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MOTOR TREND

1992 TRUCK OF THE YEAR



FORD CHATEAU CLUB WAGON



FORD F-SERIES FLARESIDE PICKUP



GMC TYPHOON



CHEVROLET BLAZER



MITSUBISHI MONTERO SR



CHEVROLET SUBURBAN



CHEVROLET CREW CAB PICKUP

JANUARY 1992 \$2.95

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MOTOR TREND'S 1992 TRUCK OF THE YEAR

PLAINS, CRANES, AND AUTOMOBILES

by the Editors of *Motor Trend*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT KILLEEN AND CHARLIE RATHBUN
PHOTOGRAPHY LOCATION COURTESY OF SAN DIEGO WILD ANIMAL PARK

"Please, ladies and gentlemen, note how the San Diego Wild Animal Park provides a large and natural setting. Complete herds are found within its more than 2000 acres. As a real treat, look to the right side of the tram next to the giraffe and ostrich, where we find a rather unique family of light trucks that's made its appearance just recently at the park. And the humans? Yes, they're a strange breed. But they coexist well with the trucks, so we let them stay...at least until feeding time."

Okay, so we're getting a little carried away. But the assemblage of vehicles in this Truck of the Year program was something special, even if we discounted the giraffe feeding from the bed of the Crew Cab, or the rhino's brush with Hollywood as its massive sides grazed the photo van. These are exciting vehicles, every one of them, which made this the best and wildest bunch in our four Truck of the Year competitions.

The public has long awaited the arrival of Chevrolet's reborn Blazer, Suburban, and Crew Cab. They looked stronger and sleeker than their predecessors, a more genetically fit breed in a light-truck world that's grown more contemporary and refined. An all-new Ford Chateau Club Wagon and renewed Flareside Pickup came on the scene to challenge for superiority. Mitsubishi's second-generation Montero, the perfect safari vehicle, seemed at home in this exotic setting. And the GMC Typhoon, quick as a cheetah and as sure-footed as a big-horn sheep, seemed eminently capable of running down its prey.

Ready to ride? Strap in tight, while we put these beasts through their paces on the track, slalom, and skidpad. Come along as we stalk the streets and hunt the highways for the leader of the pack. This is the story of natural selection—of how we ferret out a winner, test the mettle of these party animals, and drive them like the wild things they are.



CHEVROLET BLAZER

Chevy's full-size Blazer takes a leap forward this year by joining the more modern C/K family of light trucks. Riding on a longer wheelbase with improved suspension, it offers a more refined personality than that of its predecessor.

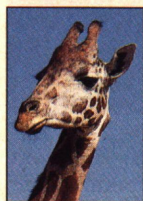
Much of this refinement is inside, where comfortable seating and leg room are abundant. Convenient touches are everywhere. "The overhead console is handy and cleverly designed," noted one editor. Another added, "I love the hidey-holes in the roof and other spots."

While power seemed adequate under most circumstances, one staffer felt the engine was too loud when accelerating, "sounding as if it's putting out a lot of work for little in return." Others noted that "acceleration is disappointing." We also were underwhelmed by the Blazer's manual transmission and notchy shifter, wishing more than once for a friendlier automatic.

Overall, the editors liked the new Blazer, but in a market where most of these vehicles are spent running errands, it felt a bit too truck-heavy.

\$19,280
base price
•
\$24,454
price as tested
•
2-door,
5-passenger
•
Front engine,
four-wheel drive
•
5735 cc
OHV V-8
•
210 hp @ 4000 rpm
•
300 lb-ft @ 2800
•
4-sp. man., O/D
•
111.5-in. wheelbase
•
4566 lb (est.)
curb weight





CHEVROLET CREW CAB

The Crew Cab is a specialized truck that enjoys an amazing, almost cult following. The editors were impressed by how civilized the Crew Cab was, considering its size. "It's surprisingly stable during hard turns and quick transients," stated one writer, "with predictable handling. But you do have to remember just how much truck is out there."

The Crew Cab's interior is fairly carlike and provides commodious seating for six, with tight leg room at the front-center seat position. The editors' rides were pleasant in most instances, but this opinion changed on the interstates. "The suspension is too stiff without a ton of bricks in the back," griped one test driver. Summed one judge: "This truck is probably wonderful at hauling a race car or a pair of jet skis, but probably isn't the best choice for everyday transportation."

Power wasn't a problem, as the 454 V-8 delivered good acceleration and decent torque. "Every time I stomp on the throttle," one staffer quipped, "I could feel Exxon's stock going up two points."

- \$17,404
base price
-
- \$25,089
price as tested
-
- 4-door,
6-passenger
-
- Front engine,
rear drive
-
- 7440 cc
OHV V-8
-
- 230 hp @ 3600 rpm
-
- 385 lb-ft @ 1600
-
- 4-sp. auto., O/D
-
- 168.5-in. wheelbase
-
- 4240 lb curb weight



CHEVROLET SUBURBAN

The Suburban's greatest faults now fade into memory, as its dated styling, cumbersome tailgate and rear glass, and relatively inaccessible third seat are problems of the past.

Sitting on a longer wheelbase, the Suburban feels stable and predictable even when driven hard. "This doesn't handle like any Suburban I've ever driven," enthused one judge. Others called it "poised," "compliant," and "well balanced." Noting its stop-and-go capabilities, one staffer wrote that "the 350 V-8's power delivery is agreeable and there when you need it, and four-wheel ABS is the hot ticket."

New ergonomics make the Suburban a more enjoyable place in which to spend time. "The overhead air-conditioning system and rear heater ducts are a nice touch, and the rear controls are easy to use," one judge pointed out, but several editors grouched about the still unrefined dash.

The Suburban is a big improvement over the original. Did we like it? You bet. One gushed, "I'd be happy to drive this across country—right now."

- \$18,155
base price
-
- \$26,284
price as tested
-
- 4-door,
8-passenger
-
- Front engine,
rear drive
-
- 5735 cc
OHV V-8
-
- 210 hp @ 4000 rpm
-
- 300 lb-ft @ 2800
-
- 4-sp. auto., O/D
-
- 131.5-in. wheelbase
-
- 4657 lb (est.)
curb weight



FORD CHATEAU CLUB WAGON



The '92 Chateau Club Wagon's aerodynamic exterior styling belied the designer's bent for a look that would appear innovative now but work equally well into the next century. A driver-side airbag and rear ABS also reinforce Ford's commitment to bring its full-size van into a new era.

"This van boasts a knockout interior that could rival the best available from aftermarket converters," shared one editor. "It's clearly a step up in comfort and luxury from even the best mini-vans," enthused another, "and it bristles with nice touches." One editor felt "its rear radio headset plugs, 12-volt power plug-ins, and multiple cupholders will all be welcome on long drives."

The Chateau's responsive engine did its job well and provided plenty of pickup. Overall handling was good. "It tracks well through corners for such a tall vehicle," stated one staffer. Though we felt rear ABS was an excellent step forward, it was possible to lock up the front brakes during panic stops, and front ABS would make the package that much stronger.

\$23,963
base price
•
\$25,609
price as tested
•
5-door,
7-passenger
•
Front engine,
rear drive
•
5752 cc
OHV V-8
•
200 hp @ 3800 rpm
•
300 lb-ft @ 2800
•
4-sp. auto., O/D
•
138.0-in. wheelbase
•
5138 lb curb weight



FORD F-150 FLARESIDE PICKUP



Ford's popular pickup moves significantly up the sport scale this year with new sheetmetal and the first Flareside box available in several

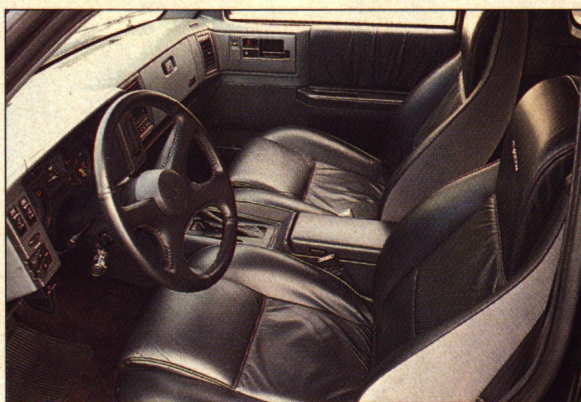
years. It's evident Ford is going after the personal-use market.

One of the real surprises is found on the inside. "The interior is well thought out," noted one judge, while another praised it for being "contemporary with a smoothly contoured instrument hood." Small touches make this interior user-friendly. Some editors pointed out how easy the F-150 is to drive. "It has surprisingly good balance for a pickup," commented one staffer. "It moves out quickly, and moves well through the powerband. But there was a strong tendency to understeer and a good degree of body lean during hard cornering. And while rear ABS certainly was helpful, most thought the addition of front anti-lock would be welcome.

Overall, the editors judged the freshened F-150 Flareside a nice step forward in full-size pickups.

\$14,776
base price
•
\$19,189
price as tested
•
2-door,
3-passenger
•
Front engine,
rear drive
•
5752 cc
OHV V-8
•
200 hp @ 3800 rpm
•
300 lb-ft @ 2800
•
4-sp. auto., O/D
•
116.8-in. wheelbase
•
4336 lb curb weight





GMC TYPHOON

Featuring a turbocharged 4.3-liter V-6, all-wheel drive, and sports car-style handling, the GMC Typhoon is cause for any performance driver's adulation.

This vehicle's handling is superb. "The Typhoon is incredibly stable under the most severe transitions," stated one evaluator. Another enthused that "corners are a thrill and straightaways a blur." Some editors noted that the on-center steering feel was too vague and the steering ratio too slow.

"The irony of the Typhoon is that it's built on a dated sport/utility platform," stated one tester. This feeling continues on the inside, where editors found supportive seats, but an "uninspiring dash design and interior."

The Typhoon provides the most driving fun you can have in a sport/ute. One editor mused, "Imagine the surprise of a BMW 325 or Porsche 968 driver on a mountain road—and certainly from a stoplight." But another summed up what the others were thinking: "There's a lot to like about the Typhoon, but I'd have to like it lots more to part with its asking price."

\$28,995
base price

\$29,430
price as tested

2-door,
4-passenger

Front engine,
four-wheel drive

4293 cc, OHV V-6,
turbocharged

280 hp @ 4200 rpm

360 lb-ft @ 3600

4-sp. auto., O/D

100.5-in. wheelbase

3800 lb (est.)
curb weight





MITSUBISHI MONTERO SR

The second-generation Montero offers an updated look, an improved level of comfort, and plenty of attention to convenience. "The Montero's many nice touches make it a liveable family vehicle," shared one editor, while another added that it's "user-friendly."

Two specific shortcomings were noted by many staffers: lack of power and abundant body roll. "If it has one major weakness," one tester cited, "it has to be its lack of available horsepower." The consensus was that the new Montero was built for an agreeable ride, not for speed.

A propensity for luxu-lean prompted an editor to pen, "Its body roll is disconcerting." While noting this drawback, others praised its cushy ride quality and ability to soak up hard bumps. Many felt the Montero's handling delightfully predictable, the anti-lock brakes beyond efficient, and adjustable suspension a definite strong point.

The Montero's healthy sticker price means it offers less for the money than other notable sport/utilities in its class. While unique items like a dash-mounted compass, inclinometer, and altimeter are interesting and useful off the trail, they hold little value for highway driving. Off-road is where the Montero will shine, but few of the Montero's potential customers will even get off the freeway, much less off the road.

\$22,900
base price

\$27,049
price as tested

4-door,
5-passenger

Front engine,
four-wheel drive

2972 cc
SOHC V-6

151 hp @ 5000 rpm

174 lb-ft @ 4000

4-spd. auto., O/D

107.4-in. wheelbase

4417 lb curb weight





FUEL ECONOMY IN MILES PER GALLON (CITY/HIGHWAY)

| | | | | |
|----------------------|----|----|-----------|--|
| GMC TYPHOON | 15 | 19 | | |
| MITSUBISHI MONTERO | 15 | 18 | | |
| CHEVROLET BLAZER | 13 | 17 | | |
| FORD F-150 FLARESIDE | 12 | 16 | | |
| FORD CHATEAU | 11 | 15 | | |
| CHEVROLET CREW CAB | | | NOT RATED | |
| CHEVROLET SUBURBAN | | | NOT RATED | |

ACCELERATION (SEC/MPH) 0-60 MPH QUARTER MILE

| | | | | |
|----------------------|------|-----------|--|--|
| GMC TYPHOON | 5.5 | 14.2/95.5 | | |
| FORD F-150 FLARESIDE | 9.4 | 17.1/80.4 | | |
| CHEVROLET SUBURBAN | 10.6 | 17.7/76.7 | | |
| CHEVROLET BLAZER | 11.0 | 17.8/77.4 | | |
| FORD CHATEAU | 10.8 | 17.9/76.6 | | |
| CHEVROLET CREW CAB | 11.9 | 18.5/74.6 | | |
| MITSUBISHI MONTERO | 12.8 | 19.0/72.4 | | |

SLALOM IN MILES PER HOUR

| | | | | |
|----------------------|------|------|------|------|
| GMC TYPHOON | | | | 65.7 |
| CHEVROLET CREW CAB | | | 57.9 | |
| MITSUBISHI MONTERO | | | 55.8 | |
| FORD CHATEAU | | | 55.2 | |
| FORD F-150 FLARESIDE | | 53.7 | | |
| CHEVROLET BLAZER | | 53.5 | | |
| CHEVROLET SUBURBAN | 51.7 | | | |

BRAKING (60-0 MPH/FT)

| | | | | |
|----------------------|-----|--|-----|--|
| GMC TYPHOON | 131 | | | |
| MITSUBISHI MONTERO | 145 | | | |
| CHEVROLET BLAZER | 153 | | | |
| FORD F-150 FLARESIDE | 155 | | | |
| FORD CHATEAU | 165 | | | |
| CHEVROLET SUBURBAN | 167 | | | |
| CHEVROLET CREW CAB | | | 172 | |

SKIDPAD (LATERAL G)

| | | | | |
|----------------------|--|--|------|------|
| GMC TYPHOON | | | | 0.82 |
| FORD F-150 FLARESIDE | | | 0.75 | |
| CHEVROLET CREW CAB | | | 0.73 | |
| CHEVROLET SUBURBAN | | | 0.72 | |
| CHEVROLET BLAZER | | | 0.71 | |
| MITSUBISHI MONTERO | | | 0.70 | |
| FORD CHATEAU | | | 0.68 | |



Our Truck of the Year evaluation procedure is broken down into two major categories: Subjective and Objective. In the Subjective category, the existing best-in-class vehicle is used as a 100-point baseline, so a score of better than 100 points would mean the candidate truck exceeds the benchmark, while a sub-100-point score would mean it falls short of its existing competition.

Objective testing constitutes the last two major headings on the chart, Performance and Handling. Performance is made up of three elements: 0-60-mph time, quarter-mile time, and combined EPA fuel economy num-

bers. Handling consists of lateral acceleration, slalom speed, and 60-0-mph braking distance. The figures a candidate generates in each of the objective categories are compared to those generated by the best-selling vehicle in the class (tested in advance) to determine a final score. Just as in the Subjective scoring, a rating of 105 would indicate the candidate is 5 percent better than the benchmark in this particular area.

The accounting firm of Ernst & Young conducts the final tabulation and auditing of the results.

SCORING

| | Styling & Design | Quality Control | Occupant Comfort & Convenience | Ride & Drive | Chassis Dynamics | Dollar Value / Market Significance | Utility & Function | Performance | Handling | FINAL SCORE |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|--------------|------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| FORD CHATEAU CLUB WAGON | 111.19 | 105.33 | 104.24 | 101.27 | 100.41 | 107.44 | 102.75 | 102.32 | 103.86 | 938.81 |
| CHEVROLET SUBURBAN | 106.81 | 103.78 | 102.75 | 102.18 | 101.96 | 103.88 | 101.13 | 105.41 | 102.76 | 930.66 |
| GMC TYPHOON | 95.13 | 93.83 | 96.41 | 107.30 | 102.84 | 65.31 | 59.17 | 148.61 | 118.22 | 886.82 |
| FORD F-150 FLARESIDE PICKUP | 102.88 | 102.55 | 101.24 | 99.18 | 97.96 | 99.44 | 84.63 | 99.95 | 94.42 | 882.25 |
| CHEVROLET BLAZER | 100.25 | 99.70 | 99.18 | 96.91 | 94.25 | 93.63 | 101.71 | 98.52 | 98.04 | 882.19 |
| CHEVROLET CREW CAB | 100.69 | 101.18 | 98.99 | 97.13 | 99.04 | 85.44 | 98.21 | 94.08 | 103.86 | 878.62 |
| MITSUBISHI MONTERO SR | 95.53 | 100.25 | 98.44 | 92.59 | 94.71 | 76.69 | 97.29 | 90.96 | 100.62 | 847.08 |