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CAReport



FORD '95 Aspire's the same, but everything else changes

During the 1980s, most car-makers took the back roads when considering redesign of their vehicles. In the hurry-hurry 1990s redesign was the prime directive, and there's been no exception at the Glass House.

Ford Motor Co. is in the midst of bringing to market a truckload of new and redesigned vehicles. The redesigned Explorer and the new Continental made their debuts in January, and a new Sable is coming for 1996.

Meanwhile, there have been changes in almost every 1995 car Ford sells. So sit back and we'll give you a spin around the models that are in dealer showrooms right now.

Introduced in January as a 1994 model, the Aspire has just a few changes on options available. Interior and exterior design remain the same.

Available in two model groups — base three-door and SE five-door — this fuel-efficient subcompact comes standard with a 1.3-liter single overhead cam four-cylinder engine mated to a five-speed manual transmission that produces 64 horses. The automatic transaxle is an option. Fuel economy figures are a whopping 36 mpg in the city and 43 mpg on the highway.

Changes include adding an electronic AM/FM stereo radio with digital clock and a convenience group as standard equip-



Road Test
By Anne
Fracassa

ment on the SE model. No longer available on Aspire are the rear window/wiper washer. Aluminum wheels are now restricted to the SE and the automatic transaxle is no longer available on the SE model.

The Aspire is the least expensive car on the market with standard dual air bags and optional anti-lock brakes. There are two new colors added — silver blue mist clearcoat metallic and teal clearcoat metallic — for a choice of seven colors.

Last redesigned in the 1992, the Ford Escort has a number of

additions and deletions from its 1994 model. Dual air bags are now standard, the tachometer is now an option and vacuum climate controls replace mechanical controls. The radio antenna has been relocated to the passenger-side front fender.

On the inside, the Escort sports a new instrument panel design that's easier to read. No longer available are the rear ashtray. The leather-wrapped steering wheel and seat tilt adjustment have been deleted from the GT model.

Later in the year, Escort will offer an integrated child seat in the rear, the first passenger car to do so.

There are other refinements on the Escort as well, including a better sound-dampening package, a reduction in engine vibration, a better performing air conditioner (with a larger condenser) and an improved speed-control system.

The Probe, first introduced in 1988 as a 1989 model, has a new rear fascia. The taillamp has been

redesigned on the Probe and Probe GT. There's now a center trim panel between the taillamp and restyled rear bumper cover on the GT. Also on the GT, the rear license plate is incorporated into the bumper fascia.

Interior changes include a second cupholder, new seat fabrics, restyled interior door panels and new grab handles.

No longer available on the option list: Rear wipers/washers, four-way seat height adjustment, graphic equalizer and heated dual mirrors. Added on the option list are 15-inch, three-spoke aluminum wheels and 16-inch, five-spoke chrome wheels on the GT.

The base Probe comes equipped with a 2.0-liter four-cylinder 16-valve engine, while the optional engine is a 2.5-liter 24-valve V-6. Both engines can be outfitted with a five-speed manual or four-speed automatic transmission. Fuel efficiency: 118 horsepower and 164 horsepower, respectively.

The hot new Mustang, enjoying

its second year of a major redesign — and its 30th anniversary — stays just the way it perfectly is this year. The only changes: The power driver's seat is now an option (last year it was standard) and now you can get a CD and premium sound system. There are three engines available on the Mustang: A 145-horsepower 3.8-liter V-6 (with five-speed manual or four-speed automatic transmission), a 215-horsepower 5.0-liter high-output V-8 (mated to a five-speed manual or four-speed automatic) and a 240-horsepower 5.0-liter V-8 that comes only with a five-speed manual transmission.

The Mustang is available as a base coupe and convertible, GT coupe and convertible and a limited-production Cobra coupe and convertible. It has dual air bags and optional anti-lock brakes for safety.

The newest Ford out of the bag is the Contour, introduced just a few months ago. Born from the tremendous success of the European Ford Mondeo, the Contour has state-of-the-art engines and transmissions, along with a host of technological wonders that add up to handling and response usually reserved for the high-powered sports cars.

Available in base GL, luxury LX and the sporty SE models, each has its own unique blend of standard equipment. The base engine is the 2.0-liter 16-valve dual overhead cam aluminum engine that pumps out 125 horsepower. The sweeter engine, called the Duratec V-6, is a 2.5-liter 24-valve rated at 170 horsepower. The smallest engine in production, it's outfitted with platinum-tipped spark plugs and calls for only routine maintenance — replacement of fluids and filters after 100,000 miles on the road. Both engines can be mated to a five-speed manual or four-speed automatic transmission.

The Taurus has no exterior or interior changes for the 1995 model year. Look for a restyled Taurus to debut next year, however. Rear window defroster, manual conditioning and solar tinted windshield glass are now standard equipment.

There's also a new decklid spoiler on the SE models.

The Taurus is available in four trim levels and in sedan and wagon models. Standard is a 3.0-liter V-6 engine that has a new piston and ring combination that reduces emissions. The coolant life has been extended from

36,000 miles to 60,000 miles.

Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, the Thunderbird graduates to become the longest-running nameplate in the Ford family of vehicles. Still rated as the sales leader in the midsize specialty market, the Thunderbird is available in luxury LX and sports version SC models.

The LX comes equipped with a standard 3.8-liter V-6 or an optional 4.6-liter V-8 with automatic transaxle. The Super Coupe high performance model comes only with the supercharged V-6 engine mated to a four-speed automatic or five-speed manual transmission.

The Thunderbird also now comes with a trunk-mounted CD changer with a power antenna.

It's been a short three years since the Crown Victoria got all-new sheet metal all around — and Ford decided to update it just a bit. The exterior has been freshened and there's a whole new interior for the 1995 model year.

On both the front and rear of the Vic are new taillamps, a revised grille, new front and rear bumper fascias, a new aluminum decklid that's wider and lower and new color-keyed body side molding.

There's a new instrument panel with new appliques and woodgrain that are framed by door trim panels. Power seat controls are now on the door for ease of operation.

All new seats provide 10 extra track inches for improved knee room. There are also front and rear passenger-assist handles, a backlight window and door lock switches. All models feature an on-the-floor 12-point power point for accessories like cellular phones or — ahem — the radar detector.

Ford's family of automobiles has rounded out in the last few years, with nearly every model having either new sheet metal or major revisions. With a new Taurus on the horizon, it'll be interesting what gets the next facelift. Bet it's T-bird. What do you think?

If you'd like to see a particular model tested or if you have a car question, send Anne Fracassa a message at AVANTI1054, Avanti's American Online mailbox. Or comment through the Internet at AVANTI1054@aol.com.

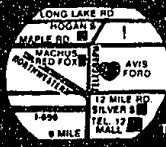
Anne Fracassa is senior editor of Avanti NewsFeatures.

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