

# Suburban Observer & Eccentric Automotive Showcase

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**CAR REPORT**

## Meet an Isuzu truck that's as American as you can get

 By Anne Fracassa  
 Avant NewsFeatures

No wonder you're all confused.

Can you really buy a foreign car or truck and call it American?

Yep. Here's a vehicle that's got a "foreign" name, but it's really all-American.

This Isuzu Hombre is 92 percent U.S./Canadian parts content, has a powertrain and transmission built here in the U.S., has a General Motors platform and is assembled in Shreveport, La., at a General Motors truck plant right alongside the Chevrolet S-10. That's more American than the last Mercury I owned. The remaining 8 percent of the Hombre is made by GM in Brazil, by the way. Hence the name, I guess.

Isuzu pickup trucks have a long history — and partnership — with General Motors.


 ROAD TEST  
 By  
 Anne Fracassa

sister to the S-10, it's really quite different in a number of ways. The sculptured front fascia and smoother fender lines make it quite distinct and different from the S-10. It's got a more aggressive front, as well.

The large headlamps give the Hombre a sporty, fun-to-drive look. Even the rear tailgate, taillamps, side moldings and wheelcovers aren't shared with its sister. I think this truck looks cuter than the S-10.

Yes, I said cuter. Some statistics say more than half of the people who buy compact trucks are women, so I can say "cuter."

The suspension on this Hombre is impressive. There's a stiff feel, but it's very comfortable. It handles the roughest roads with ease and you

won't have a headache from the ride.

That nice ride comes from a box-section ladder-type frame with four bolted and riveted crossmembers. It's got front independent upper and lower "A" arms with coil springs and rear, two-stage springs handle load support and add to the ride's comfort.

The rear bed measures 72.6 inches by 56.6 inches. That translates into nearly 40 cubic feet of cargo space, more than enough to carry just about anything you need card-of-home. Towing capacity is 2,000 pounds — perfect for those jet skis.

Power is adequate for a truck of this size. This 118-horsepower 2.2-liter in-line 4-cylinder has a sophisticated fuel injection system that provides improved cold starts,

reduced engine noise and great fuel economy — 23 mpg in the city and 30 mpg on the highway.

The only transmission available is a 5-speed manual with integral overdrive. All Hombre models are 2 wheel drive. That's a good choice because industry statistics show 76 percent of all light-duty pickup use calls for 2-wheel-drive applications.

There are two models to choose from: An S that has bench seats, or an upgraded XS, which has a 60/40 split bench seat. A driver's-side airbag is standard in both the S and XS.

The Isuzu Hombre XS is equipped with quite a bit of stuff usually reserved for the option list on most small pickup trucks out there, like a sliding rear window, cut-pile carpeting, rear step bumper, air conditioning, tachometer, digital clock and an AM/FM cassette stereo with four speakers.

The Hombre is safe. Side-impact door beams, 3-point safety belts, 4-wheel anti-lock brakes, a collapsible steering column, side-guard door beams, safety-cage construction, intermittent windshield wipers, daytime running lamps and roadside assistance are there to protect you.

The Hombre also is equipped with 100,000-mile replacement spark plugs and a maintenance-free battery. The warranty is 36 months or 50,000 mile limited basic; 60

month, 60,000 mile limited powertrain; and 72 month or 100,000 mile limited anti-corrosion.

That's all well and good. But what you need to know is, this mini-truck is solid, functional and fun to drive. A good choice for people who appreciate those qualities.

**1996 Isuzu Hombre**  
 Vehicle class: Small pickup.  
 Power: 2.2-liter in-line 4-cylinder engine.  
 Mileage range: 23 city / 30 highway.  
 Where built: Shreveport, La.  
 Base price: \$12,063.

## Things You Auto KNOW!

### True or False?

The radiator pressure cap on your car is designed to maintain cooling system pressure between 20 and 22 pounds per square inch.

**False!** Most cooling systems operate between 7 and 16 pounds. The system acts like a pressure cooker, which permits water to boil at a temperature higher than the normal 212 Degrees F. A hotter running engine, within specified limits, is a more efficient engine.

The pressure cap, which serves as the safety valve of the system, should be checked periodically to be sure it is keeping pressure within range.

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