CX22 TRS
PRICE £9290·18

CX25 DTR SAFARI
PRICE £11840·40

CX25 GTi TURBO
PRICE £13350·35

CITROËN CLASSIC OWNERS' CLUB OF AUSTRALIA
Australia's National Citroën Car Club

Avantgarde

Australia's National Internet Magazine for Citroën Owners and Enthusiasts

May 2021 Vol 2 No 1

Citroën CX: A Better DS?

Postal Address

CITROËN CLASSIC OWNERS' CLUB of AUSTRALIA Inc.

The address of the Club and this magazine is:

PO Box 52, Balwyn, Victoria, 3103.

The Club's website is:

www.citroenclassic.org.au

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Life Members

The committee awards life membership to Club members in recognition of their contribution to, and support of, the Club. Life memberships have been awarded to:

Sue Bryant	2017
Brian Wade	2017
Rob Little	2012
Ted Cross	2012
Peter Boyle	2003
Jack Weaver	1991
Nance Clark	1984

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Membership

Annual Membership is $35 and printed editions of 'Front Drive' are posted to Australian addresses for an additional $45 per year.

Meetings

Club meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of every month [except December] at 7:30pm. The venue is the Frog Hollow Reserve Rooms, Fordham Ave., Camberwell.

Citroëning

Club Permit applications to VicRoads must be accompanied by a RWC [pre 1949 cars can be inspected by a Club Safety Officer], ownership validation and VicRoads forms endorsed by the club including financial validation.

New Permit holders must supply the Club with approved photos, club permit number and expiry date.

Club permit renewals can be sent to PO Box 52 Balwyn, Victoria. 3103 with a stamped return envelope or signed at club meetings/events if the appropriate officers are present.

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Cover Image

The cover image is taken from The Citroën Magazine, Number 17, published in November, 1985 by Citroën Cars Ltd., Slough, UK. The photo was taken by Nigel Arter

Deadline

The deadline for the next edition of 'Front Drive' is Wednesday, 19 May, and for 'démarreur' it is Monday, 21 June

Contents

Contributors

Contributors to this edition of 'démarreur' include Nigel Arter, Tess Burfurd Daniel Denis, Richard Fewster, Ronan Glon, Malcolm Greenway, Craig Keller, Max Lewis, Julian Lombard, Julian Marsh, Frédéric Maury, Aarnout Pluijgers, LJK Setright, and Graham Wilson

SPARE PARTS & TOOLS

Contact Lance Wearne. Phone: 0424 054 724 [if you do phone, please do so at a reasonable hour] or spareparts@citroenclassic.org.au

CLUB SHOP

Club Shop is presently not operating. For further information please contact the Club's President.

OTHER CLUBS

Vic www.citcarclubvic.org.au
NSW www.citroencarclub.org.au
QLD www.citroenclubqld.org
SA www.clubcitroensa.com
WA www.citroenwa.org.au
Tas www.citroentas.org

Ed Sed

I first flagged to the Committee the idea of focussing this edition of our magazine on the CX well over a year ago. As the owner of both a GS and CX, two designs created by the genius of Robert Opron I must express a personal view that the CX is more beautiful of the two. I know many will declaim that the SM has to be the zenith of his work, but my vote goes to the CX.

Little was I to know last year that the death of Robert Opron would cast a shadow over this edition. Various motoring journalists have written obituaries for Opron, but I think that penned by Julian Marsh has to be the best. Julian has kindly given his approval for it to re-printed here in full.

But, the CX did have its shortcomings, especially at its launch. But these should be laid at the feet of Opron. The fact that Citroën was so cash-strapped that

the mooted six-cylinder engine was neither developed nor fitted. Indeed it was never fitted. Of course, neither was the much vaunted triple-rotary motor: that was a good thing, as it happened.

Ronan Gloan's interesting article, written on the occasion of the model's 40th Anniversary, gives more insight on the car's development.

The first Australian review of the CX, based on the launch undertaken north of the Arctic Circle, appeared in 'Wheels' in May of 1974 and this is accompanied by a 1977 review of the Prestige from the UK magazine, 'What Car?'

The car was given a make-over in 1985 at the hands of Geoff Matthews, who was Chief Designer for Exteriors, under the watchful eye of Carl Olsen. In common with the update of the GS which had been launched five years previously the sleek stainless steel bumpers were replaced by composite bumpers. While welcomed at the time, many now feel both cars lost some of Opron's original design finesse in doing so.

But, LJK Setright who was not looking at the Series II car's design æsthetics described it as 'the best, bettered'. And who am I to argue?

You may remember some

Continued on page 6

Prez Sez

Our CCOCA AGM was conducted by Zoom with proxy voting. We had a quorum, and most of our existing committee members were re-elected. We wish to welcome Marg Towt to our 2021 committee. Marg also worked on the recent Cit-In joint committee and will be a valuable addition to our group.

After many years of faithful committee work, Kay and Robert Belcourt did not wish to continue their positions in 2021. So, a special thank you to them both for jobs well done. The position of Club Shop is now vacant.

Max Lewis has fully taken over the reins of the Library and it is being re-vamped. A couple of valuable library books have been previously borrowed but not returned ~ we would like them back. If you have a CCOCA library book in your possession, please get in touch with Max about its timely return. [librarian@citroenclassic.org.au]

Helen and I have just returned from the joint CCCV/CCOCA Bendigo Cit-In. This took a couple of years of planning, and we had to modify some parts due to prevailing Covid-Safety rules. Nevertheless, we all had a great time catching up with old friends from other clubs and several interstate CCOCA members who made their way to Victoria. We then undertook the post Cit-In run, which was also a time to unwind after the hectic Cit-In activities.

It is now time for members to turn their attention towards our June Long Weekend/OzTraction event in the Bairnsdale area. June can be cold in Gippsland, but the welcome will be warm and the run being organised by Lee Dennes will be well worth the effort. We personally hope to see you there.

Welcome to our newest members, Grahame Maddeford and Glenys Watt from New South Wales, Bauke Meijer from Tasmania. Peter Moore from Western Australia, and not forgetting our good friends Ray and Julie Potts and Dave Rogers and Mary Noonan from Victoria.

We have heard recently that Robert Opron died on March 29. He had a long and productive life, and was responsible for many fine Citroën designs, in-

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Ed Sed

Continued from page 4

conjecture by your Editor as to whether club member Dave Rogers' GSA might be the oldest surviving RHD example still on the road. Join Graham H Wilson, Aarnout Pluijgers, Marc Stabel, Julian Marsh and me as we play sleuth and try to determine the truth of the matter.

Perth-based member Mark Greenway shares his memories of an art deco display he visited in Houston in 2016; remember… when international travel was permitted. While Citroën was not represented in the display, he firmly believes the Traction Avant was there in spirit.

I hope you enjoy this month's motoring selection.

Leigh F Miles ~ Editor

Prez Sez

Continued from page 5

cluding the acclaimed CX, GS and SM models of the seventies. He also revised several other models and was an important servant of Citroën over many years.

Regards to all.

Ted Cross

A-Tractions

Please note: For all events you will be required to provide names, email addresses and phone numbers of attendees to the Event Contact as per Covid Contact Tracing Regulations. Please check the Club's website for the latest information or contact the organiser prior to travelling to any listed event.

• May

Monthly Meeting: Special General Meeting & Chat

WHEN Wednesday, 26 May
TIME: 7:30pm
WHERE: Zoom virtual meeting at a computer near you.
COST: Free
BOOKINGS: Not required
CONTACT: Lee Dennes, 04 3828 6181
l.dennes@bigpond.net.au

Keep the date free and keep an eye out for Lee Dennes' Activities email and Tim Cottrell's Zoom link on the evening. See page 14 for more details.

Peter Sandow's 'Poke Around the Factory' and al Fresco Lunch

WHEN Saturday, 29 May
TIME: From 11:00am, lunch from 1:00pm
WHERE: Workshop/Factory, 3 /4 Merino Street, Capel Sound then lunch at 16 Arunta Crt., Rye
COST: Free
BOOKINGS: Essential by Monday, 15 February
BRING: Everything for a BBQ/picnic
PROVIDED: BBQ facilities, tea and coffee
RSVP: Essential by Monday, 21 May
CONTACT: Peter Sandow 0419 515 302
p.sandow@fmsa.com.au

As always, numbers are limited, so book early or you may have to join the waiting list. You will need to give Peter the names, contact numbers and email addresses of everyone in your group when you book.

Some of the gems to be seen include

- An ID19-P, 1959-1960, ex Javel factory, France. Rumoured to have been imported to Australia by the French Consulate in Canberra.
- Another ID19, also a single light, West Heidelberg assembled, c1962-66. Originally was an 'Ivory', but unfortunately has been painted, as Peter says, with a toothbrush. He is planning a rebirth.
- Peter's beloved Traction Avant, ex Javel factory, 1950-51.
- 'Beachcomber', Not Peter but a 2CV6 Special.
- All hat, no cattle, DRB Cobra, 302 Ford, 5-speed.
- The good night out, Mercedes Benz 450SLC, 1978.

• June

OzTraction 2021

WHEN Queen's Birthday Long Weekend, Friday, 11 to Monday, 14 June


The wharf at Metung


Bairnsdale's historic Railway Station


The entrance to the Gippsland Lakes

A-Tractions

WHERE: East Gippsland
COST: $230pp
BOOKINGS: Essential, by Friday, 21 May
CONTACT: Lee Dennes, 0438 286181
l.dennes@bigpond.net.au

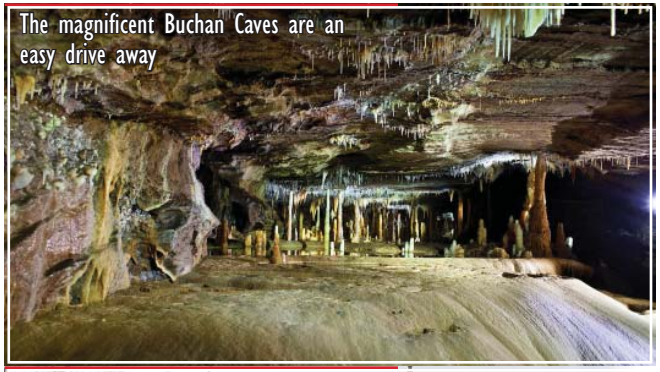
WHAT IS INCLUDED?
You will be provided with
- luncheon at a winery
- three evening meals
- entry to a private garden,
- two-and-a-half-hour cruise on the Gippsland Lakes and
- an individually packaged Continental Breakfast.

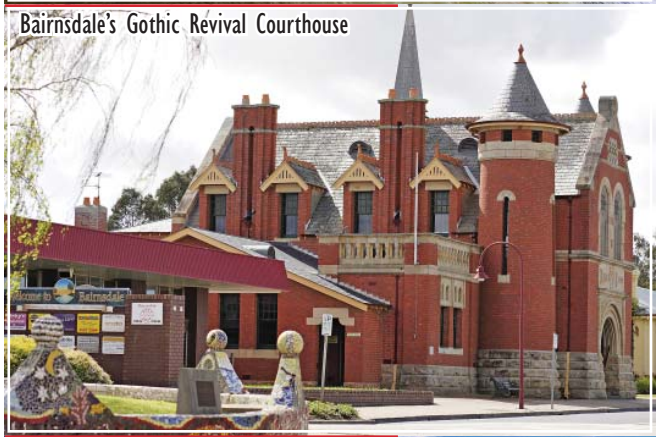
WHAT'S NOT
All other costs, including accommodation, will be at your own expense.

ACCOMMODATION
Preferred accommodation will be
- Bairnsdale International Motel, 355 Main Street, Bairnsdale 8300 www.bairnsdaleinternational.com.au

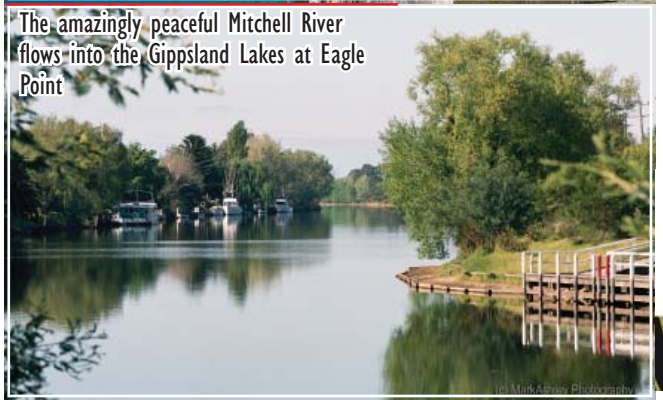
The Motel has offered participants a Classic Queen Room for $129 per night [excluding Breakfast].
Mention you are a member of the Citroën Classic Owners' Club to obtain this discount.
There are several other motels in the area if you wish to seek alternate accommodation.

REGISTRATION & PAYMENT
Go to https://citroenclassic.org.au/wordpress/ and follow the prompts..


The magnificent Buchan Caves are an easy drive away


Bairnsdale's Gothic Revival Courthouse


Pelicans are regularly found in the area


The amazingly peaceful Mitchell River flows into the Gippsland Lakes at Eagle Point

REFUNDS
All refunds will be at the discretion of the organisers.
- Further details of the event will be available closer to the date.

Early Warning
• November

RACV Alpine Trial Centenary

WHEN Saturday, 20 to Saturday, 27 November
FROM: RACV Nobel Park
TO: RACV Goldfields Resort, Ballarat
COST: Participants: $350pp
BOOKINGS: Essential
CONTACT: Glenda Chivers, 0431 709 248
racvalpinetrialcentenary@vdc.org.au

In 2021 RACV will celebrate the centenary of the RACV Alpine Trials, events that were significant milestones in Australian automotive history. To commemorate those milestones, RACV, along with the Vintage Drivers Club, will be organising an event recreating the original 1921 Alpine Trial. The RACV Alpine Trial Centenary event will follow, as closely as practicable, the route of the 1921 RACV 1,000 Mile Reliability Trial
A maximum of 100 vehicles will be permitted to enter, with preference given to vehicles that competed in the original events and to other vehicles manufactured during the period of the trials: 1921-1926.
Entries will be accepted in 3 Tiers. Preference for acceptance will be in the order of these tiers.
TIER 1: Vehicles that actually contested any of the four RACV events.
TIER 2: Vehicles of the same make and model as the original contestants of the trials.
TIER 3a: Other vehicles manufactured between 1921-1926.
TIER 3b: Vehicles up to 1930.
CCOCA members will be interested to know that in 1921 four Citroëns participated. The drivers were H Curtis, WG McDonald, Miss K Braithwaite and William Dixon who was a late entry and did not finish. Curtis' car is listed as 9.4lhp, while the others are 8.59hp. It would be great to see a Citroën or two participate in the Centenary Trial.

A-Tractions

Chit Chat Tuesday

WHEN:	Ist Tuesday 4 May 1 June 6 July
TIME:	10:00am
WHERE:	Laneway Espresso Café, Dromana
COST:	Cheap Eats
BOOKING:	Not required
CONTACT:	Warwick Spinaze 04 0701 6719.

Laneway Espresso Café ~ next door to the Dromana Hotel, 167 Nepean H'way, Dromana. Easy to find, plenty of parking, under-cover seating if weather wet. This is a low key 'DIY' event for like minded Citroën owners to meet and chat.

Book Review

Citroën BX… A new generation of Citroën

This Citrovisie book arrived last week after a short wait [it seemed like an eon but as it was so looked forward to, my impatience got the better of me] is presented by Thijs van der Zanden with Julian Marsh responsible for this English edition just as was Julian's work on the GS/GSA book.

The full title is Citroën BX… A new generation of Citroën.

And that sub title folks really describes this model in its true perspective.

The book like that of the GS/GSA is in the landscape format and that pleases me very much.

As well, it has its own fabric bookmark whereas the others did not.

A small but nice touch.

The book is 312pages and has a hard cover in the modern style… ie no dust jacket.

The book starts off with the origins of the BX and what interesting reading that makes as the author explores and relates the goings on at Citroën when this car first came up as hopefully a worthy successor to the GS.

This section is as full of illustrations as you would want and they are mostly in colour.

I would like to take from the Foreword written by Julian Leyton [retired Press & Public Relations Manager Citroën UK] the essential soul of this wonderful new offering from Citroën.

'The BX ~ the car that, together with the GS/A, Xsara Picasso and Saxo, most improved Citroën's fortunes in the UK.'

More BXs were sold in just that relatively small market [producing a right hand drive model must always have been a pain in Citroën's derriere] than all of the preceding small models put together.

The factory went on the produce more than 2.33million units… no small beer here!!

As with the other two Citrovisie books that I have reviewed… The GS/GSA and CX, this edition is another great example of how Thijs and his band of merry Citronauts have put together such detail with more photos that you can shake a stick at, that it again resets the standard.

The BX was initially the subject of [or maybe 'to' is the more apt phrase] the notable designers Jean Giret, Regis Gromik and Luc Louis .

These three auto design musketeers were following in the footsteps of Robert Opron who had been the No I pen and ink man.

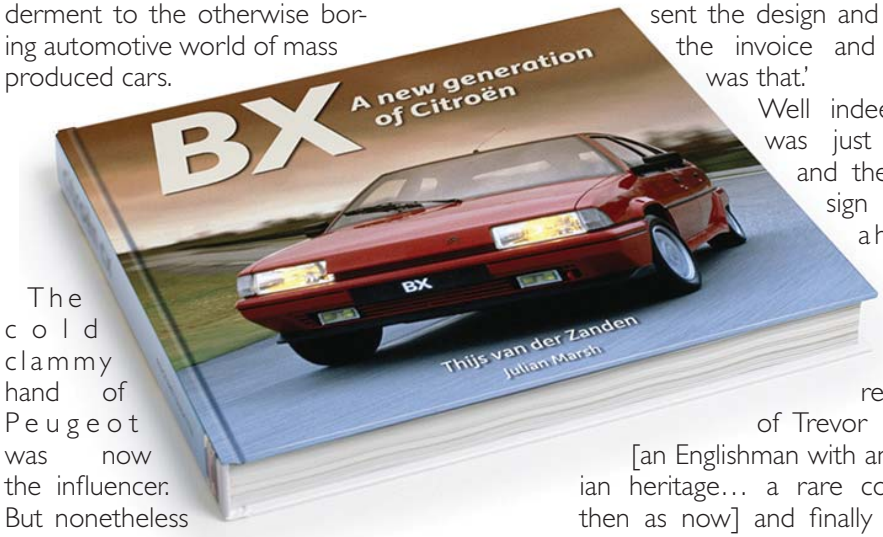
A small interruption here and one that had a huge bearing on Citroën's future was that at the 1973 fuel crisis our beloved marque found itself in a financial fix.

Book Review

Citroën as you know was owned mostly by Michelin who with the cold wind of fiscal meltdown breathing down its neck, it got Peugeot to throw out a life line.

An editorial aside: Others have suggested that it was the French government who forced Peugeot to 'rescue' Citroën while putting Renault into a Full Nelson to take the marque's truck arm.

This saved Citroën's bacon; but the price was rather steep… no more outlandish models with which to woo and bring wonderment to the otherwise boring automotive world of mass produced cars.



The cold clammy hand of Peugeot was now the influencer. But nonetheless Citroën weaved its path amongst the minefields of pernicious papa Peugeot!!

How's that for alliteration?

Along came Italians Giorgetto Giugiaro and Marcello Gandini ~ internationally acclaimed for some exotic Italian autos.

This was the genesis of the era of the wedge and creases and sharp this, that and the other… altogether a new mould. The curves and soft forms of the GS/GSA for example went by the way.

Citroën was losing its way in determining the shape of what you and I know as the BX. And Gandini did some good work and as a parry to the in house designer's purple mutterings expressed the view that 'I was not hired to make friends.'

A perfunctory man who also expressed the view that 'we sent the design and then the invoice and that was that.'

Well indeed it was just that and the design went ahead under the direction of Trevor Fiore [an Englishman with an Italian heritage… a rare combo then as now] and finally morphed into the shape we well know.

Citroën introduced the car to the public in 1982 with enormous pomp and pageantry and away it went.

Although it missed out on a Car of the Year award, the BX nonetheless scored extremely well with overall driveability and its small engined models scored an economy first place in the 1983 Mobil Economy Run.

All boded well for the BX and over its 12+ year production run it was deemed a success and helped Citroën's fortunes on the way.

There were many, many derivatives… too many to mention here but perhaps one that stood out was the 16-valve sport model which was the epitome of a boy racer's rocket.

Sadly it would seem the wedge shape of the BX would be supplanted by the more rounded curvaceous bodywork of the next lot of Citroën models. It is the fate of car designs since mass production came into play that design trends are fickle.

The BX and its kith and kin of the time were replaced with the new lot of shapes like the Xsara and Xantia morphing into the C-Series.

The British market provides an example of how a successful model came and went. Of the 200,000 built for the UK, barely 200 exist today.

Such is the way.

OK folks, this book is now in the library and is ready for you to borrow.

Line up as this book on the absolutely delightful BX will be a popular read.

Your humble scribe,
Max Lewis,
Librarian.

Looking Forward

The Oldest GSA?

Following the article about the joint CCCV/CCOCA run last December to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the launch of the GS published in the February/March edition of 'Front Drive' [Volume 44, No 5] your Editor got onto the path of attempting to determine whether Dave Rogers' GSA is indeed the oldest RHD GSA still on the road. I started hunting for more information. I contacted Marc Stabèl [the author of the excellent book about the GS/A, a copy of which is in the Club's library], Julian Marsh [of Citroënët fame], my GS expert Rob Moss [from the Chevronic Centre in the UK], Aarnout Pluijgers [a Dutch GS expert] and Graham H Wilson [who is in charge of the CCCUK's GS/A Register. In addition Graham is the owner of the GS Pallas which featured in an article in 'Classic & Sports Car' magazine and was reprinted in Volume 44 No 4 of 'Front Drive'.

I have to say that the vast bulk of the information in the article which follows is the work of Graham, with additional vital information that fills many of the gaps in knowledge coming from Aarnout. My contribution, on re-

For those who may need reminding, here is a picture of Dave Roger's GSA... the car that started this quest.

The Oldest GSA?

flection, was more limited and largely involved asking Aarnout and Graham questions, the answers to which were not always apparent. So, over to Graham… but before he starts, as this is largely Graham's work, reference to Graham is 'I' while reference to Leigh is 'he'. Got it?

'The Earliest Surviving GSA' research leads on to a lot of 'unknowns'. I feared that this would be the case after helping a UK CCC member in 2016 who was writing about late model UK GSAs which were in Cornflower Blue paintwork, as on his car.

The research started because Leigh wanted to date a round dial GSA in Victoria, Australia, that was imported at least 30years ago. For those who are not aware, the first batches of GSAs for the UK [right hand drive] had a modified version of the GS dashboard that has round dials. The clock was moved from a central position to the left where it replaced the voltmeter. Extra warning lights were added where the clock had been.

Leigh said that he thought that these cars were only available for the 1980 model year from September 1979 to August 1980 [confirmed from Marc Stabèl's book] but it was *'anyone's guess'* whether they actually ran for the full model year. Leigh explained to me that the car had been in Australia for decades and he thought it had at least three different registration plates from two different jurisdictions ~ South Australia and Victoria. Leigh has been able to trace the ownership of this car through its three previous owners, and of course its current owner. But, the first of these could only advise that he had bought the car from a now-defunct dealer in Adelaide, SA. At the time he bought the car there was no record of the car's previous UK registration.

Unravelling the VINs

The best way to date a GSA is by the four-digit RP code but, unfortunately, it has been painted over on this car. The real fun then started when Leigh mentioned the VIN/chassis number: *'My understanding was that the 'age' of the car could be determined from the two separate digit-parts of the number.'* He continued by saying that the Australian car *'GXYL 00 YL 8107 is older than the oldest Dutch car which is GXYL 01 YL 5859, but that a French car we know of [although now wrecked], GXYL 00 YL 0654 was older still.'* This was information passed to Leigh by Dave Rogers and it came originally from Aarnout.

In the hope of bringing clarity, Leigh suggested that where we reference numbers that are related to a specific VIN type we have substituted lower case letters. So, a VIN of the style shown in the paragraph above would show as:
GXYL øø YL øøøø.
or
GXYL øøøø YL øøøø. OK?
Where did the extra two digits come from? Sometime around 1981 there were moves to standardise VINs internationally. Two extra digits were added in the middle and VF7 [representing Citroën] was added at the start.

I told Leigh that I am no expert on chassis numbers and my real concern as GS/A Registrar is keeping track of the UK cars and to build up a bank of information on each car that I put in a folder that supplements a large spreadsheet covering known GSAs, and of course GSs. I now have folders for 285 GS/As that includes information from websites on vehicles listed for sale.

I cannot keep track of who owns what though, as it has become impossible with some cars changing owners so often in the UK and not all owners are in the CCCUK.

There is one part of the VIN data which looks simple and that is the two letters before the four numbers. As an example, I will use the VIN for my own GSA Special 1,129cc that may be the only UK specification one in use. Its full VIN is:
VF7 GXYA 0002 YA 4910.

The UK Register data indicates that 'YA' codes are only for 1,129cc Specials and by looking at the rest of the data it seems that the following table can be developed. [Table 1]

A problem car is an X3 with full VIN: VF7 GXYL 0001 GL 9849. If the GL is correct the VIN should have been GXGL in the second block of characters if it was to match the YA, YR and YS codes. I think the 'GL' before the 4-digit number is an error made many years ago. It would be great to hear from the owner of another GSA X3 to determine which pattern is correct.

And this is where Aarnout came to our rescue. The Dutch, it seems, have always had an especially soft spot for the GS/A [and as you may recall from an earlier XM-focused Front Drive] and he has been able to provide a far more comprehensive list of the letter codes and their relationship to the model types. [Table 2]

But, then you need a further table to decipher which engine is which. While Citroën may name an engine GI0/611 the less technical amongst us would prefer to

Table 1: GSA Model Designations from the CCCUK Register

GXYA øøøø YA	1,129cc GSA Special
GXYL øøøø YL	Standard GSA Hatches, including X1 and maybe X3
GXYR øøøø YR	GSA C-matic
GXYS øøøø YS	GSA Estates

The Oldest GSA?

TABLE 2: GS AND GSA MODEL DESIGNATIONS FROM DUTCH RECORDS			
GS		GSA	
SERIES	VEHICLE TYPE	ENGINE TYPE	SERIES VEHICLE TYPE	ENGINE TYPE
GX-GA	Berline 6CV	G10/611, G10/612, G11/631	GX-YA	Berline 1130	G11/631
GX-GB	Berline 7CV	G12/611, G12/612	GX-YB	Berline 1220 [S/J]	G12/612
GX-GC	Break 1220	G12/611, G12/612			
GX-GD	Service Van 1220	G12/611, G12/612			
GX-GE	Break 6CV	G10/611, G10/612, G11/631	GX-YE	Break 1130	G11/631
GX-GF	Service Van 6CV	G10/611, G10/612, G11/631	GX-YF	Service Van 1130	G11/631
GX-GG	Birotor	KKM624	GX-YG [A]		
GX-GH	X2	G12/619			
GX-GJ	Break 1300 [CH]	G13/625			
GX-GK	Break 6CV [A]		GX-YK	Berline 1130 [A]	G13/625, G13/646, G13/655
GX-GL	Berline 1300	G13/625	GX-YL	Berline 1300	G13/625, G13/646, G13/655
			GX-YM	Service Van 1300	G13/625, G13/646, G13/655
GX-GN	Berline 1301 X3 [I]	G13/626	GX-YN	Berline 1301 [I]	G13/635
			GX-YR	Berline C-matic	G13/625, G13/646, G13/655
			GX-YS	Break 1300	G13/625, G13/646, G13/655
			GX-YV	Break C-matic	G13/625, G13/646, G13/655
			GX-YX	Berline 1300 [A]	
			GX-YZ [A]		

Notes: A = Austria, CH = Switzerland, I = Italy, J = Japan, S = Sweden.
We know that GX-GG and GX-YZ exist, but we know no more about these models.

know that it is the 1,015cc motor. So, there's another table. [Table 3 which has been extracted and updated from a listing of Citroën's air-cooled engines complied by J Cats and which can be found at https://cats-citroen.com/citroen_atypes/enginegearbox.html]. Having said, you will note that neither GI3/626 nor GI3/635 [the 1,301cc motors for the Italian market] are in his list.

Berline RP Numbers

As far as I can tell, the 4-digit number sequence is separate for each of the letter codes such as YR and YL, as explained next. The two cars below were built only eight days apart but the four digits numbers are not close.

MODEL	VIN EXTRACT	RP NO	BUILD DATE
Manual Hatch	35 YL 3529	2059	Tues, 29 June, '82
C-matic Hatch	01 YR 9316	2067	Wed, 7 July, '82

TABLE 3: CITROËN GS/A ENGINES									
ENGINE PLATE	CAPACITY [CC]	MODEL	DATE	COMP. RATIO	POWER [HP/DIN]	RPM	TORQUE [NM]	RPM	COMMENTS
G10/611	1,015	GS	1971-9/77	9.0:1	55.5	6,500	71	3,500	C-matic
G10/612	1,015	GS	1971-9/77	9.0:1	55.5	6,500	71	3,500	
G11/631	1,129	GS GSA Special GSA	9/77-7/80 7/80-7/81 7/81-1985	9.0:1	56.5	5,750	79	3,500	
G12/611	1,222	GS	9/74-7/79	8.2:1	60	5,750	87	3,250	
G12/612	1,222	GS	9/74-7/79	8.2:1	60	5,750	87	3,250	C-matic
G12/619	1,222	GS X2	10/74-9/78	8.9:1	65	5,750	91	3,500	
G13/625	1,299	GS X3 GSA	9/78-7/79 7/79-7/81	8.7:1	65	5,500	96	3,500	
G13/646	1,299	GSA [ECO]	7/81-1985	8.7:1	63.8	5,500	94	3,500	
G13/655	1,299	GSA [EI]		8.7:1	63.8	5,500	94	3,500	Electronic Ignition

In 1982, 80,965 'Berline'/hatchbacks were built. I have assumed a 5-day working week, across a 48-week working year that means about 330 hatchbacks per day. [Note: The production calculations in this and the next paragraph should be good enough to prove my points even though there would be holidays, strikes [?] and possibly some weekend working]. For the eight days gap in the example above, you would expect the 7 July figure to be a VIN near 6170 and not 9316. Even if you took the year's production of all variants of GSA, you only get to a VIN ending somewhere in the region of 7240 and not 9316. The YL and YR number sequences are separate based on the evidence here. What I do not know is if the YR code for C-matics includes estate C-matics or are C-matic estates under the YS code or, as there are no C-matic estates on the GSA Register, do they have a totally different code?

From Leigh's brochure collection we know that the GSA Club Estate was available from launch [UK brochure] and it appeared in the 1981 Model year [Dutch brochure, August, 1980]. But for the 1984 model year the C-matic box was dropped from the gearboxes on offer. So, there may not have been many manufactured to begin with.

But, once again Aarnout's information comes to our rescue. His table clearly shows that C-

The Oldest GSA?

matic estates received their own unique letter identifier: YV

Break RP Numbers

VIN Extract	RP No	Build Date
05 YS 3618	1925	Mon, 15 February, '82
08 YS 9546	2485	Mon, 29 August, '83

Next for analysis are YS estate cars to see if the last four digits are separate for the two-digit number codes before the YS:

RP2485 minus RP1925 = 560 is the number of days between those two dates that means about 400 production days. In 1982/83 Citroën built an average of 13,700 Estates per year, or an average of about 57 cars per day. This gives 22,800 estate cars built between the dates; that is a number well beyond a four-digits at the end of the VIN code. The last four digits are therefore separate for each two digit letter code such as 05 and 08 based on the evidence here.

Leigh looks like he was correct to think the 05 and 08 codes reflected a date order and they seem to make sense for the few GSA estate cars on the Register:

02 YS = 1981
05 YS = 1982
07 YS = 1983
08 YS = 1983-84
09 YS = 1984

Citroën has a four-digit number sequence at the end of the VIN code and so would have to generate a new two-digit code in front of the YS before 9999 was reached. With the limited data on the GSA Register, I cannot work out what happened to 00YS, 01YS, 03YS, 04YS and 06YS. Were they for non-right hand drive [ie LHD] cars? However, the C-matic data does not support that view as shown below.

C-matics Illuminate Matters

With few C-matics on the Register [and an even smaller number with VIN/RP information], there is only the code 01 YR in 1982-83. Leigh's own GSA C-matic is 01 YR 9340 and his is even the same colour as 01 YR 9316 that is on the UK register. The respective RP numbers for the two cars are 2160 and 2067 ~ that makes sense. What does trouble me is that there are two LHD C-matics that are 01 YR 5704 and 01 YR 6247. Were so few C-matics built that most came under the 01 YR code whether they were LHD or RHD?

Indeed, Aarnout's data shows that the same two-letter was allocated to both left and right hand drive cars; whether C-matic or manual.

Year Coding

For the normal GSA hatchbacks with the YL letter code, the date order for UK RHD cars appears to be:

RMP 123Y aka 01 YR 9316 belongs to your Editor's friend Shaun Lilley. Shaun's example benefits from a sunroof and rear spoiler and that rather odd handle near the bottom of the hatch.

Leigh Miles' GSA has no such adornments, although it does benefit from an upgraded interior using the upholstery from a GSA Pallas SE.

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00 YL = 1980-81
16 YL = 1981
17 YL = 1981
20 YL = 1981-82
21 YL = 1981-82
28 YL = 1982
35 YL = 1983 and is most common code on the register
42 YL = 1984-85

Why are there gaps in the number sequence? Were these LHD cars? Were some numbers reserved for cars produced at the Vigo plant in Spain? I only have VIN data for four LHD cars: two are C-matics as discussed above, another is an X3 and one is a normal hatchback. The regular LHD hatchback is 26 YL 1136 and was first registered in France in December 1981 and that does not seem out of place in the YL list in blue as above.

Aarnout supplied us with a further chart [Table 4] which details not only the various 'year codes' that were applied to the various body/engine types but also the starting number for each year and in some cases the final number issued for each year. This information is largely sourced from source 'De Citroën GS en GSA by Marc Stabèl & Martijn Kok.

Two UK GSAs. On the right is Graham Wilson's 'other' car: the only UK-spec GSA Special still on the road there [GXYA 0002 YA 4910] and on the left is the car with lowest known VIN in the UK: GXYL 0000 YL 5041.

Early GSAs

Having looked at VIN codes, I turn to early GSAs and then round dial GSAs in particular. There are 30 cars with V and W registration letters on the GSA Register ~ the earliest possible letters for a GSA on its original number plate. They cover 1 August, 1979 to 31 July, 1981. Of the 30 cars:

- 1 [one] is on a very early, non-standard UK number plate
- 7 were taxed for road use the last time I checked;
- 6 were on SORN [Statutory Off Road Notification in the UK]; they exist and could be easily on the road again or be near wrecks;
- 7 were 'Unlicensed' ~ this means the Government's DVLA knows about the car in theory but is should be on SORN if it exists and it may not exist at all;
- 7 have been scrapped according to information in the Register and are not shown on the DVLA Government website;
- 2 are problems, eg one number plate is now a Volvo.

I have a VIN for 11 of the 30 above but do not ask about RP numbers. Of that 30, 12 are 'round dial' and none were taxed for road use in the UK; four were on SORN; four were 'unlicensed' and four were scrapped. That also puts the number of early GSAs in the UK into perspective.

The oval Citroën logo that bookends the VIN/chassis number.

The VIN plate of KGV 45V, showing quite clearly the 'bracket' at very end of the VIN. Easily confused.

Round Dial GSAs

There is a very early round dial GSA in the UK and I had no VIN for it until the present research began. However, I have been looking at my photos of that car and found one of the whole engine compartment taken 12 years ago on a small Panasonic digital camera. Amazingly, after zooming in on my computer and increasing sharpness etc, I have a reasonable photo of the VIN and it is GXYL 0000 YL 50410.

That last digit is a real mystery: why 5 numbers as on the accompanying photo? Could what looks like an '0' be a closing bracket? There is also something before the initial G that could also be a bracket. Was it possible that Citroën were considering a 5-digit code at the end of the VIN? I hope to obtain the RP number one day. I seem to remember a discussion with an earlier owner of the car who showed me the bodywork in the gutter area visible where the tailgate shuts down and it was not like that on other GSA hatchbacks and I did have my 1981 GSA to compare with it. This early car is on SORN and could easily be on the road. Is this the earliest RHD GSA produced that is roadworthy or even the earli-

The Oldest GSA?

est LHD or RHD GSA?

And that is pretty much where Graham left it.

But again, Aarnout came to our rescue! Here is what he shared with us:

'What I haven't told you [is] that the VIN are enclosed between 2 double chevrons. To be more precise it's the original logo with the oval around. That's the 0 you see at the end.'

So, Aarnout agrees this is a very early car. He has pondered that it might be from the first series of demo cars for the English dealers.

Leigh said that there was a Dutch car with VIN 0I YL 5859; that looks like it would be slightly later than the UK car because it is 0I, not 00. The wrecked French car Leigh mentioned was 00 YL 0654 and would have been before the UK car assuming that we are looking at the same VIN code system for both cars.

However, when I was going through the GSA Register, I found a UK 'V' plate GSA that was first registered on 1 Jan 1980 and the VIN is 00 YL 6063. Information from the owner said it was 'one of the original demo batch with LH [left hand] door mirror'. If this information is correct [and I have no reason to doubt that owner] it is still a car that is later than 00 YL 5041.

Conclusions

The 'oldest' round dial GSAs using the data as at present thought to be, with oldest first are shown in Table 5:

Table 5: Known Low VIN RHD GSAs

VIN	1st Reg Date.	Comment
00 YL 5041	11/3/80	UK: Easily put back on the road
00 YL 5866	6/2/80	UK: Scrapped, 2015
00 YL 5957	21/1/80	UK: Scrapped, 2003
00 YL 6063	1/1/80	UK: Could be put back on the road
00 YL 6454	13/2/80	UK: Scrapped, 2010
00 YL 7795	5/1/80	UK: SORN, 27,573miles @ 2012
00 YL 8107	N/A	AU: Registered & roadworthy
00 YL 9849	1/3/80	UK: Scrapped, date unknown

So, right now Dave Roger's GSA is the 'oldest' RHD example on the road… but who knows for how long that will be the case?

Table 4: Citroën GS and GSA Chassis Numbers

Year	GX-GA	GX-GB	GX-GC	GX-GD	GX-GE	GX-GF	GX-GG	GX-GH	GX-GJ	GX-GK	GX-GL	GX-GN
1971	00GA0006> 09GA7318											
1972	10GA0001> 25GA2116				00GE0002> 03GE7293	00GF0002> 00GF1868						
1973	25GA6001>	00GB0001>	00GC0001>	00GD0001>	02GE0002>	00GF2501>						
1974	28GA4501>	14GB1001>	04GC6001>	00GD2501>	05GE4501>	00GF5501>	00GG3001> 00GG3899					
1975	34GA0001>	32GB0001>	12GC0001>	01GD0001>	09GE0001>	01GF1001>	00GG3901>	00GH0001>				
1976	39GA2001>	38GB1001>	14GC2501>	?	00GE9001>	01GF4501>		01GH2501>				
1977	46GA0001>	48GB0001>	18GC0001>	00GD5001>	12GE0001>	01GF5001>		04GH0001>				
1978	50GA2001>	56GB5001>	21GC2001>		13GE3001>	01GF7501>		06GH2001>				
1979	56GA5001>	64GB3501>	24GC2501>		15GE0001>	02GF0001>					00GL0001>	
1980	62GA0001>				16GE9001>	02GF3201>				00GK5301>		

Year	GX-YA	GX-YB	GX-YE	GX-YF	GX-YG	GX-YK	GX-YL	GX-YM	GX-YN	GX-YR	GX-YS	GX-YV	GX-YX	GX-YZ
1980							00YL0001>			00YR0001>	00YS0001>	00YV0001>		
1981	00YA0001>		00YE0001>	00YF0001>			12YL5001>			00YR6001>	02YS0001>	00YV2501>		
1982	04YA0001>		01YE4001>				20YL0001>	00YM0005>		01YR0001>	03YS4001>	?		
1983	06YA5001>		02YE0001>				31YL0001>	00YM4001>		01YR5101>	05YS7501>	00YV6601>		
1984							39YL0001>	01YM0001>			08YS5001>			
1985							42YL4001>	01YM6001>			09YS7001>			
1986							45YL8001>	02YM9001>			10YS9001>			

The Oldest GSA?

Prepared by Graham H Wilson [UK] with much help from Aarnout Pluijgers [Netherlands] and a little assistance from Leigh Miles [Australia].

A Plea for Information

If you have a GS or GSA in Australia please contact Leigh at editor@citroenclassic.org.au with any information that might help.

NB: Data on GSA production numbers was sourced from Marc Stabèl's book with Julian Marsh: 'Citroën GS & GSA'

A Final Find

Regular readers of 'démarreur' and 'Front Drive' will be very aware of our Vendée-based correspondent, Alan Brown. Indeed, long-standing members of CCCUK may remember Alan for his regular contributions to 'Citroënian' in the 1990s.

A few weeks ago Alan happened to send to me some photos of a GSA Pallas that was at his local mechanic's workshop.

Here is what he wrote in his email that accompanied his photos:

'Daniel [garagiste, Bazoges] started preparing the GSA Pallas last week: timing belts, fluids, new exhaust. Slumbering since 1994. 84,000kms. Original seats under covers. Snapped you a few photos while it is still dusty. We shall perhaps feature it, whimsically if not factually, in the 1984 story, as a 3 year old visitor…'

As it turns out, and I did not realise it when the pictures

first arrived, this is Alan's own GSA Pallas. He bought it from its previous [original] owner, a gentleman called René [naturellement] lived on Ile d'Yeu, an island 35kms off the Vendée coast. This helps explain the low mileage. Alan tells me it was first registered on October 24, 1979. GXYL 00 YL 2006. 2006! OMG!

Given this car is only 1,300 numbers after what was the oldest GSA [remember the now-wrecked GXYL 00 YL 0654] could this be oldest GSA in existence? No, I am not off on another chase, but someone might well take up the mission.

Instant Car of the Year

If only Australian manufacturers could come up with something as fresh as the Citroën CX. It would be an instant Car of the Year.

Citroën have done it again with the CX range ~ a new four-door sedan which slots between the GS and the D-Series. It's a car totally attuned to today's motoring needs and is already being acclaimed as the best two-litre car in the world. After driving it we can understand why.

Nothing about Citroën engineers is more predictable than that they are unpredictable. The new CX 2000/2200 is a bolt-out-of-the-blue, such an extremely well-kept secret that all the 'usually reliable informants' and 'informed sources' had it all wrong.

Of course, the new Citroën was clouded by Peugeot's take-over of Citroën. Now the question really is: will the CX be the last real Citroën? Peugeot, after all, is so conservative and so predictable that the two design philosophies must surely be on a collision course. Which is a pity, for the CX, even by Citroën standards, is a great car ~ perhaps the best two-litre car ever. And it's the best by such a long margin that it's hard to visualise who will be able to equal it in the next five years, let alone bet-

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ter it.

The reason for this heavy praise of the CX is simple enough ~ it is more switched-on to the needs of the '70s than any other car. Safety, economy, styling, comfort, ergonomics and price are exactly in step with what most of the world's drivers need from now until at least the mid '80s.

Officially, the CX is an intermediate model, fitting in between the GS and the DS. But as the price is likely to be in the same bracket as the DS, there does not seem to be much doubt as to the role the CX will eventually have in the Citroën range.

It's a smaller car than the DS, but is almost as spacious inside; it looks something like a GS, though, with better proportions: 4,597mm long, 1,359mm overall height and 1,727mm wide. Wheelbase is substantial, too, at 2,845mm confirming its makers' belief in the wheel-at-each corner concept.

There was enormous pre-release speculation about the CX's engine. Educated guesses went as far as a Maserati-based V6,

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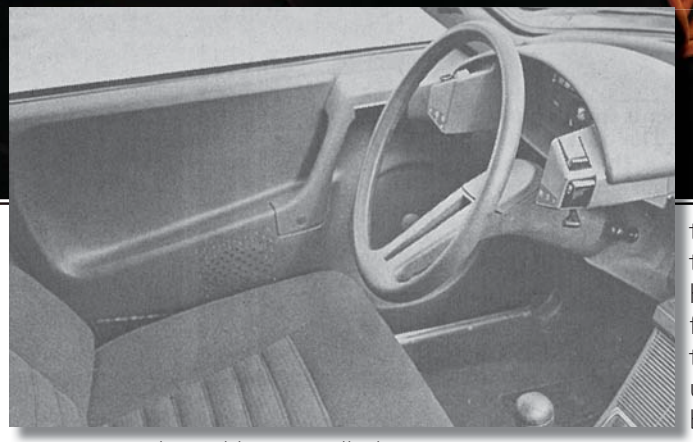

a GS engine with two cylinders added to make a flat-six, and a third generation rotary. They were all wrong, totally wrong. Instead of anything new, the CX has the DS in-line, water-cooled four under the bonnet, but mounted transversely, rather like the Lancia Beta layout with the gearbox at the left hand end [looking forward from inside the car] driving the front wheels through unequal-length half-shafts behind the crankcase. The engine is tilted forward at 30 degrees to guarantee a low bonnet line.

There are two versions of the engine. The first has a capacity of 1,985cc and develops 76kW at 5,500rpm. The more powerful model, called the CX 2200, has a 2,175cc unit developing 83.5kW at the same revs.

In layout there is nothing new about the engines. The valves are operated through cross-over pushrods from the block-mounted side camshaft. The cranks run on five mains and the cylinder strokes are common to both units ~ 85.5mm. The 2000 has an 86mm bore, the 2200's being four millimetres larger.

Four-speed gearboxes are standard on both models. But if you buy the CX 2000 there is a higher-geared economy final drive which gives 36.2kph per 1,000rpm against the normal 31.0kph. It's different again in the CX 2200 which is geared for exactly 32.2kph [20 mph] per 1,000 rpm. Citroën say that it doesn't need a five-speeder, but if the CX ever gets the DS 23 injection engine…

[Ed. While both 'Wheels' and 'Road & Track' were quite complimentary about the quietness of the old DS lump in its CX application it is generally agreed today that the lack of money in Citroën's coffers at the time of the CX's development meant that plans for either a six-cylinder motor [either V or flat] or a rotary were but the thing of dreams… and dreams that would never be fulfilled. Having said that these DS-derived petrol engines are very reliable and capable of huge mileages. These were 1,985cc, 2,175cc, 2,347cc and 2,473cc capacities. All-alloy 1,995cc and 2,165cc units fitted to Athena, Reflex and 22-models [22TRS etc] are not as unburstable but are long-lived if serviced properly. Diesel engines are more problematic and are best avoided.]

Suspension is typically Citroën Hydropneumatic with the usual height adjustments. At the front the whole lot is mounted on a subframe which bolts to the front of the perimeter chassis frame. Anti-dive geometry is included and in essence there is not a great deal that could be called truly new. It's a trailing-arm arrangement at the back, the arms themselves being light alloy.

Both the suspension and brakes are powered from the central hydraulic accumulator and, in the CX 2200, so is the steering. Brakes are disc all round, mounted outboard, with those at the front being ventilated.

Rack-and-pinion steering is common with the 2000 and the 2200. But where the 2000 has conventional manual steering with 4.5turns lock-to-lock for a 10.9metre turning circle, the 2200 needs only 2.5turns. Its power system is a direct development of the Citroën SMs but with slightly lower gearing.

The perimeter frame is a multipurpose affair. It forms the basis of the side-impact protection

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as well as being the box for the flexible mount that locates the body.

Safety has played a very important role in the development of the CX. It is one of the reasons why the engine is transversely mounted. Perhaps even more significant is the fact that after a 50kph diagonal impact barrier test, three of the CX's doors will open normally. The European requirement is for one!

When you get into the CX for the first time there is something slightly unearthly about it. The door mouldings are pieces of sculpture in their own right, but they are also immensely practical in the way the handles are located and the armrests are formed. Of course, in true Citroën fashion the steering wheel has only one spoke, but there are no stalks protruding from the column. Instead, everything is located on a single module directly in front.

Apart from the centrally-mounted handbrake, gear-lever and ventilation controls, every minor control is within finger-tip reach ~ without having to take your hands off the wheel!

Recessed into the module are drum-behind-glass faces for speed and revs and apart from a ·clock there is only a fuel gauge and a dial for battery condition. A bank of warning lights above them notifies you if something major is going wrong. A test button lets you check that the main warning system works.

The seats are soft and comfortable with plenty of adjustment which, even at the extremities, does not hamper the rear-seat room. The front passenger feels naked at first, for the fascia runs at the same level as the base of the windscreen. But it does mean that even a tall passenger can move his seat all the way forward and have ample leg and knee room.

First off we drove a 2000, Citroën's Press people having arranged a swap-over point halfway through the 400km test course, much of it on the far side of the Arctic Circle in northern Lapland. As with all Citroëns, you are immediately impressed by the softness of the ride and the feeling of security the vehicle imparts.

But we confess to being dubious about the engine. Although it's efficient and reliable, the D-Series engine has always been lumpy and noisy. Part of the problem is that the engine, because it is reversed with the gearbox out front, is just about in the cabin with the occupants, so noise and vibration suppression is just about impossible.

With the running gear differently located, it has been possible to kill off just about all engine and transmission excited noise and feel. In fact, you are aware of the silence, for the CX is so close to being totally devoid of wind noise as well it does not matter. However despite all the work to insulate the body from the rest of the works, road noise was definitely creeping in, but not as badly as in the GS.

Performance felt moderate ~ it was the normal transmission ~ and this reflects in the acceleration: 0-100kph takes just on 13seconds, but the silence allowed the speed to build-up almost unnoticed so that the car was soon whispering along at 125kph, ignoring the very poor surface of the dirt roads over which we had been routed. However, as with the DS, sudden humps catch the suspension right out, so that for a moment it feels solid.

Roadholding was very good indeed and the handling deceptively neutral. In places where you expect it to understeer strongly, it doesn't. The fact that it wears 185-14 tyres on the front and 175-14s on the rear must have quite a lot to do with this neutrality of handling. On very loose surfaces, though, there is never any doubt that the rear wheels will hang out first, and that the way to get them back in is with opposite lock.

Although the 2000's steering sounds a bit slow at 4.5turns, it is quite responsive and the car gets itself back into line very smartly with no twitching. But with the power steering and 2.5turns, the CX 2200 can be positively sporting once you become accustomed to the ratio of input against response. Citroën has abandoned the brake-button in favour of a more conventional pedal. The fully-powered brake system does, of course, make the pedal feel hard, but the amount of retardation can be juggled very accurately. This and the load-sensitive pressure limiting valve to the rear discs, makes stopping a fussless affair.

The clutch is smooth and positive and the gear-change a little rubbery but quite precise.

We made a serious effort to drive the 2000 smoothly and steadily without putting a foot into the carburettor just for the sake of it. For one thing we wanted to find out what the fuel consumption was like. But at the change-over point a lead-boot from one of the boy-racer publications was waiting to take over the car. There goes the consumption average, we thought, and washed our hands of knowing how little fuel the 2000 would use. So we hopped into his just-vacated 2200 and decided to pour on the coal, too, to establish a few points about directional stability, the maximum speed and the most comfortable cruising rate.

The 2200 felt more gutsy from the outset and after some winding-out showed a true 180kph, which is just about what the makers claim, [174kph for the

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2000 and 167kph for the 2000 with economy gearing].

In its review 'Road & Track' commented 'there is a much greater difference in road performance between the economy 2000 and the normal 2000 than between the latter and the 2200. It is a question of gear ratios.'

Directional stability at high speeds was sensationally good despite strong crosswinds and plenty of surface irregularities. You can put some instability into the CX 2200 yourself if you don't quickly learn that the helm is for steering and not for use as some kind of grab handle. Until you realise the only way to come to grips with the steering is not to grip it, you can end up going down the road in a series of little swerves calculated to make your passengers tremble more than a little. .

So it has to be the gentle touch all the way.

That night, as we finished our reindeer steak under the light of a clouded-over midnight sun, Citroën's engineering people came around with the fuel consumption figures: the 2000 had returned 9.9IL/100km overall and the thrashed 2200, 10.83L/100km. Given reasonably gentle treatment, the 2000 would most certainly have recorded better than 9.1 and the 2200 very close to 9.4 Citroën say the 2000 will give 8.3L/100km at a steady 90kph, 10.5 at 120 and 12.3 at 140; the 2200's figures are hardly less impressive at 7.85, 10.1 and 12.3.

In its review 'Road & Track' commented that, 'sharing an economy 2000 and a 2200 with another fast driver and swapping them about halfway between the start and finish of the 425km run [including a large percentage of winding secondary roads], we used more fuel with the economy model than with the 2200, surely because top gear was used comparatively little with the former. No doubt the results would be inverted on a long motorway run at 145kph, which is what most people consider the accepted limit of French turnpikes [legally restricted at 140kph].'

But should we be surprised? After all, CX is an engineering symbol for the aerodynamics of a moving body, and this Citroën has aerodynamics deserving more than just a symbol.

Australians will have to wait until mid-1975 before they get the chance to see a CX. Our driving gloves are ready…

This article first appeared in 'Wheels' magazine in the October 1974 edition. Unfortunately, neither the author nor the photographer is credited. Additional material have been sourced from a review written by Paul Frère for 'Road & Track' magazine. Paul's article is based on the same Arctic Circle press launch.

You Sed

Peter, Ted and everyone else behind Cit-In 2021,

We arrived home from Cit-In 2021 yesterday afternoon after a much needed sleep in Yass on Monday night. Was it the driving or too much of a good time at Cit-In? All three of us, Debra, Lucy Hill and I agree it was Cit-In's fault.

Congratulations on a very well organised Cit-In. Probably the most relaxing and sociable we've been too in years and perhaps the best ever. But memories from Deb's and my first Cit-In in 2000 [Jindabyne] are faded now.

The venues were great, there was not too much to 'do' and there was time to have a look around or even escape for an all important 'nanna nap'.

While the observation run was cunningly written it was a great drive through the countryside and the picnic lunch stop a great social interlude. That the ObsRun was the only 'competition' we think that helped with the relaxed attitude for the weekend. We don't need trivia comps, motorkhanas and human obstacle courses these days. Better to socialise and reacquaint ourselves with our common brethren.

Your organised catering was spot on. We all appreciated the ability to have social time and decent finger food on Friday night, the provided lunches were ideal and the spit-roast on Saturday night was ample. Sunday night's meal was excellent ~ good food and service and even some wine at the table. Then topped off with more food on Monday morning and, well, what more could we want? Apart from a Jenny Craig membership?

Well done to you all ~ enjoy a well earned rest and we look forward to seeing you all in Cowra for 2022.

In case you're not aware, I created a Facebook group on Sunday evening while the dinner was underway to allow people to share photos etc from the weekend. This is the link:
https://www.facebook.com/groups/539003590404123

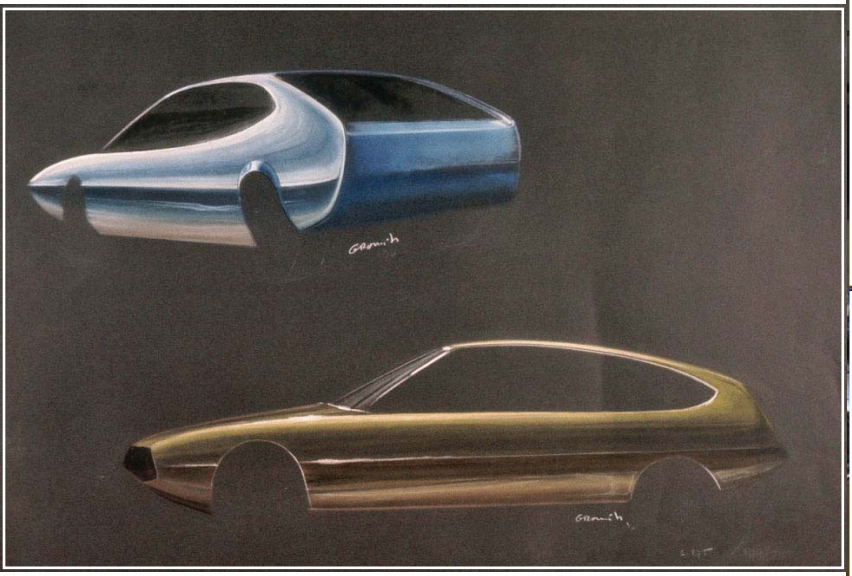
Cheers,
Craig Keller

Craig and Debra Keller with their DS.

Missed Opportunities?

Ronan Glon wrote this article for the website https://ranwhen-parked.net/ in 2014 on the occession of the CX's 40th birthday. This is the second article that Ronan has given his permission for us to republish and we are very grateful for his support.

Citroën is celebrating the 40th anniversary of the CX.



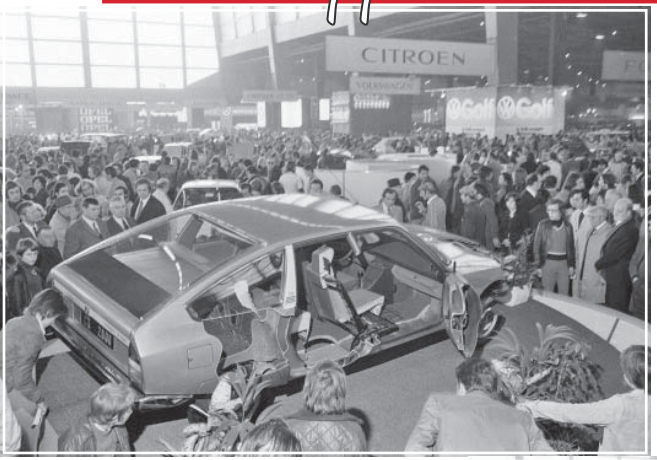
Designed to replace the iconic DS, the CX served as Citroën's flagship from its launch in 1974 until the arrival of the XM in 1989.

Citroën started seriously developing a successor to the DS in the late 1960s. In 1972, the company built a sleek prototype called Project L [pictured below] that accurately previewed the CX's overall silhouette, though it was still far from the final design. When launched, the CX featured a highly-aerodynamic look that was penned by Robert Opron, the same designer who drew the GS and the SM. Notably, the CX was shorter than the DS it was tasked with replacing and it was equipped with an innovative concave rear window that eliminated the need for a wiper.

From the earliest days of the project, Citroën designed the CX to use Wankel rotary engines developed and built by Comotor, a joint-venture the maker founded with NSU in the late 1960s.

Period reports indicate the range-topping CX was initially set to feature a triple-rotor 1.5-litre Wankel rated at 119kW, while lesser models should have been powered by a small twin-rotor 900cc engine tuned to

Missed Opportunities?



a four-cylinder.

Unfortunately for Citroën, introducing a large sedan powered by a Wankel engine became almost literally impossible for a number of reasons. First off, rotary engines used more fuel than traditional piston engines and the oil crisis that hit in 1973 sent petrol prices sky-rocketing. Second, rotary engines faced a number of important mechanical issues that sometimes led to premature engine failure, a tendency that was flawlessly demonstrated by the NSU Ro80. Finally, a lot of buyers were simply hesitant to become early adopters of what was a relatively unknown technology.

Citroën tested the market in 1973 with the GS Birotor, a total flop that was pulled from the market after less than 1,000 examples were built.

Citroën backpedaled and cancelled all Wankel-powered variants of the CX with mere months to go before the car was scheduled to debut. Engineers panicked and experimented with a variety of solutions including fitting the CX with the SM's potent Maserati-designed V6 engine. Surprisingly, the six-cylinder could apparently be shoe-horned transversely into the CX's engine bay but the project was ditched because it was too tight of a fit.

Executives brought up the idea of making the engine bay larger but the idea was also ruled out because it was far too late in the car's development to make structural modifications. Delaying the CX was not an option because the DS was getting close to its 20th birthday and the company was in dire financial straits.

When all was said and done, the CX lineup was introduced to the press and the public in August of 1974 with two models: The CX 2000 and the CX 2200. The 2000 had a 76kW 2.0-litre four, while the 2200 was equipped with a 2.2-litre rated at 83.5kW. Both engines were carried over from the DS with only minor modifications.

In early CXs, power was sent to the front wheels via a four-speed manual transmission, though a five-speed unit, a semi-automatic C-Matic and an automatic gearbox were all made available later in the production run. Following the path blazed by the DS, all CXs were equipped with a hydraulic suspension setup that provided a level of comfort and stability that was second to none.

The CX won the prestigious European Car of the Year award in 1975, beating the first-generation Volkswagen Golf by a long shot and the Audi 50. The Wankel issues had not impeded the CX's success but the entire Comotor fiasco played a sizable role in pushing Citroën towards its second bankruptcy. The firm was later taken over by Peugeot, making the CX the last sedan designed entirely by Citroën. The very last Citroën designed in-house was the Axel hatchback, which was largely developed in the early 1970s but kept on the backburner until it was launched, seemingly as an afterthought, in the mid-1980s.

CX sales exceeded expectations in 1975, and the lineup grew with the addition of the CX Super, the CX Pallas, the long-wheelbase CX 2400 Prestige and the diesel-powered 2200D, the latter being Citroën's first post-war diesel-burning car. A long-wheelbase station wagon with a raised roof was introduced the following year to replace the DS wagon.

Citroën made several mechanical and aesthetic updates to the CX over the course of its

generate 82kW. Citroën also planned on selling the CX with several carburetted four-cylinder mill sourced from the DS and at least one diesel, but, clearly, the bulk of the high-end models should have been Wankel-powered.

This is a very important part of the CX's development story: Wankel engines are highly compact so the engine bay was designed to fit nothing larger than

Missed Opportunities?

long production run. A facelifted model [sometimes called Mark 2 or Series II] launched in 1985 brought modifications such as plastic bumpers on both ends, a more modern-looking radiator grille, an all-new interior, new alloy wheel designs and plastic hubcaps.

Facelift cars benefited from a Peugeot-sourced 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine that was also found under the bonnet of the Renault 20 TS and select versions of the Peugeot 505.

To boost sales, Citroën expanded the CX lineup downwards with the addition of the Leader model [a trim level also available on the BX and the Visa] and upwards with performance-focused GTi-badged variants capable of comfortably keeping up with Mercedes and BMWs on the German Autobahn.

150,000 CXs were built in 1978, the model's best year. The millionth example rolled off the assembly line on October 30th, 1987, but the end was near as Citroën was busily developing the XM. Interestingly, a handful of CXs were fitted with a primitive version of the XM's electronic Hydractive suspension and put in the hands of carefully-selected customers in order to gather data on how well the system worked and what kinks still needed to be ironed out.

CX production ended in 1991 when the last station wagon [which was re-christened CX Evasion] was built in Aulnay-Sous-Bois, on the outskirts of Paris. All told, Citroën built 1,041,560 CX sedans and 128,185 station wagons over a 17-year period. Happy 40th, Citroën CX!

The Renault 20TS [top] and Peugeot 505 [centre] both deployed the 'Douverin' 2-litre motor long before it was eventually installed the CX. Bottom and facing some images from https://ranwhenparked.net/ showing the CX Athena on display at the 2014 Beijing Motor Show.

The CX in China

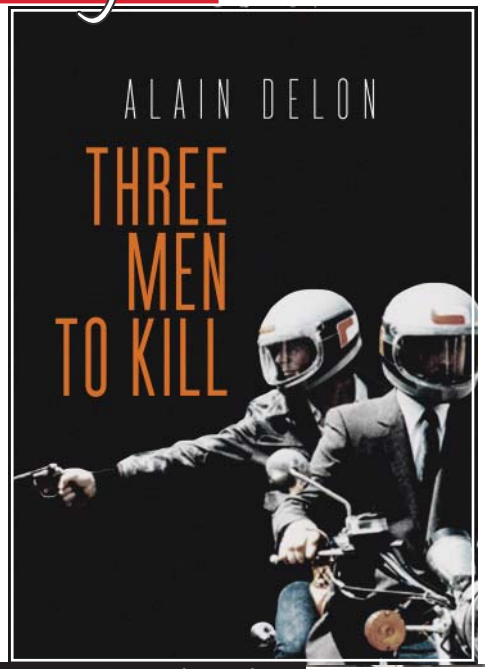
We were surprised to find a stunning blue CX Athena displayed on the Citroën stand at the 2014 Beijing Motor Show in order to commemorate the car's 40th anniversary. Few people seemed to notice it, and we're guessing the ones who did wondered 'what the hell is wrong with the suspension?' Folks were more interested in the DS 21 that was displayed on the DS stand [DS-badged Citroëns were sold in standalone showrooms in China even then] but we couldn't get anywhere near it because it was surrounded by iPhone-wielding show-goers.

The CX has an interesting connection to China: In 1984, Citroën sent 2,500 CXs to China in hopes of being awarded a contract to provide the country with a large car. The contract was awarded to Volkswagen [with their amazingly lack-lustre Santana Ed.] , but Citroën was given permission to build small cars locally and it started producing a four-door version of the ZX hatchback locally in 1992.

Going back to the Beijing show, if Citroën shipped a CX all the way from Paris to Beijing to celebrate its 40th birthday we imagine there are great things in store for this October's Paris Motor Show.

Ronan reports that very few of the CXs shipped to China are still around today.

Nonconformity? It's de rigeur



In the mid-1970s, two brands with the same passion for technical innovation offered their interpretation of the large sedan. The Citroën CX and the Lancia Gamma did not have the same success, far from it, they nevertheless had a lot in common with their big 4-cylinder engines and their 'two box' bodywork…

A sequence of anthology! In 1980, your writer, as a child, discovered in the cinema the spectacular chase between a Lancia Gamma sedan and a Citroën CX. Directed by Jacques Deray, the film was called 'Three Men to Kill' [Trois hommes à abattre]. The blue Gamma was driven by Alain Delon beating, at the top of his career, the brown CX 2400 driven by 'the bad guys'… However, in the automotive landscape of the time, the two models did not occupy the same place. We crossed paths with the CX everywhere and I remember the blue 2400 of cousin Pierre, a big wheeler before the Lord, and the Reflex of great-uncle Henri. The Gamma was invisible! The production figures confirm it: 1,169,695 CX and just 15,197 Gamma sedans, which is just 1.3% of Citroën's number!

The French and the Italian were cousins, however. They were developed at the time of the Fiat-Citroën association, when Fiat had bought Lancia at the end of 1969. Rationalisation dictated that certain structural elements would be common and the Gamma would have a hydraulic rear suspension. A CX mule also rolled with a Lancia 'flat flour'. The style was inspired by Pininfarina's prototype BMC 1800 [1967], more explicitly for Gamma, which was designed by Pininfarina.

[Ed. While this claim is often made in regard to both the CX and the GS it has always been fervently denied by Robert Opron. Ed.]

However, the early transalpine divorce, linked to the fear of the French authorities that Citroën would be reduced to the rank of subcontractor, had significant consequences.

[Ed. Other sources are more strident on this, suggesting that 'This Franco-Italian hybrid however was allegedly shelved owing to objections of French President, Charles de Gaulle,

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who reportedly opposed the use of French technology in an Italian car. It should not be forgotten that this came at a time when serious national rivalries continued to fester despite the post-war era of collaboration; de Gaulle having also vetoed Britain's entry to the EEC in 1961'. (Gamma: Signs and Portents ~ Part Three, by Eóin Doyle. 2015)]

Exit the shared hydropneumatic suspension and common structural elements! The two models however remained very close: two-box bodywork without a tailgate, a very respectable Cx [!] of 0.37, front-wheel drive, large displacement 4-cylinder engines, sophisticated technology and meticulous comfort. But their respective careers were the opposite.

The handling of the Citroën CX, whatever the weather conditions, is such that it becomes indecent for the competition!

Introduced in March 1976, the Gamma sedan was powered by a brand new engine. Very different from that of the Flavia, this horizontally-opposed 4cylinder, all aluminium SOHC motor of 2.5litres generated 140hp [105kW] allowed it to reach 195kph. The specification included a five-speed transmission, four-wheel independent suspension and four-disc braking. At the end of 1976, a 2litre version [120hp, 89.5kW] was launched, but this was reserved for the Italian market. Unfortunately, the engine, in either capacity, was unreliable and the style controversial, which limited sales.

[Ed. The car's looks were universally criticised ~ comparisons to the Citroën CX, Rover SD1 and even the Renault 30 were usually to the Italian car's detriment. (Automotive History: Italian Deadly Sins Part 3 ~ The Many Sins of Lancia, by Tatra87)]

In spring 1980 the Gamma Series II was launched, with fuel injection [for the 2.5litre] and improved presentation [grille, new rims…] which remained in production until 1984.

Unveiled the summer of 1974, the Citroën CX was available in many versions [estate, long wheel-based limousine, diesel, turbo petrol and diesel…]. The range is too long to list here. Although innovative, it was powered, for budgetary reasons, by the motor from the DS that the latter had borrowed… from the Traction! Several innovative powertrains had however been envisaged, including rotary pistons. The cast-iron block push-rod engine was however improved and mounted transversally. For the rest, progress was essential: modern bodywork signed Robert Opron, futuristic interior [with the famous 'lunule'], sophisticated soundproofing, suspension and engine arranged as units, optimal passive safety… Launched as 2000 and 2200 [102/76 and 112hp/83.5kW], the CX received a 2400 engine [115hp/86kW] in July 1975. In May 1977 the

Efficient and holding up well, the large Italian sedan was not ashamed to face European competition, but the CX was ahead of it…

Nonconformity? It's de rigeur

With its ultra-assisted braking and Diravi steering, the CX requires familiarisation time. Note the rare Jaeger dashboard here.

GTi sports version appeared with specific trim and features [rims, fog lights…], equipped with a 2.4litre injected engine [128hp/95.5kW], mated to a five-speed gearbox. This flagship version was available until the model's demise [May 1989], renamed 25 GTi in 1983 [2.5litre, 138hp/103kW] then receiving plastic bumpers, and other updates in a mild make-over in 1985 [Series II].

At decision time, which of these two unconventional sedans would win your support today?

Life on Board

Appearance

Whether we like CX or not, we have to recognise its deep stylistic coherence and a singular personality. In some ways the CX suffers [in France at least] from being a common sight… familiarity may have bred contempt. As soon as we manage to forget its 'over-seen' character and its image of being the car for a CEO, we perceive its sculptural dimension, in the true sense of the term. It is no coincidence that Robert Opron is a great lover of art. Everything here is finely chiselled, the headlights stretched, the recess in the bonnet which surmounts them and recalls the profile of the front wing, the overhangs which go up towards their two ends and happily integrate the bumpers, the large curved windscreen or the original concave rear window. Let us also mention the two lateral vanishing lines, the rear wheel 'spats' and the large glazed areas.

The Gamma is less inspiring.

The futuristic cockpit style [steering wheel, gear lever knob…] makes you smile. The plastics a little less.

Oh, sure, she is not ugly and has a balanced line but without the formal perfection of her rival. The Lancia shield on the radiator grille and the head lights, under glass covers do not give the car's front the desired expression. It is however seen more to its advantage from the three-quarter rear angle and makes gains in the presentation of various details The striations of the quarter panel, slats at the base of the rear glazing, the alloy rims and use of chrome are very 'today'.

Driving Position

We are well seated in the Gamma and the height adjustment of the steering wheel allows us not to adopt a great driving position. However, in the high position, the wheel's rim obscures the fuel and oil gauges, which is annoying! The seat itself is comfortable, it is adjustable for height and their support is satisfactory in shape. The pedal location is classic and the gear lever does not require any particular familiarisation.

In the CX, the driver's seat was locked in the high position, which forced me to drive with my legs too close to the steering wheel [which is not adjustable]. We sink into the seats, which is too much for some! But their level of support is good. On the other hand, the pedals require real adaptation time with the brake positioned low. Rearward visibility is better on the CX but driving space is more confined.

Rear Seats

We're dealing with two long-distance tourers in which travelling in the back seats are not a

Nonconformity? It's de rigeur

punishment. In both cases, the well-designed bench seat head restraints and a central armrest. That in the CX is wider.
[I was unable to find a measurement for the width of the rear seat of the Gamma. The CX's is 1,372mm and its external width is slightly [3mm!] more than the Gamma.]

Leg room is sufficient in both but it is more generous in the Gamma.

Boot Space

In both cases, the boot looks like a real cargo hold [500litres on the Gamma against 507 on the CX], while the loading sill is placed low; even lower on the CX. The shapes are practical, especially on the CX. But only the Gamma is fitted with a fully upholstered boot. But the CX has the advantage of having its spare tyre under the bonnet.

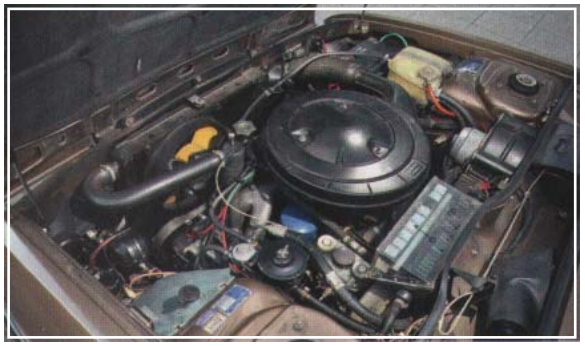
Equipment & Finish

Our two examples are very well equipped with front and rear electric windows [although those in rear were optional on the Gamma], complete instrumentation including the tachometer, oil pressure gauge, water thermometer and even an oil level gauge on the Lancia. Both are upholstered in leather, although again this was an option on both cars. More recently, the CX also has the option of an electric sunroof and automatic temperature control of the cabin. She is even fitted with side sun visors and reading lamps for the rear seats and a rear window blind.

The comfort offered by the CX in the rear seats, with the feet that sink into the carpet, makes it a car for the president…

In both cases, the quality of the materials is less exciting. Plastics [air vents in particular] are not very flattering, but are durable given their state of conservation. The leather upholstery is more pleasing to the eye and also robust. The presentation is very different. The CX plays the originality card with its famous dashboard 'lunule' which combines instrumentation and controls at your fingertips. However, here, the drum instrumentation has been replaced by more sporty Jaeger accessories. The highly sculptured door liners with the door opening 'triggers' are also a typical Citroën curiosity. Next to it, the Gamma appears very conformist, with its angular dashboard and its classic inner doors. There are certain baroque elements, such as the steering wheel or the clock enthroned alone in its own niche, which can make you smile…

The rear passengers will be free to travel very comfortably in a typically Italian atmosphere.



Life on Board

Lancia:	7/10
Citroën:	8.5/10

Performance

Engine

Deriving from two very different design worlds, the two 4cylinder motors [in line or flat, with cast iron or light alloy block, with an overhead camshaft per bank of cylinders or with lateral camshaft] have a history which is just as different. The launch of each, in its original form dating from 1976 or… 1934! Their displacement is however similar [2,484cc for the Gamma, 2,500cc for the

Nonconformity? It's de rigeur

TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS		
	CITROËN CX25 GTI, 1984	LANCIA GAMMA 2500, 1978
Motor	4-cylinder in-line transverse mounted, aluminium cylinder head, 2valves per cylinder in a V, single lateral camshaft [chain], 5-bearing crank	4-cylinder horizontally opposed longitudinal mounted, 2valves percylinder in a V, single overhaed canshaft per row of cylinders [belt], 3-bearing crank
Displacement	2,500cc, 93×92mm	2,484cc, 102×76mm
Power & Torque	138hp/103kW @ 5,000rpm 211nM @ 4,000rpm	140hp/105kW @ 5,400rpm 208nM @ 3,000rpm
Compression Ratio	8.75:1	9:1
Power Supply	Bosch LE-Jetronic injection	Weber 38 SDLD/150 double-barrel reverse carburettor.
Transmission	Front wheel drive, 5-speed gearbox, 4.21 axle	Front wheel drive, 5-speed gearbox, 3.7 axle
Steering	Rack and pinion with servo-assistance	Rack and pinion, optional power assistance
Brakes	Front: Ventilated discs, Rear: Discs, powered	Front: Ventilated discs, Rear: Discs, assisted
Equipment	Hydraulic equipment high pressure pump for braking, power steering and hydropneumatic suspension	
Suspension	4 wheel independent suspension. Front with transverse levers and anti-dive device; Rear with longitudinal levers. Front/rear hydropneumatic system with automatic level adjustment and levelling corrector, stabilizer bar	4 wheel independent suspension. Front with elastic legs, transverse levers, triang. and stabiliser bar; Rear with elastic legs, levers transv. single, arm transv. adjustable auxiliary and longitudinal bars. Front/rear: coil springs and telescopic shock absorbers
Structure/Bodywork	Self-supporting steel hull with auxiliary chassis, 4-door sedan, 5 seats	Self-supporting steel hull with auxiliary chassis, 4-door sedan, 5 seats
Tyres	150 TR 390 aluminium rims and Michelin TRX 190/65 HR 390 tyres [5.5J aluminium rims, 185 HR 14 tyres on model tested]	Steel rims 6 J, 185/70 HR 14 tyres [BF Goodrich G-Grip on tested model]
Dimensions [m]	L×W×H: 4.66×1.77×1.36	L×W×H: 4.58×1.73×1.41
Wheelbase	2.85	2.67
Track [f/r]	1.525/1.37	1.45/1.44
Weight	1.370kg	1,320kg
Boot Capacity	507L	500L
Performance	Max Speed: 201kph 0 to 100kph: 9.2sec Standing Start 1,000m: 31.1sec	Max Speed: 195kph 0 to 100kph: 10.0sec Standing Start 1,000m: 31.2sec

LUDOVIC AUDONNET

'It is time to give way to the extremely rare Gamma sedan!'

Our Gamma sedan was bought by Ludovic from Relais de l'Auto Ancienne, in Limoges. He almost immediately drove it to Prague! Ludovic says: 'We have always tried to have, in addition to the great classics, cars that are atypical, interesting by their condition, their history or their rarity. The Gamma meets these three criteria! Despite its damnable reputation [the timing belt jumps], it remains really interesting. Lancia just missed the mark…' Ludovic is however won over: 'Apart from the exterior style, which is quite mature but full of details, the interior is worth a look. The condition of the leather and carpets confirms Lancia's savoir-faire. The big 'boxer' is quite voluntary, power and torque are there in more than sufficient quantity for current traffic. Carving out a route while on board, seated well, in a bright interior, with full instrumentation and precise steering, is a real pleasure. It is very modern and easy to take along. It's time to reassess the extremely rare Gamma sedan!

CX] and, more surprisingly, their performance is almost identical with 140hp/104kW [DIN] at 5,400rpm for the Lancia against 138hp/103kW at 5,000rpm for the Citroën. And torque which is 208nM at 3,000rpm against 211nM at 4,000rpm.

The two engines show both appreciable flexibility and vigour as soon as they are whipped a little. Helping by injection feeding, the in line motor seems a little more flexible. Conversely, the Italian "boxer" emits, in our opinion, a more pleasant sound; a kind of buzzing, which however is less musical than contemporary Alfa machines.

Gearbox

The Lancia's gearbox is well staged and well synchronized but the level of travel in the lever is quite large and, above all, it is firm… or even hard, which limits its pleasure. This phenomenon is aggravated by the angular and not very ergonomic shape of the pommel, probably dictated by stylistic considerations.

In contrast, the CX's gearbox control, whose staging and synchronization are satisfactory, offers the consistency of a marshmallow. Too soft or too hard [we are talking about mechanics…], should we really have to choose?

Both are equipped with a 5speed gearbox reflecting both car's motorway cruiser potential. Having said that the CX's box pulls longer [37.1 against 33.3kph

Nonconformity? It's de rigeur

at 1,000rpm in 5th gear].

Numbers

According to manufacturers' data, the CX takes the advantage slightly higher top speed [201kph against 195kph] and faster acceleration [0 to 100kph in 9.2sec against 10sec.]. On the other hand, the respective times for a standing start kilometre are almost identical [31.2sec for the Lancia and 31.1sec for the Citroën].

During our tests, the CX actually gave the impression of having a little more vigorous acceleration, even if the Gamma suffered then from being loaded with the photographer's ultra heavy equipment…

Performance

Lancia:	7/10
Citroën:	7/10

Comportment

Handling

Hailed in the press at the time the handling of the Gamma is very safe. Once the car is mastered, which comes quickly, we can negotiate the corners at a good speed and without fear, while appreciating that it exhibits little roll. The flat motor, which lowers the centre of gravity, is undoubtedly good…

The CX was nicknamed 'the suction cup' in its day. We understand why! Reassuring; she stubbornly hangs on to the road. And if the weather is good, those who know her well know that her skills are maintained in the rain.

Braking

We adapt quickly to the braking of the Lancia. The assistance is satisfactory: the pedal is neither too hard nor too soft, making it possible to moderate braking levels correctly. They are efficient and ensure you brake well in line.

While just as effective, the braking of the CX is much more confusing. Citroën being 'terra incognita' for me, I admit to having looked forward with anxiety to the brakes of this car. My first braking manoeuvre was carried out with an excessively muscular effort, under the reproving eye of my distinguished passenger; the owner. If the 'mushroom' pedal of the DS has disappeared Citroën's braking assistance still obviously requires a real finesse to really go all out! Once it has been mastered, it seems that we cannot do without it.

Steering

At Citroën, we want to distinguish ourselves from the vulgum pecus and the servo-assisted steering, the famous Diravi, is one of these house specifics.

VICTOR HIDALGO

'We are learning to rediscover the CX with a new eye'.

The CX is an old acquaintance for Victor Hidalgo; he started driving the model in 1980! Victor understands the model. 'Cx stands for aerodynamic coefficient. This is the first car designed in a wind tunnel and that is the first thing that comes to mind. Robert Opron was well aware of the issues of aerodynamic efficiency. At the same time, in line with Flaminio Bertoni, he conceived the automobile as a sculpture'. But the CX is not just a piece of rolling art and Victor recalls that 'stylists and engineers worked hand in hand'. In fact, safety is optimal. 'In 1980, she was la reine de la route! At the time, no car was as safe, especially with the Diravi. Its stability at high speed was, and remains remarkable. It was also ahead in terms of passive safety with its reinforced central cell'. Owner of the iconic 25 GTi, Victor appreciates the car's 'masterful comfort' as well as its performance and concludes: 'The CX has been seen too much. We should learn to rediscover it with a new eye, independent of its social symbolism'.

The CX was so popular that you no longer know how to appreciate the accuracy and subtlety of its lines. Great art by Robert Opron.

Rare in our latitudes, the Lancia Gamma, a discreet bourgeois sedan, deserves to be rediscovered.

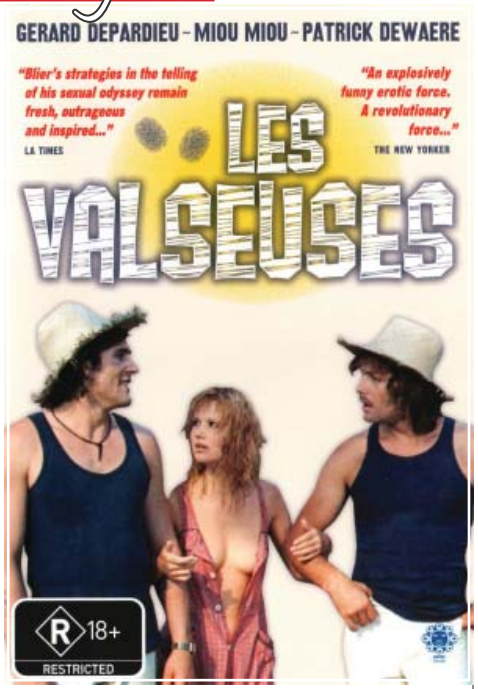
Nonconformity? It's de rigeur

Between the variable assistance [the assistance weights-up with speed and from a certain steering angle] and the automatic return of the steering wheel to the centre, there is no doubt that there is again a certain assimilation required. However, the device seemed less disconcerting to me than braking.

The power steering of the Gamma is much more classic except for one detail: in order not to blow up the left timing belt [which activates the power steering pump], you should not turn it all the way. When manoeuvring, it's rather annoying, even scary!

Suspension/Comfort

With its hydropneumatic suspension, which makes it possible to have 'oil cushions' under the posterior, to quote 'Les Valseuses', the comfort of the CX is imperial and it erases the irregularities of the road.



[Ed. 'Les Valseuses' ('Going Places') is a French film dating from 1974 in which two whimsical, aimless thugs harass and assault women, steal, murder, and alternately charm, fight, or sprint their way out of trouble. They take whatever the bourgeois characters value: whether it's cars, peace of mind, or daughters. Marie-Ange, a jaded, passive hairdresser, joins them as lover, cook, and mother confessor. She's on her own search for seemingly unattainable sexual pleasure.]

Nor does it fear bad roads with its adjustable ride height. [automatically, now].

[Ed. I am unsure why the writer suggests that the ride height adjustment is now 'automatic'. None of the French/English translation tools give a different meaning to the original French [automatiquement, désormais]. While in Series II cars the height adjustment lever was replaced by an electrically powered switch, this was not fitted to any Series I cars, to my knowledge.]

The Gamma's coil springs are much more traditional, although elaborate, and they provide it with good levels of comfort.

Comportment

Lancia:	8.5/10
Citroën:	9.5/10

Maintenance

Spare Parts

For the CX, routine maintenance parts [pads, starter, water pump…] are no problem. On the other hand, it is much more difficult to find specific parts. You have to hunt around, especially on the internet, to find body parts [front or rear wings, rear light clusters…] or accessories [switches…]. While cylinder head gaskets are available, engines, gearboxes, brake callipers, camshafts are difficult to find. Good news, however, the hydraulic suspension circuit is eas-

Nonconformity? It's de rigeur

ily rebuilt [there are specialists] and the spheres are available.

The Gamma sedan having been produced in far smaller numbers than the CX and being less popular, parts are much more difficult to find. It is not useless, if you are fortunate to have enough space, to have a spare wreck [sedan or coupe, mechanics and some of the interior accessories being common] for parts. However, consumables [exhaust, pads…] do not present a problem. Front discs are rarer, while front wheel bearings cost a fortune [compatible items exists]. When surfing the internet and calling on specialists, you need a good deal of patience to find a lot of the items you need. But, it will often pay off.

Frequency and Difficulty of Interventions

The engine of the CX is particularly robust [being chain rather than belt-driven]. Well maintained, it can exceed 300,000km. The oil must be changed every 7,500km or every year. The 5-speed gearbox is solid, unlike the previous 4-speed gearbox, which was prone to premature wear and tear on synchros.

The Gamma engine has experienced reliability issues. It tended to overheat. Sometimes the oil drop holes on the camshafts were in the wrong place, causing them to wear out prematurely. On the first models, the timing belt on the left side tended to jump, causing irreversible damage. However, recalls by the manufacturer were carried out and a tensioner roller was fitted. Well maintained and without defect, the engine can easily reach 120,000km.

Oil changes take place at the same intervals as on the CX. On the other hand, the drive belts need to be changed every 30,000km or three years. The gearbox is indestructible. In common with so many Italian cars, the Gamma can encounter small electrical problems [ventilation-heating controls…].

Finally, both cars are prone to corrosion, even though the treatment of the body of the Citroën CX was improved in 1981 and then again in 1983. On the CX, rust can strike at the level of the front bumper rackets, the windscreen base, the front door pillar and rear the quarter pillar. On the Gamma, look for it at the top of the front wings and the windscreen surround.

Costs

Our two models display a reasonable price: around €3,000 to €3,500 in very good condition for the Lancia Gamma sedan and from €3,500 to €4,500 for the Citroën CX GTi. Of course, specimens in exceptional condition can greatly exceed these values. Finally, note that CXs are highly sought after on the German and Dutch markets.

Maintenance

Lancia: 5.5/10
Citroën: 7/10

Conclusion

In the 1970s-80s, the Lancia Gamma sedan and the Citroën CX, in GTi version in particular, offered a serious alternative to the classic long-haul tourers across the Rhine [they were all three-box bodywork and rear wheel drive] with their off-beat two-box bodies, their undeniable road qualities, their great comfort and their extensive equipment tally.

Admittedly, they were not entitled to the nobility of a 6cylinder engine and their finish remained less than perfect. Nevertheless, they did not have to be ashamed, on the contrary, of their technology and were safe in all respects while offering performance in the good average of their category.

Note that the Gamma was the last Lancia equipped with a specific engine, while the CX is often considered to be the last 'real' Citroën. The GTi of our match benefits [in terms of performance and equipment] by being more recent, but the two cars remain convincing.

The CX is the simplest choice because it is easier to find and, despite everything, to maintain. The Gamma is aimed at lovers of white elephants, sensitive to its great rarity and its original mechanics. It's up to you.

Our sincere thanks to Victor Hidalgo and Philippe Coudray for their availability and their patience, as well as to Ludovic Audonnet, of the Relais de l'Auto Ancienne [http: //www.lerelais-delautoancienne.cmm/], Eric Duval, president of CX Club de France [www.cxclubdefrance.com], Jean-Charles Voisin, vice-president of Lancia Club France [http://www.lanciaclubfrance.co/calendar / index.html], Stéphane Louazé, president of the Lancia Classic Club [http://www.lancia-classic-club.com/news/news.php], the University of Poitiers [http: // www.univ-poitiers.fr/], Louis Drenenu [Gamma referent from LCF], Piero Stroppa, Ernanuele Sanfront, André Le Roux [http://leroux.andre.free.fr/], Laurent Bunnik [http: /daurent.bunnik.archives-catalogues-automobiles.fr/] and Marcel Leau for their help.

This article originally appeared in AutoRetro magazine. It was written by Julien Lombard and the photos were taken by Daniel Denis. It was translated by the Editor, who accepts all responsibilty for any errors that may have occurred.

Sculpted in Steel

Perth-based member Malcolm Greenway starts his article by telling us he has been travelling again. Well, given the issues of COVID it is instantly clear that the travels he describes are not recent. He was surprised when he realised that this Art Deco enhanced trip to Texas was back in 2016. Over to Malcolm…

Malcolm has been travelling again ~ not for work this time. He's been away in the USA on holiday visiting his son Graeme, daughter-in-law Melissa and family ~ and getting acquainted with his now three-month old granddaughter, Ava. He had a couple of weeks in Texas ~ a week holidaying with the family at Lake Travis just outside of Austin [State Capital of Texas] and catching up with an old colleague at the University of Texas at Austin ~ and then a week at his son's home in Pearland, Houston. Previous visits had taken him to the Johnson Space Centre in Houston ['Houston we have a problem']. So this time he had to look around for holiday entertainment. Houston is not particularly a tourist city. The 'downtown' is a bit of a soulless concrete jungle and there are four and five lane freeways running all over the place. Of course it is the USA hub of the Oil and Gas industry ~ which is suffering from the drop in the oil price much like Perth is suffering after the iron ore boom.

As luck would have it Malcolm found an exhibition on at the 'Fine Arts Museum, Houston'. Titled 'Sculpted in Steel' it was an exhibition of 'Art Deco Automobiles and Motorcycles 1929 ~ 1940.' Just a marvellous show of 14 cars and three motorcycles. The countries of origin were mainly the USA and France but also Germany [1934 BMW R7 concept motorcycle] and Czechoslovakia [the 1938 Tatra T97]. Makes present [in addition to those already mentioned] were Bugatti, Cord [two of], Henderson [motorcycle], Ford, Packhard, Voisin, Chrysler [two of], Delahaye [two of], Stout [weird], Hispana-Suiza, Talbot-Lago, Indian [motorcycle]. WHAT! No Traction Avant?!!! Well clearly this selection favoured the exclusive, the exotic and the ultra-luxurious ~ no place for a world beating production car that would sell more than ¾ of a million over 23 years. However there was a Citroën connection which hopefully will redeem me in submitting this to the club magazine ~ but I'll get to that.

First of all, one thing I learnt which I didn't appreciate before was that the very term 'Art Deco' came from the name of an exhibition in Paris in 1925 'EXPOSITION INTERNATIONALE des ARTS DECORATIFS ET INDUSTRIELS MODERNES'.

Left: the 1930 Henderson KJ Streamline motorcycle. Below: the 1935 Chrysler Imperial Model C-2 Airflow

Sculpted in Steel

Art Deco was the machine-inspired decorative style in the period between the two world wars that was applied by architects, interior decorators, industrial designers, fashion designers, set designers and graphic artists. Art Deco design adopted the 'streamline' shape as symbolic of a forward movement depicting industrial progress and economic revival much needed to propel the world out of the depression and economic stagnation in the years following the Wall Street Crash. Art Deco style influenced everything from sleek shapes for railway trains, luxury ocean liners, residential and commercial buildings, bridges, furniture, electrical appliances, countless decorative elements, signage and clothing ~ and of course automobiles and motorcycles all across the price range.

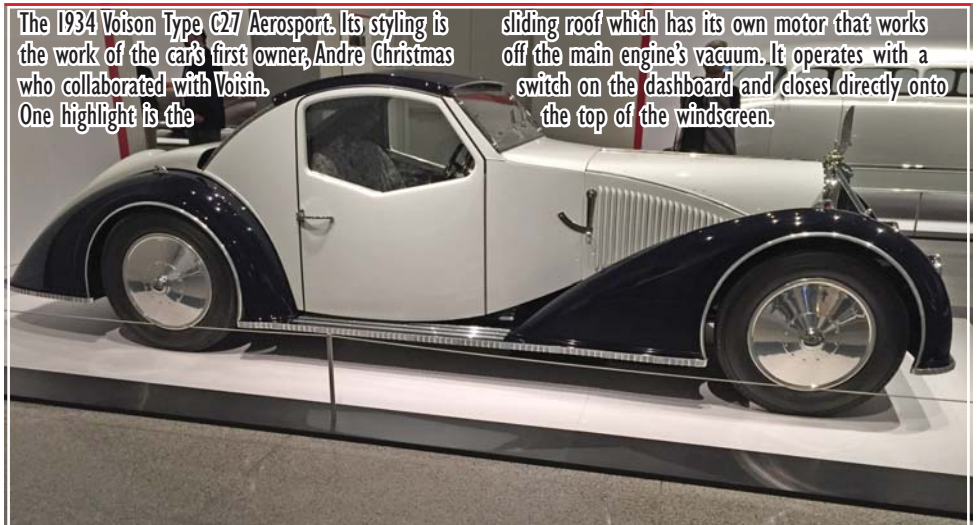
Streamlining in car design was equated with modernity as well as efficient aerodynamics and the autos selected for this exhibition demonstrated that wonderfully. So too was the Art Deco attention to detail in such items as door handles, items of trim, and interior finishes. I took some 64 photos on my iPhone so here are just a couple to illustrate this fine show: the 1930 Henderson KJ Streamline motorcycle; the 1935 Chrysler Imperial Model C-2 Airflow; the 1938 Talbot-Lago T-150-C SS Teardrop; and the 1934 Voisin Type C27 Aerosport.

Okay so did you spot the Citroën connection? Yes ~ of course it's the Voisin. The badge on the radiator cap reads 'Avions Voisin' ~ the name of the company that manufactured it. Gabriel Voisin was an illustrious French aviation pioneer and car manufacturer. And the connection is that Andre Lefebvre ~ Citroën's Chief Engineer that designed [with his team] the Traction Avant, the TUB front wheel drive utility that was succeeded by the H and HY vans, the 2CV and the DS ~ was first employed by Voisin and was responsible there in his first 16 years for designing and indeed racing competition and record-breaking Voisin automobiles. Gabriel Voisin was Lefebvre's mentor and he regarded Lefebrve as his 'spiritual son'. Between them they had no primary interest in engine performance, acceleration and speed but were rather pre-occupied with safety and reliability. Their 'golden rules' of safety and stability were: The mass of the engine and gearbox should be within the wheelbase; The car's centre of gravity should be ahead of the middle of the wheelbase; The centre of gravity should be as low as possible; The aerodynamic centre of pressure should be behind the centre of gravity; The brakes on the front wheels should be more powerful than those at the rear. Other design criteria were 'centre-point' steering, low vehicle weight, and an efficient aerodynamic profile with small frontal area.

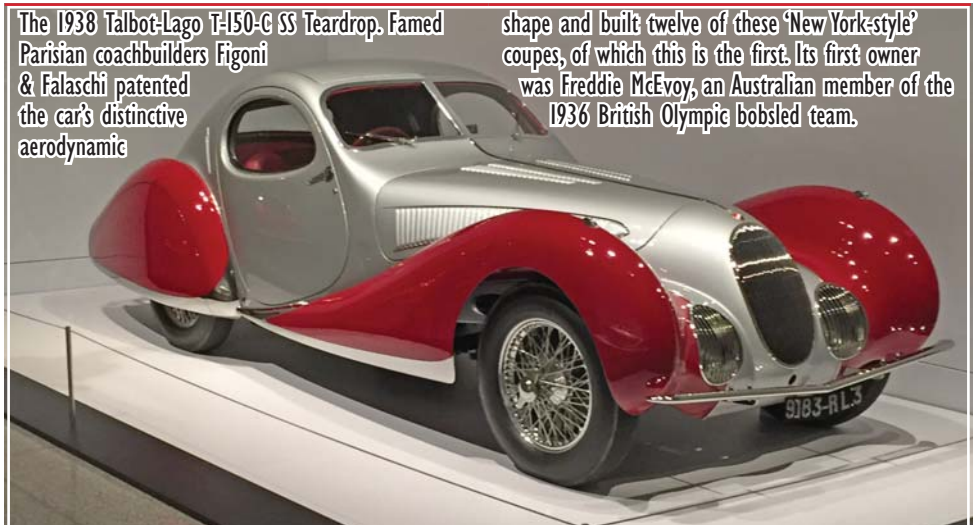
Well say no more; Lefebvre brought out all of those criteria in the Citroëns we love so much ~ so I feel the Traction Avant was there in spirit ~ a 1934 Art Deco design that captured modernity, flair, and fast stable design setting the standard in automobile design for many years to come.

Malcolm Greenway

Three of the five stamps issued by the French postal authorities to publicise the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs Modernes.



The 1934 Voison Type C27 Aerosport. Its styling is the work of the car's first owner, Andre Christmas who collaborated with Voisin. One highlight is the sliding roof which has its own motor that works off the main engine's vacuum. It operates with a switch on the dashboard and closes directly onto the top of the windscreen.



The 1938 Talbot-Lago T-150-C SS Teardrop. Famed Parisian coachbuilders Figoni & Falaschi patented the car's distinctive aerodynamic shape and built twelve of these 'New York-style' coupes, of which this is the first. Its first owner was Freddie McEvoy, an Australian member of the 1936 British Olympic bobsled team.

The Best Bettered

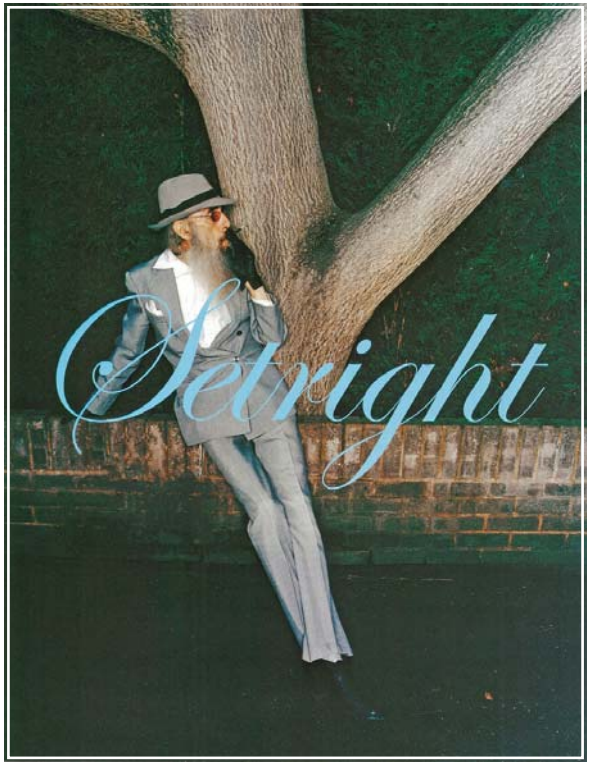
CX25 GTi Turbo

Readers will know how much your Editor enjoys, nay revels, in the writings of LJK Setright. As part of the publicity for the launch of the Series II CX in the UK in late 1985 Citroën UK commissioned three articles from well-known, well-respected specialists in their fields.

Nigel Chapman, Head of the Department of Transport Design at the Royal College of Art cast his eye over the CX's altered image while Stuart Bladon, who was Deputy Editor of 'Autocar' for 26years investigated the improvements in the company of the owner of a Series I CX and Setright.

Setright celebrated the restyle of a superstar by investigating the dynamics of the CX.

As cars go, the CX is most egregious in its design and construction. Accordingly, it does not go as other cars go, but behaves in a quite exceptional way for which the thinking Citroën driver is profoundly grateful. Any other kind of driver might feel himself at a loss, especially if he be the irrationally responsive type, given to throwing fits of all the limbs and hoping to sort out the consequences before it is too late. The CX does not reward such people, for it does not introduce consequences: it does what it is instructed to do, no more ~ and no less. It is the thinking driver's car, having been created more rationally than any current car from any other source.



It thus defies all attempts to isolate any particular feature as being responsible for its character. One cannot dismiss it as being an extreme expression of front wheel-drive concepts, for it is equally arguable that it has front-wheel drive merely as a consequence of its advanced expression of aerodynamic concepts. Those in turn might be thought subservient to its self-levelling suspension ~ but that could have been inspired by the desire for uncorrupted suspension geometry, the need for which is magnified by the desire to embody front-wheel drive.

Wherever you start, the answer is always the same in the end: this is a car in which every major feature is, by the most remorselessly logical analysis, found to be perfectly complementary to all other major features. That is why, as cars go, the CX is eventually found to be a most refreshing synthesis ~ and why, once a thinking driver finds the CX, he seldom reverts to any other.

Hydraulic Power

However, logic should be our servant, not our master. If we can find no logical point at which to begin an examination of this fascinating machine, we are free to

The Best Bettered

pick an arbitrary one. As at buffets, I choose to start in the middle and work outwards, beginning with a little engine-driven pump which crams an hydraulic fluid into a circuit maintained by a reservoir at very high pressure. Here is a source of what all men seek: power.

It can be used to do almost all the many jobs around a car ~ those bodged by antiquated ironmongery in some cars, and those left to the driver's own muscles in some others. Citroën do not yet employ this power to shut the windows, sweep the windscreen [though that big single wiper on the CX is one of the two best I know], nor even to actuate the clutch; but it does most of the things that matter.

For a start ~ or rather, for a stop, since that takes priority should a circuit fault develop ~ the high-pressure hydraulics operate the brakes. There is thus no need for the brake pedal to move [indeed, there would be no need even for a pedal, but to pacify the frightened novice accustomed only to lesser machines], since it merely controls a valve, responding accurately and sensitively to the pressure exerted by the driver's foot. If the pedal has virtually no movement, it is always in the same place, and that foot can always rely on finding it, no matter how great the hurry. And if the urgency is extreme, so is the power of CX brakes.

Available in the better versions of the car is an anti-panic braking system which, as in aircraft blessed with comparable hydraulics, monitors the rate at which each wheel is slowed and modulates the hydraulic pressure if there is any tendency of one to lock [as it might on a slippery surface], doing so ten times a second. Other cars with ABS systems develop sickening heaves at the pedal when the system is interfering with the driver's excesses, and then they sometimes give up in disgust.

JEAN-PAUL GOUDE & GRACE JONES

The advert which caused a sensation in France making a French minister's hair stand on end ~ the 220kph turbo publicity campaign. The message reached a far larger public than envisaged. The RSCG agency commissioned Jean-Paul Goude to design a poster of the CX GTi Turbo for the Paris Motor Show. He took Grace Jones as his model and photographed her with a 'CX' hairstyle, discreetly outlined with a laser beam. As a result of recent laws passed in France, constructors could no longer base their campaigns on the performance figures of cars. The Minister of Transport considered that the neatly-printed '220 Km/h' figure contravened those laws and alerted the press. He couldn't have done better ~ it was all over the papers and the CX Turbo got the kind of launching that publicists and their clients usually only dream about.

Always Well Behaved

In the CX, there is none of this disgusting behaviour: when the excess effort has to be intercepted, the driver is told [so as to warn him about the road surface] by a steady 10Hz buzz in the sole of his foot, as though he were triggering a remote machine-gun.

Even without this new refinement, there is no car less likely to get itself sideways at high speeds, either through injudicious cornering or ill-modulated braking. Even so, it can still be acted upon laterally by the wind ~ and that is not a comfortable situation in any conventionally streamlined car. You do not, I trust, need to be told in this day and age how desirable it is that a car body be shaped for minimal aerodynamic drag; but not everybody knows that the classical streamlined low-drag shape is directionally unstable when subjected to a cross-wind.

The faster it goes, the worse it gets, trying ultimately to turn in mid-air like an arrow shot tail-first. The cure is to erect large areas of bodywork at the tail, so that side-wind pressure is always centred behind the centre of gravity; but these erections spoil the streamlining [and the view from the cabin]. The CX has no need of them: its weight is well forward, to ensure good traction from the driven front wheels, so it can afford a classically shaped low-drag body. But that is not all there is to it: the body is shaped so that its drag remains low even in a crosswind, and that is something very rare indeed among modern low-drag cars.

If the wind can move a car sideways, it can also move it up the down. The CX is designed to suffer minimal lift or downforce as it passes through the air: apart from anything else, such forces induce extra drag. More importantly, they play havoc with roadholding and steering stability, by altering the distribution of weight on the wheels so that the car rises or sinks on its springs at one end or the other.

The Best Bettered

Should this happen momentarily to a CX, no great harm is done, because the suspension [as we shall see] has geometry which is not corrupted by such motions; and it can only happen momentarily, because the self levelling suspension keeps the car's ride height substantially constant at both ends. It does this regardless of the load being carried in the car, as well as of loads applied externally.

Thus the airflow is always consistent, something that cannot be said of any other car. In the dozen years since the CX was formed, other manufacturers have brought out new cars with lower drag coefficients than this Citroën can boast ~ but those lower figures only apply in ideal conditions. As soon as a car is loaded so as to ride higher on its quaint old cartsprings, its drag can increase sharply. In the windtunnel where the CX figures were measured, another car was tested which proved when unladen to match its maker's claim for drag coefficient of 0.35, a shade lower than the 0.36 of the CX Turbo. Laden as with four passengers, the poor tip-tilted thing produced a reading of 0.43! There are cars with even lower coefficients, today; there are none, I think, so well-behaved in all circumstances of load, speed and wind direction as the CX.

The self-levelling suspension was not created just to cheat the wind. By keeping the car at a constant level regardless of the load it carries, it enables the suspension to maintain a constant comfortable spring frequency, neither too soggy when fully laden nor too bouncy when running light. This is best done by using bubbles of trapped nitrogen as springs, so that is what Citroën do: the gas spring offers progressively more resistance to heavy loads than to light ones, suffers no internal friction, and takes up very little space. Linked to the wheels by high-pressure hydraulic fluid [which is incompressible] acting as an adjustable length pushrod, and incidentally as a longlife aeration-free damper, the four nitrogen bubbles are what gives this care the world's most impressive combination of ride and roadholding.

Handling is another matter, determined not by how well the tyres are kept on the road but by how well they are kept pointing in the right direction. CX suspension has little in common with other makes: it suffers none of the gyroscopic precessions and allows none of the variations in camber, castor, kingpin inclination and steer angle which corrupt the geometry of wheel motions [and disturb the functional responses of the tyres] in almost all other cars.

Turning the steering wheel does not jack up or lower the nose of the CX, as it does in most front-wheel-drive cars; all it does is to steer the wheels as the driver commands, no more and no less. Drive a CX really fast through a bumpy bend: the gas springs absorb the bumps, the wheels follow the contours, nothing else intrudes. There is no wheel-fight, nothing to feel: the car simply goes around the bend, really fast. And the next one, even if it is in the opposite direction.

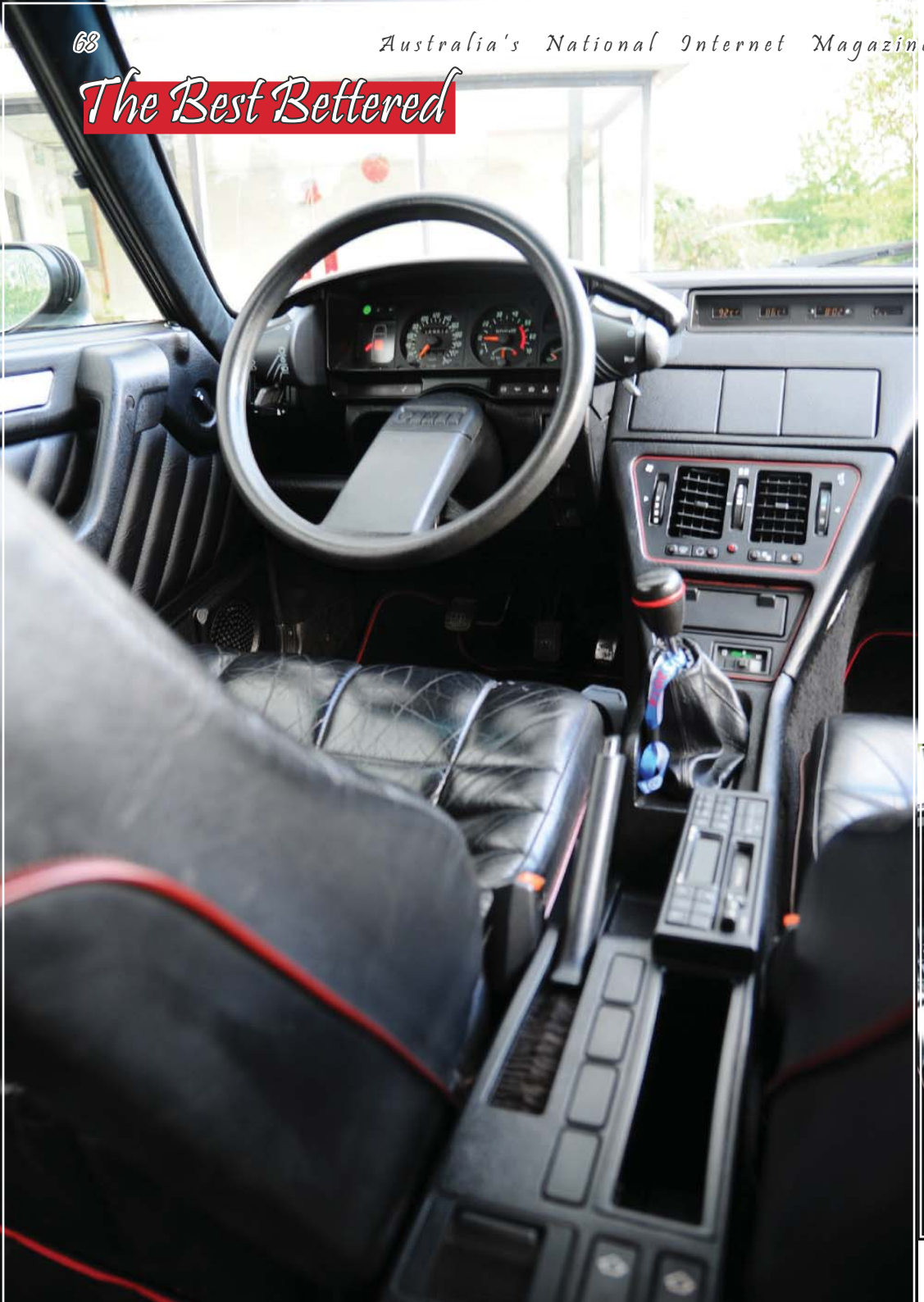
This 1987 CX Turbo II was auctioned by Aguttes at their Citroen Centenary auction at La Ferté-Vidame. It was estimated to sell for between €8 and €15,000. https://www.classicdriver.com/en/car/citroen/cx/1987/683047

The Aguttes' car showed 169,000km on the odometer.

Logical Arrangements

Why do people ask for steering which allows them to feel what they may do, when they can have steering which does as they direct? The CX

The Best Bettered



wheels point where the driver wants them to point, and neither a puncture nor a kerbstone is allowed to interfere. The driver has no need of feel, only of self-centering, and that is how Citroën arrange matters. The powered hydraulics do most of the work, so there is no need for the steering to be low-geared and twirly, even though so much of the car's weight is carried [for traction and directional stability ~ remember?] on the front wheels.

Most manoeuvres can be performed without moving the hands on the wheelrim, without crossing the arms, and without disconcerting effort. At parking speeds, one finger can give you full lock with an alacrity that makes parking something to be done smartly with a glow of satisfaction, rather than slowly with a sweat from exertion. At motorway speeds the steering is still precise and prompt, but is hydraulically weighted [a shade too much for my light-fingered taste] so that you do not sneeze yourself into another lane. Between those extremes the steering weight is proportional to car speed [not to engine speed, as so many others illogically do it], and at all speeds the car keeps its course with an impeccable calm beyond emulation by others. Indeed this steering encourages calmness in the driver, which cannot be a bad thing: anyone who blames the system in fact betrays himself.

While black leather appears to have been a popular option on CX Turbo cars, you editor prefers the standard chevron-pattened velour which was standard. https://www.citroenorigins.fr/en/cars/cx

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The extraordinary positivity of the CX [it deserves to be called logical positivity, but philosophers might object to their jargon being disturbed] extends even to braking. Most cars will do a dreadful nose-dive if braked hard, with unpleasant consequences to the springing and steering; those that do not often employ an anti-dive effect which opposes the natural action of the suspension and thus produces other consequences equally unpleasant. It being quite unimaginable that Citroën would let anything interfere with their suspension, the CX [aided by an uncommonly long wheelbase which also enhances ride comfort and steering response] exploits an inertial anti-dive system whereby the car's own weight keeps it level, leaving the springing to deal normally with any bumps encountered while braking.

It cannot work quite so well in the opposite mode: look in the mirror and you may detect a slight pitching of the car during hard acceleration. Not that the majority of CX models accelerate all that hard ~ but for those who appreciate that facility, the CX25 GTi Turbo accelerates very hard indeed. Not merely because it has been turbocharged, mark you, but because of the way it has been turbocharged.

As by now you must expect, Citroën approached the matter logically: high performance on the road is not achieved merely by high power output at the top of the engine's speed range, nor even by a high torque peak at some lesser rate of revolutions. What truly matters is best expressed mathematically, as the area under the curve of surplus tractive effort: in practical terms this means the torque curve and gear ratios are made mutually complementary.

What Citroën have done is to contrive a high boost pressure, and thence enormous torque, slap in the middle of the engine's operating speed range, and then progressively to reduce the boost pressure as the engine speed approaches its limit. Never mind the niceties of the valving which achieve this; the result is that the engine pulls astonishingly hard whenever you want it to.

Few cars so fast demand so little gear-changing; few cars so flexible offer such astonishing performance; and all those few in both categories cost at least twice as much as the Citroën.

Thoughts on Figures

Perhaps a few figures might not come amiss. So far I have driven three GTi Turbo specimens: one was a bit off-colour and would not exceed 206kph, but the other two were both still accelerating when I had to ease the accelerator at a true 217. In one of those I took some acceleration figures too: either by luck or by good judgement I managed the sprint from 0 to 96kph in 7.5seconds [Citroën claims 7.6], and 0 to 160kph in just 19seconds. As it happens I consider 0-96 times as immaterial, representing a kind of driving which is inappropriate for the public highway; but for really fast practical roadwork, acceleration from 95 to 145 or 160 is all-important, and in this vital range the Turbo has very few, and almost all very extravagant, peers.

While the Turbo is clearly the model most-photgraphed for the internet your Editor is strangely drawn to this tan interior on a CX25 TRI.

Nor do many cling to the road and adhere to the driver's instructions as well as this prime CX. In a very tight corner or roundabout it can be a bit disappointing when it understeers under full power; in all other circumstances, it ranks as one of the very best.

Personally I think that all CX versions should be well shod and stabilised as the wide-tyred Turbo with its stiffer anti-roll settings ~ but for that matter I think that all versions should be as fast as the Turbo, and all other cars should be redesigned to be as rational as the CX.

That, alas, is as clearly beyond hope as the CX GTi Turbo exceeds normal expectations. Even Citroën do not appreciate its true worth. On the evidence of its price and their strange notion that its market rivals are the quickest current Rover, Renault 25, Volvo and Saab, Citroën undervalue their car. The others are dearer by anything from 7 to over 40%, but I do not see them as peers: to rival the CX, a car must have comparable refinement of concept. Lotus Excel, Audi 200 Quatro, Bentley Turbo R? Prices from 24 to 513% higher? Citroën like many potential customers, don't know what they are missing.

This article by LJK Setright first appeared in 'The Citroën Magazine', published by Citroën Cars Ltd in November 1985.

Vale Robert Opron

Robert Opron [22 February 1932 ~ 29 March 2021]

Although he had been in poor health for quite some time, the cause of death has been attributed to COVID-19.

He created or redesigned, among others, the bodywork of the Citroën DS, Citroën Ami 6 break, Citroën Ami 8, Citroën GS, Citroën SM, Citroën CX, Citroën Axel and later at Renault he was responsible for the design teams for the Renault Fuego, Renault 9, Renault 11, Renault 25 and for the Alfa Romeo SZ [ES30].

Opron was born in Amiens in Picardy, France. His father was in the military and the family lived in locations in French Colonial Africa like Algeria, Mali and Abidjan.

In 1952 he enrolled in the École des Beaux-Arts in Amiens; transferring to the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1953 where he studied architecture under Auguste Perret along with painting, and sculpture.

At age 21 he married Geneviève Mercier. In the early 1950s he took up flying.

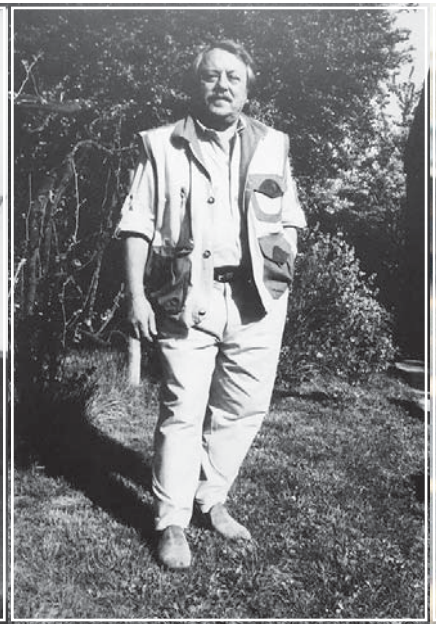
Opron began his professional career as a machine designer for the Compagnie Nationale des Sucreries in Ham in the Somme and in 1954 he was hired by aircraft manufacturer Société Nationale de Constructions Aéronautices du Nord where he specialised in cockpit design, and worked on the Nord Noratlas aircraft.

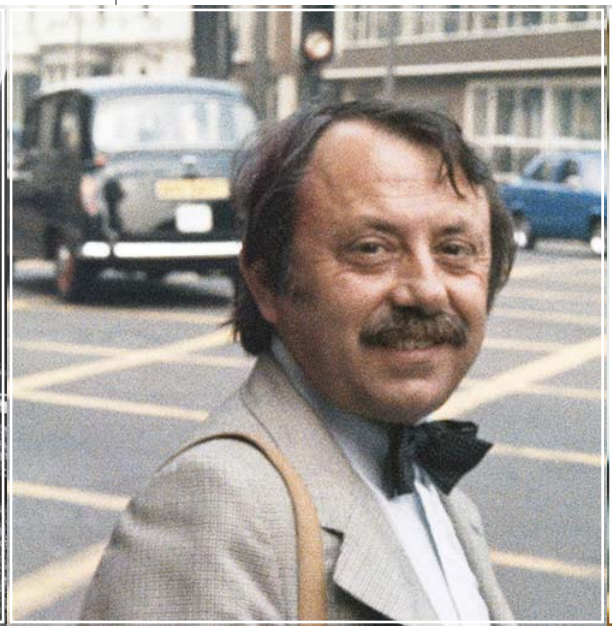
In 1958 he began working at Simca but his job disappeared in 1961, and he received a two-year salary redundancy payout, but with a non-competition clause that prevented him from immediately moving to another automaker. Opron went to Arthur Martin, a company that produced household and domestic and home appliances, where he became Director of Style.

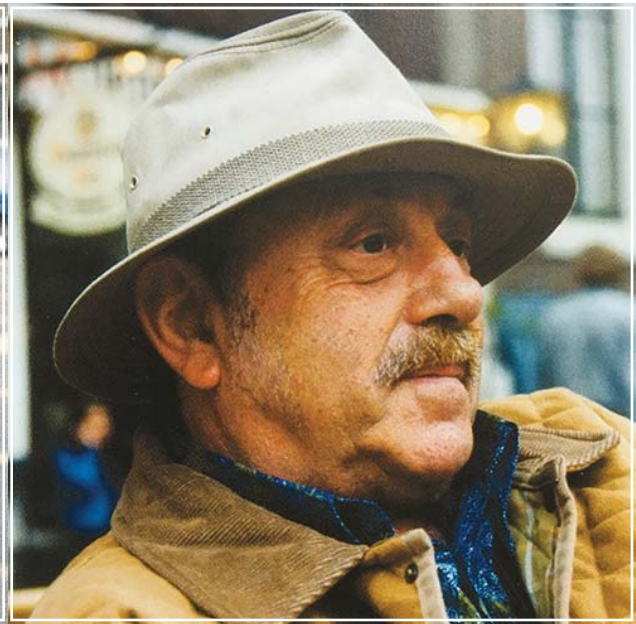
In 1962 Robert Opron responded to an ad in le Monde stating that an 'important industrial group' was looking for an experienced designer. He received a letter in which he was directed to report to Citroën where he met with Flaminio Bertoni, Citroën's chief designer who had been responsible for both the 2CV and DS.

When Opron arrived at the meeting, Bertoni asked to see Opron's portfolio of drawings. Opron said that Bertoni '… threw them on the floor, prodded them with his cane and said that he did not think very much of them.' Opron collected his drawings and told Bertoni he found his behaviour was unacceptable, to which Bertoni replied 'I do find you interesting though!' Opron left, vowing to never work for such a man. Three weeks later, he received a letter offering him a job…

Opron was directed to come up with a replacement for the 2CV ~ the never-launched G-Mini; he worked with Bertoni on the Belphégor range of trucks; redesigned the DS nose and submitted proposals for a new rear end; modernised the Ami 6 [turning it into the Ami 8]; was responsible for the GS and SM;







Vale Robert Opron

and designed the CX and the Axel.

In 1964, following the death of Bertoni, he become Responsable de Style for the brand until its takeover in 1974 by Peugeot.

Robert Opron realised that housing the headlights under a smooth surface improved aerodynamics no end. In addition, he developed the system of directional headlights connected to the steering that allowed the driver 'to see round bends'. He combined these two ideas into the 'second version' [or third nose] of the DS in 1967.

Robert Opron left Citroën in 1974 and moved to arch-competitor Renault where he then headed up the Renault style office. In 1986, he moved to Fiat where he designed for Alfa Romeo.

In the early 1990s, he worked as an independent consultant in automotive design and styling, notably for Ligier.

He finally retired in 2001.

He established a house style that built on Bertoni's work and created a range of quite dissimilar cars that could not be anything other than Citroëns.

His styling motifs included designs that featured a large, steeply raked windscreen, truncated tail, semi-concealed rear wheels and an unusually large front overhang, all of which emphasised the front wheels and thereby the fact that the cars were front wheel drive. A large curved rear window [admittedly inverted in the CX] was another one of his style signatures.

Robert Opron created designs that typify Citroën's 'glory years' of the 1960s and 1970s.

He was responsible for:

- the post 1964 restyling of the 2CV
- the post 1964 restyling of the D-Series
- the Ami 6 Break
- the Dyane
- the Ami 8
- the Wankel-engined M35
- the SM
- the GS
- the Wankel-engined Birotor
- the CX
- the Axel
- the Belphégor trucks

He is survived by his wife, Geneviève, and three generations of descendants.

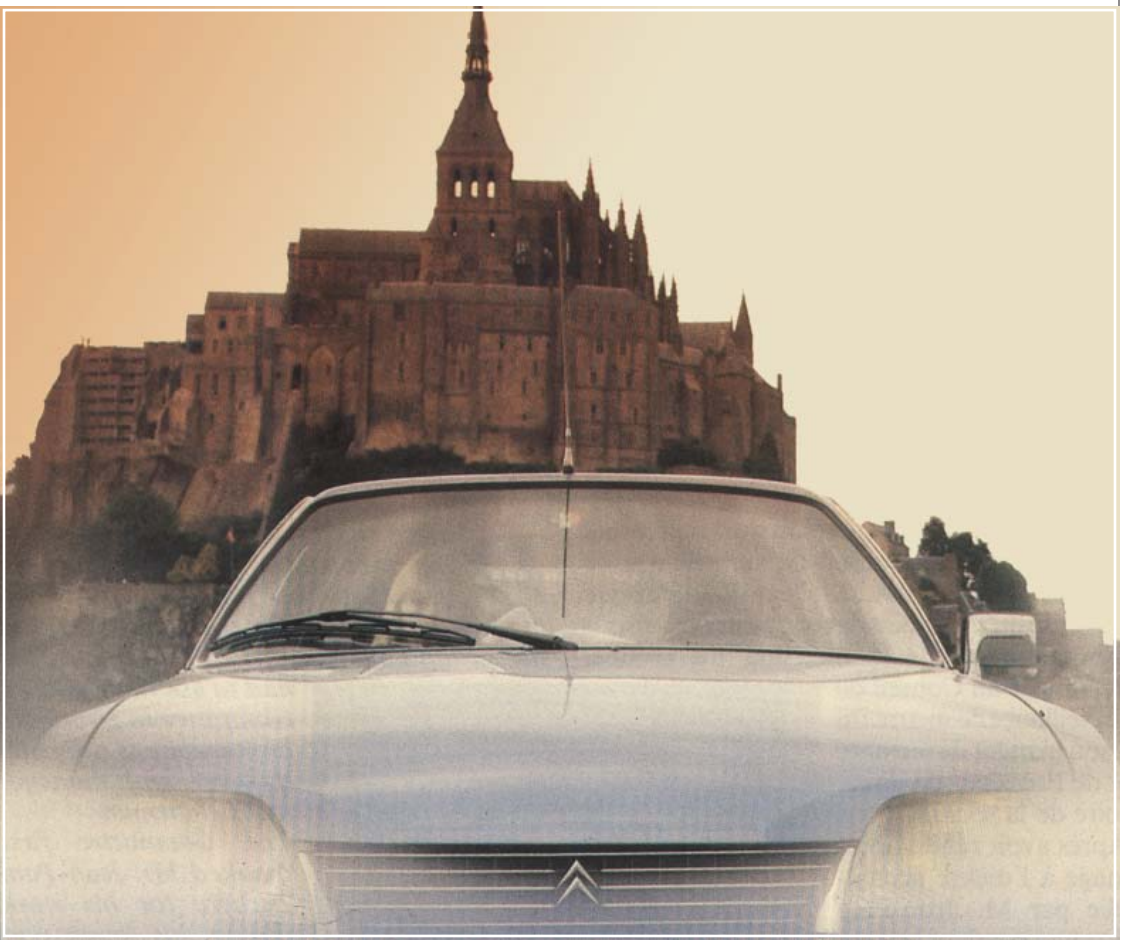
Julian Marsh and Citroënët would like to extend sincere condolences to the Opron family on the occasion of their loss.

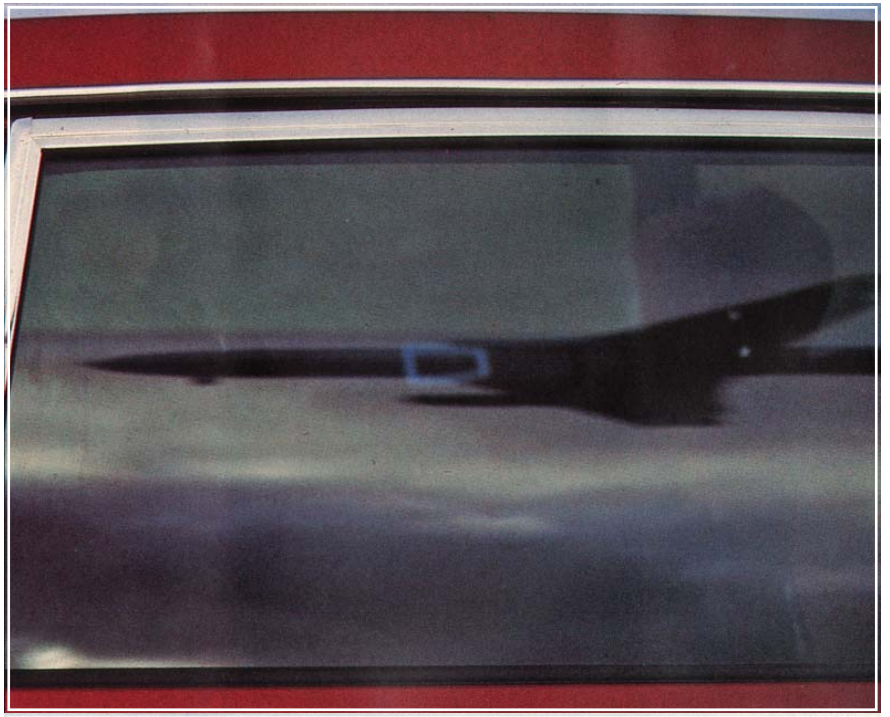
The pictures below were taken on the occasion of the launch of the French edition of the Citrovisie book about the CX by Michael Buurma. Far left [l to r] Citrovisie publisher Thijs van der Zanden, Ferdi Ernest [who translated the CX book into French], Robert Opron and Michael Buurma, the author. Picture is © Thijs van der Zanden/Citrovisie Right: Robert Opron holding a hubcap from the oldest surviving CX. This and the centre picture are and are © Michael Buurma

Photothèque 1

Frederic Maury prefers to be called a man of images rather than a photographer. He doesn't like to be thought of as a creator, but an arbitrator, an active one, prepared to wait great lengths of time to choose the right moment to capture all the elements necessary to create a weird or harmonious combination which he always achieves most spectacularly.

Frederic Maury varies his subjects. He is an audio-visual journalist, interviews show business stars and also writes articles on films which are being made. In 1976 he published 'Cine-magazine'. He had a particular liking for lavish productions and spectacular stage effects and was, at the time, drawn to the world of advertising. He thus became a photographer and began to vary the background of his landscape photos ~ from plain postcards to more daring ones such





Photothèque 1

as the one shown here, which juxtaposes a CX in a halo of misty light, with the Mont St-Michel clearly shown in the background. This opened the door for him to David Hamilton's publisher. Gallimard commissioned him to do a series of crime book covers which gave him experience in stagecraft [he was sometimes helped by the stuntman, Remy Julienne] His interest in mechanics led him to industrial photography, and he has often taken pictures of helicopters and planes. One of the techniques he often uses is to match varied subjects together, as seen here in this series of photographs. Two means of transport are placed side by side or on top of each other ~ one seeming to come out of the other. The combination of different scales causes some strange optical illusions such as the plane taking off from the roof of a CX or the helicopter landing on the rear-window. Frederic Maury works on standard-size format as a rule for optimum clearness of detail. He only uses a Mamiya 645 4.5×6cm with Ektachrome 64 ASA film.

This article, and the associated images, are taken from 'Le Double Chevron', the magazine of Automobiles Citroën. The issue [No 77] was published in Autumn, 1984.

Photothèque 2

When your Editor started planning this edition of 'démarreur' he contacted a number of the Club's CX owners in the hope that they may have felt comfortable making a contribution to the magazine. I certainly believe that a member's reflections on the car[s] they own has far more resonance for members than an old road test or a recent classic car magazine review ~ both of which appear in this edition.

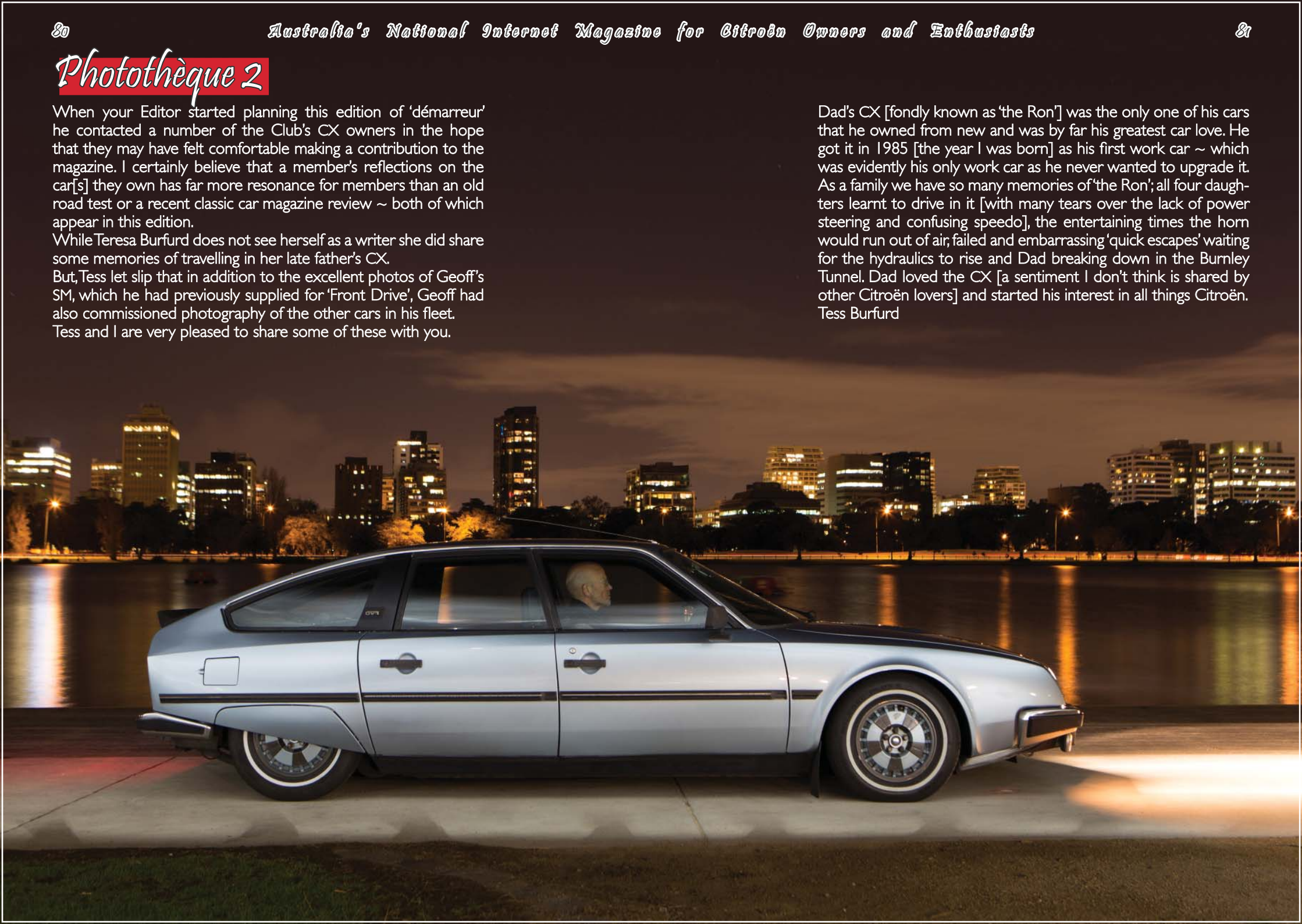
While Teresa Burfurd does not see herself as a writer she did share some memories of travelling in her late father's CX.

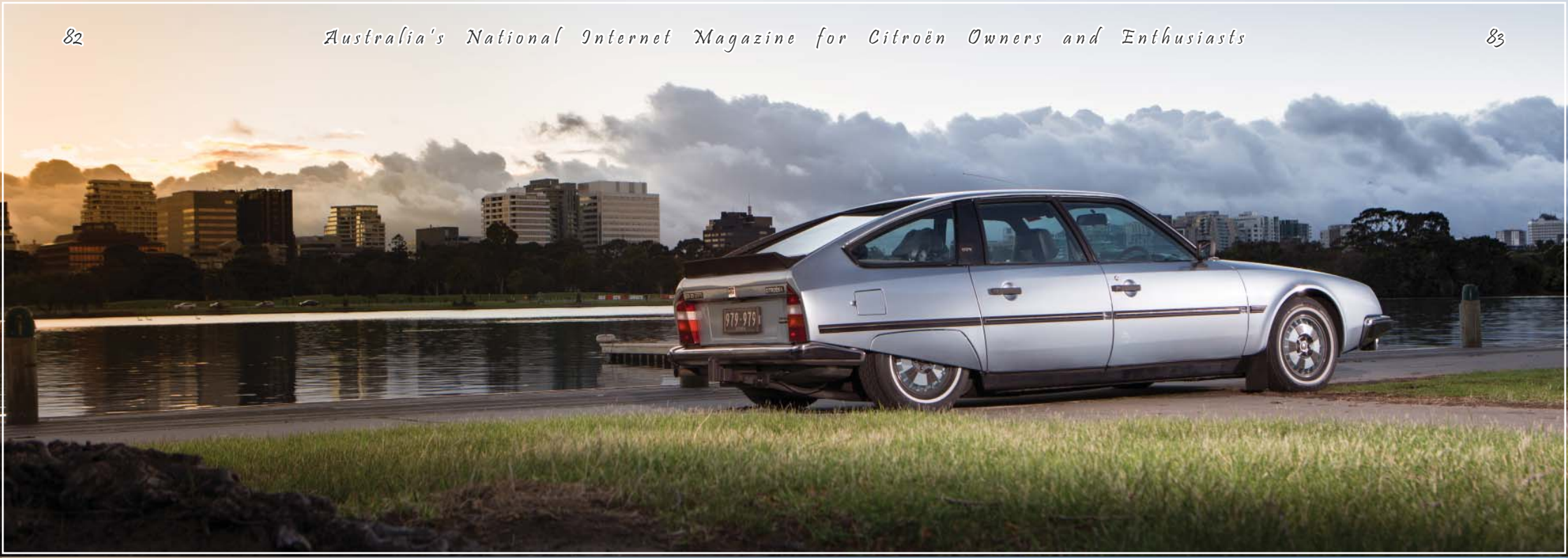
But, Tess let slip that in addition to the excellent photos of Geoff's SM, which he had previously supplied for 'Front Drive', Geoff had also commissioned photography of the other cars in his fleet.

Tess and I are very pleased to share some of these with you.

Dad's CX [fondly known as 'the Ron'] was the only one of his cars that he owned from new and was by far his greatest car love. He got it in 1985 [the year I was born] as his first work car ~ which was evidently his only work car as he never wanted to upgrade it. As a family we have so many memories of 'the Ron'; all four daughters learnt to drive in it [with many tears over the lack of power steering and confusing speedo], the entertaining times the horn would run out of air, failed and embarrassing 'quick escapes' waiting for the hydraulics to rise and Dad breaking down in the Burnley Tunnel. Dad loved the CX [a sentiment I don't think is shared by other Citroën lovers] and started his interest in all things Citroën.

Tess Burfurd






979-979

Four of the Best

HOW THEY STAND

VEHICLE	Price	Fuel Econo-my/Grade	Ins. Group	No. of Dealers	Other Models
CITROËN CX PRESTIGE	£7,400	20/4★	7	220	3 saloons 3 estates
JAGUAR XJ3.4	£7,225	22/4★	6	300	2 saloons 3 coupés
MERCEDES BENZ 250	£7,350	20/4★	7	86	6 saloons
PEUGEOT 604SL	£7,128*	22/4★	7	180	None

* Car tested had optional auto gearbox, air con, sun roof.

The after-effects of the 1973 Yom Kippur war are certainly over as far as the world's car makers are concerned. Three of the four cars in this group test have made their public debuts since that time, and all appear to be selling well in an area of strong competition.

Citroën and Peugeot have joined this luxury market, Mercedes Benz have introduced an improved model and only Jaguar rely on the model that has been bringing them sales success for many years. Wealthier car buyers appear to have dismissed ecology and austerity fears as fads.

We started the group with the Citroën CX Prestige which went on sale earlier this year. It is an even more luxurious version of the Pallas, and has an impressive extra 24cm in the wheelbase. It is beautifully appointed throughout.

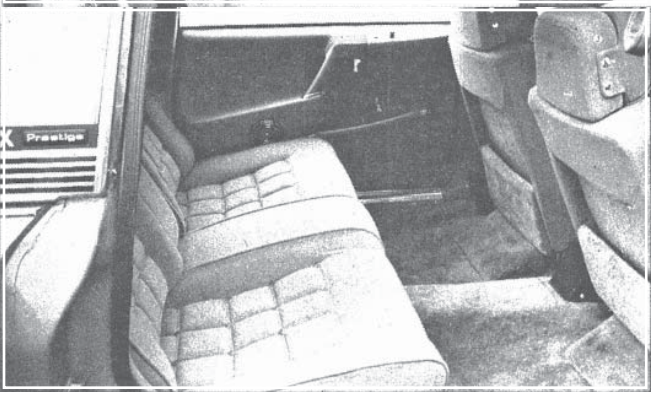
Everything about the Prestige is different. In addition to its original styling, inside and out, it has very direct power steering, a clutch pedal-less gear change, non-cancelling indicators, revolving drum instruments, finger-tip controls, adjustable ride height, hydropneumatic independent suspension ~ the list is endless. Driving the Citroën is like learning to drive all over again.

The only item the car inherits [unfortunately] is a 85.8kW, 2,347cc version of the old four-cylinder engine. It is reasonable as far as it goes, but is in no way a match for the multi-cylinder opposition. The Citroën's retail price, including C-matic gearbox and air conditioning, is £7,400, marginally the most expensive in the group.

Mercedes Benz's W123 models have been on sale for around six months now. There is nothing extravagant or extroverted about these cars. The 250 tested here is typical of the type. It is conservatively styled, markedly austere in comparison with its rivals. But it is beautifully conceived, developed and constructed.

A three-pointed star on a car's bonnet means it is smooth and easy to drive, and has just about the best primary and secondary

Four of the Best



Citroën's ultimate luxury for the chauffeur [top]; yards of leg room for the VIP [below].

safety features of any car in the world. In short, it is idiot-proof.

The 250's power unit is a 96.2kW six-cylinder overhead camshaft engine, and is mounted in conjunction with a four-speed automatic gearbox. This, and the power steering, is standard, and the 250 retails at £7,350.

A year earlier, in November 1975, Peugeot had joined the Mercedes Benz / BMW / Jaguar club with their all-new 604SL. The Pininfarina-styled car is a model of under-statement, and is a fairly obvious ape of the luxury cars of Germany.

The only similarities between the Peugeot and Citroën are that they are French, and now, closely linked in business terms. Otherwise, the 604 is a stark contrast, conventional and angular. It has a 101.5kW engine which drives the rear wheels; it is the joint Peugeot-Renault-Volvo all-alloy V6 that speculators suggest will eventually go into the CX.

The basic 604 is a competitive £6,202. But the model tested was equipped with automatic transmission, an electrically operated sun roof and air conditioning, which takes the price to £7,129. It makes it a very well equipped machine that can still match its rivals on price.

We were originally going to include the Rover 3500 in this group ~ but it is too cheap! Even with extras like automatic, electrically operated window lifts, alloy wheels, etc, one would be hard pressed to spend more than £6,000. As an aside to this test, it is a very worthy alternative.

In the end we chose a Jaguar XJ3.4 at £7,225. The Series 2 was introduced in September 1973 [a month before the Yom Kippur war] and the 3.4-litre version came 18 months later. It has the same long wheelbase chassis as the 4.2 and 5.3, but has cloth seat trim and no air conditioning or tinted glass options.

The twin overhead camshaft six-cylinder engine produces the most power in the group, 120.1 kW. It is available with an overdrive manual gearbox or [in our case] an automatic; there is no difference in price.

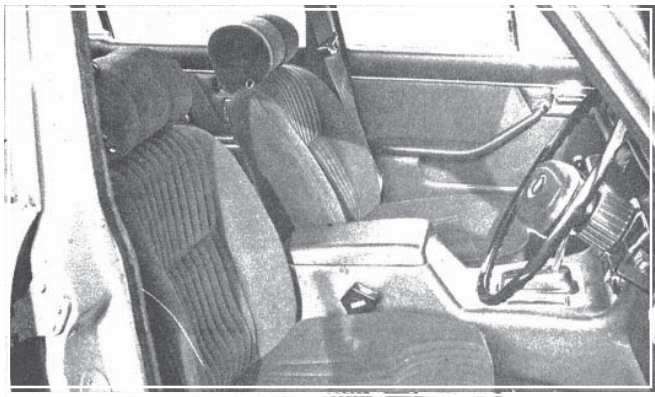
Performance

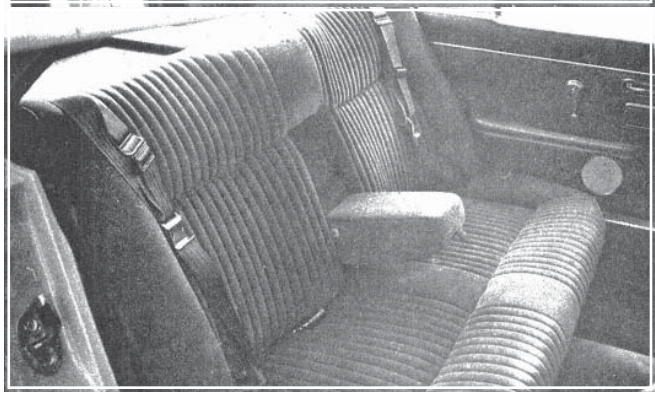
All four are smooth, silent and reasonably good performers. The various types of automatic gearbox mean there is some penalty on outright acceleration, though 'top' gear over-taking times are much improved.

The Peugeot is marginally best to 96kph, taking 12.5secs. The engine spins freely and quietly, the General Motors automatic gearbox allowing all the engine's resources to be used before changing up. The car's progress is deceptively fast, though there are distinct wind and road noises.

Although it produces most power, the Jaguar's engine has a reluctance to spin so freely. Its time to 96kph is a reasonable 13.2secs. What is most impressive, though, is the silence in which it is achieved. It powers forward with an almost inaudible hum, leaving passengers immune from the straining engine, wind and road noises.

When we first tested the Peugeot 604 [February 1976] we wrote that its quietness and smooth ride were the equal of the Jaguar XJ's. Having stepped





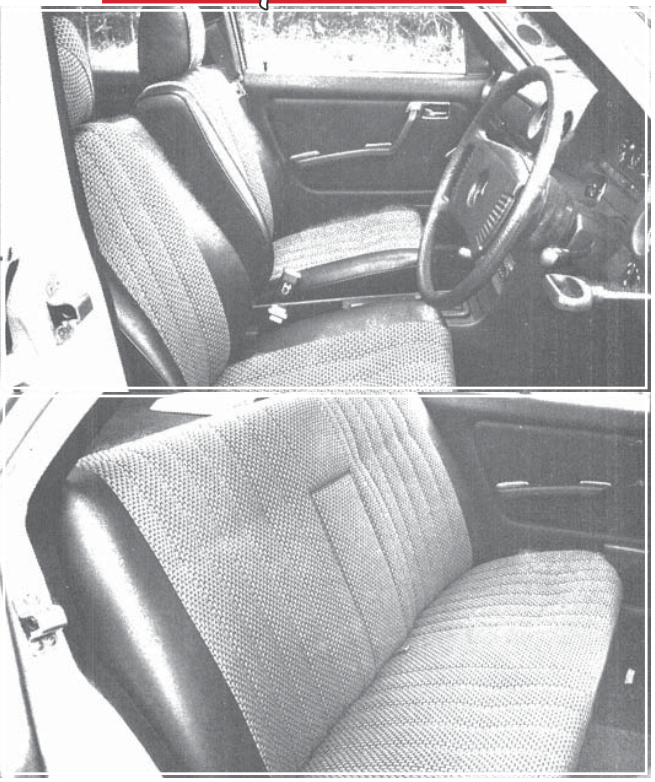
Classic Jaguar interior [top]; front seats are broad and rear comfort is excellent [below].

from one car to the other in this test we must revise that opinion. The Jaguar is still the quietest car for the money on the market.

The Jaguar's gearchange is good, though not as smooth as the Mercedes Benz's. That is uncannily smooth, and one has to concentrate hard to detect any of the three changes.

The 250's time to 96kph is a little disappointing [14.6secs] and may not have been representative because of the car's new-

Four of the Best



Mercedes Benz has a good driving position [top], but seats are too hard for some [below].

ness. There is a little wind roar and a purposeful growl from the engine, which add to an impression of sparkling performance.

By contrast the Citroën is a slow coach. Its time of 96kph is 15.5secs, achieved by almost abusing the engine. In fairness, however, the unit remains quite well muted, though there are distinct wind noises. There are no road noises.

The CX's forte is not brisk town driving. It is at its best bowling along a motorway as quickly as the law will allow, the passenger in the back making notes for an important business meeting. But the other three are also good long distance cars ~ and combine brisker acceleration into the bargain.

The C-matic gearchange ~ a three-speed affair that is used like a normal gearchange but automatically engages the clutch when it is moved ~ requires long and deliberate movements. Citroën are firmly wedded to the system, just as they are to many of their other ideas, but we are unconvinced that it has any advantages over a normal automatic.

Among other things, it means it cannot be 'kicked down' to overtake, from 50 to 80kph for instance. It has a torque converter, and does the test in 10.0secs. By contrast its opposition here select lower gears when subjected to harsh acceleration. Their times are better: 4.9secs for the Jaguar, 6.4secs for the Peugeot and 6.7secs for the Mercedes Benz.

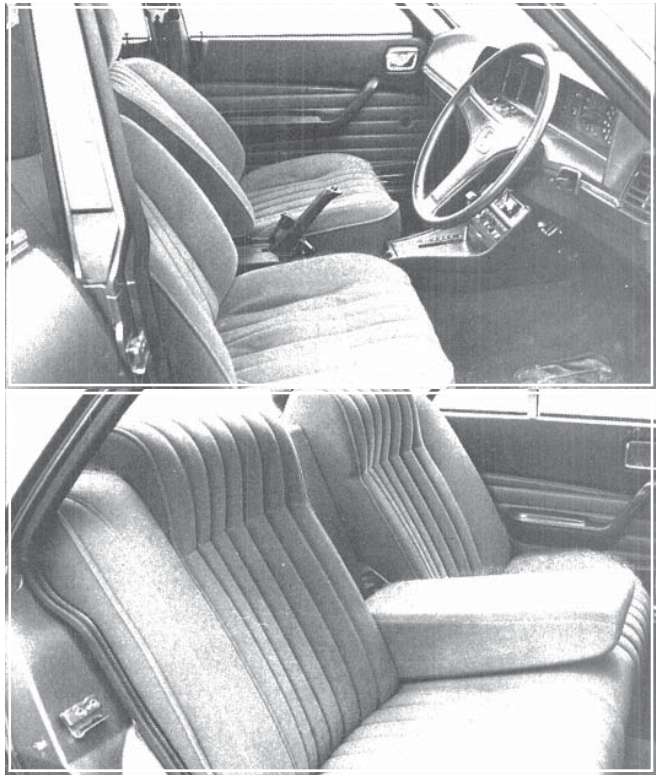
All have very powerful dual circuit disc brakes all round. The Citroën's are power operated, and the others have regular type of vacuum servo assistance. All stop well, but they have differing characteristics. The Citroën pedal is touch- sensitive and needs a gentle touch

The Jaguar's cornering potential is deceptive, yet it must be as good as any in its class. The rack and pinion power steering is extremely light at all speeds, giving a suggestion of slack in it. On the contrary, however, it is precise, and the general momentum of the car when going quickly round corners seems to eliminate the effect of small wheel movements. Driving position is good, thanks partly to the in-out adjustable steering wheel.

Road holding qualities are high indeed ~ it too has all-round independent suspension ~ and it irons out road irregularities with ease. Body roll is moderate. But what really belies the impression of speed is the car's quietness, no wind, road noises, hardly a murmur from the engine and an occasional hiss from the power steering.

Driving the Citroën is not for newcomers. The futuristic styling, including all instruments and controls in a pod on the facia, immediately suggest a new kind of driving experience. So too do the ride height control, fingertip controls, single spoke steering wheel and clutch pedal-less gearchange. But the one item that sets the seal on it is the steering.

The VariPower steering is very highly geared [2½ turns lock to lock] and finger light at low speeds. It also has very strong self-centring action ~ it will straighten itself when stationary



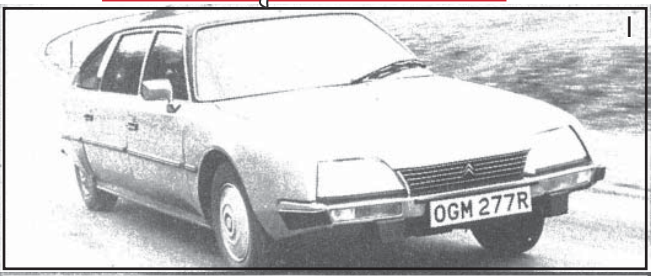
Angled wheel spoils Peugeot [top]. Front seats lack support, rear is comfortable [below].

~ and the initial habit is to drive in zig-zags along the road.

As speed increases the power assistance fades, providing the driver with a more solid feel. But the steering maintains its straight ahead preference at all times, which means the Citroën drives like a slot racing car. It is most noticeable on fast, sweeping curves, where its directional stability is uncanny.

It takes many, many miles to become acclimatised to the

Four of the Best



1] Varipower steering and hydro-pneumatic suspension give Citroen superb stability and ride.
2] Excessively light power steering spoils the otherwise excellent Jaguar.
3] The Mercedes Benz has the best steering and the most responsive handling.
4] Though it may seem sedate and dignified, the Peugeot is in fact the fastest of the four.

system. A trip round the block in a dealer's demonstrator will not suffice. But once the driver has grown, accustomed to the steering, he will appreciate the thought and development that has gone into it. It will mean either an order for one, or complete rejection.

All have good straight line stability, as befits cars designed as long distance motorway expresses. Our vote for the best must go to the Citroën, though.

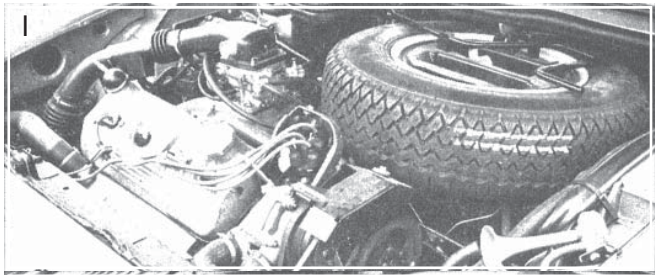
Accommodation

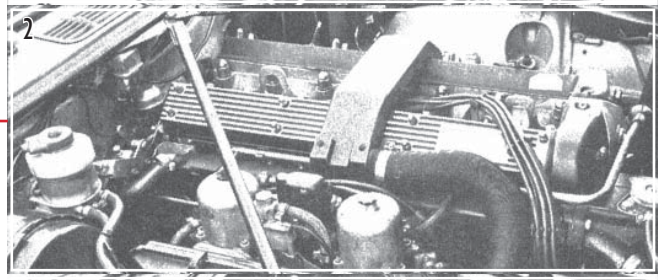
Although it has the shortest passenger cell, the Mercedes Benz is as much a five seater as the others. The rear seat is less shaped for two, it has plenty of headroom, but it cannot match the rear seat knee room of the others. Indeed, it is little better in this respect than a Ford Cortina which is less than half the price.

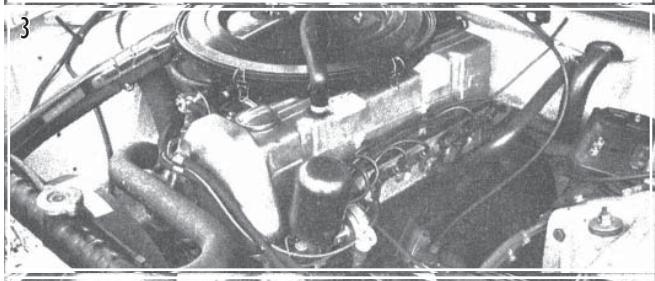
The Peugeot's rear knee and head space are good, while the Jaguar and Citroën, being more low slung, require much greater space for rear seat passengers to stretch their legs. They certainly get it.

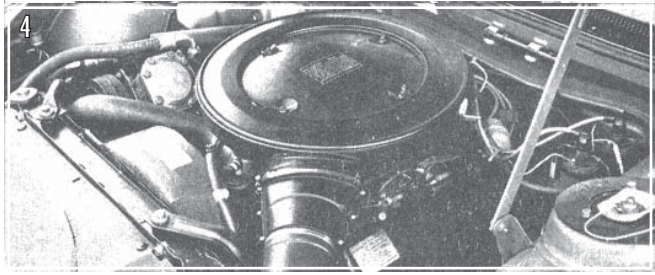
The Jaguar, with ten extra centimetres of wheelbase over the original models, is superb, but the Citroën is truly limousine style. It even has carpeted foot rests, and has the bonus of no transmission tunnel.

1] Transverse four-cylinder Citroën engine is now showing serious signs of age in the CX.
2] Classic six-cylinder DOHC Jaguar engine is powerful and unobtrusive despite its vintage.
3] Good accessibility and low servicing requirements distinguish the smallest Mercedes six.
4] The Peugeot V6 is smooth and powerful, but ancillary equipment impedes accessibility.







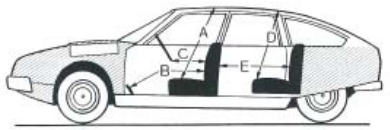


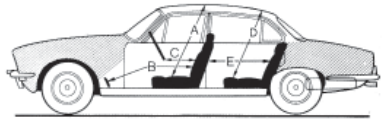
As the side elevation drawings show, the CX is even more generous than the Jaguar, which can better the Peugeot and put the Mercedes Benz to shame. Shoulder width in the Peugeot is the best of the group, though none of them is cramped in this respect.

All cater well for oddments stowage. The Citroën's big facia box is supplemented by a facia hole on the offside, door pockets all round and front seat back pockets. The Mercedes Benz has a facia box, seat back nets and a single front door pocket. The Peugeot has a facia box and door pockets at the front, while the Jaguar has front door pockets, a transmission cubby hole and a small facia box, compete with clever pop up mirror.

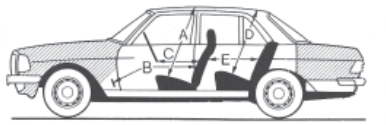
The Citroën boot is carpeted, large, squarish and has a low load height. The Jaguar has a fairly low load height, but is shallower and a good deal longer; it has mat covering. The 250 and 604 boots are very large and deep, but have high sills that hinder loading. The 604's wheel is stowed upright in a wing, the XJ and 250 spares are below the boot floors and the CX spare is under the bonnet.

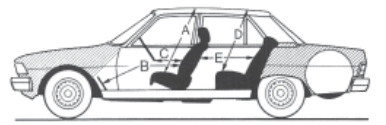
Four of the Best





	Citroën CX Prestige	Jaguar XJ3.4	Mercedes Benz 250	Peugeot 604SL
DIMENSIONS				
A/D: Headroom [F/R]	94/93cm	94/89cm	91/88cm	94/85cm
B/E: Legroom [F/R]	76-97/104-127cm	98-113/41-55cm	89-109/66-86cm	NA/74-94cm
C: Steering reach	20-36cm	41-55cm	43-63cm	29-47cm
Interior width	138cm	140cm	142cm	152cm
L x W x H	4.91×1.73×1.49m	4.95×1.77×1.37m	4.91×1.73×1.36m	4.71×1.77×1.42m
Wheelbase	3.09m	2.87m	3.09m	2.80m
Track [F/R]	1.47/1.36m	1.47/1.49m	1.51/1.42m	1.49/1.43m
Weight/Tow Weight/ Payload	1,422/899/ 491kg	1,712/1,026/ 415kg	1,362/904/ 521kg	1,412/848/ 505kg





Using the Citroën's ride height control takes the physical effort out of changing a flat tyre.

Comfort

At £7,000, the owner expects, and gets, a high degree of comfort. The most opulent are the Jaguar and Citroën, in rather different ways. The Jaguar's traditional wooden facia and tasteful interior treatment are a sharp contrast to the space-age style Citroën.

The Prestige seats are trimmed in cloth, and are large, soft and comfortable. The Jaguar's are also trimmed in cloth; they are firmer, well padded, but generally on the small side ~ insufficient height and length to them. The back seat is rather flat and lacks grab handles.

Seats on the 604 are similarly trimmed, but are larger and softer. The squab tilts as it is pushed back. Those in the German car are stark by contrast. They are hard, well-shaped and trimmed in vinyl with cloth inserts. They are generally comfortable, though one tester has an historically unsympathetic view of Mercedes Benz seats; they always give him backache.

If anything, the longer Prestige wheelbase has given the CX an even better ride. It is supersmooth ~ as if floating on air, which to a certain extent it is. There are distinct wind noises and often harsh engine notes.

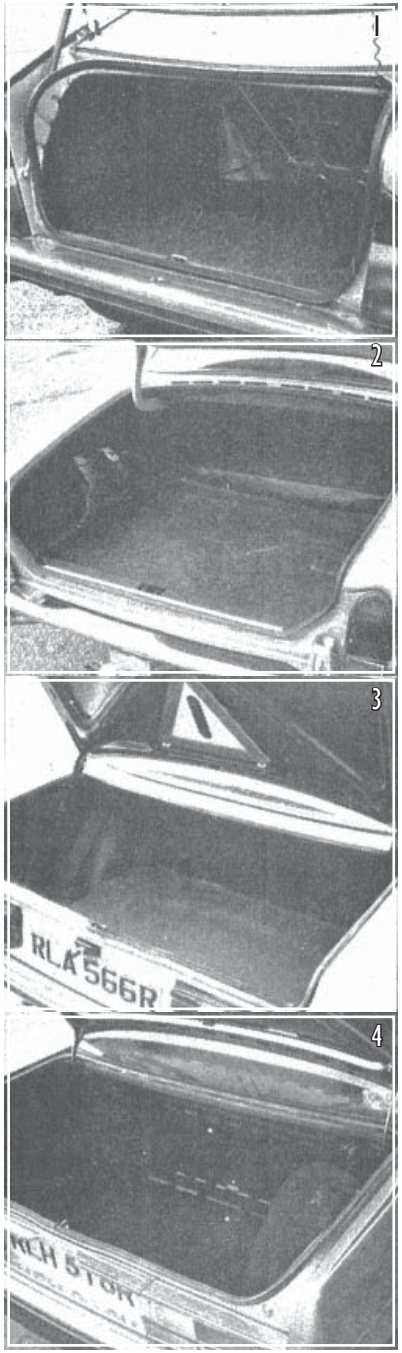
The Jaguar is really the Citroën's only rival here in ride qualities. It is soft, well damped and also glides along very easily. The absence of almost all outside noises adds to the impression of travelling in a sound booth.

Suspension echoes and wind noise apart, the Peugeot approaches the Jaguar and Citroën

	Citroën CX Prestige	Jaguar XJ3.4	Mercedes Benz 250	Peugeot 604SL
PERFORMANCE				
Maximum speed [kph]	177	185	177	180
Max in 3rd [kph]	-	-	145	-
Max in 2nd [kph]	126	130	89	130
Max in 1st [kph]	72	79	45	85
Acceleration				
0-48kph [secs]	5.4	5.1	4.8	5.1
0-64kph [secs]	7.8	7.2	6.7	6.5
0-96kph [secs]	15.5	13.2	14.6	12.5
0-113kph [secs]	20.3	17.3	18.3	15.7
Standing 400m [secs]	20.2	19.2	19.8	18.8
Terminal speed [kph]	114	122	119	122
Top gear				
48-80kph [secs]	10.0	4.9	6.7	6.4
64-96kph [secs]	11.8	5.8	8.0	7.3
Speedo error @ 96kph	2% fast	3% fast	None	4.5% fast
SPECIFICATIONS				
Capacity [cc]	2,347	3,442	2,525	2,664
Cylinders	4	6	6	V6
Bore×stroke [mm]	94×86	83×106	86×72	88×73
Valve gear	OHV	DOHC	SOHC	SOHC
Main bearings	5	7	4	4
Power/rpm [kW]	86/5,750	120/5,000	96/5,500	101/5,750
Torque/rpm [Nm]	183/2,800	255/3,500	196/3,500	207/3,500
Steering	Rack/pinion	Rack/pinion	Rec ball	Rack/pinion
Turns lock to lock	2.5	3.2	3.0	3.5
Turning circle [m]	NA	11.6	11.3	10.7
Brakes	P/D/D	S/D/D	S/D/D	S/D/D
Suspension [F/R]	IHp/IHp	IWiC/IWiC	IWiC/ISTrC	IMcP/ICSTr

Four of the Best

	CITROËN CX PRESTIGE	JAGUAR XJ3.4	MERCEDES BENZ 250	PEUGEOT 604SL
COSTS				
Fuel economy [L/100km]	18.8-14.1	17.7-12.8	16.6-14.1	16.6-12.8
Fuel capacity [L]/grade	68/4★	91/4★	65/4★	70/4★
Major service [km/hrs]	10,000/3.85	10,000/4.8	16,000/4.2	10,000/2.75
Parts cost/fitting hours				
Front wing	£35.34/8.4	£89.00/-	£55.52/-	£39.41/2.75
Front bumper	£60.22/1.8	£48.50/0.4	£70.58/-	£69.44/0.75
Headlamp unit	£50.70/1.3	£2.97[?]/0.3	£67.30/0.4	£18.03/0.75
Front brake pads	£15.65/1.3	£16.24/0.7	£11.01/0.6	£19.15/1.0
Windscreen	£82.08/2.5	£44.00/2.5	£94.59/-	£89.25/2.0
Exhaust system	£85.57/2.4	£198.70/1.8	£92.56/3.0	£163.17/3.25
Alternator	£47.21/0.45	£29.83/0.4	£45.00/-	£32.85/1.0
Insurance group	7	6	7	7
Warranty	12/UL	12/UL	12/UL	12/UL
Price [inc Car Tax, VAT]	£7,400	£7,225	£7,350	£6,626
EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST				
Air conditioning	☑	☒	☒	☑
Ashtrays [number]	4	4	3	4
Automatic transmission	C-Matic	☑	☑	☑
Central locking	☒	☒	☑	☒
Dual circuit brakes	☑	☑	☑	☑
Electric windows	☑	☒	Optional	☑
Engine bay lamp	☑	☒	☒	☒
First aid kit	☒	☒	☑	☒
Fan speeds	3	3	3	3
Fresh air vents	4	5	4	6
Head rests	☑	Optional	☑	☑
Intermittent wipe	☒	☒	☑	☑
Laminated screen	☑	☑	☑	☑
Leather upholstery	Optional	☒	☒	Optional
Oil pressure gauge	☒	☑	☑	☒
Petrol cap lock	☒	☒	☑	Optional
Power steering	☑	☑	☑	☑
Rear fog light	☑	☒	☑	☑
Seat belts	☑	☑	☑	☑
Sun roof	☒	☒	Optional	☑
Tachometer	☑	☑	☒	☑
Tinted glass	☑	☒	Optional	☑



1] CX boot has a low sill and sensibly shaped.
2] Jaguar boot is long and wide but shallow.
3] High sill mars Mercedes boot; note the warning triangle.
4] Peugeot boot is large but sill is too high.

standards. It is good by any levels, but this is still a battle of the ride comfort giants.

Mercedes Benz obviously have a different way of doing things. Their 250 has a reasonable ride, firm and well damped. But they believe their customers should know they are travelling quickly, and the car has distinct wind and road noises. Coupled to the firmness of the seats, they have succeeded.

Equipment

The contest for fitting the most equipment is led by the two French cars. Among items the Citroën boasts are ride height control, air conditioning, four facia vents, electrically operated window lifts and door mirror, three cigarette lighters, tinted glass, and superb quality carpets and trim. There is an ammeter but no temperature gauge or intermittent wipe for the large, centrally mounted windscreen wiper. This has two speeds.

In test form the Peugeot is also well off. It has air conditioning and electrically operated window lifts and sun roof. It is com-

Four of the Best

prehensively instrumented, and has a temperature gauge but no ammeter. The two-speed wipers have an intermittent wipe. It has six facia air vents.

The Mercedes Benz has a more frugal look. There are hard carpets, a lot of moulded black plastic and an absence of unnecessary embellishment. Greater emphasis has gone into designing items like rain channels that keep the windows clear and rear light fluting that keeps them clean when the roads are dirty .

It has a first aid kit on the rear shelf, extra driving lights and central door / petrol cap / boot locking system but there is no rev counter or ammeter. The electric sun roof fitted to the test was extra. It has four facia air vents, and the two-speed wipers have an intermittent facility.

On paper the Jaguar appears a little left out of it. In reality, little is missing, and it has an adjustable steering wheel, oil pressure and temperature gauges and ammeter. Obvious items that are missing are head rests, tinted glass and a self-parking system for the two-speed windscreen wipers. There is no intermittent wipe. It has five air vents, including one for those in the back.

All are equipped with various types of automatic transmission, power steering, hazard flasher, laminated windscreen, clock, heated rear window, reversing light, rear arm rest and [now] seat belts in the price.

Costs

As these cars are presumably going to be bought in the main by companies for their directors, accountants should note that there are fewer than £300 between them, and they each offer much the same sort of value for money in terms of equipment, accommodation and performance.

There is little to choose between them on fuel consumptions. Our returns show them consistently between lows of 18.8 and highs of 12.8L/100km, the rates dropping by similar ratios as speeds increase. All require four-star fuel.

All have 12months/unlimited mileage warranties. The Jaguar has an insurance advantage by being in Group 6, while its three opponents are in Group 7. On the other hand, the Mercedes Benz servicing intervals are better: a major service at 16,000km with a lesser 8,000km service, compared with major 10,000km/ minor 5,000km attention for the others.

To carry out those services, Jaguar offer by far the widest spread of dealers ~ 300 compared with just over 200 for Citroën, just under 200 for Peugeot and fewer than 100 for Mercedes Benz. By this simple geographical spread, and the fact that British companies still prefer British cars for their staff, the Jaguar is bound to sell more.

Mercedes Benz and Peugeot resale prices are better.

Verdict

This is not a verdict we found easy. All are very fine quality cars with merits of their own. In the end we had to adopt a subjective system of scoring. Four of our testers imagined they could afford one, and awarded the cars marks out of 10 for general desirability, making a possible total of 40 points.

The Jaguar emerges top with 34 points. Its ride qualities, silence, accommodation, performance and traditional style are enough to outweigh the disadvantages of that light steering.

A close second is the Mercedes Benz [32points]. Despite its fairly basic interior and its inferior comfort and accommodation, we are very impressed by the dynamic qualities of handling, cornering, braking, and by the obvious effort that has gone into making it a safe, durable product.

The general consensus is that the Citroën [27points] would have scored more but for the poor performance from its antiquated engine and unique automatic gearchange which has none of the advantages of a proper automatic or a proper manual. We love the steering, the stability, the comfort and passenger space. Generally, we also like the dramatic, purposeful styling.

That the Peugeot comes bottom with 23points is no disgrace. It offers very good value for money in terms of equipment and space. It has good performance and comfort, and its overall position may be because it is a conservative fence-sitter. It has none of the extravagance of the Prestige , none of the no-frills sense of the Mercedes-Benz, none of the olde worlde aura of the Jaguar. It does all things well, but not outstandingly well to win our hearts.

This review originally appeared in 'What Car?' magazine in May, 1977 and is taken from the Editor's archive.

1924 Citroën 5CV: For Sale

Now, notionally this is just an advertisement for a secondhand car. But, with the delightful back-story Richard tells this is clearly something between a love letter, a motoring article and a 'For Sale' advert. Over to Richard…

3 Owner Car with Full History

I purchased the car in 1970 from a guy called Denis Elliot who lived at Streaky Bay on South Australia's West Coast. The car was living in a deserted fowl shed. Elliot had been given the car by his spinster aunties who had owned it from new.

The best feature of the car was that it was totally complete ~ nothing missing [not a thing]. The fact that it was slow most probably saved its life because even a set of wide rims and tyres fitted to the rear of the car did not make it fast enough for the young Elliot to go kangaroo shooting. So it got parked in the chook shed and not touched.

That's where I found it. The two Elliot sisters rarely used the car and in fact I was told that its weekly outing to church was one of the biggest things in its life. I paid $350 [plus a lot of beers in the local pub] for the car. I had it trucked to Adelaide by a local West Coast carrier and delivered to Port Adelaide for me to collect.

When I came to collect the car at Port Adelaide one of the workers there was waiting for me to tell me he had a trailer with the same wheels as my car but that he couldn't get tyres and could I help him.

I suggested a swap of the two fattened wheels [Vanguard] with good tyres off the back of my car for his trailer wheels would solve his problem ~ the deal was done.

I took the car home, changed the plugs, changed the oil and filled the tank with fuel. Two or three turns on the crank handle and it fired into life. The question was should I restore the car or leave it in its basically good original state [there was some surface rust].

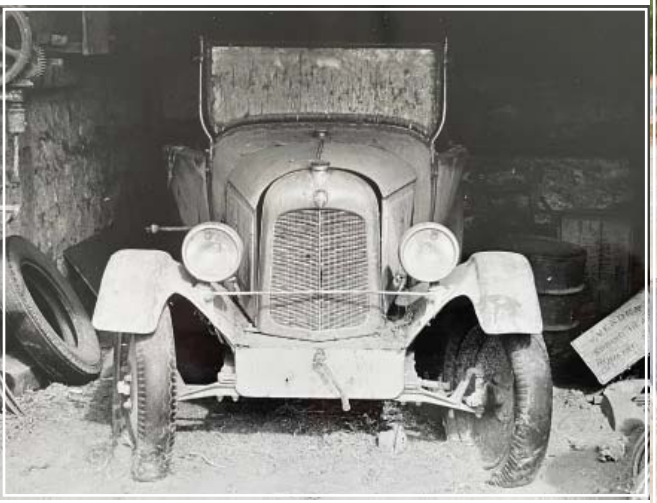
I chose the option of leaving it as it was for the time being. I ran it in several rallies and even entered it in a Citroën Club motocross event at Mt Crawford forest in the Adelaide Hills and won the day. It was a very wet day, the course was very boggy and the more modern Citroën cars had considerable trouble gaining traction and staying straight. The 5CV with its big diameter wheels and narrow tyres found grip under the mud. The fact that the car was not overly quick but had plenty of torque made it very easy to take home the trophy very much to the surprise of those there.

In in the end I decided to restore the car because atmospheric moisture was progressing the surface rust.

It has undergone a total rebuild including paint, new hood, new steering wheel and radiator badge, new leather upholstery with the original door pockets with the embossed leather Citroën logo and new beaded edge tyres.

The car's body was made by TJ Richards in Adelaide and what is interesting is that there is

Below: The 5CV as originally found in the 'chook' shed.



For Sale

a 1924 Amilcar in Adelaide with an identical body except for the bonnet and radiator. It was also the same colour.

I have a lot of books on early Citroëns and some 5CV parts which I am happy to sell with the car. I have owned quite a few Citroëns including a Big Six Traction, two Light Fifteens, several 2CVs an ID20 and a CX 2400. The 5CV is all I have left of my Citroën past.

Registration is 49146 [SA registered].

I am asking $25,000 or near offer. By arrangement I could deliver the car.

Contact Richard Fewster, Richard.fewster@arran.com.au or 0418 820 209 [D02/01]

UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED ALL PRICES SHOWN EXCLUDE RELEVANT GOVERNMENT TAXES AND CHARGES.

1986 2CV Ute

For health reasons I am selling my 2CV Ute for the price of $20,000. The 2CV Ute was built for the English Navy, to fight the rebels in the Malaysian jungle. It had to be robust and reliable to cope with the jungle tracks and it had to be light enough to be taken ashore by helicopter from the aircraft carriers, it was for that reason the 2CV's were chosen. The first batch of 35 pick-ups was delivered late 1959 and 1960, when the ship reached Singapore. A second batch of 30 pick-ups was delivered in 1961. When the mission was over: all Utes were thrown overboard into the ocean. My Ute is a reproduction of the originals. The person who had it built died before it was finished. The Ute was completed and was advertised, and I bought it and had it shipped to Fremantle. I have driven it as my usual transport since 2017. VIN: VF7AZKA00KAI84323, Eng No. 0905042793. Registered until 14.2.2021 will be extending by another 3months. Contact: Herman Berkeringh, winkbul45@bigpond.com or 08 9844 4245 CCOCA takes no responsibility for the provenance of this car and the buyer needs to conduct their own due diligence. [D01/04]

1990 BX GTi 16-Valve

Rust free body with very good cloth interior. Mechanically sound with strong motor and smooth 5-speed manual transmission. All electrics work. [windows and roof] Suspension is very good with no problems evident. Repaired f/g crack in left front bumper with accompanying small dent in guard. Small hole in passenger seat cloth. Paint faded on bonnet and roof. Maintained by French specialist mechanic. Timing belt changed within last 1,000kms. On club rego [Vic 1283-H3, which is not transferable, VF7XBFC0001FC1421]. $4,000. Contact: Richard Ward, 0407 316 060 or richardward007@bigpond.com [F44/05]

CX22 TRS
PRICE £9290·18

CX25 DTR SAFARI
PRICE £11840·40

CX25 GTi TURBO
PRICE £13350·35

Photographs Nigel Arter

CITROËN CLASSIC OWNERS' CLUB OF AUSTRALIA

Australia's National Citroën Car Club