Observer & Eccentric Suburban Observer & Suburban Utomotive

CAROPORT 1997 Saab 900 S will impress you with hidden power

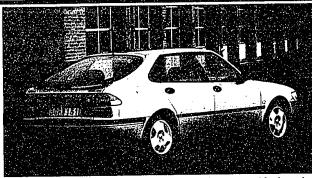
By Anne Fracassa Avanti NewsFeatures

The engine in the 1997 Saab 900 S responds as though there's an 8-cylinder under the hood, even though there isn't. Really. Power is there the millisec-

Power is there the millisec-ond you press down on the gas pedal. It's easy to reach exces-sive speeds on the freeway, even if you don't want to. The car's power comes from a 4-cylinder engine. Yep. Those Swedish engineers put together a 2.3-liter dual overhead cam naturally aspirated turbo inline job that delivers 150 horsepow-er in a flash. And the 900 S driven had a 5-

job that delivers 150 horsepower in a flash.
And the 900 S driven had a 5speed transmission in it. I
never felt put out by it. It performed well, shifted easily and
only confused me in the dark
when I couldn't remember
where reverse was. You've got
to lift the ring under the shift
knob to get it into reverse gear.
This 4-door hatchback that
sents five with ease is a high

This 4-door intenback that sents five with ease is a high performance vehicle with a lot of functional uses. It's almost like it's a sport utility because of its functionality.



ROAD TEST By Anne Fracassa

I was thinking about this the other day because many years ago, Sanb's big bosses invited us over for the weekend. We flew to Fairhope, Ala., not far from Mobile to see how functional Sanbs could be.

When we got into town, we were given instructions and a map outlining a typical Saturday morning of chores so we could make the test fun.

All the town was in on the game and participated actively. We picked up Grandma at the

airport. She used a cane and told us how easy the car was to get into and out of. Then we drove to the hardware store to pick up several bags of feed and some hav

some hay.

The Circle K let us put what would in my household be about six months worth of greeries. Then the clock store called. The grandfather clock was fixed, so we went to pick that up. Our last stop was picking up one of the town's kids for tuba class — tuba and all.

What we learned that day is how versattle Saabs were. And still are.

With the back seat up in the 900 S, the cargo area is 24 cubic feet. More than most. But with the back seat down — and by the way, it goes all the way down flat —the cargo room increases to 49.8 cubic feet.

The back seat has enough from for a couple of large adults. The front seats are comfy as well, and perfect for The Circle K let us put what

anyone with long legs. Headroom was perfect. Hiproom was great. The only problem I had was getting the seat belts to stay locked. On several occassions, I heard the belt "click" in securely, only for the belt to pop out unexpectedly several minutes later.

The 900 S has a better brake system this year. The brake calipers and dises are larger and the brake pads have been repositioned. What that gives you is better braking torque, resulting in shorter braking distances. The brake system is also outfitted with 4-channel anti-lock braking system.

Saab really didn't change a whole lot on the 900 this year. Much is the same as last year. And I still have the complaint that I shouldn't have to be a Rhoades scholar to figure out the radio controls.

There are four new paints for 1937 — hot shades of blue, vio-The 900 S has a better brake

let, red and yellow. The manual transmission has a new shifter. The seats are more comfy. And there's new luxury velour

there's new luxury velour upholstery.
The 900 S isn't a blast to drive, but it surely is spirited. It's a large car that you wouldn't expect to handle like a sports car, but it does. If you want to get a little wild in the 900, you can — it will accommodate and be happy doing so.
Another thing you'll like about the Saab 900 S is the level of safety features included as standard equipment. I'm talking about ABS, dual air begg, lap and shoulder safety belts and head restraints in all five seating positions, side belts and head restraints in all five seating positions, side impact reinforcement, the well-known safety cage construction with front and rear crumple zones and 5-mph self-restoring

zones and 5-mph self-restoring bumpers.

The rear soat, called Saab Safeseat, has crossbeams under the seat and at the top of the rear seathack. What that gives your backeat passengers is the protection of cross-car reinforcement in side impact collisions and holds those passengers against the seat with the three lap and shoulder belts.

That crossbeam on top also adds another level of safety by protecting the rear passengers from any possible cargo in the luggage compartment.

The Saab 900 S is the lowest-priced Saab and starts at around \$25,000. But take a look at some of the goodies it offers: 16-inch alloy wheels, 4-wheel disc brakes with ABS, premium sterce with power antenna, heated seats, power windows, power door locks, telescoping steering column, height-adjustable belts, remote lock

and alarm system. The alarm system by the way, has an engine-immobilizing feature, intrusion sensors for the doors, hood and hatch, and a glass-breakage sensor.

Sanb takes care of its cus-

tomers - the first maintenance service at 5.000 miles is done

service at 5,000 mies is aone free of charge. OK, so the book on the Sant 900 S is that it's fun to drives performs well in inclement weather and is the perfect fami-ly sedan. Heck, it's a great car for any

Anne Fracassa is senior editor of Avanti NewsFeatures.

1997 Saab 900 S Engine: 2.3-liter DOHC 4-

cylinder. Mileage: 20 city / 29 highway.

Where built: Sweden. Price: \$25,000.



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