

TEST DRIVE *By Winfred Cross*



1993 Ford Taurus SHO

Photo/Calvin L. Ferguson

Ford set the automotive world on its ear in 1985 when it introduced the Taurus as a 1986 model.

The car won Motor Trends' "Car Of The Year" award and set a standard for styling that's been copied a thousand times over (actually, Ford borrowed a lot from Audi's 5000, now called the 100).

Not content with the car's success, some engineer got the great idea of putting a high output engine in the somewhat pedestrian family sedan.

Ford did follow through on that idea and transformed the Taurus into the Taurus SHO (super high output), a fire breathing sports sedan.

But despite all the hoopla and rave reviews, there was one major problem -- the transmission. The Mazda-based five-speed was a bit too mushy for some, but that's all Ford offered in the car.

That is until 1993. This year's SHO can be ordered with a nifty four-speed automatic that makes this one of the nicest American sedans you can buy.

Like the rest of the Taurus

line, the SHO received a minor facelift in 1992. The wheelbase was stretched a few inches and the exterior and interior were freshened. The SHO now has a grill that is distinct from the rest of the Taurus line, different alloy wheels and a small, trunk-mounted spoiler with integrated stop lamp.

My test car was a light, ultra red crimson, fitted with lots of stuff, including mocha leather seats and automatic air conditioning. I've never driven the five speed SHO (or any other Taurus for that matter) but I can say I enjoyed the automatic transmission completely. I never longed for a five-speed.

To make the automatic fit, the 3.0 liter engine was enlarged slightly to 3.2 liters. Torque and horsepower remain unchanged at 200 pounds-feet and 220 hp, respectively.

The transmission shifted very smoothly and quite crisply. It never seemed to hunt for the proper gear, even on steep grades.

The car's handling is solid. You can fling the car around sharp curves and not worry

about losing your grip, of the tires, that is. The steering is a different story. I found it to be a bit light for a car with this much juice. It's accurate, but just a touch light, which requires simple, but necessary corrections every now and then.

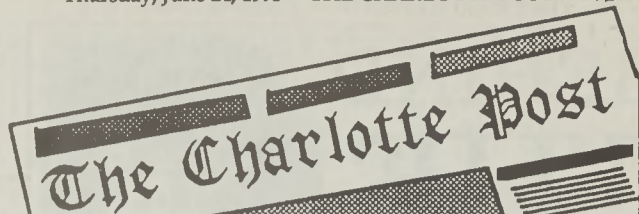
The only other complaint I had about the car is the interior. It's functional, but the dash looked pieced together. It doesn't flow as nicely as the Chrysler LH cars'. I do like the separate controls for the radio, which are mounted at eye level. There is enough room for five to travel in comfort.

Still, that wasn't enough to spoil the sporting nature of this car. The idea of squeezing this potent Yamaha engine in this already competent family sedan was, and still is, a good one. I can see why people like the Taurus so much. It's well-built, rides well and isn't very expensive.

That is unless you opt for the SHO version. The base price is \$24,829. The automatic transmission cost \$641. The dual airbag option added another \$488. Leather seats cost \$515. Throw in

\$525 for destination and the grand total came to \$26,949. Not exactly affordable, but not as expensive as BMW's 525i, the car Ford says is the SHO's competition.

That comparison may be stretching it a bit. I don't think the folks at BMW are losing sleep, but they should at least take notice. This is a good alternative for those searching for a sports sedan made on these shores.



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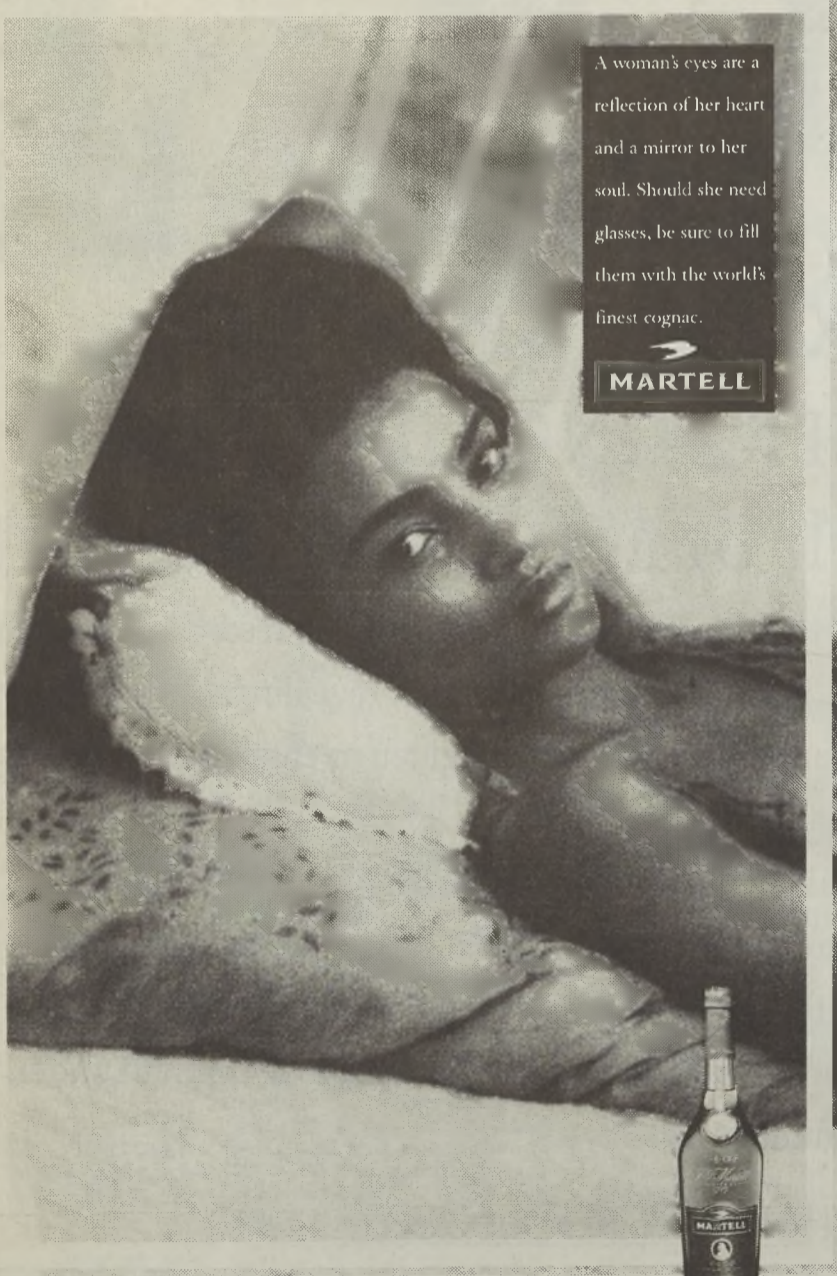
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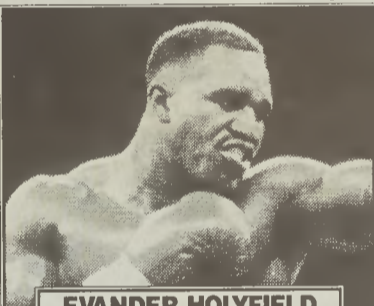


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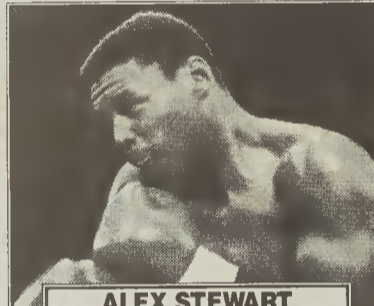
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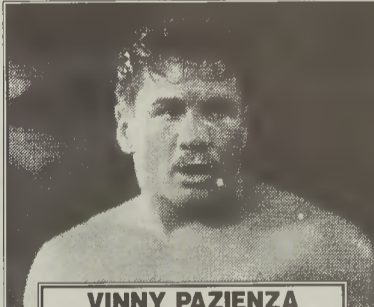
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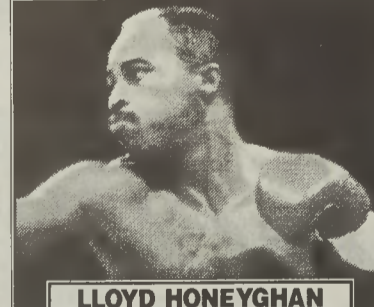
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