

Suburban Observer & Eccentric Automotive Showcase

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CARReport

Special Camaro is unadulterated power on wheels

By Anne Fracassa
Avanti NewsFeatures

Take a deep breath. Open the door. Slip behind the wheel. Buckle up. Slowly turn the key in the ignition.

Listen. It's the sound of pure, unadulterated power.

The 1997 Chevrolet Camaro limited edition Z28 SS 30th anniversary package makes you feel young again.

Back to the time when the whole world was ahead of you, your eyes were clear and bright and you didn't have a care in the world.

Take yourself back to 1967, when the first Camaro was born. Wide hood stripes were all the rage. Thirty years later, Chevrolet brings back the wide stripes on the anniversary edition Camaro.

There will only be 1,000 of these "ligger" orange-striped arctic white Camaros built, so it's certain they'll become collector cars. The anniversary edition is stocked full of special features.

It's a doggone pretty package, too. White all the way around, the exterior features white door handles, white five-spoke wheels and white front fascia. The interior instrumentation,



ROAD TEST
By
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dash (a word from the past) and all around is black.

Complimenting the interior are white front leather bucket seats with black-and-white cloth inserts. At the top of the headrest is a neat 30th anniversary heat-stamped logo. The seats are new and are wider to offer better lumbar support during long-distance driving.

Back to the inside in a minute.

Let's jump to what's hiding

under the hood.

It's the beautiful 5.7-liter LT4 V8 engine with sequential fuel injection that's graced the Corvette for a number of years. Turn the key and this engine roars to life, has a beautiful, throaty growl on takeoff and makes this puppy just too much fun to drive.

The 5.7-liter features a cast-iron block and cast-aluminum cylinder head and provides 350 horses under the hood.

Mated to a 6-speed manual transmission, the V8 performs flawlessly and gives you power with just a tap on the accelerator. Without trying to risk an accident, if you look at the tachometer, it barely moves when you shift into the different gears.

The 6-speed performed quite well, but there was one annoyance. On occasion, when shooting out of the gate, there was a second-shift override. When you tried to get it into third, it was

difficult and it was unnatural just to pop it into fourth gear. Minor annoyance and actually my fault for not shifting at the right time.

Top speed on the speedometer is 150 miles per hour. I never got it above 80 mph. That was more than enough. With a hot-looking car like this, you're prime for a ticket for just driving it around town.

I didn't turn on the sound system until just a couple of days before I turned the car back in. I just loved listening to the engine roar and the sound of the throaty exhaust.

But the new high-performance audio system in this anniversary edition deserves some mention. It was outfitted with an electronically tuned AM/FM stereo with seek-scan, digital clock, automatic tone control, speed-compensated volume, Dolby noise reduction and compact disc. The six speakers strategically located throughout

the cabin make music come alive.

One thing was new to me. In choosing the pre-calculated equalizer choices there now is one just for country-western. Usually you can just pick the rock choice on most. But there actually was a difference in sound when you chose the "C-W" mode. The stereo also has a TheftLock security system on it.

Other neat features on the anniversary edition include remote keyless entry, leather-wrapped steering wheel, power windows with driver's express down, theft-deterrent alarm system, remote rear hatch release, power door locks, twin remote electric mirrors, electric rear window defogger, electronic speed control, fog lamps, 6-way power driver's seat, 16-inch aluminum wheels on 16-inch performance blackwalls and acceleration slip regulation (designed to decrease tire spin on slippery surfaces).

Safety doesn't take a back seat on this Camaro. No surprise that it has dual air bags or even daytime running lamps. But standard is a 4-wheel anti-lock brake system. There's also reinforced steel safety cage with steel side-door beams and front and rear crush zones. The safety belts were easy enough to get into and out of in the front seats, but the in the rear seats were a bit annoying.

All Camaro owners have, at their disposal, the Chevrolet 24-hour Roadside Assistance program. The program provides everything from a gallon of gas and free towing for warranty repairs to free locksmith and routing assistance. Heck, you can even have a tire changed or

a jump start if need be.

Camaro also features platinum-tipped spark plugs that don't need maintenance for the first 100,000 miles, automatic trans fluid that never needs replacing, battery-rundown protection and extended-life engine coolant good for 5 years or 150,000 miles (whichever comes first).

The anniversary edition wasn't outrageous in cost, either. It starts at a reasonable \$20,116 and with all the bells and whistles topped out at \$24,217. Not bad for a collector's item.

This pony sure is a lot of fun to drive, looks great and performs well. You'd expect the younger kids to be craning their necks to get a look at this anniversary edition Camaro. Nothing was farther from the truth.

Most of the looks came from late thirty-something and forty-something guys and gals. I guess it reminded them of when they were young.

Can you tell? I loved this car. You will too.

Anne Fracassa is senior editor of Avanti NewsFeatures. Write her online with your choice for best car on the road at AVANTI1054@aol.com.

1997 Chevrolet Camaro 30th anniversary package
Vehicle class: Compact sports coupe.

Engine: 5.7-liter SFI LT4 V8.
Mileage: 16 city / 27 Hwy.
Where built: Ste. Therese, Quebec, Canada.
Price: \$24,217.



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