



FAMILY WHEELS

Nicely equipped FOR WEEKEND EXCURSIONS

2000 Daewoo Leganza CDX packs in the options.

BY WILLIAM ROEBUCK

Daewoo is another one of those huge Korean industrial companies that's recently brought its vehicles to Canada, so its name may be unfamiliar to you. The parent company is undergoing some financial difficulties currently, but restructuring is under way, and Daewoo Motor is a likely target



New Daewoo Leganza has Italian styling.

for a takeover by another major carmaker.

The company sells three models in Canada, the Lanos subcompact, the Nubira compact sedan and wagon, and the Leganza luxury sedan, which comes in

base SX and upscale CDX versions.

One of the first rides I took in the top-of-the-line 2000 Daewoo Leganza CDX was a trip into Toronto from Oakville with my family and an exchange student from Argentina, who is here for a year with a local Rotary Club.

It was a sunny but very chilly Saturday morning – about 3 below – when I turned the key on the Olive Silver-coloured Leganza. The 2.2-litre four-cylinder engine started promptly, producing a bit of a roar. The leather seats were cold, but the seat heaters took care of that soon enough. All of the features mentioned come as standard equipment in the CDX model, which costs \$24,500. It's a good price, considering all the included amenities.

Everyone agreed the Leganza doors provided easy access, and leg room was adequate, especially in the rear. When Juan, the exchange student, joined my two teenagers in the rear seat, they found themselves shoulder-to-shoulder – tight, but not uncomfortable for the ride into the city.

Loaded to its passenger capacity, the Leganza didn't handle much differently than when I was driving it alone later. The

ride is smooth and comfortable, although you can notice the potholes and sewer covers when you drive over them – the car feels like it needs better suspension damping. Acceleration from the 131-hp engine was just fine on the uphill ramp going on to the Q.E.W., although the engine howls when you push down the pedal for maximum acceleration. You also notice the shifting of the four-speed automatic transmission, especially from third to fourth.

Driving along at highway speeds, there was little influence from tire ruts in the road. We didn't notice any wind or road noise. A couple of hard stops when the traffic backed up gave me confidence in the ABS brakes. Dual front airbags are standard, as are seat belt pre-tensioners.

When my kids started arguing over the radio station they wanted to hear, it became clear that the buttons on the CD-equipped Sony radio were frustrating to use. The unit has 10 tiny channel selection buttons. There's also a plastic bar on the buttons that presses hard into your finger. That said, the six-speaker stereo system produced great sound.

All the other controls are easy to see and adjust. Ventilation was quiet and the heater provided good temperature control. The compact size of the Leganza made it easy to squeeze into a small parking spot in a Queen Street West lot; its manoeuvrability made it simple to later drive frontwards into a streetside spot in Greektown on the Danforth, and there was a clear view out the rear window when backing into a tight spot along crowded Queen Street East in the Beach.

The most significant thing about the Leganza is the number of standard features – accoutrements that are usually extra-cost

options on other cars in this class. In addition to the features already mentioned, the CDX includes power windows, mirrors and locks, remote keyless entry with a security system, power sunroof, heated mirrors, rear power windows (that open all the way), six-way power driver's seat, lumbar adjustments on both front seats, front console cupholders, a change drawer, door and console storage compartments, and a good-sized glove box. There's also a magazine/map pocket behind both front seats. Roadside assistance for three years is included as well.

The Leganza also comes with a power switch on the shifter which allows peppier acceleration. Transport Canada mileage ratings are 11.9 L/100 km city, 7.8 highway.

What's missing? Rear-seat passengers don't get reading lights or cupholders. "What else?" asked my son. He couldn't believe all the options that are included for the list price. For what you get, the Leganza has to be one of the best value packages available. According to a company spokesman, many of the vehicle's parts come from General Motors suppliers, and the engine is refined from a GM design, accounting for cost efficiencies.

If you'd like a nicely loaded, good-looking car that's competent, easy to drive and good value, you can add the Daewoo Leganza to your list. 🌟

■ *Home Digest editor William Roebuck is a member of AJAC (the Automobile Journalists Association of Canada).*