

MOTOR MANUAL

JANUARY 1980/450 \$1.00* N.Z. \$1.10

CARS FOR THE CRUNCH!

-Subaru Leone: Honda Civic: Holden Gemini:

'PETROLICS ANONYMOUS' - petrol economy, ALL the facts
MOTORING ON THE DOLE
IN RETROSPECT:
the stars of the seventies

MOTOR MANUAL



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PUBLISHER

NEWSPRESS — A Division of Age
Publications
David Syme & Co. Limited,
250 Spencer St., Melbourne
P.O. Box 628E, GPO Melbourne 3000.
Phone 60 0421

The price set out or referred to herein is a recommended price only and there is no obligation to comply with the recommendation.

All prices referred to in Motor Manual are recommended prices unless otherwise stated.

Printed Web Offset by
Waverley Offset Publishing Group
Phone 560 5111

Motor Manual is distributed in Victoria by Magdiss Pty. Ltd., 250 Spencer St., Melbourne 3000; in New South Wales by Allan Rodney Wright (Circulation), 221 Liverpool St, Darlinghurst 2010, in S.A. by B.G. & K.L. Fuller, 105 Main St., Beverley 5009; in Queensland by Mirror Newspaper Limited, Cnr. Ann and Marshall Sts Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006; in Tasmania by The Mercury, 93 Macquarie St, Hobart 7000; in W.A. by Gordon & Gotch.

JANUARY '80

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AUSTRALIAN MOTOR MANUAL JANUARY 1980 No 450

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THE COVER

It's normal to photograph cars at rather exotic locations, but with the future looking far from exotic at this time, *Tim Britten* highlights the dominating factor of the eighties as a background to "Cars for the crunch," Subaru's Leone and Honda's new Civic.

OH MY GAWD!

IS THERE ANY wonder that we all get so frustrated on the roads.

The other day one of our staff pulled into the side of the road outside a shop, to buy some cigarettes. He was about to get out of the car when another vehicle, parked in front, started to reverse at an increasing speed.

Our man leaned on the horn and the reversing car stopped.

Predictably, a lady alighted from it, enquiring in a slightly impatient manner what the horn was all about. When it was suggested that there was every possibility of her vehicle slamming into the one behind, the bland comment was "Well, it wasn't there when I parked!"

Road Briefs

WIND IN THE hair, plugs in the ears and cramp in the leg. Could this be the machine that brought back all those clouded memories of the legendary magic of the famed Fiat X1/9?

When the sporty Fiat first arrived in Australia, it came with a roll of drums and a big fanfare. And we weren't disappointed. What a driver's car, surely the ultimate toy for out and out driving pleasure. That's what the car is all about, and that is what we told you.

The updated X1/9 has now hit our shores and we were naturally eager to slide into that tiny but inspiring cockpit. But this time reality began to sink in. The car does have faults like everything else. Maybe that 'dream' was shattered, but it was replaced by a contented realisation.

Don't get us wrong, the new X1/9 remains superb and indeed improved. But it's a toy, a play thing, it's not a serious motor car. Its very size means it can't be anything else, the X1/9 is simply too small to be practical. The cockpit is cramped, too cramped, and the two boots tiny. As a second car we could think of nothing better — but it would take a very special kind of person to live with an X1/9 as sole transport.

But more of that later. With the new model come a number of small but significant changes. The cabin is almost totally new. The dash is now more conventional than before, looking both modern and expensive in its dark brown plastic. The gauge layout — although containing the same bits — is slightly improved, but the small steering wheel still manages to obscure the oil pressure gauge (left) and the top row of the warning light cluster (right). The centre console, window winders, handbrake and door trims have received likewise modernising. Even the chic looking ribbed carpet is new.

The two most significant changes inside though are the inclusion of a lockable glovebox — much needed considering the X1/9's total lack of interior storage space — and the bucket seats. The seats are deeper and more dished, featuring short strips of trendy fabric on their sides.

Further additions include an LED digital display clock operating whenever the ignition is on, the red light emitted is good during the day, even in the brightest sunshine, but is a bit distracting at night. New too are the cockpit adjustable side exterior mirror, the intermittent wiper mode, and the switchgear.

Moving to the outside, most obvious changes are the bigger, bolder bumpers front and rear. Together with a front air dam, the deletion of those strange "strobe" strips so long associated with X1/9s, and a bigger engine cover, results in a new aggressive style that brings it right into the eighties.

Mechanically, things aren't all that different. With the bigger 1500 cc engine still some 18 months away here, the car retains the 1290 cc unit which gives it a 41.3%



FIAT X1/9 Re-styled fun runner

With new bumpers and a few other bits and pieces, Bertone's baby now needs only a bigger engine says David Segal.

front 58.7% rear weight distribution. The gearbox remains the four speed manual, the suspension independent all round. New though is the track, 20 mm wider at the front, 7 mm wider at the rear.

Sliding behind the wheel, our first criticism (mentioned earlier) became apparent. The cockpit is small, too small to give adequate legroom for a six foot road tester, for example.

A person around five-nine, five-ten would be ideal, anything above that becomes a little less comfortable.

The actual driving position, forgetting the room limitations, is excellent. The steering wheel is the ideal size, and falls easily to hand, as does most switchgear. Only the headlights switch could be more handily located.

Pedals have a light, easy movement and are oh-so perfect for heel and toeing.

Occasionally, on the move you could feel prone to criticise the noise level, if you're blatting around town it can become a bit much, but somehow, without it the car wouldn't seem right.

On the performance scale, this latest model is slightly down on the last car, but not by very much. The difference is understandable when you consider the extra 10 kgs it carries, AND the reduction in both power and torque. Like: 53.7 kW in the old car, 51.5 kW now; and 101 Nm before, 96 now. As a result, standing quarters end after 19.2 seconds, three tenths slower than before. Mind you, from behind the wheel you simply don't notice the drop in power and performance, it's that minimal.

Our test car was still fairly new, so we would put the very tight and sticky gear-change down to that. Occasionally it was difficult to select third on the downchange for instance, again probably a matter of adjustment. The movement itself though will be sporty and precise with time.

None of this distracts from the sheer pleasure of driving the X1/9. Sure it hasn't got traffic light Grand Prix winning power, but it doesn't need it. The X1/9 will go round

corners at insane speeds, and will hang on like it's on rails. Last time we drove the car, we likened it to driving a Formula Ford racing car, that impression comes back immediately. It will simply do no wrong.

The secret is that even driven absolutely flat out through a bend, the car will flick enjoyable sideways, always under the driver's control. You'd have to be stupid to lose the damn thing.

Giving this amazing level of driveability are the quick, responsive steering, the excellent four disc brakes, and the solid but not uncomfortable suspension system.

We found more minor points to criticise; the headlights are disappointing, even on high beam. The speedometer has too many calibrations (one for every km/h when even five would be sufficient) and is thus hard to read. There's far more wind noise around the roof seals than we remember.

Fuel economy proved very good even with the engine so new. 9.7 l/100 km was the result on our hard drive test, 8.8 l/100 km our normally driven figure. When considering the \$11,700 price tag, those figures seem to offer a measure of compensation in running costs.

After living with the latest Fiat X1/9, we still love it. There is no better driver's car around, it's a machine built entirely for the enjoyment of driving.



PERFORMANCE:

Speedometer error (km/h)			
Indicated.....	60	80	100
Actual.....	55	75	95
Maximum speeds in gears (km/h)			
First.....			43
Second.....			65
Third.....			105
Fourth.....			165
Acceleration from rest to —			
60 km/h.....			5.7
80 km/h.....			9.1
100 km/h.....			14.3
120 km/h.....			18.2
Acceleration from 60 km/h to —			
100 km/h.....			7.3
Standing start to 400 metres —			
Elapsed time.....		19.2	secs
Terminal speed (km/h).....			121
Braking			
110 km/h to rest (average).....			48.9m
Fuel consumption (litres per 100 km/mpg)			
Driven hard.....			9.7/29
Driven normally.....			8.8/32

TOYOTA'S CELICA is one of the cult cars of the seventies, or at least was. When the company announced the car in 1971, it went straight to the top of the sales chart.

It was the first successful 'personal coupe' to come out of Japan — ignoring the Datsun 240Z which was really a sports car way back when — and made stodgy old Toyota look terribly, terribly 'together'.

The Celica sold well to virtually all types, and still continues to attract high prices on the used car market.

For a while the original car had levels of ride, handling, response and comfort which were acceptable (indeed quite good) at the time, but the new body featured no real heightening of those levels. Thus, it began its slide down the preferred 'sporty' car scale.

Now comes the latest version with its new Scorpion rip-off front styling. It certainly looks better, no matter where the stylists got their inspiration, and we had hoped the engineers would get a say in the matter and return the car to its former rung. That hope was in vain, for while a fair degree of money has been spent, it's almost all on cosmetics. Steel radials aren't standard yet, vehicles being sold with fabric radials fitted.

To their external credit, Toyota did take notice of criticism concerning excessive noise in the old car. Better dashboard bracing, stronger 'A' pillars and rocker panels, additional structural torque boxes and a thicker firewall all contribute to a noticeable improvement in the resonance area.

Apart from that, what you see is what you get. New urethane bumpers front and rear, new frontal treatment with quad Q-H lights. There are new tail lights and driver's exterior mirror. Inside you get bigger seats with separate headrests, and a memory for re-set of the backrest angle after rear seat access.

TOYOTA CELICA LIFTBACK Quietly improved, but...

Good looking and pleasant to drive, only the performance disappointed David Segal.

