

with us.

We are sharing his articles with our readers over the next several newsletters, here's the first installment from his website. Please note, we have made a few minor edits for our format, but the content is unchanged.

Our Two Volvos

by Howard Cheng

We have owned 2 P2 generation (2001-2007 S60/V70 XC70) Volvo wagons for a few years now. Our first one is a 2001 V70 T5 which was purchased at 46k miles. Currently (9/2009), it is up to 117k miles. Our other one is a 2001 XC70 also purchased used. It is now (9/2009) at 86k miles.

I have done much of the debugging and maintenance on these two vehicles. My site <http://howardsvolvos.webs.com> is to capture the common problems I've encountered and tips I found from various sources on the internet.

Modern European Premium Cars

A common question I see on the forums is people getting into used modern European premium cars for the first time asking about the maintenance cost. Here is some general background information to familiarize yourself with.

You may be amazed at "how much car" you can get for such a relatively low price when consider these used Euro premium brands such as Mercedes, BMW, and Volvo. The fact is they depreciate so fast for an obvious reason. Their maintenance cost can be very high. Be cautious before you buy into the logic "For the price of a used Honda Accord, you can drive a used premium European car". This said, these Euro cars can be tremendous value if you are more knowledgeable about what you are buying and the lower cost repair options.

First, the repair costs. Premium European cars are on high end of the price segments. This means EVERYTHING about it will be priced accordingly. This includes parts and labor. For example, hourly labor rates for your standard Japanese cars will be lower than the European premium equivalent. I'd say a good rule of thumb is everything is about 2X or higher compared to Honda or Toyota mass volume cars.

Next, premium segment cars have more standard equipment. This simply means more stuff can go wrong. Premium segment cars also have to provide more advanced technology to justify the higher new car purchase price to their customer segment. This means the latest in engine, drive train, braking, and suspension technologies compared to the lower end segment cars. Just looking

at history, we can see fuel injection, ABS brakes, 5 & 6 speed automatic transmissions, fly by wire throttle all got introduced in these cars first. And when you are an early pioneer, you get to work out the bugs. One of the key reasons for the higher quality of mass market such as Hondas and Toyotas is their usage of highly matured technology. Maturity = cost less + high reliability. Perfect for the market they are after.

In general, I think European cars body style change every 7 years or so. But they

mirror or radio on this car requires the dealer computer to "marry" them to your car! On top of this, some DIYs require special tools. For example, a simple oil change on European cars frequently requires more than the average tools. On this car, you need a special filter cover wrench. Last, there are parts you can only purchase from the dealer and your local Volvo dealer will add HUGE mark ups if they are like the ones near me. There are Volvo parts vendors as well as Volvo dealer parts departments that operate online now



The V70 "MKII" was sold in the US from 2001 to 2007 and was available with front wheel drive and all wheel drive, non turbo and turbo gas powered engines ranging in power from 180 HP to 300 HP.

The 2005 model got a major cosmetic facelift.



The Volvo S60 Sedan was sold in the US market from 2001 to 2009 and was available with front wheel drive and all wheel drive, non turbo and turbo gas powered engines ranging in power from 180 HP to 300 HP.

The 2005 model got a major cosmetic facelift.

will introduce new engines + drive trains in between, updating lots of other sub-components and generally slightly update that beautiful exterior sheet metal once in this cycle. If you can afford the later ones, do that because they would have worked out more of the bugs. It seems to take at least the first 3-4 years of this 7 year cycle for them to work out the major bugs from what I have experienced with these Volvo P2s and the Mercedes e320 series.

So you are entering this segment for the first time? What should you expect?

I think the answer isn't the same for everyone. It depends on 2 things

- What is your perspective. If you are expecting to maintain the same "low cost while generally neglect the car" nature of high quality low tech Japanese cars. You will probably be in for a shock. You definitely don't want to "neglect" premium European cars! It will cost you. But the good news is you are already reading this which means you desire for knowledge and info and probably not a "neglector" by nature.

- If you can do some DIY, then you can save bundles of money owning these cars. A lot of DIY procedures are within the reach of reasonably average wrench turners. This said, these cars are also highly computerized these days. Many components require dealers special computers to set them up properly. For example, installing a new rear view

which can save big chunks of money.

Major Changes 2001-2007

2002+ redesigned the ETM. See here <http://www.freewebs.com/howardsvolvos/engine.htm#255255665> (except for 2002 non turbo V70/S60)

2003+ XC70 has the bigger (and some people say much more responsive) 2.5T engine.

2003+ XC70 has the Haldex AWD instead of the Viscous Coupling unit. See FWD or AWD <http://www.freewebs.com/howardsvolvos/notesbeforebuying.htm#256361186>

2005+ has slight exterior and interior updates. Exterior got some silvered surfaces and headlight lens became plastic (older glass ones crack when hit by rock). Interior got wood trim surfaces on the center console.

So if you are looking for an XC70, 2003+ would have most of the latest mechanical changes. 2005+ would have most of the latest surface changes.

2001 models are the first year and ones with most of the issues. Of course, they are also the lowest cost used car of this model which maybe the reason you are considering it. Later build date (mid year 2001) is better than early build date (early to mid 2000). Open the driver side rear door and look at the tag along the lower pillar for a tag. Build date is on there (under the word "Date")