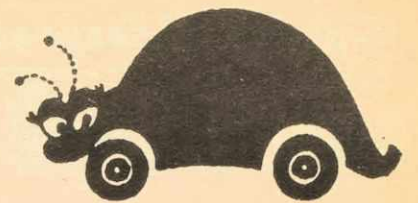


Wheelin' around



by Charlie Moore

Honda, the people who build roughly one-third of the motorcycles manufactured in the world today, may have another booming fad on their hands. Incidentally, they may also have revolutionized the whole concept of individual commuter transportation. The hot-selling article, rather than being bikes as it was in the early sixties, happens to be a car, albeit a rather unusual car.

In Japan, in order to get a driver's licence, you have to pass a very stiff written test which includes questions on fundamental auto mechanics. However, since auto mechanics is not everyone's bag, the benevolent Japanese government has provided an alternative. They also issue a sort of second class driver's licence which entitles you to drive cars which have less than 350 cc's engine displacement. If you are familiar with motorcycles you will note that 350 cc's are so

gutless, the cars that they power are quite small and light. Thanks to the government's licencing regulations they also sell quite well and are manufactured by about ten different companies, including Honda.

About four years ago the Honda bigwigs decided they would try to open up a market for their new baby outside Japan. The problem was that westerners were not ready for the style of driving necessitated by the 350's lack of power — very slow. Probably they never would be. The solution was to drop in a bigger, 600 cc engine.

When the new car finally rolled off the assembly line, it bore more than a small resemblance to the very successful Austin Mini. Many of the engineering ideas were also borrowed from the little British bomb, like front wheel drive, and the engine, 4 speed transmission, and final drive unit all sharing the same crank-case

and lubrication system. The suspension was of the popular MacPherson strut design at the front and conventional leaf springs at the back. The engine was a two-cylinder overhead cam aircooled job that developed a screaming 36-horsepower, one horse for every cubic inch displacement.

The car was introduced in Europe in 1969 and in the western U.S. late the same year. It was not a roaring success. The good ol' U.S.A. was in the middle of it's big performance car binge and the general public had not yet started to take ecology seriously. But things have changed. The performance car business has fallen off. People are becoming more pollution conscious, the freeways and expressways are becoming more crowded, and Honda 600s are selling like hot cakes in California. People are finding

that the little Honda is just the ticket for the daily grind of commuting. It zips through traffic like a greased eel and the tint engine doesn't produce much smog at all. It squeezes 40 miles out of a U.S. gallon of gas and upkeep is very inexpensive.

By using every bit of space to its best advantage, the Honda engineers designed the interior to be very comfortable for two passengers while not too painful with four.

The only drawbacks are that the engine is a trifle noisy and still too powerless to use an automatic transmission (who needs one?). Two body styles are presently offered, a two-door sedan and a coupe. The coupe is the more sporty of the two and offers a tachometer and radial tires as standard equipment. A four-door sedan is available in Japan but has not yet been exported. The sedan retails for \$1,445 and the coupe

for \$1,630 in western U.S.A.

At present, Honda car dealers in the U.S. (except on the west coast) are few and far between, and almost non-existent in Canada. But looking back to the early sixties motorbike craze, I think it is safe to say that Honda is capable of finding dealers in a hurry. Since the Austin Mini was removed from the U.S. market in 1968 with the advent of the federal safety regulations, and since the Renault 4 has never been sold there, the little Honda has no competition in its price range.

Looking into my crystal ball and seeing a forthcoming boom in micro-mini cars, I assume that Austin, Renault, and maybe a few others will slap some safety equipment of their small ones and try to cast in too. If they wait too much longer they may be too late. Just ask Harley-Davidson, Triumph, and B.S.A. Keep a wheelin'.

Loans delayed again

Brian Smith (Student Union President) is pissed off — again — at the provincial government in general and Education Minister Nicholson in particular. This time it concerns the lateness of the provincial student aid grants.

Earlier in the year Smith hassled the Student Aid office because the Student Loans were sent out late. He was assured that all would be well in January. All is not well. Students who should have gotten the grants immediately after returning for the second term are being told that they

will not be out until February 28.

Talking to one of the Student Aid secretaries about the delay Smith was told that "Students should get a bank loan".

He has tried several times to see Nicholson with no results. Now he has given up on this and is going directly to Premier Regan.

The university has cooperated in the affair by allowing students who are depending on the grants for their tuition money to defer payment until their grants are received.

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In addition to the regular Summer Session, The University of Toronto is offering Degree Courses in Nice, July 6 - August 18. Credit courses in English, Fine Art, French, History and Political Economy will be given by professors from the Universities of Toronto and Nice. Classes will be held each weekday at the Faculte des Lettres and the Ecole Internationale D'Art de Nice.

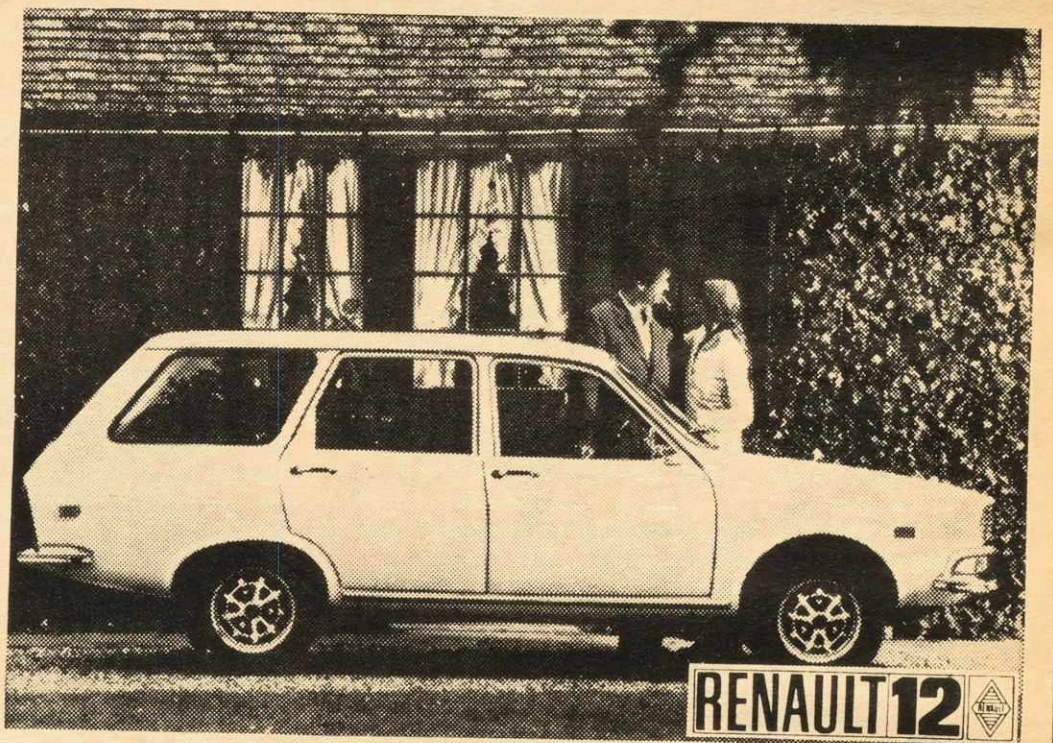
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