MOTIONING
TWIN TEST

STORY
BARRY GREEN

IMAGES
AUTONEWS, SUZUKI

TESTERS
BARRY GREEN, JOHN EWING

STARTERS
RENAULT CLIÓ INTENS,
SUZUKI SWIFT GLX

Suzuki Swift.

Renault Clio.

56 THE ROAD AHEAD OCT/NOV 2017

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THE RENAULT CLIO and Suzuki Swift are two of the longest-running nameplates in the Australian Light (aka City) car segment, harking back to 1990 and 1985 respectively. Both were upgraded recently; the Swift by way of a new model. The Clio has taken on Renault’s new nomenclature, in line with the recently-released Koleos SUV and Megane hatch. Variants include Life – available with a five-speed manual or EDC (six-speed dual-clutch auto) – and Zen, Intens and GT-Line with EDC only. The engines remain unchanged: 66kW/135Nm, 0.9-litre turbo petrol three-cylinder in the Life, and 88kW/190Nm, 1.2-litre turbo petrol four-cylinder in the higher grades.

The Swift A2L series features a range of improvements including new powertrains, a new light-weight underbody platform with greater rigidity, enhanced safety technologies and new bodywork. Buyers can pick from four specifications and – model dependent – a choice of two petrol engines plus manual, CVT and automatic transmissions.

Our top-range GLX test car boasts a six-speed auto mated with a 1.0-litre, Boosterjet turbo-petrol three-cylinder (82kW/170Nm). All other variants are powered by a 1.2-litre, Dualjet naturally-aspirated petrol four-cylinder (66kW/120Nm).
MOTORING TWIN TEST

THESE ARE TWO GOOD LOOKING AND WELL FINISHED CARS...

VALUE FOR MONEY
Both carry a $22,990 price tag, though the Swift’s is drive away, not Manufacturer’s List Price (MLP), which equates to a sizeable $3500-$4500 advantage. The Suzuki also retains better value after three years, according to Glass’s Guide – 52 percent compared with 48 – and annual insurance premiums are cheaper by some $100.

Expect to pay more at the pump filling up the Renault. ADR combined cycle numbers favour the Suzuki by 0.5 litres/100km (5.1 v 5.6), but on test the margin was more significant with the Clio averaging 9.7 compared with 7.2 for the Swift. Both use 95 RON PULP.

Capped price servicing costs per service are close, though the Swift requires more frequent attention due to shorter intervals. The Renault has the better warranty – five year/unlimited kms versus three year/100,000kms.

Each brim with equipment.
Standard kit on the GLX includes paddle gear shifters, rear-view camera, seven-inch touch screen Smartphone Linkage ‘infotainment’ system with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, Smart Key entry and push button start, daytime running lights and auto airconditioning,

The Intens has hands-free entry with Smart Key and push button start, auto dusk-sensing headlights, rear view camera, front/side/rear park sensors, LED headlights, sound system, navigation and multimedia system with voice control, velvet/faux leather and climate control.

The Suzuki offers the driver more safety assistance tech, including forward autonomous braking, lane departure warning, active cruise control and auto headlight beam control. Renault claims DAB radio, rain-sensing wipers, hands-free (self-parking) system, rear fog lights and 17-inch alloys, as opposed to 16-inch on the Suzuki.

DESIGN AND FUNCTION
Though neither has cushion tilt nor lumbar adjustment, each seats its driver comfortably. The Clio is alone in having height adjustment for both front pews (which only the driver gets to enjoy in the Swift) and we thought the Renault rotary adjuster for the backrest was more user-friendly than the Suzuki’s lever action.

Unfortunately, rear seat passengers in both cars miss out on their own air vents.

For Light (i.e. smaller than Small but bigger than Micro) cars, space is more generous than you might think. Thanks to 40mm extra body width, the Swift has better head, leg and foot room, particularly for longer-legged passengers, and cargo space has grown by 54 litres to 242, though this is still short of the Renault’s 300.

Both boast tilt and reach steering adjustment, but a full-sized spare wheel is an omission – the Clio comes with a temporary use item, the Swift a space saver.

These are two good-looking and well-finished cars. The Swift is appreciably better presented than its predecessor, though we would argue the Clio has a slightly more premium/Euro look inside.
ON THE ROAD

Despite their small engine displacement, forced induction ensures both deliver respectable performance. Lighter mass (by some 189kg) helps the Suzuki to better power and torque-to-weight ratios. That said, the Clio felt a little perkier, though the Swift makes good use of its broader torque band. We found the Japanese car’s conventional auto to be smoother than the Renault’s dual-clutch unit.

Both cars ride firmly, though the Swift – with its smaller diameter and narrower tyres – is a tad more compliant than the Clio with its customary Euro tautness. Each steers and turns in nicely, though the Renault feels a tad better weighted. Mid-corner lumps and bumps can provoke some kickback through the Swift’s steering.

As is the way of Suzuki’s ‘small’ car range, the Swift is a fun drive, complete with gruff engine note when singing for its supper, despite not quite having the dynamic depth of the Clio. The latter feels lighter on its feet and corners and changes direction with more poise.

The Suzuki has disc brakes front and rear, the Renault a front disc/rear drum combination, but there is no discernible difference in braking ability. Both pull up competently.

Our noise meter readings showed the Swift emitted a little less tyre and road noise on coarse chip surfaces. Engine NVH is similar.

RENAULT CLIO INTENS

Price $22,990^  
ANCAP safety rating «««««  
Warranty 5yr/unlimited km  
Capped price servicing $299 (maximum) per service  
Annual insurance costs $752.20^^

SUZUKI SWIFT GLX

Price $22,990 (driveaway)  
ANCAP safety rating N/A  
Warranty 3yr/100,000 km  
Capped price servicing $245 (average) per service  
Annual insurance costs $667.92^^

^ PRICES ARE MANUFACTURERS’ LIST PRICES UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED AND DO NOT INCLUDE STATUTORY AND DELIVERY CHARGES. PRICES CORRECT AT TIME OF PRINTING.

^^ BASED ON AN RACQ INSURANCE COMPREHENSIVE POLICY FOR A 35-YEAR-OLD MALE, MAXIMUM NO CLAIM BONUS, VEHICLE FINANCIALLY UNENCUMBERED, AND $650 EXCESS. MULTI POLICY AND RACQ MEMBER LOYALTY DISCOUNTS MAY APPLY. DISCOUNTS OF 2.5-15 PERCENT MAY BE AVAILABLE TO RACQ MEMBERS DEPENDING ON LENGTH OF MEMBERSHIP.