



Toyota FJ60 Consumer Test

Roadtesting a vehicle in the time available to publications such as this does not provide the opportunity to anticipate the long-term experiences which might confront the everyday owner. Overlander co-roadtester GORDON MALLET purchased a brand new FJ60 Deluxe Toyota Land Cruiser five-speed in January of this year.

This is the first of a two-part article on his experiences as an owner.

Part One takes us up past the first 10,000 km service:

The purchase:

PREVIOUS GOOD EXPERIENCES with other Land Cruisers, together with an enjoyable time roadtesting the HJ60 five-speed prior to release made me decide to purchase the five-speed petrol version on its release.

My previous vehicle was a diesel, so the decision to return to petrol power took some amount of soul searching.

As I do a considerable amount of towing in a year, the scales started to tip in favour of petrol. When the extra \$2000 for the diesel engine was brought into consideration, the decision became a little clearer cut. And so petrol it was, with some reservations about having to think of heavier consumption, plugs and points again.

That decision made . . . next find your car! More to the point, find the dealer

who had one! With the car just being released and queues already forming, this wasn't easy.

Rumours of impending price rises (which turned out to be more than rumours) added a little urgency to closing a deal.

After ringing a string of dealers I was lucky enough to find one 'just off the truck' at Gateshead Toyota, Newcastle.

So, with haggling over, MDK-073 was prepared for delivery. Despite the usual protests from the salesman, the only extras were Nippondenso Air and flexible-hitch towbar . . .

"Oh, wouldn't sir like stripes?"

"Listen, you put stripes on that car and . . . no thank you. No stripes!"

As it turned out, dealers were still discounting, especially when there was no trade and not enough was known

about the future sales of the new model.

For once in my life I got a bargain. Approximately \$16,500 on the road with the air and towbar. Price rises to date make this look cheap — as it was, it was \$1000 off.

As the haze of moths and spiders cleared after the ceremonial wallet opening, I took delivery of my new charge.

The standard of finish on receipt was most satisfactory with trim, paint and fit and finish all A1.

The next three weeks would see me rack up 1400 km in short time. Faults revealed and noted ready for service (due really at 1000 km) were relatively few: the throttle was jamming open slightly — this was rectified beside the road as it was only a dry airconditioner idle-up control sticking, in need of light

oiling — the driver's side door lock barrel was loose; the passenger's side window guide and quarter window support was slightly loose; and there was a flat spot causing hesitation as the second choke cut in.

This set the scene for the first service.

Servicing:

The 1000 km service is listed as free. It almost is, too . . . well, the labour component is. The customer pays for oils, filters and other parts and, oh yes, the latest trick of dealers of putting in additives without request.

"Don't put it in again or I won't pay for it!" . . . mumbles about kids to feed or some such . . . end of problem.

The flat spot, the quarter vent and the lock were all fixed.

The car was returned with all service items attended to (yes, I had marked the filter and other important points for adjustment or tightening). Engine oil level was on the mark and not over-filled. Even the battery and windscreen washer reservoir had been topped up.

The price: \$31.89, or \$24.94 without the additive.

The 5000 km service was carried out at an actual 5380 km. This is another free service, oils being the only cost.

Total: \$17.43 . . . no additive! Hope the kids survive!

Faults noted for attention were a slight rattle in the driver's door snipper knob and the ever-present transfer case lever rattle.

Both were rectified and have not reappeared. It's worth noting that Gateshead Toyota are the first dealers I have seen to stop the rattle, probably because they took the time to think the problem through and use initiative. Their solution involves fitting a plastic sleeve over one of the shift rods. It works.

The 10,000 km service cost \$40 for labour, \$6.43 for filter and \$19.42 for oils. Total: \$65.85.

Just prior to the service a very faint noise was detectable in the thrust race. The service manager checked it out and said that while it didn't cause immediate concern, it shouldn't be there and they would replace it at the 15000 km service. No hassling needed. Apparently they had the same sort of thing some months back on a four-speed. It turned out to be one finger on the pressure plate sitting proud of the rest.

At the same service, the manager asked me why I had fitted air shocks. I said 'to maintain ride height for towing.' He offered to fit/reset six leaf springs under warranty. I pay about \$50 for the pair of extra leaves, they carry the rest. This will be done at the 15,000, too. I'll keep you posted.

In short, I have been most pleased and impressed by the standard of service and the dealers' attitude. We would all prefer not to have any dealings with warranty, but at least the attitude inspires confidence and my experiences so far have been positive ones.

Aftermarket equipment:

At this point it is probably of interest to list some of the extras I have added and give a brief appraisal.

*The ride was given first attention, with very helpful advice coming from John Chapman of OME. I first had dealings with John before my connection with the magazine, when I lived literally back o' Bourke. It was hard to get help and advice out there and I remember well the attention John gave over the phone, even though there was only a \$60 or \$80 order as the bottom line.

In this case, John looked at my problem of wanting better ride/handling but at the same time maintaining ride height and suspension travel when towing a five-metre van. As John says, everything is a compromise, the greatest part of which is the pocket.

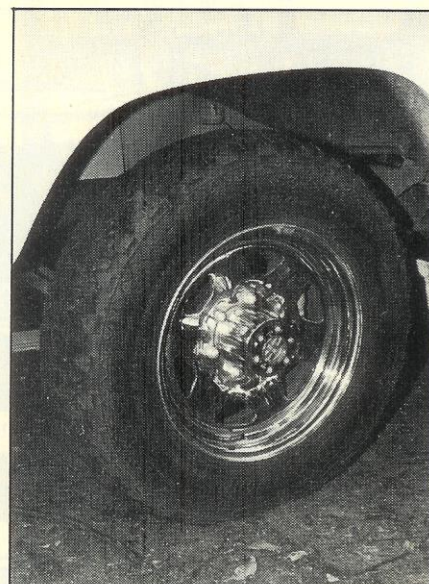
Really, we would have liked to upgrade the rear springs and go OME Fat Gas all round. In some trade-off for ride, we fitted gas at the front and OME Big Lift (air) at the rear. Despite the compromise the difference over the standard arrangement is enormous. In terms of towing, the arrangement is excellent.

With the six leaf springs being fitted by the dealer I will probably try Fat Gas at the rear as well and see how it works out.

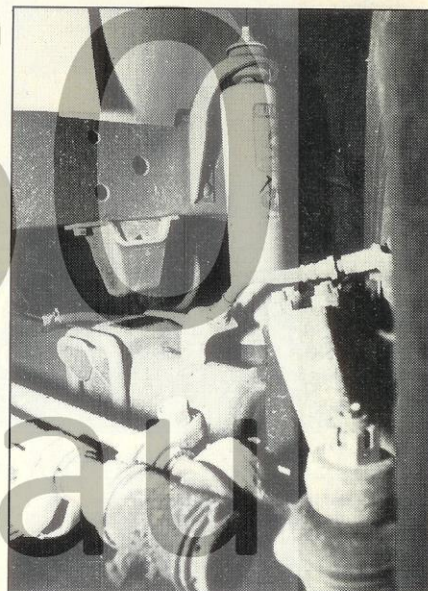
At just over \$200, the present arrangement is certainly to be recommended especially for towing. While mentioning suspension . . . when it came to get the shocks fitted, John was pushed to capacity in his own shop and arranged for Jim Hunter of Pedder's at Auburn to do the fitting. The work was carried out well and in talking to Jim I was interested to hear that Pedder's now has a swaybar developed for the rear of the 60 Series. It tucks up well out of the way. There is an upgraded one for the front as well. Reports from other owners indicate greatly improved handling.

*An SAAS Sports Wheel set me back about \$95, but is worth every cent in terms of improved feel.

*After looking at all kinds of Bull Bars and deciding not to go too heavy, but not liking the profile of most full alloy offerings, I found Town and Country's Kit Bar. It cost about \$255 and is made of alloy pipe with steel uprights. As the name suggests, it comes in a kit, the



Dunlop SP44s already showing signs of wear.



OME gas shocks replaced OE front shocks.

difference in this kit being that all parts are actually supplied and it does fit without bending, cutting or swearing. Good value.

General performance:

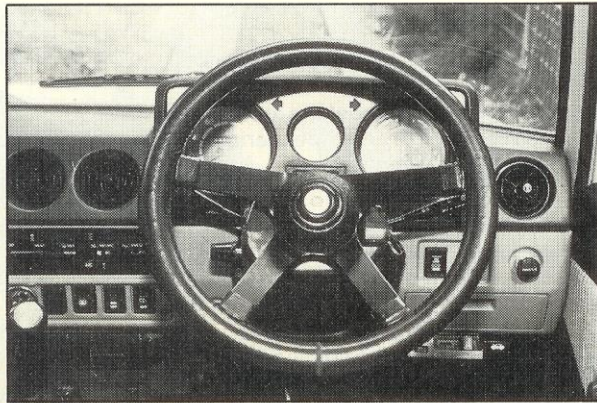
Most aspects of the performance of the FJ60 have been well documented on these pages.

Some points, however, are worth noting.

Firstly, the five-speed box is a little noisy and a little notchy fifth to fourth. It is, however, a great boon to both cruising and economy. The vehicle really is a pleasure on a long trip.

Secondly, the Dunlop 205R16 steel belts are a great improvement over RTMs (what wouldn't be?), but are a

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SAAS steering wheel improved feel.



Bolt-ons included Cibie Supar Oscars and Town and Country kit-bar.

little suspect in the wet and with regard to wear rate. While I will stay with the standard rims, I may try Avon or Michelin when these give it up.

Finally, economy has been good. Towing the van, the vehicle gives about 23-17.5 l/100km or 12-16 mpg.

Open cruising gives 17.5-15 l/100kms or 16-19 mpg.

Summary:

The 60 five-speed has generally lived up to expectations. The few faults that have arisen have been taken in hand by the dealer without argument. Servicing has also been of a good standard. Cost of servicing and general running costs have indicated that it will be economical to run when you consider the type of vehicle it is.

These are early days, and the more complete picture will arise when I report back after 20,000 km. Until then, good driving!

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