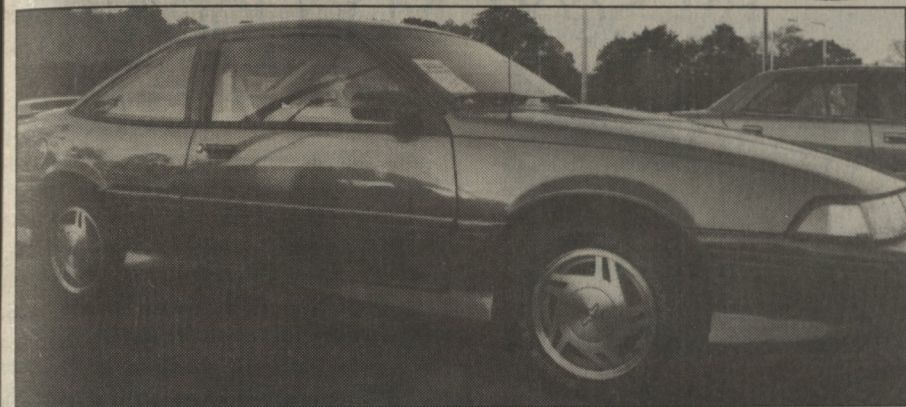
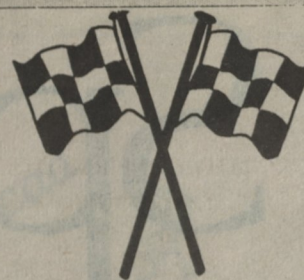


FIFTH GEAR



By Marko Peric

YOU MAY NOTICE A FEW ADDITIONS TO this week's column. The most obvious is a title, *Fifth Gear*. Also, a short list of comparable cars will be included in every review. Finally, I will attempt to give each car a rating. Hopefully, these changes will make the column even more useful to prospective car buyers. For those of you who cannot even begin to afford a new vehicle, I will also have some used-car info later in the semester. Any comments, questions or complaints can be directed to the *X-Press* office, either in person or by e-mail.

This week I drove a 1994 Cavalier, the cheapest car in Chevrolet's lineup and a best-seller in Canada for five years. Any car which sells in such numbers is worth looking into. This car's main feature is value, and you

certainly get your money's worth. Even on the basic VL (value leader) model, there are power locks, power steering, good tires and antilock brakes. On the better models many other features are standard, including air conditioning.

The engine puts out 120 horsepower--not bad for this type of car. Another engine choice available on all versions except the VL is a V6 with 140 horses and plenty of torque. This provides much-improved driveability and good acceleration. The V6 is noisy if you put your foot down, but whisper-quiet at cruising speed. The quality of assembly of the Cavalier has improved vastly over the years, although it's still a long way from a BMW. Reliability was always a weak point, but that has improved as well. When you do need to make repairs, the parts are cheap and readily available.

The most serious concern with the Cavalier is appearance. The car is, to put it mildly, bland. Hideous black trim is everywhere, the door handles look like toys, and the bumpers couldn't possibly look worse. The lines are unimaginative, and the sedan and station wagons are outright ugly. Despite all this poor styling, all models feature interesting, aggressive wheel-covers; this anomaly is a bright point in the look of the Cavalier.

The good news is that the Cavalier has been redesigned for 1995, and the new cars look nothing like the old ones. Most obvious among the changes are the curves--all the sharp angles have been smoothed out. The black trim is gone, the door handles are restyled, and the bumpers look contemporary. Even better news is the price: surprise, no serious increases. With improved looks, a better engine choice, and even dual airbags, that is a real shock. And to top it off, no more station wagon (I hate station wagons).

All told, this is a good little car. It may not corner like a Porsche, or have the styling of a Ferrari, but it does do the job it was designed for--providing comfortable, reliable, and economical transportation. Few cars can do this at such a low price. Competitors who try include the Ford Escort, Honda Civic, Toyota Corolla and Tercel, Mazda Protege, all Saturn models, the Nissan Sentra, and last but definitely not least, the Dodge/Plymouth Neon. The Neon and the Cavalier will certainly dominate this class for

years to come.

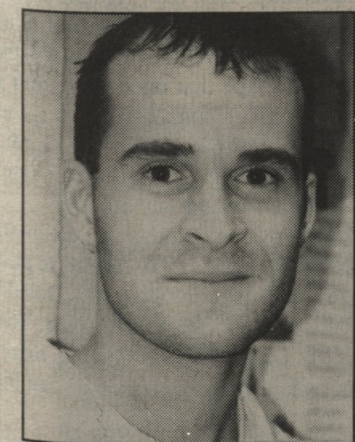
I did not attempt to get 1994 prices since the few remaining unsold '94s have all been marked down to clear them out. The four-door I drove was all but loaded, and had the better engine. The asking price was \$17,913, but there is a \$1500 price cut. A good deal might be had if you drive a hard bargain. The 1995 prices start at \$11,595, but more information on the '95s will be available when they arrive, probably within six weeks. I hope to do a full review of them in the new year.

Finally, when buying a Cavalier, look for the V6 engine. It truly makes all the difference. Be careful when considering a used one--these cars have had problems. As with any used car, get a good mechanic to look it over before you buy. If you want a new Cavalier, wait for the '95s. I can't rate the new version because I have yet to see one, let alone drive one, but I give the '94 Cavalier a three.

- 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.**

CAMPUS COMMENT

WHY ARE THE STUDY CARRELS IN ROBERTSON LIBRARY SHAPED LIKE SWASTIKAS?



It's probably not intentional.
George Anderson,
Senior English



I really have no idea.
Leslie Shaw,
3rd year Arts



They were designed by the Reform Party.
Jamie Steadman,
4th year Philosophy/Sociology



The librarians are Neo-Nazis.
Penny Breedon,
2nd year Arts