

## Acura's new 2.2 CL is competent coupe



'97 Acura 2.2 CL

WINFRED B. CROSS

### Test Drive



PALM SPINGS, Calif. — Acura's revamp of its car line will be nearly complete this month when it releases the CL, a familiar-looking coupe which replaces the two-door Legend.

The Legend name is gone forever, replaced by Acura's weird decision to go with alphanumeric names. Why? Because the company says more people knew the names of its cars than the company. Why should that matter? Ask Acura. I couldn't figure that one.

Anyway, the CL is a totally different approach to the Legend. It is not a two-door version of the RL, the new flagship sedan that replaced

the four-door Legend. And it's nothing like the Legend coupe. So why is it familiar? The CL screams Honda Accord coupe. It should. It's based heavily on the Accord, from chassis to transaxle. It even looks like an Accord from the front. That wide-mouth chrome grill is nothing but Honda.

But that's where a lot of the similarities end. View the car from a three-quarter angle and you see a much more striking figure, especially the rear. It is wildly aggressive, moving the tail lights to the corner and using a subtle crease down the center. There is no external trunk lock, just the Acura symbol. It's des-

tined to become one of the most distinct rear ends on the road.

Inside, there is plenty of room for a coupe, but it's best suited for two. Four can ride, but the rear passengers need to be short and narrow to have a good time.

The interior is much like the Accord's — trimmed neatly, finished meticulously. The exception is that the CL is trimmed in fake wood, acceptable fake wood, but fake none the less. All the amenities are standard — power locks, mirrors and windows and single CD player.

The standard five-speed transmission coupled to a 2.2-liter, four-cylinder engine is straight from the Accord. The proven engine is quiet, making 145 horsepower with 147 pounds-feet of torque. Acura engineers said the gear ratios are slightly different from the Accord's, thus giving the car a sportier feel.

I found this to be true. We

flogged the CL through some breath-taking mountains and found it to be a great handler as well as driver. Negotiating twisty roads (many of which didn't have guard rails, which I found to be a bit unnerving) was fairly simple. The front-wheel drive CL was right at home whipping around tight curves.

The greatest advantage the CL has over its Honda cousin is its rigid body. Acura has shored-up the CL's body in critical areas, making it feel solid as a rock. This in turn adds to the car's deft handling ability.

Complaints? I hate fake wood no matter how real it looks. The cloth seats look much too much like the Accord's. And there's not enough engine. The 2.2-liter

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In Connection With Its Family Arts Programs, The Afro-American Cultural Center Is Presenting, "The African Safari"... Maisha And Omar Of Sarasota, Florida Will Take Children And Adults On An African Safari With The Magic Of African Rhythm As The Vehicle In A Four-Week Series Of Classes. Beginning On April 20, 1996. Students Will Experience Song And Dance, Textile Designing, Beading, Storytelling, Writing, Musical Instruments, Languages, Traditions And Foods. The Class Is \$45 For Center Members And \$60 For Non-members. Registration Ends On April 19th. For Additional Information, Call The Afro-American Cultural Center At 374-1565.

### "INAUGURAL CIRCLE OF HONOR AWARDS"

You Are Cordially Invited To Attend Johnson C. Smith University's INAUGURAL CIRCLE OF HONOR AWARDS On Friday, March 29th at 7:00p.m. At The Sheraton Airport Plaza Hotel. Join Mistress Of Ceremonies, Ms. Val Holley-Dennis At This Black Tie Affair. This Event Is Hosted By Dorothy Cowser Yancy, Ph.D., President, Johnson C. Smith University... The Committee Of 100 Women... And Sponsored By Hoechst Celanese Corporation.

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