

Suburban Observer & Eccentric Automotive Showcase

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CARReport



Grand Am SE: Hard-charging coupe d'thrill

By Anne Fracassa
Avanti News Features

This little sweetheart is a blast to drive.

Excitement? You bet. And I didn't even drive the sporty, performance-driven GT coupe. I drove the SE coupe. And it still was a lot of fun.

Power's provided by a hard-charging 2.4-liter twin cam 16-valve 4-cylinder engine (all new) that pumps out a respectable 150 horses. Last year's Quad 4 engine on Grand Am was no slacker. But this new engine peaks a tad lower in the rpm range and gives you quicker response from a stop and improved passing abilities. For a 4-cylinder, it performs quite well, and quietly.

Standard equipment gives you a 5-speed manual transmission. With that, you'll see fuel economy of 22 mpg in the city, 33 on the highway. But get this — the Grand Am has a huge 15.2-gallon fuel tank. That means a cruising range of more than 500 miles.

Also available is a 155-horsepower 3.1-liter V-6 engine mated to a 4-speed automatic transmission.

A lot has changed for 1996 on the Grand Am, which comes in coupe and sedan versions. The new look includes driver and passenger airbags, body-mounted driver and passenger safety belts, a redesigned soft-touch instrument panel and



door trim, more integrated cupholder



ROAD TEST
By
Anne Fracassa

ers, door-mounted power door locks and window controls and some new interior fabrics.

The nicest surprise is the change in instrumentation. They're back: Analog instrumentation with speedometer, tachometer, fuel and temp gauges. Everything is smartly laid out with controls easier to grasp and maneuver.

Also new are the backlit heating, ventilation and air-conditioning controls. Better see in the dark, my dear. The rectangular air conditioning and ventilation outlets have been replaced by spherical ones,

which are easier to manipulate in different directions. They're more pleasing to the eye as well.

The instrument panel was also outfitted for better occupant safety during its redesign. Within the panel is a tubular steel structure for greater rigidity, which means fewer squeaks and rattles and is more energy-absorbing.

The AM/FM stereo can now be controlled from the steering wheel on all Grand Ams for a mere cost of \$125. It's a great option to get, just for the safety factor involved in letting you keep your hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road.

Also standard on all 1996 Grand Ams: A single-key system for doors, trunk and ignition, a theft deterrent system, a 240-watt engine cooling fan, cast aluminum wheels, an enhanced traction system when you opt for the automatic transmission and daytime running lamps.

This is the first year DRLs are standard on some Pontiac models, primarily the Grand Am, Bonneville and Sunfire. Pontiac added DRLs because of its experience in Canada, which has mandated them since 1989. Canada has found that DRLs

have reduced daytime opposite-direction, two-vehicle collisions in that country by as much as 11 percent.

"Use of daytime running lamps is a cost-effective method of helping drivers see each other avoid crashes and save lives," said Pontiac General Manager John G. Middlebrook. "We're encouraged by the results in Canada and expect to see similar reductions in the U.S. as more vehicles with DRLs travel on American roads."

With DRLs, your car or truck is easier to see and therefore, avoid. The headlamps are at a reduced intensity that are bright enough to be seen, but not strong enough to affect headlamp life. Next year, all General Motors vehicles will be outfitted with DRLs.

Other standard equipment on the Grand Am includes power rack-and-pinion steering, stainless-steel exhaust, 4-wheel anti-lock brakes, bolt-on wheel covers, impact resistant fog lamps, tinted glass, illuminated entry, dual visor vanity mirrors, carpeted floor mats and remote fuel and trunk releases.

For some reason — cost, maybe

— the outside mirrors are only remote-controlled on the driver's side. On the passenger's side, they can only be moved manually. That's where you need the remote, right?

The Grand Am's exterior has been revised slightly for a more aerodynamic, sporty and distinctive "Pontiac" look. It looks even better than before with new front and rear fascias, hood, grilles, headlamps, fenders, bodyside moldings, dock lid, rear deck spoiler (add \$150) and tail-lamps.

This is a pretty car. Not a kid-hauler family car, mind you, but a really fun car to drive. Take it for a spin. You may just feel that excitement.

Anne Fracassa is senior editor of Avanti News Features.

1996 Pontiac Grand Am SE
Vehicle class: Compact coupe (also available as a sedan).

Engine: 2.4-liter twin-cam 16-valve 4-cylinder.

Mileage: 23 city/33 highway.

Base price: \$13,499.

As tested: \$16,124.

Where built: Lansing, Mich.



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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Doing Something About Dirty Air

(NAPS)—According to the EPA, motor vehicles emit a high percentage of the pollutants found in congested cities. Fortunately, a concerted effort by gasoline and automobile manufacturers along with new legislation is helping to reduce the level of the pollution.



A new fuel has been introduced that produces at least 16 percent less pollution. The new fuels are called Reformulated Gasoline, or RFG, and are manufactured to meet the same industry performance standards as conventional gasoline. However, they reduce vehicle emissions of toxics, carbon monoxide and ozone causing (smog) pollutants.

As the new fuel program gets underway, we will see the more widespread benefit of reformulated gasoline this summer when there will be something missing from the air we breathe: 300,000 tons of dangerous ozone forming pollutants will not be released into the atmosphere. This is equivalent to taking eight million cars off the road.

A special telephone hotline has been set up to provide information about reformulated gasoline: 1-800-458-6743

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3.1 liter V-6, automatic, air conditioning, dual air bags, power windows & locks, anti-lock brakes, 16" aluminum wheels, rear deck spoiler and more. Stock #950706.

SALE PRICE \$16,695*

GM OPT II Deduct \$931.80



1996 SUNFIRE SE 2 DOOR COUPE

Air conditioning, rear defogger, tilt, AM/FM cassette, much more. Stock #950183.

SALE PRICE \$12,195*

GM OPT II Deduct \$540.45

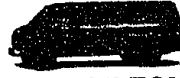


1995 TRANS SPORT SE

3.1 liter V-6, four wheel ABS brakes, driver side air bag & more. Stock #950562.

SALE PRICE \$13,995*

GM OPT II Deduct \$594.45



1995 3/4 TON CARGO VAN

V-8 engine, air conditioning, four speed automatic transmission, ABS brakes, 33 gallon fuel tank, 14" size spare tire, load rear door glass, AM/FM stereo. Stock #957562.

SALE PRICE \$16,395*

GM OPT II Deduct \$1002.65



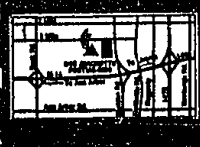
1996 SONOMA EXT. CAB PICKUP

2.2 liter four cylinder engine, five speed manual transmission, air bag, ABS brakes, air conditioning, AM/FM cassette stereo, tachometer and much more! Stock #95818.

SALE PRICE \$13,595*

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