road users.

The Falcon does not betray its Cortina origins at all and feels a lot more positive thanks to its excellent chassis. On arrival at BRA I asked both Peter and John to have a look at the car as I value their opinion. They pronounced it excellent with the steel bulkhead, the neatness of the engine installation, the trimming and particularly the design of the sliding window sidescreens being singled out for approval. Given a quick test run in the car they reckoned that the springing was a bit soft for them but that they would quite happily tour the South of France in it. High praise indeed from two of the most respected people in the business. I have to admit that I hated to give the car back,

and couldn't come up with a good enough reason to keep it.

I must thank Dave Ashley for lending me the car and for his hospitality at the excellent JBA open day on the following Sunday. I feel that the Falcon is one of the finest kits available and its easy assembly, low price, attention to detail and overall engineering excellence must make it one of the best in the country, if not the world.

Priced from £1995 + VAT, the Falcon represents a real investment in a car that is better than a Morgan, more attractive than a Kallista and more practical than a Lotus Seven.

I shall be returning to JBA's works fairly soon to bring you analysis on their newly launched Javelin and then may be 'twenty-four hours' with the same car. In the meantime I wonder whether they'd lend me the Falcon again, you see there's this two week kit car meeting in St. Tropez and I was wondering if . . .

More details? Send £1 to **JBA Engineering, Unit 56B, Bradley Hall, Trading Estate, Bradley Lane, Standish, Nr Wigan, Greater Manchester. Tel 0257 424549.**