

Automatic Vs. Manual

This is a discussion that is going to be (as it has been) argued, until the end of the internal combustion engine. Personally, I have now, after a life-time, come over to the automatic side of thinking with CALYPSO. Introduced by the blog to attract attention, I will provide you my final “feelings” about the choice. It basically comes down to the controls (emphasis “controls”), pictured below. that allow for CHOICE. BUT, is it “choice”? Proponents of “Manual” state that IT is CHOICE, derived from the thought that Manual provides choices that are removed by Automatic. But are they? Is it possible that there is more “choice” provided by Automatic than that provided by “Manual”?



Starting in the upper left corner, you see the brake and gas peddles, the controls for acceleration or deceleration. Then on the right the row of “direction”, either **P**arked, **R**everse, **N**eutral (ambivalence), **D**rive and finally and at the center of this discussion **MANUAL**.

adjective

adjective: **manual**

relating to or done with the hands.
"manual dexterity"

Before departing on the primary discussion in this paper. I will spend a moment on the other “choice” provided by the “Automatic / Manual” decision made at the creation of CALYPSO. Had I selected MANUAL, there would have been an additional pedal to the left of the two pictured above, the “controls” of accel/decel; get this, they call that pedal a “clutch”. In the picture on the right that solitary row of letters, would have been replaced with a pattern of gear combinations, all except two determining the increment of forward acceleration. The only two letters replicated would be **R**everse, and **N**eutral (again the concept of ambivalence), as they both provide a certain lack of forward thinking. **N**eutral comes close allowing a wide range of selections, but non-the-less a lack of ambition. When the shifter is in the Neutral position, one is left with the ability to move from the extreme left to the extreme right; a quandary of non-commitment. And from my years of experience, positional left and right movement of indecision taken during excessive waits at red traffic control signals. Therefore; is it a choice or commanded indecision?

Setting aside the almost political leanings inferred by the discussion of Automatic Vs. Manual, we are brought to the intent of this paper. At the bottom of the picture above we focus on two controls placed in easy reach of hands on the steering wheel at the 9 and 3 O'clock positions. The left marked with a negative sign (-), and the right marked with a positive, plus sign (+). These two controls while replicated on Corvettes with manuals, their primary purpose is for Automatics. TWO NEW CONTROLS, added for the enjoyment and use of the operator. These two controls are active at all times, but become exclusive to their intended use when in the "M" mode. They do perform the same function in the "D" mode, but that function is on a timer and if not used the system returns to the selected "D" mode - CHOICE! And they call them "Paddle Shifters".

I won't go into any detail on the extreme use of the Paddle Shifters; there are numerous videos and articles about the entire concept of what they do in their primary application – on the track. I will only say that they are well purposed and almost a natural expression of intent on tracks, when the majority of the track is clock-wise. Strangely counter-clockwise tracks, they feel a little out of sorts. There is something about the feel of PLUS being low under acceleration coming out of a turn; apex to apogee, and MINUS being level during the straight approach to the entry apogee. With that said, there is an aspect to "feel" when it is also associated with sound that I will discuss, and keep in mind that I am now completing my sixth year with Calypso and keeping her under control. In the first years where learning what she can do, and doing that as a new experience created the ultimate in satisfaction, it has evolved into the time where the attention to the finer points can be made. Especially when you consider that the majority use is "just around town".

"Sound" and "Feel" – those are two major aspects in the discussion of Automatic and Manual. Every shift of every gear in a manual is punctuated with sound and feel, where an automatic is smooth and seamless. Most people who prefer automatics are after that smoothness and seamlessness. They appreciate the calmness of reaching the objective of the trip calmly and serenely. I agree with this; calmness and smoothness has it's time and place. People who prefer Manual feel that, that smoothness and seamlessness, equates to a lack of appreciation of the sound and feel afforded by the use of control. This is where the paddle shifters come into play – even when not in a "track" environment.

An experienced "manual" advocate, will preach the virtue of successive gear changing with each transition marked with the proper shift of engine speed such that the entire vehicle makes the transition without mechanical strain. By all means – a virtue. And true manual advocates practice countless gear changes mastering the technique. It's called REV MATCHING. Now then with the paddle shifter controls, there is a purposeful engineering effort to retain that emphasis of the reduction of mechanical strain. And this is now fully understood and appreciated in Calypso's sixth year. This recent examination of capability is absolute delight that the correct choice was made in the long months of planning her purchase.

With the accelerator depressed, with any reasonable amount of force (creating acceleration), and the plus paddle shifter is selected with one click, the acceleration as marked with an instantaneous burst of revolution such that the next gear engages in automatically assisted mechanical smoothness. The audible and emphasized sound of a high-performance engine under acceleration is clear and distinct. This audible sound is accentuated in a slight jog in the experienced G Forces providing all occupants with irrefutable sensory input that acceleration is indeed taking place. Similarly if the brake peddle is the control being depressed in conjunction with the selection of the Minus paddle, then again, a well-engineered jog of engine RPM provides audible and physical emphasis of deceleration. Now then if neither accelerator or brake pedal is depressed, or the contact is ever so slight, the audible shift of gear either up or down is minimized to subtle, but clearly evident, as well as the associated change in G Force experienced. The very best practiced REV MATCHING is provided without the need of constant learning and appreciation. It is a well-engineered aspect of the manually controlled but fully automated use of properly sensed controls and mechanics.

I'll take well-engineered automatic over manual, at any time, when it makes you sound and feel GREAT.