

1975 BRICKLIN COUPE

1975 Bricklin Coupe SV-1, 2-door coupe

Owners: Bernie and Janice Taulborg Collection

Number made: 2,062 (1975) Ours is #1178 and is one of an estimated 1,500 that still exist today.

Original cost: \$9,980.00 (Averages in 1975: cost of a car, \$4,250; household income, \$14,100; house, \$39,300; gallon of gas, 44 cents)

Engine and transmission: V-8 cyl.; Ford Windsor 351 hp; 2-barrel carburetor; automatic (all 1975 and 1976 models were automatics)

Malcolm Bricklin made his first million dollars in hardware/plumbing franchising in Florida before he was 25. He started with Subaru of America and left to start his own production car company.

"SV-1" stood for "Safety Vehicle One" and the car had an integrated roll cage, side guard rails, and 5 mph shock-absorbing bumpers and far exceeded safety requirements of the time. It had distinctive gull-wing doors and an acrylic body delivered to customers without paint. Five "safety" colors, reportedly the most visible on the road, were used: safety white, safety red, safety green, safety orange, and safety suntan. All cars were black below the belt-line.

The Bricklin is the only production vehicle in automotive history to have powered gull-wing doors that opened and closed with the touch of a button as standard equipment. (The DeLorean, produced later, had manually operated gull-wing doors.) Its aerodynamic design had car magazines and enthusiasts believing a serious contender to the "King of the Hill" Corvette had arrived. But the dream was not to be. There were 780 cars produced in 1974, and 2,062 in 1975.

The 1975's were equipped with Ford's 351W (Windsor) V-8 and a two-barrel carburetor. Performance of the previous year's model with a four-speed

manual transmission rated favorably against the contemporary Corvette which most auto magazines used as a point of comparison.

Intended to sell for \$4,000, by the time the first model was built in 1974, the price had risen to \$7,490. The 1975 model cost \$9,980. The first 800 cars cost \$16,000 to make and were wholesaled to dealers for \$5,400 each. Production was planned at 1,000 cars/month but was never achieved.

To save money, Bricklin tried to bond fiberglass to acrylic plastic – something the plastics industry had not perfected, which led to a high failure rate and increased production costs (panels cracked while still in their molds). The 1974 cars tended to overheat due to a single radiator opening; existing models that still run today have usually been retrofitted with a larger radiator. Plagued by supply line problems, the company found it increasingly difficult to obtain financing. Lack of capital, poor quality, and design issues all led to the demise of the Bricklin.

Bricklin went into receivership in 1975 with 12 cars left with 1976 VIN's. There are discrepancies in reported production numbers. Clarkson Company, the Canadian court-appointed receiver for Bricklin, sold the last 1975 and 1976's to Bill Byers of Columbus, OH. along with all rights to the name and trademark. A final figure of 2,854 cars is generally accepted as the production count. Some cars were assembled from parts and may have VIN's that exceed 3000.

Sources: <http://www.conceptcarz.com/vehicle/z2183/Bricklin-SV1.aspx>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bricklin_SV-1
<http://auto.howstuffworks.com/1974-1975-bricklin-sv1.htm> (Excellent, long article)
http://www.oldcarbrochures.com/static/NA/Bricklin/1975_Bricklin/1975_Bricklin_Brochure/dirindex.html (Original 1975 brochure)

Additional information, designing the 1974 Bricklin; from HowStuffWorks site (URL, above):

A rolling chassis prototype was used to make sure the new 5 mph federal bumper standards were met with the 1974 Bricklin SV-1.

Lacking the funding for sophisticated facilities, test equipment, or basic tools for conducting legitimate crash tests, the (design engineering) group loaded boxes with rocks to equal the weight of a completed vehicle. They then pushed the (prototype) mule car as hard as possible down a loading dock ramp with Glenn Nutting, a volunteer, aboard. Hanging on for dear life and likely questioning his own sanity, he and the test vehicle slammed into the dock with a resounding crash.

Amid the cheers and back slapping from the engineers, there came a wail of pain emanating from the cloud of dust settling around the crashed chassis. Seeing Nutting upright on his wooden box, everyone had assumed that all had gone well. Upon closer inspection, however, they noticed a large six-inch splinter protruding from Nutting's derriere.

Without hesitation, they dropped his drawers and removed the offending splinter with needle-nose pliers. After all the figures and specifications were in and the splinter was out, the test was hailed as a resounding success.