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Chevrolet's 2000 Impala is offered in base and LS models. The base engine is the OHV 3.4 V6 producing 180 hp and 205 ft/lb of torque. The bigger brother LS can be had with the long-serving 3.8 V6 producing 200 hp and 225 ft/lb of torque.

Chevy's 'old' Impala is a totally new car

Say the word "Impala" and 96 per cent of the people you ask know it's a synonym for Chevrolet.

Now that was not the same case for the previous larger Chevrolet sedans like Lumina (60 per cent recognition factor) and the Celebrity (better left forgotten) before that.

Frankly, GM can use a little recognition, and to do it, they're betting the division on a return to an old and cherished name that is being put on a totally new car—the Impala.

The 2000 Impala is aimed squarely at Ford Crown Victoria, Chrysler Intrepid and Toyota Avalon. GM wants the full-size sedan segment back and Impala is going to have to be a hit right off the bat.

Now it's not that the Lumina was bad, in fact it recently attained a number one J. D. Power rating for build quality. But that comes just as the last one rolled down the Oshawa Plant 1 assembly line on May 12.

But this is not a another case of GM launching a car and then working six years to get it right. They think they've finally got it right in terms of highly-skilled and highly-efficient workers in Oshawa who can make whatever is thrown at them a J. D. Power winner.

Printed here is the first full test of the Impala that is part of Chevrolet's return to the three-sedan concept. The Bowtie folk will offer Cavalier (180 inches long), Malibu (190 inches) and Impala (200 inches) going into the next millennium.

Although it is 200 inches (5090 mm) long it has 122.1 cu. ft. of interior volume, of which 17.6 cu. ft goes for trunk space.

The Impala is offered in base and LS models. The base engine is the OHV 3.4 V6 producing 180 hp and 205 ft/lb of torque. The bigger brother LS can be had with the long-serving 3.8 V6 producing 200 hp and 225 ft/lb of torque. The 3.8 is an option on the Base car. Both rely on GM's superb four-speed automatic transmission to drive the front wheels. Impala comes with 16-inch wheels as standard, steel on the Base car. The Base car's fully independent suspension is tuned for smooth ride with special Uniroyal Tiger Paw (yep they're back) tires that give good fuel economy. The LS is set up with a touring suspension that increases front and rear spring rates, a faster steering ratio and Goodyear GA tires that improve grip at a slight decrease in fuel economy.

The Impala doesn't look like a GM product, which I think is a blessing because each GM division needs a

style leader. In fact, it was penned by John Cafaro who designed the C5 Corvette. If the Malibu looks somewhat Japanese, then the Impala looks very much Saab 9.5, at least at the nose. While it is two inches taller than the Lumina it has a drag coefficient of 0.31 — that is in the super slick range. That drag number is attained even with a very wide track (62 inches/1575 mm front; 61.3 inches/1557 mm rear) and the even wider body (73 inches/1854 mm).

The width makes it all the better for people to sit in my dear and this starts with the seats designed by a team that included a physical therapist. The result is what GM calls its RoomFirst design concept. The Base car gets a 60/40 split front in various trim levels while the LS has buckets.

GM wants the public to know brakes are the big story with the Impala and they are exactly the same as will be offered on the Police Pursuit version. They are four-wheel discs with rotors designed to take up all the space offered inside the 16-inch wheels. More to the point, the brake pads have 40 per cent more area than those in the Lumina. Vented front and solid at the rear, ABS is standard on the LS and optional on the Base car.

See IMPALA, pg. 2



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