

Since I have owned the 130 it has had a series of engine/transmission problems. Having had the pleasure of driving a 130 Coupe way back in 1980, for about 18 months, I know that the issues I am having with my current 130 are not the way it should run, and drive.

When I drove the car prior to purchase, it would not kick-down when I floored the accelerator, the right window would stop half way up and after a short "rest" it would continue, the left-hand window "squealed" for most of its journey upwards threatening to stop at any moment. In any case I went ahead and bought the car because the body was in reasonably good condition (at least as good as any of the 3 other 130's I had flown to Sydney and Melbourne to inspect) and there was nil evidence of oil leaks around the engine and it didn't look like it had been cleaned in any way to hide any possible issues.

Shortly after I bought the car, I had the carburettor serviced which fixed the kick down issue. I then had the auto transmission reconditioned. Despite James', from Qld Auto's best effort, it continued to "clunk" and "thump".

It is now four years since I purchased the car. I am working my way through many of the cars issues, but the one that annoys me the most is the transmission, when I select Drive or Reverse it "thumps" into gear, when coming to a stop it "clunks" into 1st gear as the car slows down. If I advance the timing this will stop but I don't like advancing the timing too much. I am unsure why it stops the clunking and thumping...perhaps because there is more vacuum associated with advancing the timing. Part of the issue seems to be that it continually goes out of "tune". I can set it up one day and the next it runs differently.

Ever since I have owned this car I have wanted to replace the dual points system with the original electronic system but despite my best efforts was never able to find one. In the meantime, I managed to find a genius (I reckon he is) by the name of Mal Ditchman who figured out how to fit the American Pertronix ignitor system to my car...he did this by lopping the top off my 3-lobe cam of the old distributor and fitting a Holden 6-lobe cam...and hey presto it worked.

There was a marked improvement and I was quite content with this setup as it helped with start and although the engine had always run well at revs the ignitor helped with starts in that they were quicker and it now ran even better at revs. After some time, the engine started playing up again and would break down on kick down, and the engine start was for some reason not as good as it was after initial fitment of the ignitor. I began to suspect that maybe the ignitor was playing up so I contacted Stefan Elshout with a view to purchasing his ignition system. One of the things that attracted me to it was the fact that he set it up the same as the original Fiat specifications for the engine. I.e. dwell and square sine wave.

After many emails I decided to go ahead and buy Stefan's system. My reasoning was that at least I would have this part of the ignition setup as per original specs and I could then start to troubleshoot all the other issues knowing that at least the ignition was correct. In other words, I had a baseline to work from...! I sent a new distributor over to the Netherlands and Stefan then used it to built a "plug and play" system for me.

Fitment of the distributor (when it arrived back from its visit to the Netherlands) and ignition system was a breeze. I removed the old system, and using the template supplied by Stefan I marked and then drilled the three holes in the wheel arch. (I used some rust inhibitor to protect the bare metal after drilling the holes)

I then connected the system. Stefan had labelled all the wiring for me, so it was simply a matter of matching the labels and the plugs with my existing system, stabbing the new distributor and then tightening it all up. That was about as hard as it got. I then started the car...no issues at all.

After fitment and testing and further tuning over the last two months I have noticed the following improvements,

Immediate start using only the choke whereas previous I had never been able to start the car from cold without using both the choke and the console hand throttle.

I can now select reverse and drive the car out of the garage within 30 seconds.

This, I am truly amazed at! No issues at all.

(I have tried this from a cold engine over a dozen times so I know it's not my imagination. Previously I always had to warm the engine for at least a minute then select/deselect reverse and drive a couple of times to pump some fluid through the transmission, and only then if the engine didn't stall, could I reverse out of garage)

When I accelerate from say 50-60kmh/hr the engine pulls away with more torque, it seems livelier, crisper. Although this may be just my imagination, kind of like when you wash and clean a car it goes faster and runs better, I am happy to say this with some certainty.

I like that Stefan's system keeps the look of the original Dinoplex casing while using updated electronics. I like that Stefan sets and tests the unit to original specs, including dwell. I like that he sends you a printout of your tested unit. I like that I was dealing with someone who actually owns a 130 and has an interest in these cars. I like that in my case it was so easy to install, and I particularly like that after spending money there was an immediate improvement on engine running.

I found Stefan to be easy/professional to deal with and usually any emails I sent (there were lots) were answered by him overnight...he also gave me a lot of tips and hints about the setup of the fuel system and how to try and ensure that this was not an issue with my car. I will follow his suggestions in the coming months to see if I can make further improvements to engine running.

Happy to recommend Stefan's system, and to talk with anyone who is considering buying Stefan's unit. Best contact is email. sollygi@gmail.com. Also, other info can be found on Andrew Morris' excellent Facebook page, "Fiat 130 cars of the world"

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