

WHEELS

Wheels

Eighty per cent of the Neon 2000 is brand new

Problems from the first generation has been solved in the latest Neon

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spirited handling and performance, it came at a cost of ride comfort and smoothness.

So, they revised the steering gear

and replaced the old suspension with softer springs, threw in a rear anti-sway bar and a 30 per cent increase in suspension travel to prevent bottoming out.

Ride height has also been raised a bit to aid the longer suspension travel.

And about those leaky windows? The tried-and-tested solution: Sturdier full-frame doors with triple seals plus water channels at the sides of the windshield.

While they were working on the doors, they also made the openings

bigger for easier entry and exit, complementing a lower step-in height and raised seats for better visibility.

Other changes include beefier front disc rotors and larger rear cylinders for improved braking and pedal feel. The trunk has been fully carpeted and a new six-speaker stereo system now comes standard in all models.

The peppy 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine carries over with induction and exhaust improvements for a broader torque curve while maintaining the 132-hp top end.

Some peripheral modifications were also made to the engine mount system to reduce vibration and engine noise.

The Chrysler Neon 2000 is available in two trim levels.

The Neon LE comes standard with

five-speed manual transmission, air

conditioning, tilt steering, floor console,

60/40 split fold-down rear seat and the

AM/FM six-speaker stereo.

The upscale Neon LX adds

features such as fog lamps, power windows and heated

mirrors, remote entry and alarm sys-

tem, leather-wrapped steering wheel and shifter, 15-inch wheels and funky

white-faced sport gauges.

Alloy wheels and four-wheel ABS disc brakes with traction control are optional, as is the three-speed automatic tranny.

A brief test versus competitors on a short autocross course gave a taste of the Neon's abilities.

The Neon holds its own against the Ford Escort, Chevy Cavalier, Honda Civic and Toyota Corolla. Size-wise, the Neon ranks closest to the Cavalier. Both the Civic and Corolla engines still run

quieter than any of the Big Three powerplants but their cars also feel like they're a size smaller.

On the highway the Neon's increased sophistication, quieter ride and smoother handling shines through.

Despite all this talk of refinement and sophistication the new Neon continues to rank as a fun-to-drive pocket-rocket. So if you really need your Neon to be neon! yes, good old Flame Red is still available.

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2000'S



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