

Automotive

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Grand Prix delivers excitement

CAReport

By Anne Francesca
Avant! News/Features

Approaching it in the parking lot, it invites you. Its aggressive, wide stance tells you — no, screams at you — we're going to have a lot of fun here.

And fun I had in this 1997 Pontiac Grand Prix.

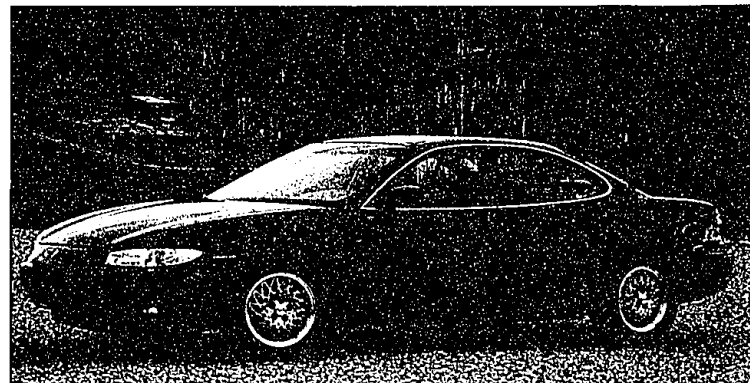
It's all new this year. The funny thing about it is that it was a great car last year. And, obviously, it's even better this year.

I have to say I was taken aback by the price tag of the Grand Prix GT. Just under \$23,000. But if you want fun, power, response and this kind of comfort, you've got to go with the GT version of Grand Prix.

I have to repeat what the automakers say about their products. But with the GT, this is true excitement. Let's start with what's under the hood. No scripping here, that's for sure. The 3.8-liter 3800 series II V-6, mated to a 4-speed automatic transmission, is a dream to drive. It steps up to the plate, nails it, and you're sailing over left field and outta the ballpark before you know it.

I didn't drive the supercharged version of the 3.8 liter, which gives you 240 horses. The 3800 series I drove only had a measly 195 horsepower. But it didn't disappoint me in the least.

On the freeway, on the street, down my block, it gave me more power than I deserved. It was quick in acceleration, quick in passing and



The 1997 Grand Prix GT with its "wide track" stance is really appealing. Its lowered hood line really makes you feel like you're in a small juicy sports car.

quick enough to maybe get me in trouble. Thank heaven it didn't.

And the surprising thing about all this is that the GT I drove was the sedan — not the two-door coupe.

Regardless, this is a fun car to drive.

Let's get to the interior. Never mind that the cockpit centers around the driver, the one who matters the most in the car. Never mind that its beklit red instrumentation is quite a sight on a warm summer night.

All controls are large enough for a gorilla to use. Everything is angled toward the driver. There's a "driver information center" that tells you just about everything you need to know about the car — including whether your tires are inflated to the

proper pressure.

It'll also tell you if the traction control system is on, whether the door or trunk is open and whether you need additional washer fluid or an oil change. I wonder if the next Grand Prix will fix you a sandwich.

The bucket seats are oh, so comfy. Even the rear bench seats are comfortable. There's a center console storage area that can hide a six pack — maybe even 8 — without a problem.

I did have one complaint. The key-fob is designed to unlock and lock the doors, as well as the trunk. There also is a little red button for a panic alarm. I had to press the trunk button about 25 times before it opened. And the lock and unlock buttons

were a pain as well because they wouldn't do their job on the first push. It seemed like it had a brain hiccup or something.

Speaking of the trunk, it's large. How large? Well, on a family outing, it carried a crock pot, a laundry basket full of goodies, two fairly large coolers, an oversized duffel bag full of bathing suits, towels and clothes and two Pyrex lasagna-sized dishes.

Lo and behold, I was many miles from home when it hit me that I forgot the hotdog buns on the kitchen table. So I flew into the nearest Meijer in Canton Township, where I put in four packages of buns, two large Tostitos chip bags and a couple of clearance bathing suits — and I still

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