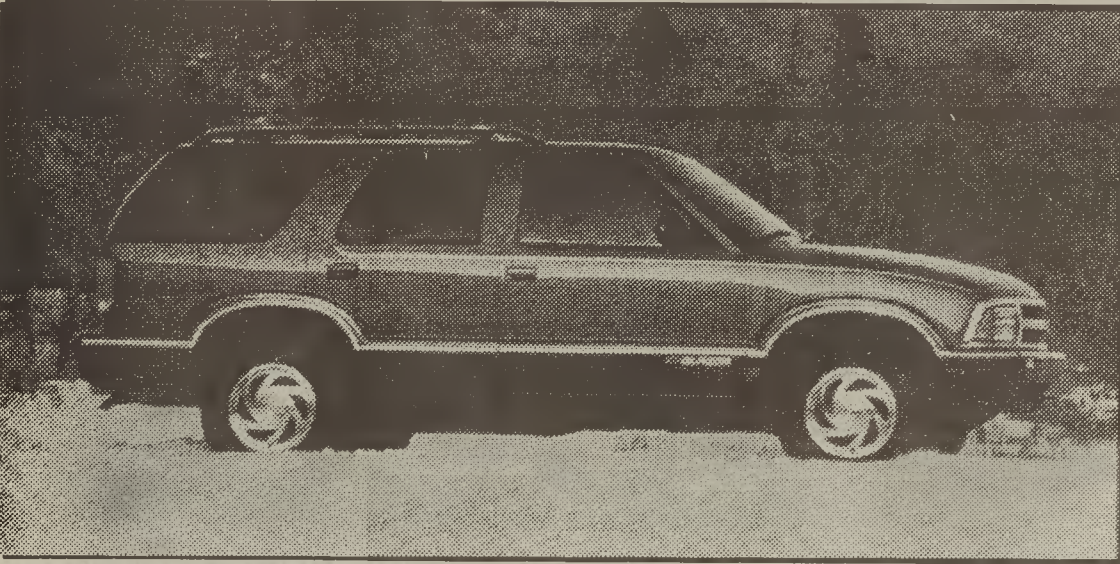


Blazer gets more refinements



'96 Chevrolet Blazer

WINFRED CROSS

Test Drive

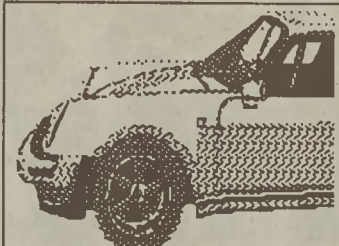


power, road manners and overall design make it a must-look-at choice in the crowded SUV market.

What price for such goodness, you ask? The base price for my test car was \$23,252. That included a great deal of standard equipment, such as anti-lock brakes, insta-trac 4x4 transfer case, full size spare tire, deep tinted glass, AM/FM radio, air conditioning and variable ratio power steering.

Options were plentiful. A \$5,294 package included leather seats tilt steering wheel, cruise control, remote keyless entry, six-way power seats, luggage rack, power windows, door locks and mirrors, suspension upgrade and tachometer. A locking differential rear axle was \$252. An upgrade to a compact disc player cost \$124 while the not-so-pleasant-looking brown and black paint job was an extra \$174.

Minus a \$600 equipment discount and adding \$490 for destination, the as-tested price came to \$28,894. If that sounds high, it's obvious you haven't been shopping for an SUV lately. That's about the average out-the-door price. Goodness has its price. And it's high.



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as well. You won't find yourself being beckoned to do hard cornering or blasting down a straightaway, but if you had to, the suspension seems capable enough to handle such. That's as long as you stay within the limitations of a four-wheel drive vehicle.

Speaking of the 4x4 system. It works like a champ. Conditions were wet, slippery and cold during my test period, so four driven wheels came in handy. Selecting the system was also easy. My test vehicle was equipped with the push-button system. There were times when the transmission didn't seem to be in sync with the selected drive system. The same problem occurred on a 4x4 truck I drove with the push-button system. Nothing went wrong on either vehicle. But they both felt odd just the same.

Complaints I have for the Blazer are few. I like the muscular exterior design, but the interior leaves me cold. The ergonomics are great, but presentation is, well, bland. There are too many sharp angles and squares. It doesn't flow.

Also, interior room could be better. Three rear passengers will take up all the hip and leg room.

But the Blazer gets points for ample storage space. It doesn't look as spacious as its chief competitor, the hot-selling Ford Explorer, but Chevy says it's bigger. Maybe, but it doesn't feel so.

And there's only one air bag. That's shameful for an all-new vehicle (last year).

Still, there's a lot to like about the Blazer. The exterior,

General Motors is making it clear it wants to sell the best sport utility vehicles on the planet.

It keeps getting a step closer to that goal by fine-tuning its offerings. Not that it had to make a lot of improvements to its already good Blazer. But GM has seen fit to give the Blazer even more power for '96.

All of GM's trucks benefit from stronger engines in '96. The Blazer gets a 4300 Vortec V6. It now blesses the Blazer with 190 horsepower with 250 pounds-feet of torque. The engine's block was redesigned and made stiffer and stronger without the addition of weight or mass. A gear-driven counter rotating balance shaft is present to cancel primary engine vibration generally found in 90-degree V6 engines.

The accessory drive system uses a stiffer mount and has been redesigned to use a single serpentine belt to reduce noise. The oil pan is cast aluminum and is attached to the bell housing via three additional bolts.

All of the additions and improvements can be felt as soon as you turn the ignition. The Blazer is commendably quiet at idle and not bad under acceleration.

On the highway the Blazer exhibits wonderful road manners. The ride is very car-like. Well, it's as car-like as a truck can be. It feels stable on all sorts of road surfaces. Bad pavement doesn't do much to affect ride.

The Blazer's handling is good

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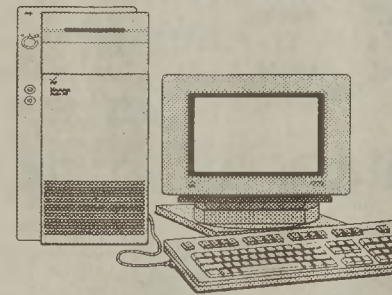
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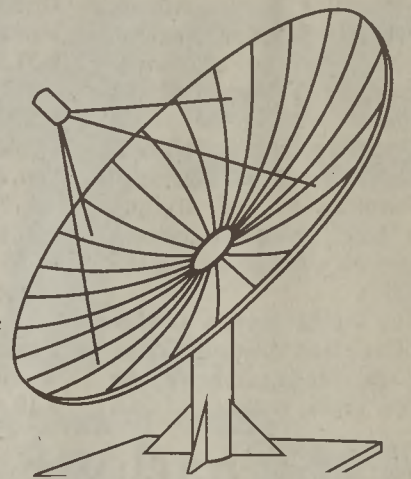
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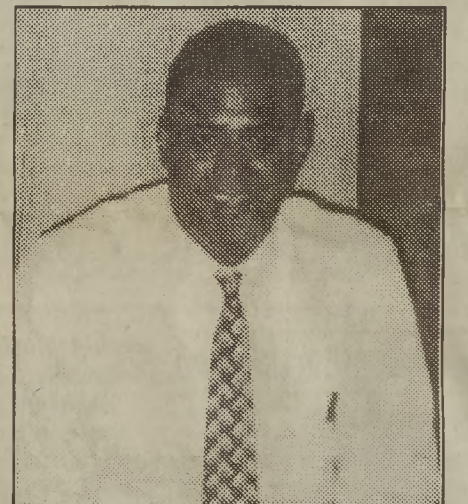


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COCA-COLA EDUCATOR OF THE MONTH WILLIAM WHITE

Headmaster &
Head of Science Department
BRISBANE ACADEMY



A native of Charlotte, NC, William was educated in the Charlotte Mecklenburg Public School System received his Bachelor of Science Degree from Johnson C. Smith University and his Teaching Certificate from UNC-Charlotte.

For twelve years William was employed with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education. At Northwest Middle, his goal was to assist emotionally handicapped students and promote learning. He then spent nine years at Garinger providing students with an environment that enabled them to learn biology and earth & physical science.



Children have always been first on Williams mind, and for that he receives the utmost adoration and a divine level of respect.

Now as Headmaster at Brisbane Academy, he furnishes the students with a safe and nurturing learning environment, and ensures that the school operates effectively and efficiently to carry out its daily business. William supports the students and teachers, and for that he receives constant applause. His goal of the Science Department is to be at the forefront of technology and to equip the students with hands on opportunities to excel in scientific knowledge.

William is married to Geraldine Brisbane-White, Brisbane's founder, and they have 2 children, William III and Liah.

Congratulations, Mr. White from the Coca-Cola Bottling Company Consolidated of Charlotte.



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