

# Suburban Observer & Eccentric Automotive Showcase

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## Cavalier coupe high on quality, convenience

By Anne Fracassa  
Avanti NewsFeatures

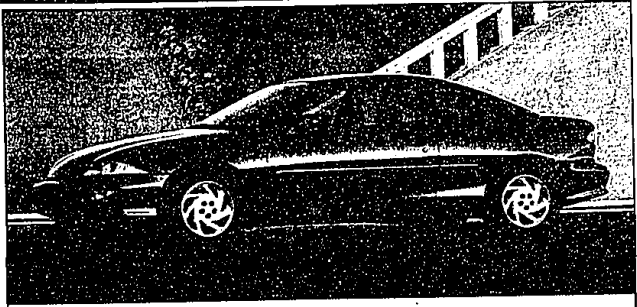
When the 1982 Chevrolet Cavalier was introduced in 1981, it was boxy, functional, economical, no-nonsense transportation. Because of its bare-bones price, teeny engine that got great mileage and compact size, it became the best-selling car in the U.S. within three years of its birth.

Last redesigned for the 1995 model year, the Cavalier has evolved into something entirely different.

No longer does it have a sluggish engine. Or its unappealing boxy exterior. Or its cramped interior.

What it still retains, however, is its low price — just \$12,225 — and its great mileage (depending on the engine and transmission mix it's between 22 mpg in the city and 37 on the highway).

What's changed the most is the Cavalier's appearance. It's still a compact, so you're not going to get four large adults in there without a bit of a struggle. You can seat four, of course, but make sure they're not tall



1997 Chevrolet Cavalier RS coupe



ROAD TEST  
By  
Anne Fracassa

or portly or it won't be easy.

The best thing about this Cavalier is that it's deceptive. It acts more like a Camaro than anything else. Gaze out the front window and you even feel like you're in a sports car.

That's the beauty of the new Cavalier.

Tested was the RS (Rally Sport) coupe. Also available are the coupe, Z24 coupe, sedan and convertible models.

Standard is a 2.2-liter in-line 4-cylinder that provides 120

horses. That's enough to propel this little puppy through the streets and freeways easily. The optional engine on the LS sedan and convertible and standard on the Z24 is a 2.4-liter twin cam with 150 horses.

The 2.2-liter is far from sluggish. Granted, I drove the RS coupe in above 40-degree weather. But even on colder mornings, it really performed well coming out of the box. No problem merging onto the freeways, either.

On the exterior, the Rally Sport looks really neat. It's got flatter lines and curves all the way around and with its rear spoiler, body-side moldings, body-color fascias and 15-inch aluminum wheels and touring tires, it's really a looker.

Other neat stuff on the Rally Sport include embroidered "Rally Sport" on the front-seat headrests, a cool 3-dimensional decal on the rear quarter panels, tachometer and AM/FM

stereo — all standard. It certainly sets it apart from the rest of the Cavalier family.

Standard is a 5-speed manual transmission. The 4-speed electronically controlled automatic transmission will cost you about \$800, but there's a traction control system on it, so it's well worth the money. You won't suffer in the performance category with the automatic, either.

I was impressed with the ride quality. Road noise was nearly nonexistent.

Look at this list of standard safety features: Dual airbags, 4-wheel anti-lock brakes, child security rear-door locks, a PassLock theft-deterrent system, rear-seat safety belt comfort guides (for children and small adults) and body and side trim revisions that meet the side impact requirements.

Hate maintenance? This Cavalier's for you. Both engines feature extended-life coolant

good for five years or 100,000 miles, platinum-tipped spark plugs that don't need service until 100,000 miles and automatic transmission fluid that never needs replacement. All under normal operating conditions, of course.

The Cavalier RS has a rigid body structure and tuned suspension, so you'll get predictable, responsive handling.

The front hood slopes down sharply and disappears from your sight. It was unnerving, at first, because you'd think you wouldn't be able to judge front distance properly. Nothing is further from the truth. What you've got is wonderful visibility instead.

One thing really important to me, lately, is seat-belt comfort. The Cavalier has three-point energy-absorbing seat belts that are really easy to put on and wear in comfort. They don't cut across your neck and are very comfortable to wear.

Got kids? No problem. Standard equipment includes full Scotchgard protection throughout the vehicle. Value is enhanced with a stainless-steel exhaust system as well.

The remote keyless entry system uses a high-frequency radio signal that transmits a coded message to the car, locking or unlocking it. Turns out it wasn't so unique at our local Meijer grocery store.

I pressed the unlock button from about 25-30 feet away and unlocked two other GM products parked next to the Cavalier. The way I noticed was the loud "CLUNK" as all three vehicles unlocked. Pressed the "lock" button and it happened again. Funny.

Almost as funny as the day

my mom hopped into her car at the grocery store, started the car, looked back to see if anyone was in the way, and noticed a big brown stuffed bear in the back seat. Her car was parked next to the car she was in! She was so afraid the real owner would discover her mistake she hurried to unload so she could load the groceries into her own car, dropping a bag in the process.

Anyway, the Cavalier is a real sound choice in the compact sedan and coupe market. The price, the size, the mileage, the ride and handling — even the engine and convenience features — make the Cavalier a real value in today's crowded market. Consider it.

Write Anne Fracassa online with your choice for best car on the road at AVANTI1054@aol.com.

**1997 Chevrolet Cavalier RS coupe**  
Vehicle class: Compact.  
Engine: 2.2-liter in-line 4-cylinder.  
Mileage: 22 city / 37 highway.  
Where built: Lansing, Mich.; Lordstown, Ohio; and Ramos, Mexico.  
Price: \$12,225.



### Special of the Week

**New 1997 DODGE 1500 SLT LARAMIE 4x4**  
5.2 liter V8, automatic transmission, airbag, cruise, tilt, power windows, power locks, sliding rear window, AM/FM stereo cassette, cast aluminum wheels, SLT Decor Group, rear step bumper, Heavy Duty Service Group. Stock #531607.

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