

Acura's RL new Legend in the making?



'96 Acura 3.5RL

WINFRED B. CROSS

Test Drive



Ten years ago, the idea of a luxury car division from the Japanese was laughable.

Yes, there was Toyota's Cressida and Mitsubishi's gadget-laden Galant (which turned into the Diamante), but neither was considered in the realm of Mercedes, much less Cadillac and Lincoln.

But then came Acura, Honda's upstart, upscale division and all heck broke loose. Its Legend sedan broke new ground. It was stylish, expensive for a Japanese car, and set new standards in build quality and overall execution. The Legend and its lesser sibling Integra firmly established the

Acura as a luxury brand. But Acura lost some of its luster to Toyota's Lexus and Nissan's Infinity divisions. Both companies took the best ideas of Acura and improved them, pushing their cars past Mercedes and BMW.

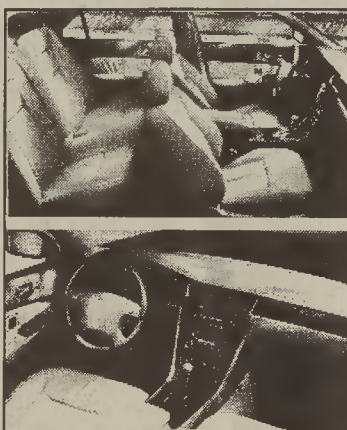
Acura's been playing catch-up lately. It's added a luxury sport utility vehicle, the SLX (basically an Isuzu Trooper), a redone Vigor (now the 2.5 and 3.2 TL) and a fourth generation a couple-of-years-old Integra that's still selling well.

Now Acura has redone, uh, scrapped its Legend. Gone is the moniker that hundreds of thousands bought and loved. It's replaced by the 3.5 RL, a sedan Acura is pitting against

the lofty Lexus LS 400 and automobiles from Mercedes and BMW.

Acura recently introduced the car, along with a stunning coupe called the CL (which I will detail in a later article), in Palm Springs, Calif., almost 10 years to the day it introduced its first cars.

Proud they are of both these cars. Acura allowed us to take them on a vigorous workout through the San Bernadino mountains. Not the place where I'd test luxury cars, but



it proved to be interesting.

The RL's manners on twisty mountain roads are very good. I'm not accustomed to driving on such roads, so I took it easy. Going 5,000 feet up mountains takes some care.

It also takes a good engine, which the RL has. The 3.5-liter V6 is the largest ever in an Acura and has the most grunt. Horsepower is 210, but torque is 224 pounds-feet available at a low 2,800 rpm. Where the Legend plodded through traffic, the RL zips. The engine is

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The Charlotte Post

COCA-COLA "STUDENT" OF THE MONTH

ALLISON

MAXWELL-DUNCAN

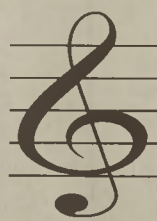
5th Grader at

Lincoln Heights

Elementary School



Allison is 10 years old and considered "Academically Gifted" as an A-B honor roll student at Lincoln Heights. She has had perfect attendance and is class secretary.



Allison is on the School City Council in The Micro Society, and plays saxophone in the Lincoln Heights Band.

She is involved in her church, Friendship Missionary Baptist, as a member of the Calvary Climbers Youth Missionary Group and the Friendship Girl Scout Troop.



Allison is the daughter of Myra Maxwell-Duncan and Al Duncan.



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