

Suburban Observer & Eccentric Automotive Showcase

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CARReport

Mitsubishi Galant stands out

By Anne Fracassa
Avanti NewsFeatures

Mitsubishi is counting on its stylish Galant sport car to make it stand out against able mid-size competitors like the Toyota Camry, Honda Accord and Ford Taurus in 1996. Everything about this car tags it as a family sedan. This \$20,000ish looker is steady, sure and quite adequate, without any one outstanding feature.

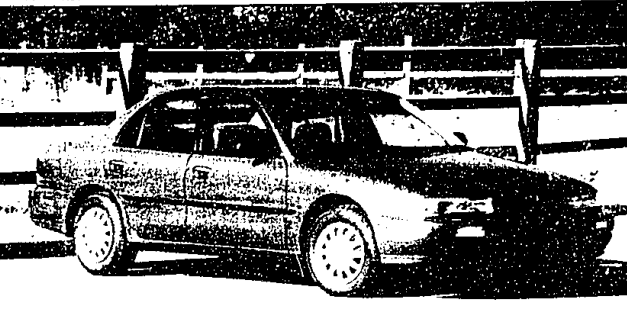
The Galant's styling is typical for a car of this class, and similar to other Japanese sedans. The hood is low, the rear corners are tapered to provide good aerodynamics and the distinct hood bulge from the 1994 Galant has been eliminated. Drag is reduced by the front undercarriage skirt, which directs airflow away from the front suspension.

The Galant's interior is, again, typical of Japanese sedans. Functional and comfortable without blowing you away. The five-way cloth adjustable front-bucket seats provide decent support. Tall drivers shouldn't have any problems with leg or head room—there's even room for your inflated ego, if you insist on bringing it along.

The rear seats provide enough room for the family, and they fold down (as most cars in this class do these days) to provide extra cargo room. The trunk is big enough to hold your weekly grocery shopping, unless you're buying for the Brady Bunch.

The instrumentation is simple and functional, with speedometer, tachometer, fuel and temperature gauges on the main dash. The climate-control system, rear defogger, clock and audio system are in the center console. The console includes a storage area and cupholders.

The Galant gets some tweaks for 1996, including:



ROAD TEST
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- * A new rear spoiler option.
- * A new panic button for the keyless entry system.
- * New spoked wheel covers.
- * New black bodyside molding.
- * Optional ABS for all Galant trim levels.
- * A new Homelink onboard remote control unit to open your garage, standard only on the ES.

Production of the third-generation Galant, first introduced and sold in the U.S. in 1985, was moved from Mitsubishi's Japanese manufacturing plant to Diamond-Star in 1994. In addition to the Galant, the plant, now completely owned by Mitsubishi in Normal, Ill., builds the Eclipse and Eagle Tailor.

Besides the segment leaders, the Galant also competes directly with

the Mazda 626 and the Tennessee-assembled Nissan Altima.

"The ... Galant represents the most important event in our history since coming to the U.S. market," Naganuma Kazuo, president and chief executive officer at MMSA, told newspaper reporters when the car was redesigned in 1994.

"We will be producing a car that will not only meet the needs of the largest market segment in the U.S., but also the Galant will represent more than 60 percent of the total sales of MMSA in this country." Galant's move to U.S. production classified it as a domestic automobile with 70 percent U.S. content. Only the powertrain is Japanese-made, and Naganuma said that may change further in the production process.

"With the added production of the Galant, we are only serving to further strengthen the American economy," he said.

The new Galant features dual air bags, impact absorbing body and anti-lock brakes as well as a 2.4-liter single overhead cam 16-valve engine and standard features that include power windows, power door locks and air conditioning.

One of the more interesting features on the Galant is an automatically controlled 4-speed automatic transmission with a "fuzzy logic" shift control. The computer senses when the transmission should be shifted for optimum power and efficient opera-

tion, all the while taking into consideration whether the vehicle is traveling uphill or downhill, or on a curved road.

If the vehicle is traveling up a steep road, for example, the fuzzy logic system prevents the transmission from upshifting or downshifting incorrectly, providing a smooth, even ride.

The Galant used to come in a GS trim level for the ultra enthusiast. That model provided a 2.4-liter dual overhead cam 16-valve engine with 160 horsepower mated to a 5-speed manual transmission. But the GS is not being offered by Mitsubishi in 1996.

Anne Fracassa is senior editor of Avanti NewsFeatures. Avanti Southeast Bureau Chief Dave Menard contributed to this report.

Mitsubishi Galant S
Vehicle class: Mid-size sedan.
Power: 2.4-liter SOHC 16-valve
4-cylinder engine.
As tested: \$17,992.
Mileage: 22/28 (automatic) 23/30
(manual) regular unleaded.
Where built: Normal, Ill.

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Anne Fracassa is senior editor of Avanti NewsFeatures.

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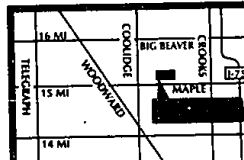
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