

Smart, Stylish, Sexy

And Four Fast Wheels

By Roger Witherspoon

The commercials never made much sense to me.

There was a beautiful, stylish, professional woman with a voice like warm honey pressing her high heels to the accelerator of a Cadillac CTS, speeding through the night, dismissing the significance of the 300-horsepower engine, the luxury refinements and the pop-up nav system and asking, provocatively:

“When you turn the car on, does it do the same for you?”

In my best curmudgeon mode I grumbled that the ad was dumb, and what woman would be intrigued by the notion of being turned on by a car?

“Me,” said my wife, the librarian. “I want to try it.”

So she did. First, Marilyn walked around the deep, burnished red sedan, noting the slim, chrome parallelogram on the side of the gently sloping hood, serving as an air vent and matching the angular shape of both the high density headlights and the aluminum, 18-inch wheels.

She nodded approvingly at the unobtrusive, dual exhausts and the car’s short, tapered rear.

She ran her hand along the contoured surface of the sedan’s body, noting the slight, angular lines which subtly changed the slope of various surfaces and hinted at the power inside. She settled comfortably in the driver’s seat, adjusting the telescoping pedals and leather steering wheel, running her hands across the African Mahogany wood trim spanning the dash and doors, and nodding approvingly at the soft, blue lighting emanating from underneath. She listened to the soft jazz humming from the 10 Bose 5.1 digital speakers and nodded approvingly when she saw – but could not hear – a garbage truck rumbling by.

Then she started the CTS. She was quiet as she drove through the residential and commercial districts and remained silent when she drove on to the Palisades Parkway, until she pulled into a scenic overlook 400 feet above the Hudson River, with the lights of Manhattan blazing on the other side of the dark water.

Then she said, “This is a car for a professional woman who is confident in herself, feels sexy, knows what she wants, follows her own lead, wants luxury without excessive frilliness, and has no time to waste on any man who does not have enough testosterone to keep up.

“I want one.”

Which proves I know as little about marketing as I do about women.

The Cadillac CTS is the latest evolution of a venerated brand long associated with old codgers with fat stogies and outlandishly large tail fins, but which is now in the forefront of 21st century automotive design. The guys at *Motor Trend* magazine named the CTS their 2008 Car of the Year and positively gushed the following:

“News flash to automakers in Japan and Germany: The eagle has landed.

Again...Not since Neil and Buzz spiked Old Glory into the lunar dust in 1969 have red-white-and-blue ambition and technological prowess looked so good.”

Its eye-catching exterior look stems from the imagination of Ed Welburn, the Howard University sculptor who how heads General Motors' design teams and views the Cadillac as a symbol of modern space technology. To Welburn, the fins on the back of the Cadillacs he saw as a kid in the 50s signified the huge, propeller driven bombers which had recently won World War II.

The new Cadillac designs still reflect the latest in space technology, he said, but today's skies are ruled by stealth aircraft, with short, angular lines that subtly modify the plane's shape. Both the stealth jet and the CTS embody power packed in a small frame, and seem to be racing even when parked.

Under the hood, the CTS has a 304-horsepower V-6 engine which can be remotely started from inside the house and with a low rumble from the twin exhausts. Once unleashed, the CTS can jump from 0 to 60 miles per hour in 5.9 seconds. It has a six-speed, automatic transmission which shifts with no detectable jolts or noise en route to triple digits.

But it is the interior of the CTS where GM has outdone itself in comfort. The captain's chairs are wide, padded, covered with soft, double stitched leather and, in front, can be either heated or air cooled. The dash consists of a pair of curved, leather-coated, split-level, sections joined by a console topped with a pop-up navigation and information system that operates via a touch screen and is one of the easiest to use on the road today.

Overhead is a double "ultra-view" sunroof spanning the front and rear sections of the sedan – though only the front roof opens – with a power shade to keep all or part of the sunlight out, if desired. There is no Bluetooth cell phone connection, but the CTS does have GM's OnStar communication system which, if you prefer, can also provide turn by turn directions and serve as a built in phone system.

For music, the sedan has AM/FM and XM satellite radio, a single disc CD and iPod player. And, for convenience, the entertainment system houses a 40 gigabyte hard drive which can be used to copy music from CDs or take them from the iPod and permanently store them. In short, it is a system providing something for any mood.

The 2008 CTS provides the kind of ride that can make you take an extra spin around the block just because you're reluctant to park and get out. It's just that good.

2008 Cadillac CTS DI V-6 Performance Sedan

MSRP:		\$48,585
EPA Mileage:	17 MPG City	26 MPG Highway

Performance/ Safety:

0 – 60 MPH	5.9 Seconds
¼ Mile	14.8 Seconds

3.6-Liter Direct Injection V-6 engine producing 304 horsepower and 273 pound/feet of torque; all wheel drive; 6-speed, automatic transmission; 4-wheel independent suspension; stability control; all speed traction control; tire pressure monitor; 18-inch

painted aluminum wheels; sport suspension; antilock brake system; 4-wheel performance disc brakes; adaptive, high intensity discharge headlamps w/ washer; fog lamps; daytime running lamps; front & side impact airbags; head curtain side airbags; remote, keyless ignition.

Interior/ Comfort:

AM/FM/ XM satellite radio; Bose 5.1 digital surround sound system with 10 speakers and 40-GB hard drive; CD and iPod player; OnStar communications; double sunroof with powered sunscreen; heated or cooled leather seats; tilt and telescope leather steering wheel with audio and cruise controls; pop up navigation, audio and information system with touch screen controls.

Competition:

BMW 3 and 5-Series; Mercedes C-Class; Lexus GS; Infiniti G-37; Audi A4