

Portland Observer Auto Review **2008 Ford Taurus Limited AWD**

New Name - New Face

BY KATHLEEN CARR

People change their identities for many reasons. They don't like their name, they're on the lam from the law, or they simply want a new start. It happens with automobiles, too. Case in point: the 2008 Ford Taurus, which falls into the category of wanting a new start.

Along came a new head honcho at Ford, Alan Mulally, who came up with an idea that was brilliant in its simplicity. He decreed that, for 2008, the Five Hundred would be re-named the Taurus.

Even if you've never owned a Taurus, you probably know someone who has. Before the demise of the original Taurus, it was Ford's bread-and-butter family car and had a prominent spot in driveways across America.

But a name change alone obviously wouldn't fool too many people. So the 2008 Taurus got a makeover and more power. A new, 3.5-liter V6 engine delivers 260 horsepower @ 249 pound-feet of torque; through a six-speed automatic transmission, and the power goes either to the front wheels or all four wheels.

This new powertrain makes the Taurus a whole lot more fun to drive than the ill-conceived Five Hundred was. Its 0-60 mph acceleration performance has been reduced by more than a second and a half,



Specifications: 3.5-Liter, 24-valve 263-hp @ 249 lb-ft. torque, V-6 Duratec engine; 6-speed automatic transmission; 17-City, 24-Highway MPG; \$ 33,600. MSRP

from 9.2 seconds down to 7.6 seconds, which is a huge chunk of performance.

The new engine and transmission transform the car. There's plenty of power, which comes on strongly and the transmission shifts smoothly, if a bit slushy. If you opt for the all-wheel drive model, the power goes directly to the wheels without wheel spin. You can't peel rubber with this Detroit iron.

And a little better mileage would be nice. Taurus is rated at 17 m.p.g. city/24 highway, though in fairness nearly all vehicles have seen their numbers cut

thanks to more real-world testing for 2008.

The Taurus' crash-test performance is as good as they get, according to the federal government: the maximum five stars in frontal and side impact protection.

Standard safety equipment includes dual-stage driver and passenger front air bags, seat-deployed side air bags for driver and front passenger, and Ford's Safety Canopy™ side curtain air bags for both rows. For an added measure of safety, a new steering wheel design recesses the air bag 15 millimeters farther away from the driver.

Ford put a new face on the 2008 Taurus. The new front end is dramatic and powerful. Ford's signature three-bar grille draws the Taurus into the family and adds machismo to the wispy wire mesh grille. The new front fascia gives it a more substantial look.

And there's that trunk. It can hold eight; count 'em, eight sets of golf clubs, which means it will hold all the luggage or groceries the family wants. Need more cargo room? The rear seat backs fold flat. Need even more? The front passenger seat folds flat at the pull of a strap so you can slip a

ladder or lumber inside.

The 2008 Ford Taurus Limited also offers a number of must-have technologies. In addition to a standard auxiliary audio input jack, available convenience features include a voice-activated navigation system, a DVD entertainment system and factory-installed SIRIUS® satellite radio.

Ford Sync is also available on the new 2008 Ford Taurus. Sync is a voice-activated hands-free in-car communications and entertainment system which fully integrates mobile phones and digital media players. The Sync in-car communications system was developed in collaboration with Microsoft and will be offered exclusively on 12 Ford, Lincoln and Mercury products in North America beginning this year.

Ford partnered with Microsoft to create Sync as a way for vehicle owners to stay connected with their cell phones and digital music players. Instead of needing separate connections for these devices, Sync works as an all-in-one solution that can be updated as new phones and players are released. Ford Sync looks to provide a simpler, one-stop-shop for connection and use of cell phones and MP3 players.

A new name, looks and power should help but so should retaining massive cabin and trunk room in a midsize sedan loaded with goodies -- plus the all-season security of AWD -- for around \$33,000.



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