

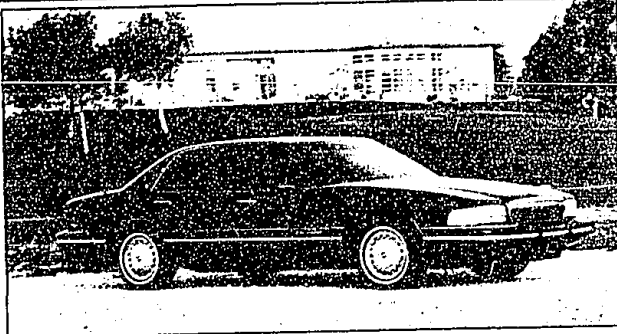
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CAREport



Buick Park Avenue delivers quality

By Anne Fracassa
Avanti NewsFeaturesROAD TEST
By
Anne Fracassa

Buick's handsome Park Avenue drives home the premium carmaker's high-end image with its smorgasbord of sophistication and feast of functional features.

Test-driven: The top-of-the-line Buick Park Avenue Ultra, which sports a different aluminum grille, wheels and body side moldings.

Buick engineers have done a fine job with the exterior of the Park Avenue, giving it flushed glass, wrap-around bumpers and windshield and rounded curves all

the way around.

The Park Avenue has sophisticated styling this year, lending way to the aerodynamic look we're all so used to now.

Truly a fine luxury car, the Park Avenue's different styling — which still has the inner distinctness of Buick — can

turn a number of heads when driving around town.

Although not radically different from other Buicks or the previous generation of Park Avenue, it still has a different air of its own.

The interior of the Park Avenue holds many pleasant surprises for both driver and passenger. The front driver's and passenger's doors flow into the instrument panel, giving it a clean look.

Front passenger has a unique choice — individual climate controls. No more fighting about being too hot or too cold. Just

adjust the heating and cooling to your own preference.

Mounted on the driver's door are a host of important switches, including electric mirror controls, headlamp switch, door locks and window controls.

Two instrument panels, both analog, are available. Standard is a center-mounted speedometer, with warning lights and fuel gauge on either side.

The Ultra driven had the optional instrument cluster that included a tachometer and wide array of other gauges. Placing all that necessary information in a space

that measures approximately 12-inches-by-4-inches makes driving a bit confusing.

It was difficult to spot the speedometer on first glance. Eyes always fell to the tach or another gauge before searching out the speedometer. It's just too much information in too little space.

The remainder of the instrumentation is easy to understand and operate, including the sound system.

Safety features include a standard airbag and anti-lock brakes.

The Park Avenue is equipped with General Motors' pride and joy, the 3.8-liter V6 tuned-port 170-horsepower engine that's teamed with an electronic automatic transaxle.

Acceleration is a joy to behold. Need help getting down that short freeway ramp? Have no worries with this engine. The only visible setback on this fine performing engine is the fuel economy — which is 18 mpg in the city and 27 mpg on the highway. The Park Avenue driven got a little

less miles per gallon than that.

The transmission is powered by a sensitive computer that monitors engine, transmission and cruise control systems. With input from all three, the transmission "knows" exactly when to shift gears, providing the optimum in unlabored acceleration.

It certainly makes a difference in city driving and during stop-and-go traffic. The Park Avenue doesn't lurch forward or act hesitant when accelerating of driving at a constant speed.

And with the comfort of five-person seating, four doors that swing wide for easy in and out and a trunk that can handle the bulkiest loads, Buick certainly has a great car here.

Anne Fracassa is senior editor of Avanti NewsFeatures.

If you'd like to see a particular model tested or if you have a car question, send Anne Fracassa a message at AVANTI 1054, Avanti's America Online mailbox. Or comment through the Internet at AVANTI1054@aol.com

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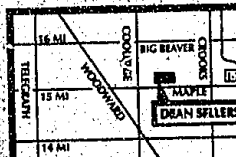
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