

FIRST LOOK: HOT NEW FERRARI 348 SPIDER!

CAR **AND** DRIVER

APRIL 1993 • CANADA \$3.95 UK £1.95 US \$2.95

SHO TAURUS WAGON!

The fastest, leanest, meanest,
and best station wagon
Ford ever built!



And: Paris to Peking in a Jeep Grand Cherokee.
Cadillac STS. Mercedes 600SL. Superfast RX-7.
Detroit Auto Show. Eagle Vision TSi road test.



Ford Taurus SHO Wagon

The Billy Wagon

Strong as hog's breath, our one-of-a-kind hauler amazes Little Leaguers. Sorry, you can't have one.

BY JOHN PHILLIPS

Car and Driver has a long and volatile history of assembling one-of-a-kind Boss Wagons, the word "Boss" in the late 1960s meaning today roughly what the expression "way cool" portends, or, if you're Bill or Ted, "Most excellent, dude."

We began in 1966 with Boss Wagon I, a Plymouth Fury on which Navy fighters could have landed, followed by a 455-cubic-inch Olds Vista-Bruiser that went 120 mph, which was, trust us, a novelty in 1968. Those two were out-engineered by surprisingly eco-trendy Boss Wagons III and IV: a Volvo 265DL turbocharged to spit out 200 hp and a 1981 Benz 300TD that collided on Michigan Route 14 with a 24-inch RCA television set, a TV smash-hit special.

So when we decided to pursue the still-warm trail of America's best-known outlaw, we needed an American outlaw wagon—a Millennium Taurus, maybe—that could carry two duffel bags, one ice chest, ten days of winter clothes, a car cover, two sleeping bags, one air mattress, one 75-pound Siberian husky (plus attendant Alpo), 22 history books on Billy the Kid, and 26 pounds of cameras and tripods. At 130 mph.

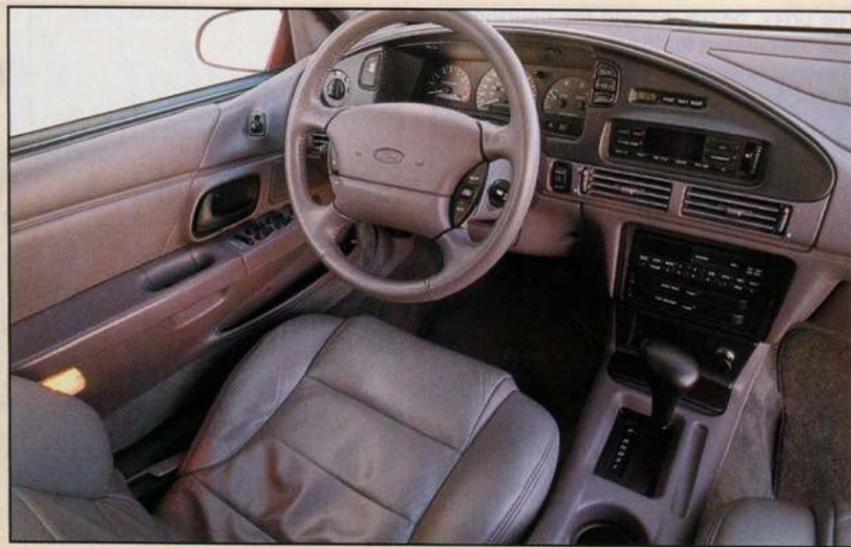
A Taurus SHO wagon, with its 220-hp bundle-of-snakes Yamaha engine, seemed the ticket. And after Ford came

up with a four-speed automatic that it trusted in the face of 215 pound-feet of torque, *voilà*, the die was cast. So here is our arrest-me-red Boss Wagon V, a.k.a. the Billy Wagon.

As it turns out (why don't we ever learn?), transplanting the engine and driveline from a SHO automatic was no overnight lark with a six-pack of Bud in the neighbor's garage. What chiefly worried Ford's engineers (we, ah, hadn't actually thought of it) was the wagon's torsional rigidity. Ford's guys thus welded reinforcing plates in the front wheelhouses, on the floor near the D-pillars, at the tops of the C-pillars, and in vital wheel-well locations. According to a computer, this made our Billy Wagon 30-percent stiffer than anything you'll find in Ford showrooms, not counting Cal Worthington's leisure suit.

Pumping up the suspension was somewhat simpler, tuning it somewhat trickier. SHO front struts were installed, a unique 23mm front anti-roll bar was fitted, and a 15mm rear bar (2mm fatter than the standard wagon issue) was put to work. Because the wagon might be used for heavy hauling (Ford perhaps misunderstood our definition of "hauling"), a unique transmission cooler was added. But, ironically, to get the handling to mimic the automatic sedan's, low-load

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DICK KELLEY



springs proved most appropriate, and the wagon's dead-stock rear shocks worked like warm cocoa butter.

Inside, the SHO sedan's unique leather buckets, center console, and instrument panel slid neatly into place. Outside, artisans fabricated SHO-like side cladding, a fiberglass rear bumper cover, and a handmade front fascia—a clone of the 1993 SHO sedan's. Because we kept mumbling things like, "130 mph would be neat," the roof rack was pitched in the dumpster, and the whole wagon was slathered with SHO-only crimson clearcoat, which everyone knows is good for, say, 11 mph. To this we added the SHO's proprietary Cuisinart alloy wheels and a set of Eagle GAs. No civilians have asked if we use this wagon to haul golf clubs, potted plants, or Girl Scouts.

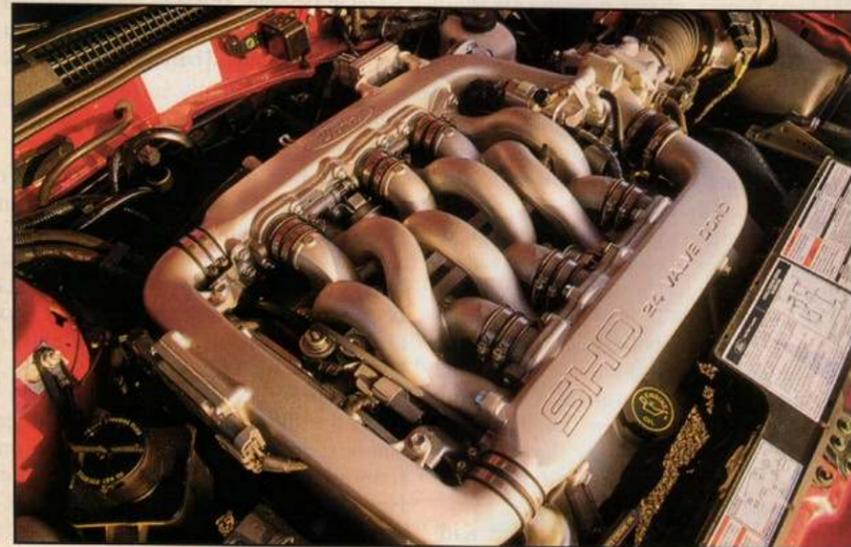
In fact, the most common query during fuel-ups is, "Is this what I *think* it is?"

To which we simply point to the dual exhausts. (We are so cool.)

Throughout this jiggery-pokery, only one wagon trait refuses to comply with SHO business. The sixteen-gallon tank, mated to the SHO's gauge, says it's dry after only twelve gallons have been swallowed—a drag in the New Mexican outback.

Under wide-open throttle, the SHO wagon shifts (at 6700 rpm) more slickly than a pre-inaugural Bill Clinton, and the transmission is programmed with hair-trigger precision to lunge from fourth to third if your right loafer so much as twitches. A small annoyance.

Ride and handling are close to the SHO automatic sedan's, if slightly more supple. This explains why I had no trouble covering 780 miles one day from Hereford, Texas, to St. Louis and had the grits thereafter to go looking for a non-existent Steak and Ale.



TAURUS SHO WAGON



Were it always summer, we'd prefer Eagle GTs to these tame GAs, although the wagon tracks superbly and slogs okay through a Lincoln Forest five-inch snowfall. Its skidpad figure of 0.80 equals that of the SHO automatic, except the Billy Wagon does it with five Little Leaguers' faces mashed against side windows.

Given its 3636-pound heft, even 220 snap-revving horsepower can't make this wagon a drag queen, although it will stuff a Dodge Ramcharger Canyon Sport back into its canyon. In fact, it pistol-whips 60 mph in only 7.3 seconds, making it slightly quicker than its sibling SHO sedan (we can't explain it either) and far quicker than other people haulers, like, say, the Jeep Grand Cherokee V-8 (8.1 seconds).

The anti-lock brakes are more potent than the sedan's too—partly because of weight distribution—bringing matters to a halt in an amazing 172 feet. This is as good as an Infiniti Q45.

Not that we ever wanted to stop. The Billy Wagon is a solid, carefully assembled, practical, quick-witted, long-distance cruiser with visibility surpassed only by minivans. It's also a head-turner, and ergonomically superb with the exception of the radio, whose stupid manual-tune button gives you four seconds before it defaults to automatic "Seek," whereupon, in Oklahoma, you receive Chaplain Ray and the International Prison Broadcast.

In pursuit of Billy the Kid, I happily put 4100 miles on this vehicle and thereafter attempted to sign it out on four subsequent weekends, claiming I had crucial hauling duties: a gallon of milk, a Brooks Brothers suit, a prized collection of Aqua Velva bottles.

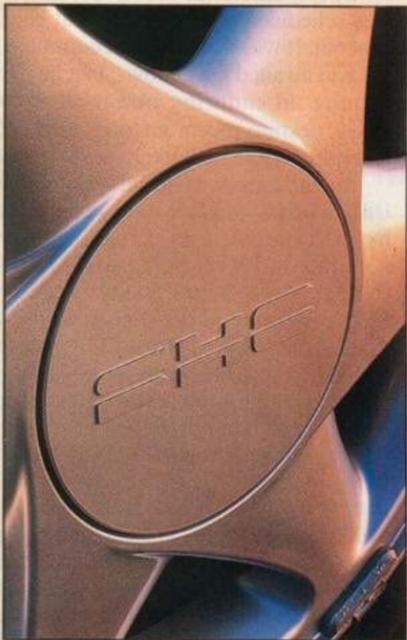
So, how much would our SHO

wagon go for? Probably \$30,000, though no one at Ford is sure. The whole project was "just for fun," unless you and 20,000 of your friends send deposits to Dearborn demanding one.

Just when we figured the station wagon was a vehicular brontosaurus out-Darwined by minivans, *this* comes along.

Hold on. Front-wheel drive, transverse V-6, automatic transmission. What would happen if we slipped this whole drivetrain into a minivan? Call it Boss VI. Maybe *Villager the Kid*. •

We're interested in what you think of this one-of-a-kind Taurus SHO wagon. Ford is too. Write to: SHO Wagon, Car and Driver, 2002 Hogback Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105.



TAURUS SHO WAGON



Vehicle type: front-engine, front-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 5-door wagon

Price as tested: \$30,000 (if you could get one)

Options on test car: automatic transmission, leather seats, passenger-side airbag, six-way power seats, keyless entry system

Major standard accessories: power steering, windows, seats, and locks, A/C, cruise control, tilt steering, rear defroster and wiper

Sound system: Ford AM/FM-stereo radio/cassette, 4 speakers

ENGINE

Type.....V-6, iron block and aluminum heads
 Bore x stroke.....3.62 x 3.15 in, 92.0 x 80.0mm
 Displacement.....195 cu in, 3191cc
 Compression ratio.....9.3:1
 Engine-control system.....Ford EEC-IV with port fuel injection
 Emissions controls.....3-way catalytic converter, feedback fuel-air-ratio control, EGR
 Valve gear.....belt- and chain-driven double overhead cams, 4 valves per cylinder, hydraulic lifters
 Power (SAE net).....220 bhp @ 6000 rpm
 Torque (SAE net).....215 lb-ft @ 4800 rpm
 Redline.....7000 rpm

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission.....4-speed automatic with lockup torque converter
 Final-drive ratio.....3.77:1, limited slip
 Gear Ratio Mph/1000 rpm Max. test speed
 I 2.77 7.2 50 mph (7000 rpm)
 II 1.54 12.9 90 mph (7000 rpm)
 III 1.00 19.9 129 mph (6500 rpm)
 IV 0.69 28.8 130 mph (4500 rpm)

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase.....106.0 in
 Track, F/R.....61.6/59.9 in
 Length.....193.1 in
 Width.....71.2 in
 Height.....55.5 in
 Frontal area.....23.6 sq ft

Ground clearance.....5.8 in
 Curb weight.....3636 lb
 Weight distribution, F/R.....61.4/38.6%
 Fuel capacity.....16.0 gal
 Oil capacity.....4.5 qt
 Water capacity.....11.6 qt

CHASSIS/BODY

Type.....unit construction with a rubber-isolated powertrain cradle
 Body material.....welded steel stampings

INTERIOR

SAE volume, front seat.....54 cu ft
 rear seat.....47 cu ft
 luggage space.....38 cu ft
 Front seats.....bucket
 Seat adjustments.....fore and aft, seatback angle, front height, rear height, lumbar support, upper side bolsters
 Restraint systems, front.....manual 3-point belts, driver and passenger airbags
 rear.....manual 3-point belts, center lap belt
 General comfort.....poor fair **good** excellent
 Fore-and-aft support.....poor fair **good** excellent
 Lateral support.....poor fair **good** excellent

SUSPENSION

F.....ind, strut located by 1 trailing link and 1 lateral link, coil springs, anti-roll bar
 R.....ind, unequal-length control arms with 1 trailing link, coil springs, anti-roll bar

STEERING

Type.....rack-and-pinion, power-assisted
 Turns lock-to-lock.....2.7
 Turning circle curb-to-curb.....38.6 ft

BRAKES

F.....10.0 x 1.0-in vented disc
 R.....10.0 x 0.9-in vented disc
 Power assist.....vacuum with anti-lock control

WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size.....6.0 x 16 in
 Wheel type.....cast aluminum
 Tires.....Goodyear Eagle GA, P215/60VR-16
 Test inflation pressures, F/R.....35/35 psi

CAR AND DRIVER TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION

	Seconds
Zero to 30 mph.....	2.7
40 mph.....	3.8
50 mph.....	5.4
60 mph.....	7.3
70 mph.....	9.5
80 mph.....	12.2
90 mph.....	16.0
100 mph.....	20.5
110 mph.....	26.5
120 mph.....	36.4
Street start, 5-60 mph.....	7.5
Top-gear passing time, 30-50 mph.....	3.6
50-70 mph.....	5.3
Standing 1/4-mile.....	15.6 sec @ 89 mph
Top speed (drag limited).....	130 mph

BRAKING

70-0 mph @ impending lockup.....172 ft
 Fade.....none **light** moderate heavy

HANDLING

Roadholding, 300-ft-dia skidpad.....0.80 g
 Understeer.....minimal **moderate** excessive

ESTIMATED FUEL ECONOMY

EPA city driving.....**17 mpg**
 EPA highway driving.....26 mpg
 C/D observed fuel economy.....**23 mpg**

INTERIOR SOUND LEVEL

Idle.....41 dBA
 Full-throttle acceleration.....79 dBA
 70-mph cruising.....71 dBA
 70-mph coasting.....70 dBA