

By FRED SIMPSON

I had a 30-minute affair with a "Rabbit" the other day and all I can say is:

Her performance was great.

Of course, I'm fantasizing about the new 1979 VW Rabbit Deluxe which was loaned to me by W & P Motors Limited of Richmond Hill for a demo-run.

Needless to say, I'm no expert on the technical aspect of any cars, transport trucks, buses, or 10-

speed bicycles.

That's why they picked me to test-run this magnificent little beast and that's why what follows is strictly non-technical.

So non-technical that I asked the salesman where you inserted the key, how you used a manual gear-shift, and how much collision insurance they had on it. He looked a little nervous as I drove away, narrowly missing a Greyhound bus.



Fred and his "Rabbit"

I'm only joking. I happen to be the proud owner of a 1978 small-car and, as much as I like it, it's not quite in the same race as the 1979 "Rabbit."

I'm a recent small-car convert for a number of reasons and the VW "Rabbit" covers all my reasons and more.

It's a combination of big-car luxuriousness but with small-car performance and that's what really grabs me.

In this energy-conscious (not to mention money-conscious) era the "Rabbit" certainly meets the test as far as fuel economy is concerned.

As its publicity release states:

"You won't be stopping at your service station too often because the Rabbit's advance 1.5 litre overhead cam engine with fuel injection just sips gas (regular, too, not expensive unleaded) at a Transport Canada rating of 8.0 litres per 100 kilometre, 6.3 L-100 km on the highway (73 km-g) and 10.4L-100 km urban (44 km-g)."

The above doesn't mean to me technically-wise but it simply boils down to the fact that the Rabbit has one of the best mileage rates in the world.

And that's just the gas-fueled Rabbit. The diesel-fuel-injected Rabbit is rated as having the highest mileage rate for imported cars.

It's also a quick starter, as its name implies, sprinting from zero to 80 km-h in only 8.5 seconds.

Having said all that I have to add it has my special affection because its front wheel drive (with the engine mounted in the front) is the only way to fly in Canadian winter.

The snow-drifts haven't got a chance with front-wheel drive and, in my opinion, you won't even need to invest in snow tires. The summer tires will do the job.

That, alone, convinces me about the "Rabbit" being an excellent buy.

But don't let me convince you. Drop into V & P Motors Limited of Richmond Hill and be convinced yourself.

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By SHAARON HAY

Now I know why there are so many Hondas buzzing around town.

They are great little cars, easy to manoeuvre, lots of pick-up, great visibility, comfortable and just the right size for a small family living in town.

Last week I had the opportunity to test drive a Honda Accord and was delighted by the way it handled.

All the gadgets and maintenance lights on the dash are an added bonus, they tell you everything you ever wanted to know but were afraid to ask.

At a glance it shows the customary how fast you are going — in kilometers and miles per hour, how fast your engine is going, a tachometer is a standard feature, fuel and engine temperature gauge, clock, heat and vent.

Over and above those amenities there are warning lights to indicate, when to rotate your tires, change your oil, change the oil filter, if a door is unlatched or if a brake light is burned out.

Great stuff for a new toy. Like any kid with a new toy I had to try out the intermittent windshield wiper switch to activate the blade every 30 seconds, located conveniently on the steering column opposite the combination turn signal, high-low beam stalk.

After driving an automatic, any gear shift is rather intimidating, but to be faced with a five-speed manual transmission made me more than a little apprehensive.

But, no problem. It was easy. Even I could change gears smoothly and quietly without passengers requiring a neck brace.

The fifth gear is rather interesting. Its function apparently is to reduce the engine rpm's at highway cruising speeds to give better fuel efficiency and less interior noise.

I found I am so brainwashed into using only the regular four gears I forgot all about finding fifth.

It was interesting to try, for the first time, a car

with front wheel drive.

Turning was more direct, but aside from that, conditions were such, the only difference to me was the extra space on the front floor because the driveshaft and transmission hump are eliminated.

The Accord I had the pleasure to drive was a hatchback which I consider really handy.

The surprisingly large trunk space is easily accessible for lifting parcels in and out of, and the convenient remote control lever beside the driver, which opens the hatchback, means a person could frequent those rare supermarkets that load groceries for you.

The rear seat, which quite naturally doesn't appear

to have too much leg room, folds down making an area even larger to transport kids, dogs and groceries, a regular event in our household.

The helpful salesman at Small Car Centre came up with all sorts of specifications such as the Honda Accord has a four cylinder overhead camshaft four stroke transversely mounted, 1600 cc front wheel drive engine and independent MacPherson strut, coil spring and anti-roll bar suspension.

I'm really glad. Most important to me was the ease of handling the auto and the fact the driver can see all four corners of the vehicle.

I think the Accord is a "fun car" to drive.



Shaaron loves the Honda

By STEVE PEARLSTEIN

The Nissan Motor Company has produced a new front-wheel-drive car for 1979 — the Datsun 310 — and if handling and interior appointments are any indication, the car should sell well.

The 310 comes in a hatchback sedan and a GX coupe model and replaces Datsun's first crack at front-drive cars, the F10. It has been completely redesigned but incorporates a proven peppy 1400 c.c. transverse-mounted (sideways) engine that delivers surprising acceleration for its size and the car's overall weight of 1,975 pounds.

We tested the basic hatchback model, though it had some fancy pin-striping and side body mouldings put on as extras. Once inside, you don't get the feeling you're either sitting or riding in a car classed as a subcompact.



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Even before you're rolling, the car's interior and dashboard alignment gives an immediate impression of luxury. The reclining front bucket seats with built-in head restraints come standard in a velours-like fabric. The floors and hatchback have cut pile carpeting which also lines the doors about halfway up.

The instrument is neatly clustered but before mentioning the standard features, there are some interesting but helpful gadgets included, with passenger and driver convenience in mind.

I have never seen the following features come standard in a vehicle this size: having push-out rear quarter windows, a dual lever system is provided at the back end of the centre console, whereby either front or rear passengers can easily open one or both rear windows with the shift of a knob, the locking gas cap can be flipped open from the driver's position and

the rear hatch can be opened with a release from the same spot on the floor near the driver's door.

Standard on the dash assembly are a tachometer, quartz clock, gauges showing water temperature, fuel, generator and braking deficiencies, bi-level ventilation system, rear window defroster and two-speed windshield wipers with a 4-8-12-second intermittent setting. There are also defoggers for the side windows.

Front brakes are power-assisted and standard tires are steel-belted radials.

There is an enormous amount of front leg room thanks to space opened up by the transverse mounting of the engine. The car is easily able to accommodate people over 6 feet because the seats recline and can be moved either forward or backward. To give rear passengers maximum comfort, front seats have to be moved almost as far forward as they can go.

Besides handling well even at high speeds, the car absorbs moderate shocks within its independent front suspension coils. We noticed very little sway while travelling at 80 miles per hour but interior noise was more prevalent at that speed than at the 30 to 50 mile per hour range.

Shifting was easy with the 4-speed transmission and getting into reverse presented no problem. We found the rack-and-pinion steering responsive but agreed cornering was easier at slightly higher than normal speeds. This could have been the case because of the radial tires.

Braking is acceptable, but was more easily facilitated by pumping the brakes, especially when decelerating from a higher gear.

Our conclusion is there is little doubt the Datsun 310, with its longer wheelbase, good looks, standard features and spirited front-drive power plant, will compete well with other foreign and domestic-designed cars with a similar engine concept in the subcompact and even the compact class of autos.

By MILLIE STEWART

As I walked across Yonge Street to the Don Little Ford showroom, believe me, my knees were knocking.

I was going to drive a brand new car, and I was scared to death. This wasn't my car, and what would I do if something went wrong.

When I arrived, I was met by Des Ellard, the general manager, and he introduced me to "My Car."

It was beautiful . . . a 1979 Mustang Ghia in my favorite color, metallic blue. It was love at first sight, and Des would be lucky if he ever saw the car again.

To begin, let me tell you, I know absolutely nothing about what makes the car go. My Mustang Ghia had a 5.0 litre (302 CID) V-8, which is what gave it such good pick up, I guess.

But you can buy a Mustang with a standard 2.3 litre overhead cam Four and four-speed manual floor mounted transmission or a 2.8 litre V-6 . . . or something.

I leave all those technical details to my husband. What netted me about "My Car" was, well, everything.

There was more room than I expected to find in a mid-size car. I could get my family plus all the gear that goes with all of us in that car easily.

It had a hatchback . . . great for doing the family shopping, and the rear seat folded down to give an abundance of storage room for extra cargo.

The car became a part of me, and I was really excited with all the gadgets on the dash. When my husband got in the car to take it for a spin, I found myself telling him what everything was for.

Everything is right there at your fingertips. On the dash right in clear view is a tachometer, trip odometer, gauges for fuel, temperature, oil pressure, the alternator and more. And all this is standard equipment . . . which means you don't have to pay

extra. That's nice.

"My Car" handled like a dream. The radial tires gave me great traction, and since it was raining when I took my car out, I appreciated that.

The optional rear window wiper was a nice touch as were the interval windshield wipers on the front.

This little baby had a cruise control option, which I know absolutely nothing about. I wouldn't dare try it, but hubby did, and he says it's great.

What I really enjoyed was the feel of the car. I could actually feel the road and the car almost drove itself, which is a good feeling.

Everything about the car was luxurious. The interior was soft leather and vinyl and the carpeting on the floor when the back seat was folded down on the cargo area matched to a "T".



Classy car for Millie

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