

# ZIPPIER ZOT

WEDGED BETWEEN a Charger and a Monaro in a solid block of 8.30 am downtown Sydney traffic, we stopped as the lights turned amber. Usual corner, usual time, usual traffic — but this time there was something different.

Standing at the kerb, waiting for the Walk sign, she was tall, blonde and built to stir your imagination. Her eyes flicked indifferently across the cars, then met ours and lingered — expression changing to interest, accompanied by that sort of a smile (you know the sort) with just a whisp of tongue brushing across slightly parted lips. An appraisal and an acceptance — perhaps an invitation. Who knows?

Then the lights changed and we and she were gone our separate ways with only an isolated moment's memory of what might have been.

Any regrets lasted only to the next corner. Different girl, same reaction — eyes, smile, and tip of tongue.

Just coincidence, we thought, until other girls at other stops made us realise that this attentive interest was normal.

All good fun, it did our ego good and we were impressed. When we told them, the blokes in the office too were impressed. When we told her, our wife wasn't.

She eyed us, smiled and tipped her tongue, then sweetly pricked the bubble. "Of course they're attracted, dear. Me too. Only as far as they're concerned it's not your animal

magnetism that does it. It's the car's!"

But, what male wants to believe, let alone admit, that he is up-staged and down-played by a car — especially one as jauntily juvenile as Honda's Z model.

You could understand this blatant pose value if it was a horny Mustang or glossy Javelin or authoritative Merc 450 SL or others in that vein.

Ordinarily any self-respecting erotic car surrounds itself with a tangible aura of sheer size or supremacy or muscle or money.

The Zot can boast none of those things. Just the opposite — it is ultra-mini in dimensions, relatively puny in performance and comparatively cheap in price.

And yet the Zot is an absolutely switched-on little jigger that you can't help enjoying for the fun it gives and the attention it gets.

Whatever else it may lack in other areas, the Zot has two things going for it — shape and character — and they have made it the success that it is.

Modern, unconventional and cute, the body shape stands the Zot apart from the crowd and proclaims — I'm here, I'm different and I'm fun. Believe it.

The car has a character of the same nature, and it rubs off onto yours when you're zotting. You develop a camaradie with other Zottists, tooting a greeting or giving thumbs-up as you pass each other; welcome to the club.

It has been that way since the Z model arrived in 1971. The little coupe has developed into a cult car in its own small and inimitable way. This is even truer today of the latest model with its new (nee Life sedan) powerplant and pillarless profile.

The water-cooled engine improves performance and reduces noise while the hardtop styling further distinguishes the appearance and lends an air of exclusivity unheard of among cars of this size and price.

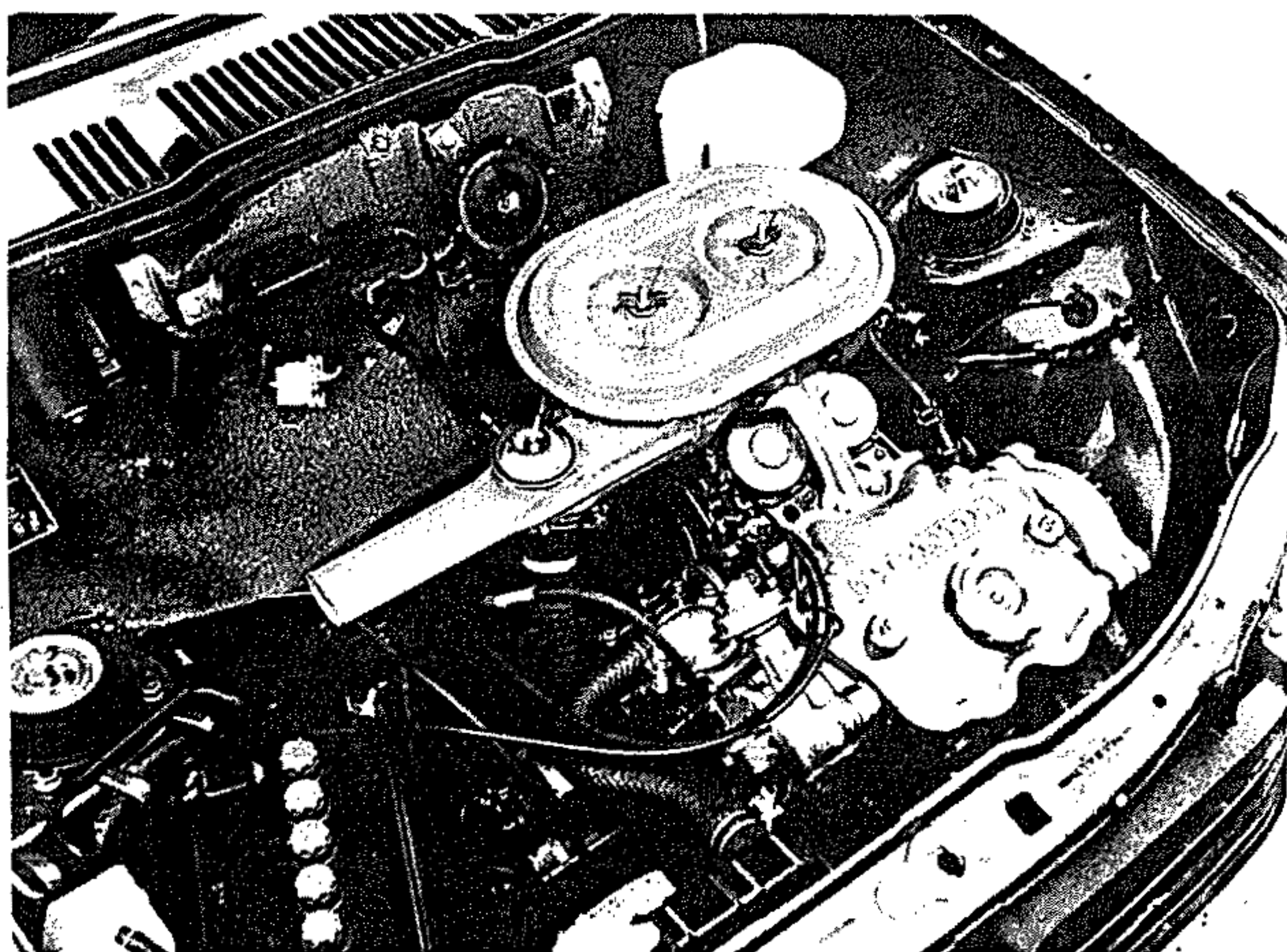
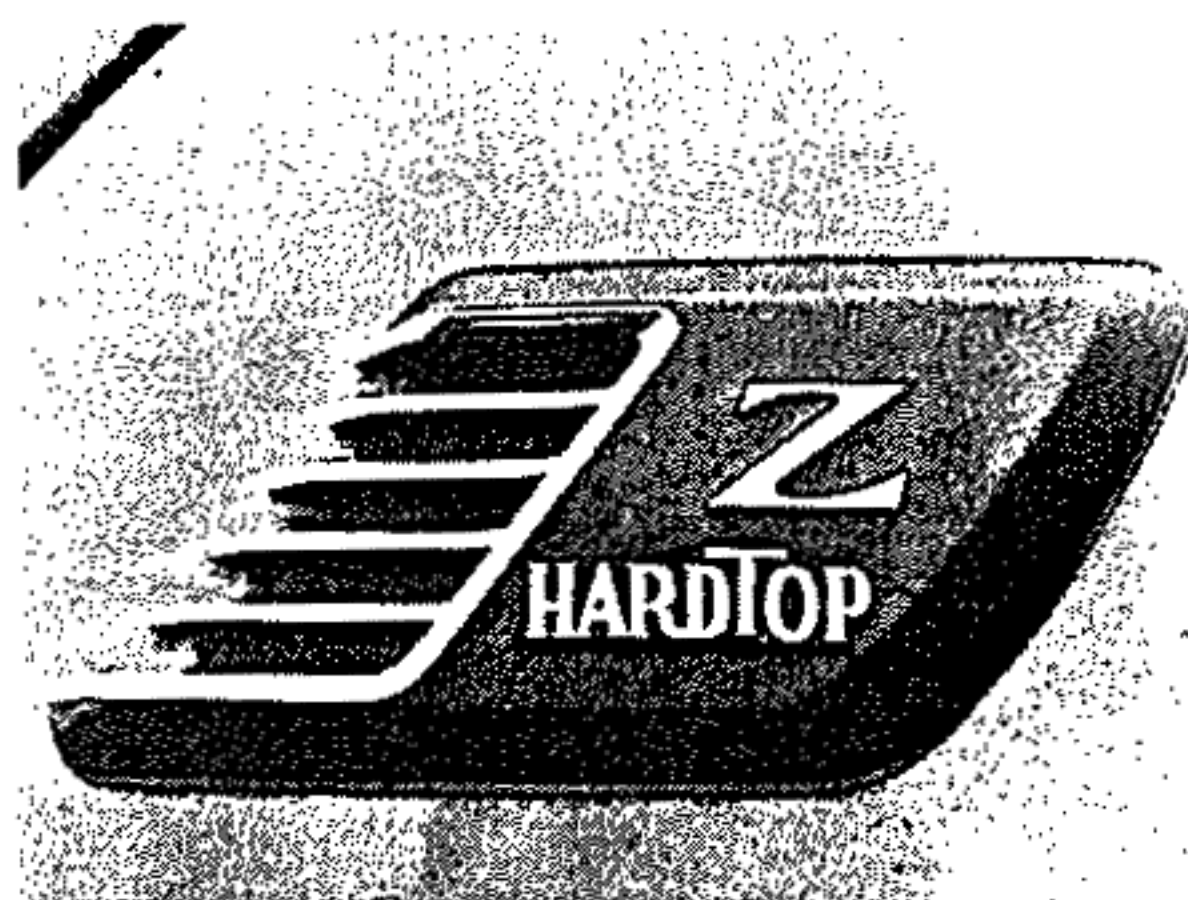
Replacing the former air-cooled engine which peaked with 31 bhp at 8500 rpm, the ex-Life engine is much more refined and quieter despite turning to even higher revs. Breathing through two carbs, the little twin churns out 36 bhp at 9000 rpm, and spins to that speed easier than many bigger engines reach 4500 rpm.

Gearbox ratios are the same as in the sedan but the final drive is lowered from 4.84 to 5.429:1 — correspondingly reducing the mph per 1000 rpm in top gear from 8.9 to 7.9 mph.

Though only one or two mph faster in top speed, the new model is quicker through the gears (almost one second difference to 50 mph for example) and considerably more flexible. In top gear the Hardtop shaves about nine (!) seconds from the 20-40 mph time and about seven for the 30-50 mph bracket.

(Continued on page 90)

IS AUSTRALIA READY FOR AN \$1899, 356CC HARDTOP? MIKE MCCARTHY HAD SOME DOUBTS—BUT THAT WAS BEFORE HE TESTED THE NEW HONDA Z.





## ZIPPIER ZOT

Continued from page 26

On the dragstrip we found the latest Zot is fractionally quicker than its predecessor over the standing quarter-mile with a best (two-up) time of 23 seconds neat against 23.2 seconds. The elapsed time dropped by over one second with the driver alone aboard.

It's still no ball of fire, of course, but performs respectably in every respect for just 356 cc. Despite its liking for mind-boggling revs the engine is remarkably tractable and will pull from under 20 mph in top gear (albeit very leisurely) without hint of protest or snatch.

Out in the country we cruised with the tachometer needle glued to the 9000 rpm red line (70 mph) for as many miles as the roads were flat. On even slight downgrades the engine will readily spin deep into the red towards 10,000 rpm and you have to back-off the throttle to hold the speed to the prescribed limit.

Climbing easy slopes you just keep your foot down and let the engine drop a thousand revs or two as it scampers up the rise. Steeper grades demand a downshift to third gear to keep the revs above the 6000 mark where the engine pulls best. Hurrying through hills, there were only a few occasions when we found it necessary to change back as far

as second gear — and then usually because we were baulked by slower travellers.

But, like the engine revs, third and second gears are there to be used and that's no hardship since the gearshift is light and positive with unbeatable yet unobstructive syncromesh for each cog.

Because only limited reserves of performance are available when cruising at above 50 mph, open-road overtaking manoeuvres aren't exercises to be made without due care and consideration. Unless the road is clear a long way ahead, discretion is the name of the game.

The natural cruising gait for the Z Hardtop on the open road is 55-65 mph. At this the engine certainly sounds busy, like the proverbial sewing machine, but noise level is low and conversation can be maintained without voices being raised. Wind and road noise are generally low, but slight transmission whine is evident in all gears. On gravel roads there's a penetrating patter of stones being thrown into the rear wheel wells.

Handling is just great. We liked it on sealed roads and loved it on the dirt. On bitumen understeer is the predominant attitude but it never becomes excessive and the car is always responsive to throttle control, allowing the line to be tightened if desired by backing-off the throttle. On dirt it can be swung through the corners with real elan, letting the tail hang out wide and just

keeping the front wheels pointed where you want to go. The Zot mightn't be fastest through the turns but there are few more sure-footed or as predictable and none more fun.

For a car so small and light it copes with poor surfaces surprisingly well. The body feels tight, the suspension smooths out most of the bumps and corrugations, and relatively little road shock finds its way to the steering wheel.

You wouldn't expect a luxurious ride, and you don't get it — but it's no worse than that of some bigger popular-class cars.

There is not much pitch or body roll but sharp bumps or successive undulations cause the car to bounce around with a choppy vertical movement that can have you alternating between the lap belt and firm seat cushion.

Driven very hard over 150 miles of country cruising and in heavy traffic, the Z Hardtop returned 38.9 mpg. That would have to be about as heavy as the consumption could go. A further 150 miles of country work and all the performance checks used 3.5 gallons for 41.1 mpg. Under average conditions the consumption would probably be in the 45-50 mpg range.

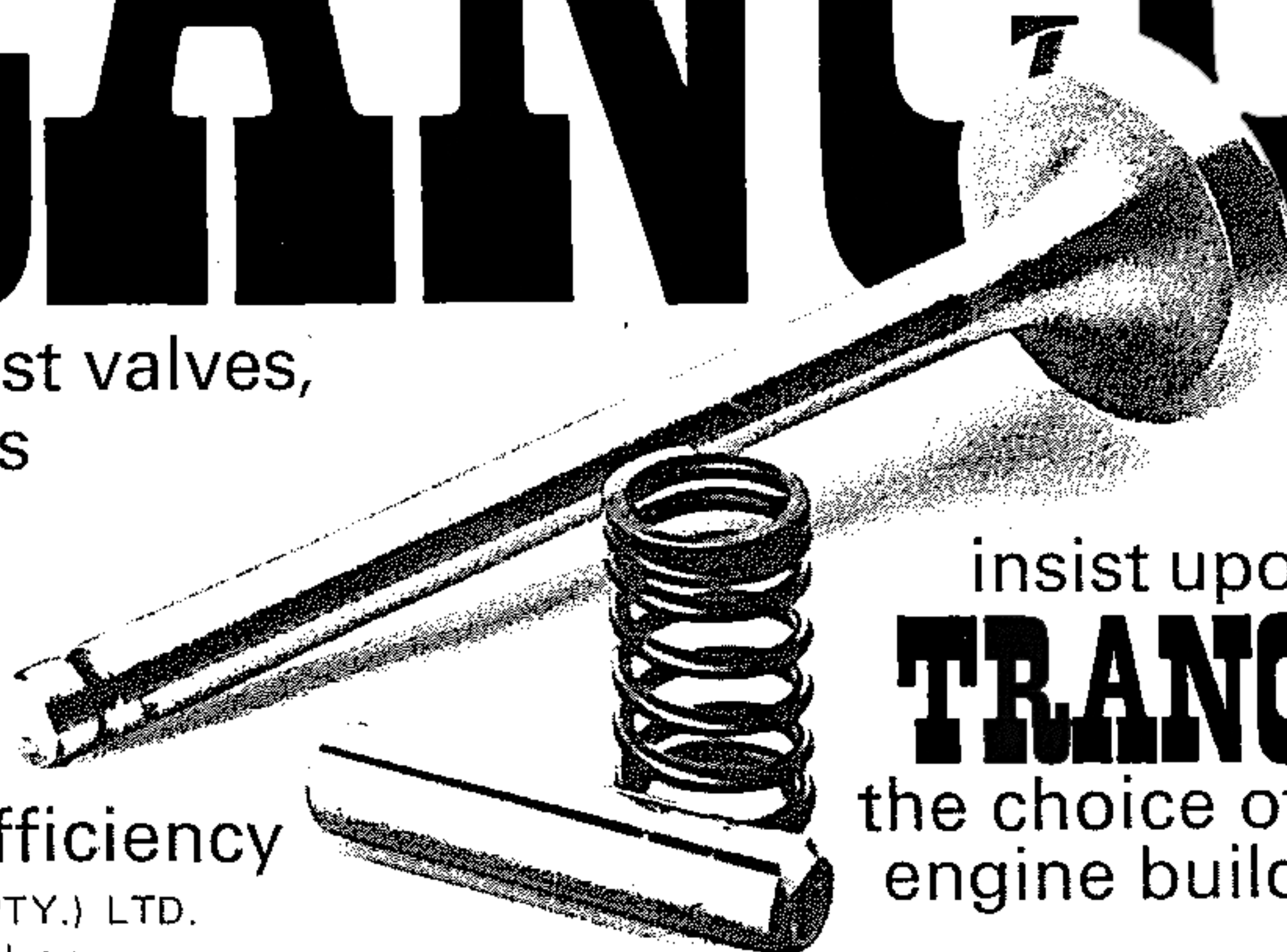
Apart from engine and styling, the Hardtop differs little from the previous model. There are now floor mats (typically Japanese, unfortunately) instead of carpets, and the spare wheel

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is reached through the opening rear window instead of having its own little compartment below the bumper bar. Though the front seat backrests are now fixed instead of reclining the seat still slides far enough back to fit up to six-footers.

By ordinary standards the interior space is best regarded as two-plus-two because the rear legroom is really adequate only for children. There's plenty of legroom up front but width is limited — so much so that one broad-beamed staffer classed the accommodation as one-plus-three. Still, even he admittedly enjoyed himself. "I don't sit in it; I wear it," he explained.

And that's part of what the little Honda is all about. In some cars you frown, in others you sing, and in yet others you relax and enjoy it. In the Zot you smile. It's contagious. \*

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# wheels road test

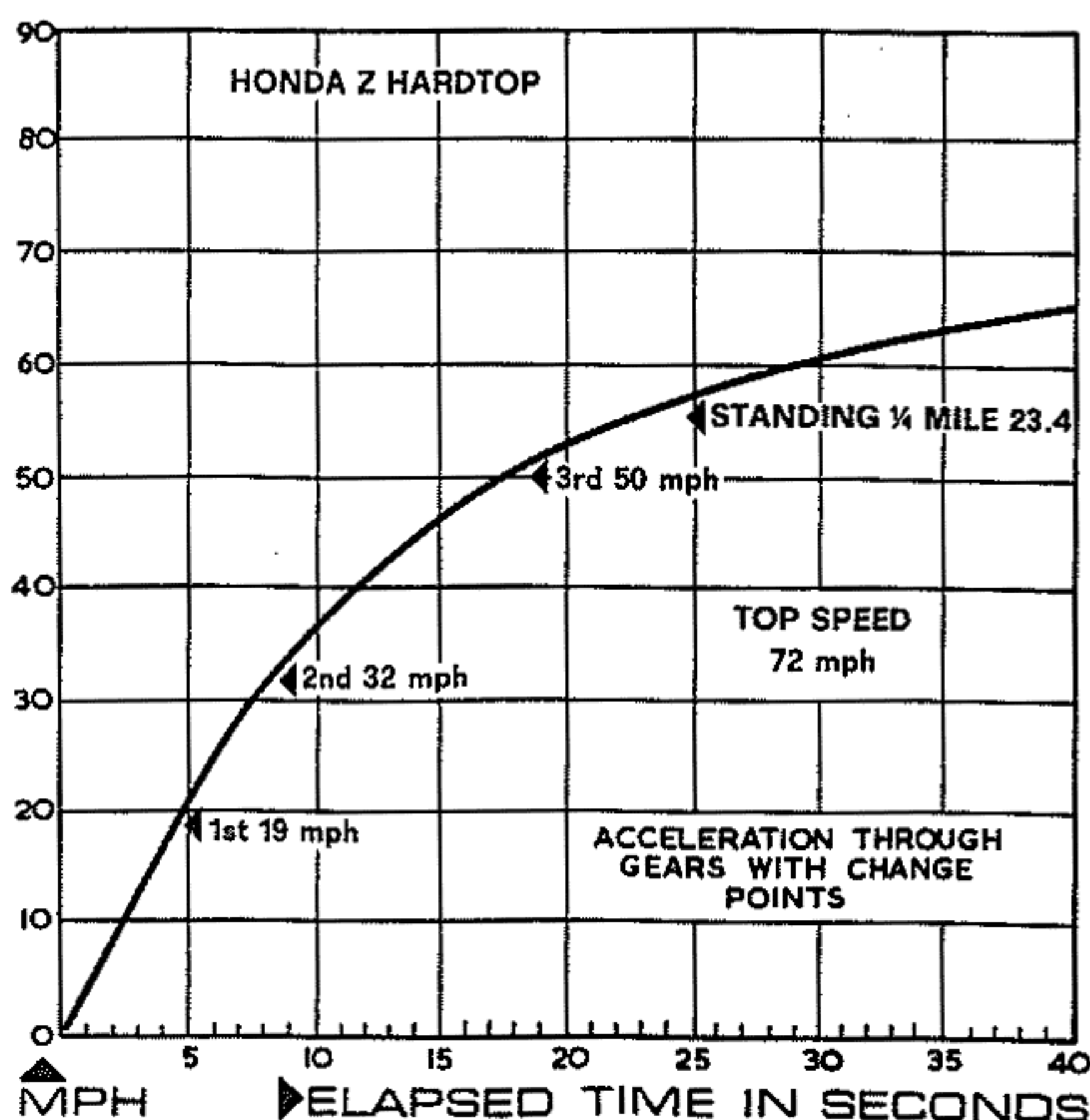
# technical details

## HONDA Z HARDTOP

MAKE	HONDA
MODEL	Hardtop
BODY TYPE	Two-door Hardtop
PRICE	\$1899
OPTIONS	None
COLOR	Metallic Purple
MILEAGE START	205
MILEAGE FINISH	546
WEIGHT	1241 lb (563 kg)
FUEL CONSUMPTION:	
Overall	(13.8 km/l) 39 mpg
Cruising	(15.9 km/l) 45 mpg
TEST CONDITIONS:	
Weather	Fine
Surface	Castlereagh drag strip
Load	Two persons
Fuel	Super
SPEEDOMETER ERROR:	
Indicated mph	30 40 50 60 70 80 90
Actual mph	30 38 47 57 67

### PERFORMANCE

Piston speed at max bhp	(910 m/min) 2985 ft/min
Top gear mph (kph) per 1000 rpm	(12.7 kph) 7.9 mph
Engine rpm at max speed	9100
Lb (kg) per bhp	(15.6 kg) 34.5 lb
MAXIMUM SPEEDS:	
Fastest run	(119 kph) 74 mph
Average of all runs	(116 kph) 72 mph
Speedometer indication, fastest run	(125 kph) 78 mph
IN GEARS:	
1st	(30.5 kph) 19.0 mph (9000 rpm)
2nd	(51.4 kph) 32.0 mph (9000 rpm)
3rd	(80.4 kph) 50.0 mph (9000 rpm)
4th	(116 kph) 72.0 mph (9100 rpm)



### ACCELERATION (through gears):

0-30 mph	7.3
0-40 mph	11.3
0-50 mph	17.5
0-60 mph	28.8
0-70 mph	45.3
20-40 mph	3rd gear 9.2 sec
30-50 mph	4th gear 16.5 sec
40-60 mph	10.3 sec
	18.5 sec
	20.9 sec

### STANDING QUARTER MILE:

Fastest run	23.0 sec
Average all runs	23.4 sec

### SPECIFICATIONS

#### ENGINE:

Cylinders	Two transverse
Bore and stroke	(67.0 mm) 2.64 in. x (50.6 mm) 1.99 in.
Cubic capacity	(356 cc) 21.7 cu in.
Compression ratio	9.1 to 1
Valves	Belt-driven sohc
Carburettor	Two-side draft Keihin
Fuel pump	Mechanical
Oil filter	Full flow
Power at rpm	(26.8 kw) 36 bhp at 9000 rpm
Torque at rpm	(31.1 Nm) 23 lb/ft at 7000 rpm

#### TRANSMISSION:

Type	Manual all-synchromesh
Clutch	.sdp
Gear lever location	Floor

#### OVERALL RATIO:

	Gearbox	1/2 overall	mph per 1000 rpm
1st	4.700	25.51	2.1 3.3
2nd	2.846	15.45	3.5 5.6
3rd	1.833	9.95	5.5 8.8
4th	1.272	6.89	7.9 12.7
Final drive	5.429		

#### CHASSIS AND RUNNING GEAR:

Construction	Unitary
Suspension front	Struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Suspension rear	Beam axle, semi-elliptic springs
Shock absorbers	Front incorporated in struts, rear telescopic
Steering type	Rack and pinion
Turns l to l	3.2
Turning circle	(8.8 m) 28.9 ft
Brakes type	Drums front and rear

#### DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase	(2080 mm) 82.0 in.
Track front	(1130 mm) 44.4 in.
Track rear	(1115 mm) 43.9 in.
Length	(2995 mm) 9 ft 10 in.
Width	(1295 mm) 4 ft 3 in.
Height	(1295 mm) 4 ft 3 in.
Fuel tank capacity	(26 litres) 5.7 gal

#### TYRES:

Size	5.20-10
Pressures	front/rear (165 kPa) 24/24 psi
Make on test car	Bridgestone Skyway-H

#### GROUND CLEARANCE:

Registered	(160 mm) 6.3 in.
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## wheels road test

**ABOVE:**  
Zot displays usual fwd understeer characteristics — handles well for such a small car and can be great fun on dirt.

**RIGHT:**  
Interior layout is virtually unchanged from previous model with stylish dash panel and legible instruments, but mats have replaced the carpets and front seat backrests no longer recline.

**LEFT:**  
Apart from hardtop styling, the new Zot also gets water-cooled engine (from Life sedan) with twin carbs. Engine performs better than previous air cooled unit, is much more flexible and considerably quieter.

**FAR LEFT:**  
Model identification is obvious from the wording on the outlets for the through-flow ventilation system. Water-cooled Zot replaces air-cooled model in Australia.

