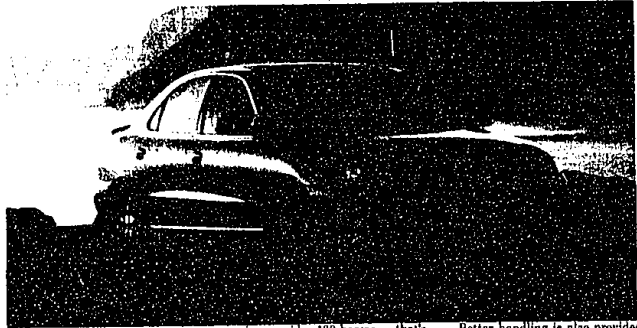


Suburban Automotive Showcase

Observer & Eccentric

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Hyundai Elantra puts on a fresh face

By Anne Fracassa
Avanti News Features

TUCSON, Ariz. — The natives say the sun shines 365 days a year here. There isn't a cloud in the sky, either.

This is the perfect place to introduce a new car. It's like a fresh beginning. Even Doug Mazza, chief operating officer for Hyundai, thinks so.

"This new Elantra is as far a step away from the previous model as we can get," said Mazza. "This is another huge step from where Hyundai has been. We're evolving in a way that's healthy to our dealer body and healthy to our customers."

This from a company that attracted buyers a few years ago by offering a three-year, no-cost maintenance program on its cars. This from a company that heard its name a thousand times over because Rodney King drove one. This from a company that enjoyed record sales of its vehicles in 1995.

This from a company that's introduced an all-new from the ground-up 1996 Elantra — a compact car that will compete with 22 entries in a class that represents 20 percent of the industry sales.



ROAD TEST
By
Anne Fracassa

They'll sell a ton of 'em, too, with a base price just over \$10,000. The top-of-the-line, fully loaded Elantra costs \$14,000. Even with the new trituff, the cost is nearly the same as the model it replaces.

It's got all new sheet metal, all new chassis, a 2-inch longer wheelbase, a 1-inch longer track, a smoother-shifting transmission and more interior hip, shoulder and head room.

The new engine is actually the best part of the car. Designed and developed completely by the South Korean auto maker, this 4-cylinder dual overhead cam "Beta" 1.8-liter

engine provides 130 horses — that's more horsepower than the Cavalier, Civic, Escort and Corolla. The redesign shaved 58 pounds off the engine's weight and provided a 7-percent improvement in fuel efficiency — 24 mpg in the city, 32 on the highway with the manual transmission model.

The engine is very quiet and performs well on city streets and on the highway. During this 600-mile test in southern Arizona, the entire line of Elantras never complained on long inclines and steep hillside roads on the way to Wyatt Earp's hometown of Tombstone. There's a lot of response from the Elantra when you want it, and it reaches cruising speeds quickly.

The body structure is more rigid and the 100-pound reduction in overall body weight of the Elantra makes it much more nimble than its predecessor. And that's saying a lot because the last Elantra was a terrific car.

Speed-sensitive power rack-and-pinion steering provides handling that's usually found on much more expensive sports cars. It holds the road well and has a smaller turning radius for those tight spots.

Better handling is also provided through a new advanced 4-wheel independent suspension that was designed specifically for a smooth, comfortable ride over a wide variety of road surfaces and to accommodate a wide range of driving styles.

There are three Elantras to choose from — the base, GLS and wagon. Yep, I said wagon. It's the first time Hyundai is offering a wagon and this thing is a work of art.

The Elantra wagon is a smartly styled family car that's a serious departure from a traditional wagon. It's actually pretty. And because Hyundai is shooting to sell more than half of its Elantras to women, making it look so good was a good call.

As a driver, you'll never know you're in a wagon because the Elantra wagon's performance and handling are as responsive as the sedan's. Just because it's a wagon doesn't mean you'll suffer sluggish performance or get a clunky feeling when driving it.

60/40 split that provides a totally flat loading surface when down.

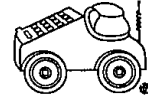
There's also been a significant reduction in what the industry calls NVH — noise, vibration and harshness. Hyundai engineers incorporated extra insulation in the instrument panel, hood and floor areas to kill the sound. The A-, B- and C-pillars are filled with foam to reduce wind noise as well.

Overall styling of the Elantra emphasizes clean lines, body-colored bumpers and a ho-man-looking air dam. It commands the road with authority.

The bottom line: The Elantra sedan and wagon are really good choices for a family looking for the versatility of each and want smart styling as well. Look for some good things coming from this auto maker in the future.

Anne Fracassa is senior editor of Avanti News Features.

1996 Hyundai Elantra
Vehicle class: Compact sedan and wagon.
Engine: 1.8-liter 4-cylinder.
Mileage: 22 city / 32 highway.
Where built: Seoul, Korea.
Price: Around \$11,000.



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.

Toyota Exports Cars Back to Homeland

(NAPS)—America is sending thousands of cars to Japan. Toyota is exporting the Avalon, that company's new American-built flagship sedan. It expects to ship more than 20,000 of these cars to Japan, Canada, Taiwan, the Middle East and other world markets during 1996 alone.

The Avalon is made exclusively at Toyota Motor Manufacturing (TMM), U.S.A., in Georgetown, Kentucky. TMM is also the exclusive manufacturer of Camry wagons and coupes, which have been exported to Japan since November 1993.

"Toyota's increased local production, along with a major investment in U.S. research and development and other operations, will further boost our U.S. exports," said Yoko Gieszi, executive vice president of Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc. "In 1996, Toyota's exports of U.S.-built vehicles will climb nearly 70 percent to 80,000 units."

About 20,000 of those exported units are right-hand-drive Toyota Camrys, built by General Motors in Ohio for sale by Toyota dealers in Japan. In addition to vehicles, Toyota also exports to Japan TMM-manufactured four-cylinder engines, crankshafts and connecting rods as well as catalytic converters and coated catalytic substrates.

While not even the best American-made car can be driven to Japan, many are being driven in Japan these days.

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