

# Suburban Observer & Eccentric Automotive Showcase

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## CAR Report

### Isuzu Rodeo is fun, yet practical

By Anne Fracassa  
Avanti NewsFeatures

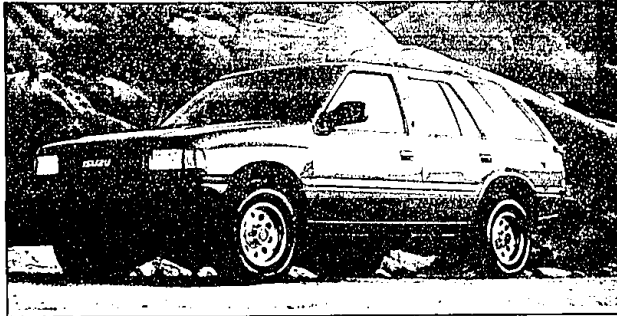
You like sporty? You like fun-to-drive? You like sport utes with power? Then you like the 1996 Isuzu Rodeo. The quality of the build on the Rodeo, including the fit and finish, is outstanding. Those folks down in Lafayette, Ind., where the Rodeo is built, should be very proud.

Given was the 4-wheel-drive model outfitted with the new 3.2-liter single overhead cam V6 engine that delivered 190 horsepower. That was adequate for a vehicle of this size and class.

The 3.2-liter is outfitted with fully sequential multi-point fuel injection. It gives you around 10 percent more horsepower over last year's models. The standard engine is a 2.6-liter 4-cylinder, but most people want the V6. It just makes sense for a vehicle like this.

Also standard is a manual transmission, but the V6 I drove had an automatic, which is a better choice anyway. The 4-speed automatic performed nicely during normal city driving, and entrance onto freeways was fine. There was enough power there to get you up to 65 or more to merge safely.

Standard this year on the 4-wheel-



ROAD TEST  
By  
Anne Fracassa

drive Rodeo is shift-on-the-fly, which means you can engage the 4-wheel-drive mode by pressing a button on the instrument panel — so long as you're traveling under 62 mph. It's something that all 4-wheel-drive vehicles will eventually have. Glad Isuzu got with the program.

With the 4-wheel-drive models, you'll get increased protection with skid plates mounted under the radiator, transmission transfer case and fuel

tank.

The ride is very, very nice — lots better than last year's model. Isuzu engineers increased the wheel track and changed the ratings on the shock absorbers and springs to achieve what amounts to a less-harsh ride than before.

The Rodeo also has front independent double-wishbone suspension and torsion bar springs with a stabilizer bar. Both front and rear, there are double-acting gas-assisted shock absorbers to provide a little more comfort to the driver and passengers.

Four-wheel anti-lock brakes are optional on all models. On the V6, however, you'll get 4-wheel disc brakes with rear-wheel anti-lock brakes as standard equipment. ABS is something everyone should have on their next new vehicle. The extra measure of safety ABS provides is worth the bucks.

Other safety features you'll find in the Rodeo — standard — are dual airbags, progressive body, frame and

engine absorption, side impact guard beams and a collapsible steering column.

On the exterior, you'll find smart styling and an aggressive front stance. The Rodeo sits on new 16-inch aluminum wheels this year that are really neat.

One of the features on the Rodeo I really liked was the swing-away rear tire carrier and how easy it was to get into the rear hatch. The door opens wide and cargo is easily accessed at your level.

The cargo capacity with the rear seat folded down is a whopping 74.9 cubic feet. About what you'll need for a weekend camping trip. With the rear seat up, you'll find about 35 cubic feet of cargo room.

And speaking of camping, the 3.2-liter engine, when outfitted with trailer brakes, allows the Rodeo to tow up to 4,500 pounds. With the 2.6-liter engine, you can only tow around 2,000 pounds.

Looks can be deceiving with the

Rodeo. Although it's only 13 inches off the ground, you feel like you're high up — much like a full-sized truck — when you sit behind the wheel. It wasn't much of an effort to get in and out of the Rodeo, as well.

Some of the nicer options available include air conditioning, a sunroof, limited slip differential, a six-speaker stereo system and leather seating.

Consider the Isuzu Rodeo a practical sport utility that's perfect for anyone who wants a fun-to-drive vehicle.

#### 1996 Isuzu Rodeo

Vehicle class: Sport-utility vehicle.  
Power: 2.6-liter 4-cylinder engine. V6 is available as an option.

Mileage: 15 city/22 highway is the range, depending on how the vehicle is equipped.

Where assembled: Lafayette, Ind.

Base price: \$17,340.

## Choosing Gasolines

Does higher octane premium gas mean more detergents to keep your engine healthy? Not necessarily, says the Car Care Council. In most cars premium gas adds up to wasted money and resources.

For people who believe they're doing their cars a disservice by using less-expensive "regular" gas, the Council states that all grades contain engine-cleaning detergents, and most cars seldom need more than a good quality of regular, 87-octane fuel.

#### Exceptions to the rule:

- An older engine that has accumulated carbon in the combustion chamber, causing knocking or pinging under load. Higher octane can help, but sooner or later a more radical procedure may be necessary to remove carbon.

- Mechanical problems, sometimes due to a vacuum leak, overheating or emissions control system malfunction. Remedy: diagnose and correct the trouble.

- The engine needs attention. Remedy: have the engine diagnosed and serviced as required.

- The vehicle is designed for higher octane fuel. Remedy: use recommended grade of fuel.

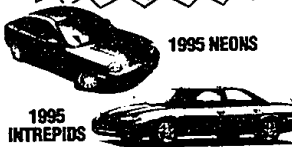
Besides the cost factor, high-octane gas requires more crude oil per gallon to produce. It also creates more toxic hydrocarbons, something the ozone could do without.

So the next time you're debating at the pump and decide to give your car a treat with some expensive, higher octane gas, remember that a better investment of your money may be in routine preventive maintenance services.

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  
Anne Fracassa is senior editor of Avanti News Features.

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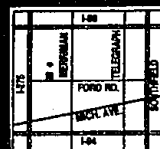
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