

In the drivers seat: Chrysler's Colt and the new Neon

Marko Peric rolls down to Reliable Motors



If you've ever tried to find a bus stop in Charlottetown, you must have realized that public transportation is not a big item on this island. So most of us have a car or truck, or at least access to someone else's wheels. If you don't care didley about cars, (if it moves, it's good enough for me) or if you don't drive, you don't have to finish this article. Everyone else, pay attention.

This is a new column here to advise you about buying a vehicle. I'll review thousands (well, maybe dozens) of cars, and reveal which ones are good buys, which ones are not. If you have any questions or comments, or would like to see a certain vehicle reviewed, contact me through the X-Press.

This week I went to Reliable Motors and took out a pair of new Chryslers, a Colt and a Neon. The Colt is a really Mitsubishi Mirage with your choice of either a Dodge or Plymouth badge (the cars are identical, regardless of the nameplate). There are three body styles: a two-door, four-door, and a wagon. The wagon is

actually a different vehicle altogether, Chrysler merely put the Colt name on it for simplicity. Intended for families with small children, I ignored it in this review.

The other Colt models hold more interest to students. Light and quick, you won't be left behind at stoplights, but don't try to race a Mustang GT or Camaro Z28. The basic two-door I drove was not a true sports coupe, despite the claims made in the brochure.

It is practical, and easy to drive. It took less than a minute to get used to the manual steering and five speed transmission, and with some back-and-forth seat adjustments, it was fairly comfortable. The interior was rather austere, lacking even a radio.

The ES is more interesting, although it costs another thousand. Among other things there is power steering, better tires, cup holders, and something absent in the base car - options: a rear spoiler, air conditioning, a bigger engine, split folding rear seats, and a host of other goodies are available. For safety

freaks, there is a driver's side air bag, but no anti-lock brakes.

The four-door Colt is a pleasant surprise -- it actually looks better than the two-door, a rare occurrence in the automotive world. The ES model only has five options, being air conditioning, power locks and windows, the radio, and an automatic transmission. Everything else comes standard. This is not the most common car around, which is a shame because the four-door is a great little car, the best in the Colt lineup.

The Colt cars are not without flaws. They claim space for five passengers, yet I pity any three people in the back seat, unless they are in kindergarten. Avoid the two-door if you carpool and need the back seat because leg-room is at a premium, even with two rear passengers. The interior in base models leaves much to be desired, and the ES cars aren't cadillacs either. Finally, except for the four-door ES, the tires are pitifully small. This might be good if you weigh 98 pounds and enjoy changing tires, but small tires mean meagre performance.

At \$10,995, the two-door Colt is a good buy, but the ES is only \$11,990, and worth the extra cash. Be prepared to shell out more money if you want any options. The four-door starts at \$11,550, but climbs drastically when well-equipped.

For the best of the bunch, the ES sedan, \$17,000 will get you a loaded car. That's not a bad price, but keep reading -- Chrysler has a better car for the same money.

The brand new Neon has only been around since late spring, but already scores can be seen around Charlottetown. Compact yet roomy, sophisticated yet powerful, the Neon is everything a small car should be, and more. At the moment only the four-door has arrived at

local dealerships, but two-doors are expected shortly. I hope to do a thorough review of a coupe later this year. The four-door is a cut little car, especially when seen side by side with a Cavalier, Tempo, or Civic. The competition has some serious catching up ahead of them, although the new Cavalier expected next year will close the gap.

I could ramble for pages about the host of features offered on the Neon. A great little 2.0 litre engine, a sporty suspension, stainless steel exhaust system, etc. It already meets the 1997 safety standards, which include steel door beams and dual air bags. Anti-lock brakes are standard on the high-end Sport model, optional on the other versions.

Like every other car, the Neon isn't perfect. I had a hard time reaching the seat adjustments, and the unframed windows seem fragile. Also, the car is too new to have a reliability record, although it looks promising. These are minor points, and all things considered, you won't find a better new car in this price range.

Speaking of price, the base Neon can be yours for \$11,640, only pennies more than the Colt. The popular Highline model begins at \$13,150, and \$14,500 will get you a well-outfitted car. The Sport version costs \$16,045 or \$17,450 loaded to the hilt.

There is a rebate of \$1250 on the Colt, but I still think the Neon is a better value. Also, Chrysler has a university graduate plan, which will knock \$750 off the sticker price on any new car they sell.

Thanks to Reliable Motors for use of their cars, and Richard MacLennan for being especially helpful. If anyone out there wants more information on Chrysler vehicles, Reliable Motors is located at 78 Allen Street.

The story nobody will tell

By Laura Masters

About 7 years ago now, the coming out process overcame me and brought me to the realization that I am a transgenderist. Of course I didn't actually realize this as such then, I only knew that I was a guy who should have been a woman.

I am much wiser than that now, I understand that I was the woman all along and that all I was actually doing, while coming out, was giving myself back the honesty my parents had taken away during my childhood. I now am completely at ease with myself and can tell you without reservation that "I am a woman, I am male, and I don't have a problem with that."

Society is a different matter. Since the 1957 outing of world famous transsexual Christine Jorgensen in the New York Daily News, people have been exposed to distorted,

often scandalous, reporting of our situations.

Transsexuals and transgenderists are not the sex-crazed mental patients we are made out to be. When viewed as the women (or men) we actually are, we're not even a little bit off the mainstream, we are quite simply ordinary people in socially maligned situations.

The rest of the world, of course, disagrees with this; often with vehemence, sometimes with violence. The media's misrepresentation of our lives, and desires is slowly but surely becoming fact, and our reality is just as surely becoming "justification".

We have a communications problem; we are explaining, but nobody is listening.

If you had asked me during my coming out experience just what our greatest problems are, I would have told you the inability to find decent counselling and psychiatric help was our biggest difficulty. At that time I was in the

middle of a quest for understanding, and was finding only a bunch of bigoted people who stalwartly believed their prejudices as facts.

If you had asked me a year later, after being rejected by numerous doctors and even getting kicked out of the emergency room of a local hospital, I would have told you the problem now encompassed the inability to find decent medical care too.

It seemed to me at the time that my suffering of back spasms was some kind of retribution for the way I was born. Women don't, after all, have penises. In the end it turned out to be a simple urological problem, which was solved by minor surgery.

Leaping forward a couple of years, the same "what is your biggest problem" question would have now brought you an answer that it seems impossible for a transgenderist or transsexual to obtain Human Rights enforcement in

this province.

By then I had complaints about the hospital in the system, and they were getting lost in the shuffle. Certainly the Human Rights Commission seemed unconcerned about the matter that I had been refused emergency medical care, and, under only slightly different circumstances, could have died.

Over time this Human Rights problem has grown to include many branches of Ontario's government, and not a few public institutions. I can say very confidently that I have been brushed off by the best that our province has to offer.

The Human Rights Commission is refusing to enforce our rights; they are more concerned with "backlog reduction", backlog being the result of their own incompetence in the first place, than their mandate of providing

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