



FIFTH GEAR

Five: McLaren F1 Supercar in my price range
 Four: Can I keep it?
 Three: Not a bad car
 Two: Hey, it's got wheels and it moves
 One: The three-wheeled car from Mr. Bean

After a one-week hiatus, Fifth Gear returns with a new car review. This week I chose the brand-new Accent from Hyundai. This subcompact replaces the Excel, which was the best-selling subcompact car on PEI. The Accent will probably continue this trend. Actually, Hyundai sells more cars on PEI than any other import company, so it makes sense that their smallest car would be a top seller.

The Accent is visually very different from the old Excel, with smooth, rounded lines instead of a squared-off boxy shape. Although the design is not cutting-edge, it is a definite improvement. Our photographer referred to it as a "cute little car." I found the basic wheels without the plastic covers strangely Honda-esque, but that's not necessarily a bad thing.

The Accent is available as a four-door sedan or a three-door hatchback, but the hatchback won't be at local dealers until after Christmas. There are two trim levels, L and GL. Both possess the Alpha engine from Hyundai's Scoupe, which boasts 92 horsepower and 97 pound-feet of torque. Those aren't numbers to get excited over, but not bad for a vehicle in this class. The car is certainly zippy, and it has enough power for everyday driving, but I wouldn't recommend taking it to Halifax if you like driving at immoderate speeds. The sus-

pension is great, and it handles bumps easily, but it isn't a Cadillac. Cornering is acceptable, although there is noticeable body roll. The narrow tires on the L model I drove didn't help the handling. Wider tires such as those supplied on the GL would be better.

The transmission in my test car was a five-speed with overdrive. It took a couple of minutes to figure out the shifter, but once I did it became simple to use. Second and fourth didn't feel right, the positions seemed too far back, and the shifter throw could have been shorter. That might be just my personal preference. Also, reverse was hard to find. On the other hand, the clutch was great. I've only been driving a standard for two months, yet I adjusted instantly to this car.

Inside, everything appeared to be in order. The seats were comfortable, and Hyundai asserts that these are 'anti-submarine' seats, which means the occupants are less likely to slide under the seatbelts in the event of a head-on collision. I didn't drive on the wrong side of the road at high speed to find out. I found there was enough room in the back seat for two, but three would be a squeeze. Up front there was sufficient room, but when I pulled the seat forward my head hit the roof. The seat tilt adjustment supplied on

the GL model would have helped. The trunk was small, and the rear seat did not fold down. You couldn't take the family on a trip in this car, but few people would want to.

For the safety conscious, airbags are optional. Antilock brakes are only available on the GL models. Also, the four-doors have child safety rear door locks. These features are typical of this level of cars, but I'm surprised that dual airbags aren't standard, since all cars sold in North America will need dual airbags by 1997.

The Accent features plenty of standard equipment, but nothing spectacular. The options are limited, but there is some good stuff you can add, such as a sunroof, aluminum wheels, airbags, antilock brakes, and air conditioning. Again, nothing amazing here, with a few notable exceptions. There's no CD player available, but a passable tape deck is standard on the four-door GL, optional on other models. A tachometer is standard on the GLs, but unavailable on L models.

Price is a big selling point with the Accent, as with all Hyundai vehicles. Due to favourable trade deals between Canada and Korea, Hyundai can sell vehicles at better prices than Japanese companies. A three-

door L model starts at \$8995, while the four-door is \$9995 and up. A fully loaded Accent will run for about \$14,900.

Almost every car company has something to offer in this price range. Common ones around Charlottetown include the Toyota Tercel, the VW Golf, Saturn's SL, the Geo Metro/Pontiac Firefly, the Mazda 323, Ford's new Aspire, the Honda Civic CX, and the Nissan Sentra Classic. The Chevrolet Cavalier and Dodge/Plymouth Neon are a step above this class, both in size and price.

For those of you who like small cars, the Accent might be just what you're looking for. Be warned though, that Hyundai doesn't have a stellar reliability record. This has improved in recent years, but it remains to be seen how the Accent will fare. Resale value is also traditionally low on all Hyundai vehicles, so don't plan on trading in an Accent after two years.

Despite my mild reservations, the Accent is a good little car. It just doesn't appeal to me like a bigger, faster, and sportier car would. My rating for the Hyundai Accent is a three.

Special thanks to Blair Connell and Jeff MacLennan at Heritage Hyundai, both of whom were very helpful and informative.

BREAST HEALTH AWARENESS INFORMATION SESSION

Wednesday, November 16
 Lecture Theatre A, A.V.C. 7:00 p.m.

Presented by:

Barb Campbell, BN/RN
 Deborah Roberts, BN/RN
 Georgie Silliker, BN/RN
 Cheryl Doran, BN/RN



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