

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 9 NUMBER 3
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AND MORE.....

CADILLAC CTS-V SEDAN

Guitars and Cadillacs



Cadillac shows its rock'n'roll soul



CADILLAC CTS-V LOGBOOK

- The CTS-V comes standard with a 6-speed manual transmission, which would suit us fine. This test car came with the optional (at no cost) 6-speed automatic. We noted that it seemed to shift five full gears in half a block of a local two-lane and that the third shift felt like a shift down, almost. We called it uneven, with a big gap between some shifts, yet also noted its smooth operation. We were pretty sure we'd enjoy all this horsepower even more with a manual transmission. We noted specific instances where it "launched like a rocket, but with a delay." Using the manumatic more often might mitigate some of our transmission issues, so we played with that with decent results. The automatic gets to 6th gear pretty quickly ... by just 1100 rpm against a redline of 6000. And downshifting gives it a healthy burst before choosing a lower gear, rather than the drag-chute downshift we may have expected.

- Turning from a surface street onto a freeway ramp produced nice, balanced handling around the corner, through acceleration and up to speed, with smooth shifts under load. Performs best when pushed.

- We missed some lush luxury touches, but concluded the tradeoffs for a performance feel overall were part of the point. For example, we've become accustomed to key-in-pocket touch-sensitive entry and lock, plus pushbutton start, but it's not part of this package. On the plus side, the base vehicle is highly equipped and package options, often confounding, are minimal on this.

- It took us awhile to get the seat adjustments where we liked them, but then they were superb. This car had the high performance Recaro seat (and metal pedals) option, \$3400. Just the ticket for this power. For aggressive driving, which is the car's prime directive, we'd go with these, though Barbara and Bill preferred the stock seats.

- Touchscreen and other controls for audio are awkward at many points; we assume they'll be far more familiar when it's your own car (a common issue). Typical with Cadillac, there are a great many settings that turn out to be set-'em-once-and-leave-'em, with the interfaces in unobtrusive places e.g. a little patch of switches to the left of the steering wheel.

- The algorithms for locks and lights bring us to the personal settings a few times, but once they're set, you're good indefinitely.

- The Bose audio quality is really quite good, adding a solid rock and roll founda-

BY BARBARA & BILL SCHAFFER

Last year, we drove more than 150 different cars in the course of our two weekly evaluations and reports from manufacturer introductions. We are often asked which of the cars is our favorite.

Not only is the Cadillac CTS one of the best looking cars we've driven, but with a new opulence and more attention to detail, the midsize sedan shows that American-made cars can match the best European models when they keep their eye on the target. The CTS model lineup has expanded with the addition of the beautiful new Sport Wagon and coupe. And then there's the CTS-V.

When the accelerator slams to the floor, the CTS-V explodes from a complete stop to 60 mph in just 3.9 seconds. On a track, or a salt flat, it has a top speed of 176 mph (191 mph with the six-speed manual transmission). It broke the record for production sedans at the famous German Nürburgring, completing one lap of the 12.9-mile long race circuit in 7:59:32 minutes.

This is the Cadillac CTS-V, and it is one of the fastest production sedans in the world, if not the fastest.

What is amazing about these figures is that this car, with a six-speed automatic transmission, has a base price of \$60,720, or \$64,145 with destination charge and the mandatory \$2,600 Gas Guzzler tax. Normally, performance numbers like that come attached to cars with six-figure price tags.

Our test car did have three options: Recaro high performance seats and metal pedals

(\$3,400), Midnight Sapele wood trim package (\$600) and V Specific suede steering wheel and shift knob (\$300). Navigation, an option last year, is now standard, along with a potent Bose 5.1 Surround 10-speaker system.

The optional Recaro seats provide excellent support and multiple adjustments; however, they are very firm. We prefer the more comfortable and good-looking standard seats.

The heart of the CTS-V is a 556-hp, supercharged 6.2-liter V-8 engine. A 6-speed manual driving the rear wheels is standard, but our test car was backed up by the optional quick-shifting six-speed automatic transmission. To make the CTS-V worthy of such power, it is fitted with a four-wheel independent suspension with Magnetic Ride Control (MRC) with two suspension settings: Tour and Sport. The MRC is the world's fastest-reacting suspension technology, using electromagnets to adjust dampening almost instantly. The massive Brembo brakes were developed for racing. The 19-inch Michelin Pilot Sport2 tires are rated for speeds in excess of 186 mph. However, one downside for the high performance tires is excessive road noise.

It would be easy for a manufacturer to assemble all this equipment and get a very good handling car, but Cadillac engineers spent untold hours testing, tweaking and perfecting the CTS-V into one of the best handling sedans in the world. What is even more amazing is how comfortable and easy it is to drive.

Aside from boosting the car's horsepower by 156 from the previous generation and

KEEP RIGHT >>

Logbook (cont'd) >>

(CONT'D) CTS-V LOGBOOK

tion to a powerful ride. We do wish we could control radio stations better and get in and out of audio settings more readily, but when it's working right it's top tier.

- You don't always realize how many of a given vehicle there are on the road till you're driving one. The CTS has lots of company in our neck of the woods (though appropriately not too many V models).

- The instrument panel has some of the same chrome details we don't care for on the SRX (also in this issue), but its other finishes are black (no brushed aluminum), so it all works together much better. Finishes include optional Midnight Sapele wood trim on the IP, center console and door trim. Microfiber accents are available for the steering wheel and shift knob.

- The combination of analog speedometer and big digital readout may seem redundant, and there is also a redundant red LED sweep following the needles of the speedo and tach, but redundant or not, these are very cool. We like 'em.

- The 19" performance tires are perfect on the road, but a little clunky on a tight back-up and turn over a driveway curb. Again, calibrated for the car's primary mission. Similarly, we felt some rocking in the suspension cornering at slow speeds, but not under aggressive driving. The ride is then very impressive and solid.

- EPA fuel mileage ratings are 12/18 city/highway. Within one day of relatively minor driving, we were down to 5/8 tank, per the gauge. But we quickly determined it's partly just the gauge: a day later, after heavier driving, it was still at the exact same spot.

- It took us a day or two to fall for the car, especially following the SRX, but the more we drove the CTS-V, the more we started to feel right at home in the brand. Early in the test week, we noted "it's still just a GM sedan," but the car won us over totally, and its all-American nature is a big factor. The logbook declares that the CTS-V has soul.

- We repeatedly note that we get the best performance and best feel when we accelerate aggressively, especially (we suspect) when equipped with this automatic transmission. We repeatedly wish for the stick.

- 556 horsepower may sound like more than you need every day, but it's plenty tame for normal driving and provides prodigious power in reserve. When we find a sudden challenge in merging, for example, we can goose it and accomplish any mission. In a pinch, we'd still rather have a stick, or consistently use the paddle shifters for their control, but it's a perfect poster boy for the fact that power can equal confidence which can equal safety. —JS



making all the other performance enhancements, designers have given the CTS-V a new dimension of style and luxury. The previous version was nice, but it didn't look like it belonged in a car priced over \$50,000. Product planners listened and did a thorough redesign. We were split on our opinion of the center stack filled with large buttons, dials and analog clock all backed with a new Obsidian material. Barb thought it looked too busy, while Bill likes the organization and ease of use.

An eight-inch screen rises from the top of center stack to display information for the navigation system, XM real time traffic, weather reports and audio settings for the Bose stereo and 40-gigabyte hard drive system. When it's not in use, the screen retracts so that just the top inch or so of the screen is visible, and that becomes the audio display.

A rich-looking hand-stitched instrument panel, center console and door trim enhance the contemporary interior design.

Frankly, we didn't expect the test car we were driving to be such a head turner, but with the chrome chainlink grilles with imbedded Cadillac crest, headlights that shined like a trophy wife's ring and sharp character lines, it turned a lot of heads. The deep muscular exhaust note coming through large dual exhaust outlets seemed to make men smile with desire. The Cadillac CTS-V rides like a luxury sedan, handles like a sports car, goes like a bat out of hell and is priced like none of the above. ■

