

Ford Taurus L

The Best Buy in family sedans is no surprise.

BY CSABA CSERE

• We at *C/D* don't accept the notion that the best-selling cars on the market are always the best cars or the best buys. But in the case of the Ford Taurus, we maintain that the more than one million buyers who have made it one of America's sales leaders over the past three years have made a fine choice. Since its introduction in late 1985, the Taurus has provided a better combination of style, driving pleasure, comfort, and utility than any other family sedan in its price range.

Considered a risky, bet-the-company move at the time of its introduction, the Taurus immediately grabbed the public's attention with its sleek, aerodynamic lines and fine driving manners. Even in its fifth year of production—while facing a host of new competitors—the Taurus sets the standard for family-car style.

Good looks are only the most obvious of the Taurus's virtues. When Ford rolled the dice and gave the Taurus its radical, aerodynamic shape, it also made a bold departure by adopting a more European suspension philosophy. With sophisticated geometry, firm springs, and tight shocks, the Taurus maintains a secure, tenacious grip on the road—no matter how hard you drive or how rough the pavement. This family sedan is no mushmobile.

The standard source of Taurus power is an anemic 2.5-liter pushrod four that traces its lineage back to the 1960 Ford Falcon's humble in-line six (which used much smaller cylinders to displace a mere 2.4 liters). One is well advised to decline this engine and opt for the optional 3.0-liter V-6, which not only provides vastly improved performance and refinement but also comes with a four-speed automatic transaxle instead of the



four-cylinder's three-speed.

The Taurus is a passenger-pleaser, with plenty of cabin room and seats for up to six. Four adults fit easily, and they enjoy well-contoured, firmly padded seats. The rear seats are notably comfort-

able, with a chairlike floor height that allows a normal sitting posture—which is more than can be said for the rear seats of many modern sedans. The new-for-1990 dashboard improves the look of the interior yet maintains the smartly placed controls and instruments.

When shopping for the best Taurus buy, we chose the L model. Even this lowliest of Tauruses comes equipped with such niceties as tilt steering, tinted glass, electric mirrors, interval wipers, a driver-side air bag, an integrated radio and clock, and a tasteful dose of black moldings and chrome trim. It's not as lavish as a BMW 750iL, but it's no stripped fleet special, either.

To the \$12,640 base Taurus L, we added air conditioning, the 3.0-liter V-6/ four-speed automatic powertrain, power windows and locks, cruise control, a rear defroster, a cassette player, remote fuel-door and trunk-lid releases, and a heavy-duty suspension. With freight, our Best Buy winner came to \$15,787. Not bad for a roomy, good-looking, sweet-driving sedan with a decent complement of creature comforts.

Of course, the new Honda Accord LX gave the Taurus a very good run for its money. For about \$600 less, the Accord

offers better fit and finish, a nicer level of trim, and perhaps the smoothest controls in the automotive world. But the Honda lacks an air bag, a six-cylinder engine, and an automatic transmission. And it's less spacious than the Ford. You can't go wrong with the Accord—but if you're looking for the best value in family transportation, we think you'll do better with the Taurus.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Honda Accord LX (\$15,140): In brand-new form, it's still the standard for quality and refinement in an affordable sedan.
Subaru Legacy L+ 4WD (\$15,339): If you need to carry four adults, the Legacy is the nicest-driving, least expensive, and best-equipped four-wheel-drive sedan on the market.

Ford Taurus L

Vehicle type: front-engine, front-wheel-drive, 6-passenger, 4-door sedan

Price as tested: \$15,787

Options on test car: base Ford Taurus L, \$12,640; air conditioning, \$817; 3.0-liter V-6 engine, \$721; power windows, \$306; power locks, \$215; cruise control, \$201; rear defroster, \$160; AM/FM-stereo radio/cassette, \$155; remote trunk and fuel-door releases, \$91; heavy-duty suspension, \$26; freight, \$455

Standard accessories: power steering, tilt steering

Engine type: V-6, iron block and heads, Ford EEC-IV electronic engine-control system with port fuel injection

Displacement	182 cu in., 2986cc
Power (SAE net)	140 bhp @ 4800 rpm
Transmission	4-speed automatic with lockup torque converter
Wheelbase	106.0 in.
Length	188.4 in.
Curb weight	3127 lb
Zero to 60 mph	10.6 sec
Zero to 100 mph	34.6 sec
Standing 1/4-mile	17.7 sec @ 78 mph
Top speed	117 mph
Braking, 70-0 mph	202 ft
Roadholding, 300-ft-dia skidpad	0.74 g
EPA fuel economy, city driving	20 mpg

