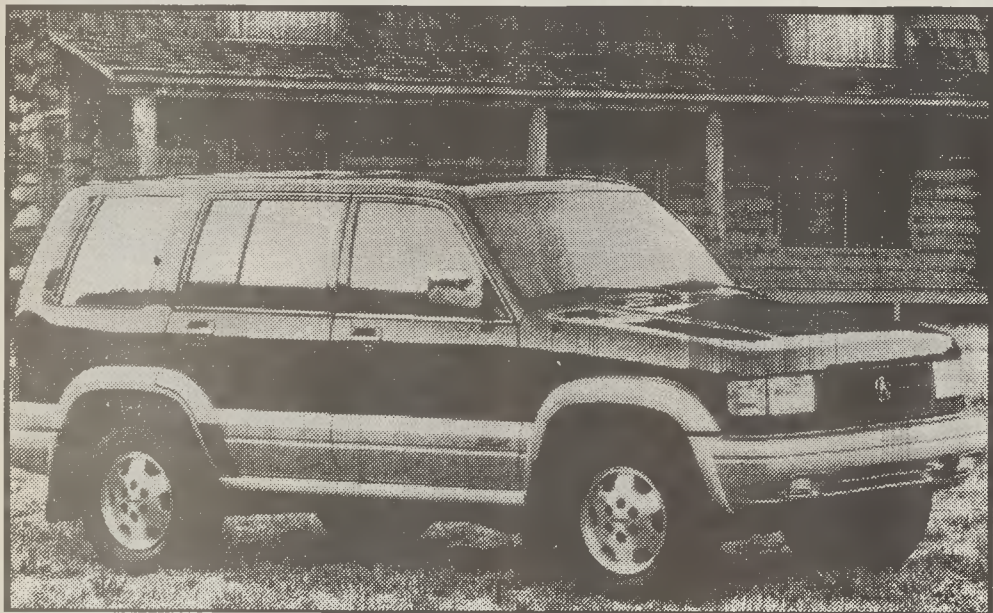


Acura SLX is a real 'trooper'



'96 Acura SLX

WINFRED CROSS

Test Drive



Everyone wants to sell a sport utility vehicle and, at the moment, everyone seems to want to buy one.



squinting. That's exactly what you see.

As you know, Acura is the luxury division of American Honda Corporation (there are no European - or Asian-sold

didn't change anything except the grill, to which it added its own corporate logo. Oh, yes, and Acura is written all over the outside and inside.

It turns out to be sort of a mixed blessing for both companies. Truck buyers scoff at the Trooper's high price, but most will not think twice about sinking a lot into an Acura.

The other blessing for Acura is that the Trooper, uhh, SLX, is a very nice truck. The exterior is boxy, but handsome. Thick cladding covers the bumpers, door sills and wheel well openings in contrasting colors. A nice touch, but I find the big chrome grill to be a might large. But hey, most trucks have big chrome grills. Maybe it's some unwritten law.

The SLX's interior is cleanly designed. Dual air bags are incorporated into the dash, along with clearly readable instruments. The controls feel expensive, as well they should. Nothing seems to be out of place or out of reach.

Head, leg and hip room are tremendous. Five can sit comfortably in the SLX and each passenger's view will be panoramic. You sit high and see everything.

You sit on some of the most comfortable seats I've ever experienced in a truck. My test vehicle was a premium model with leather seats. Yes, they are cold in the winter, but the front seats are heated. They warm quicker than the heater, although once it gets warm it will toast you.

The SLX is powered by a stout, 3.2 liter single overhead camshaft V6 engine. It has 24-valves, and delivers 190 horsepower and 188 pounds-feet of torque. That doesn't sound like

a bunch and it ain't really. The vehicle feels a bit sluggish. I guess if I weighed a couple of tons I'd fell a little sluggish too. It's certainly powerful enough to get you where you need to go in

any kind of weather.

Speaking of weather, I was blessed to have the SLX dur-

selling it as the SLX.

Still with me? Good. Acura liked the vehicle so much it

ing the "blizzard of '96." I can write volumes on how good the vehicle performed in the ice and snow. I was able to navigate some treacherously slick back roads, so long as the vehicle was in four-wheel-drive. I did feel the back wheels spin a couple of times, but the vehicle never really lost its composure.

The SLX does feel a bit strange in more normal conditions. It's not the kind of thing you want to try to corner quickly in. It feels top-heavy and leans badly. It's not unsafe, just a little unnerving. Suggestion: follow the warning signs about 4x4s. You can't drive most of them like a regular car because the center of gravity is higher.

There's nothing really bad to say about the SLX. It's comfortable to the point you feel pampered. Its four-wheel-drive system works commendably well, and it has enough

See TEST DRIVE Page 4B

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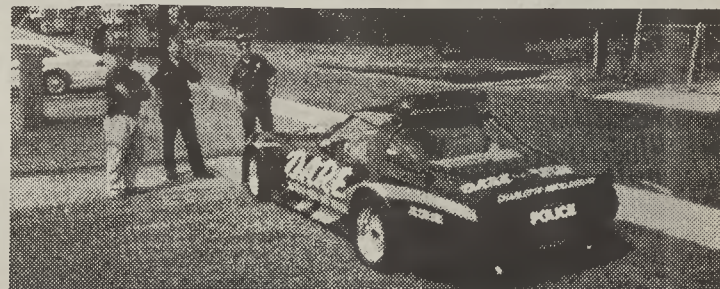
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