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CARreport

Comfort, convenience are hallmarks of Achieva

By Anne Fracassa
Avanti NewsFeatures

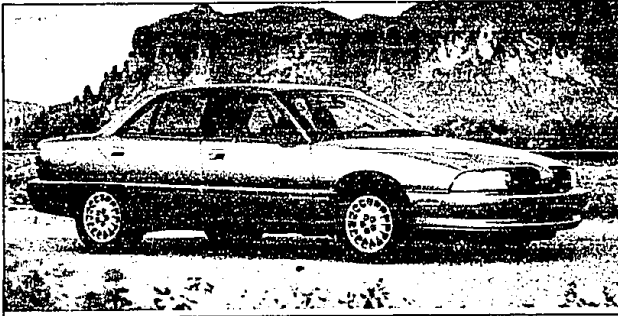
There were only two things I don't like about the 1996 Oldsmobile Achieva: Its lack of power and the price — around \$18,000, if nicely equipped.

So let's get that over with and get on with the nice parts of the car, because there are a lot of good things to say about the Achieva.

The standard 2.4-liter twin cam 4-cylinder engine just doesn't provide enough power for a car of this size. It's classified as a compact, but I would call this car a large compact. I was really surprised, as well, that the horsepower on this engine is 150. It just doesn't seem like there's that much horsepower to tool this thing around town. The Achieva's a bit noisy, too.

And the price: Base is \$16,495. There's a fair list of standard equipment, but it's a bit steep for a small car with a 4-cylinder engine.

Maybe if I had driven the standard engine mated to the 5-speed manual instead of the



ROAD TEST
By
Anne Fracassa

fort and room and very fuel efficient — 22 in the city and 32 on the highway.

It really surprised me that the amount of headroom, legroom and hiproom was impressive. I'm tall person, so comfort is important to me. Driven was the SL sedan. The rear seats were really easy to get in and out of. And the rear doors swing out wide to provide access.

First introduced in 1992, the Achieva is available in three trim levels and can be ordered in a 2-door coupe or 4-door sedan. This year, the Achieva has been given a fresh look on the inside with dual air bags, an improved V6 and an enhanced traction system. Added to the standard equipment list are air conditioning and a PASSlock theft deterrent system.

The 155-horsepower V6 powertrain has been upgraded this year with a stiffer cylinder block

and intake manifold design to cut down on the noise. As with many General Motors vehicles, the Achieva's engine is outfitted with platinum-tipped spark plugs that avoid misfire and don't have to be changed until they reach the 100,000-mile mark.

Also adding to the low maintenance list is filled-for-life transmission fluid, long-life coolant and distributorless ignition.

The interior has been changed from top to bottom — "floor mats to headliner," Oldsmobile officials say.

I love the new three-point, pillar-mounted safety belts. They're so comfortable to wear. No cutting on the neck, not hard to engage in the clip and just plain easy to get in and out of. I wish everyone would have three-point belts.

The center console has two

cupholders and an auxiliary power outlet — a lifesaver for anyone who has a cellular flip phone and uses the power cord on lengthy trips. The cupholders are even deep enough to hold the phone safely.

The power mirror and window switches are now located on the driver's door, making it a lot more convenient. Also added this year were adjustable lumbar support for the driver's seat and a leather-wrapped steering wheel and shifter.

Standard is an AM/FM stereo, but you can upgrade to a cassette, compact disc or cassette and CD.

Other improvements on the Achieva this year include a one-key system for the doors, ignition, deck lid and glove box.

The standard equipment list on the SL sedan isn't short: Anti-lock brakes, a security system, intermittent wipers, 4-speed automatic transmission, 15-inch steel belted radial blackwall

tires, reclining front buckets with driver's 4-way adjustable and passenger's 2 way adjustable seats, rear cupholders, air conditioning, AM/FM cassette stereo with clock and rear window grid antenna.

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The bottom line: The Achieva measures up when it comes to comfort and convenience. Just wish it cost less.

Anne Fracassa is senior editor of Avanti NewsFeatures.

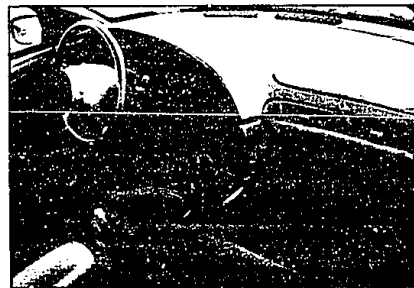
1996 Oldsmobile Achieva

Vehicle class: Compact coupe and sedan.

Engine: 2.4-liter twin cam 4-cylinder.

Mileage: 22 city / 32 highway.

Where built: Lansing, MI.
As tested: \$17,390.



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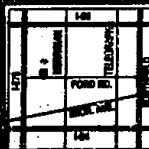
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