

Putting Performance Back in the **Luxury Vehicle**



Story by Charles Renny

If you want to drive Acura Canada people nuts, just call the new 2004 Acura TL a Japanese BMW.

Richard Jacobs of Acura Canada admits that “BMW was the benchmark for the car” but adds that “we have no intention of becoming BMW, we intend to be in the same market as BMW, with the Acura giving buyers a distinctive choice.”

2004 TL

- 3.2-litre, 24-valve VTEC V6 engine
- Double Wishbone Suspension
- 5-speed Sequential SportShift™
- Anti-Lock Braking System
- Front and side airbags
- Traction Control System (TCS)
- Grade Logic Control System
- Micron Air Filtration System
- Acura/Bose® Music System with 5 speakers, including rear woofer, AM/FM stereo/cassette, in-dash 6 CD changer and anti-theft feature
- Homelink® remote control system



Similar, yet distinctive is a tall order. On paper, both cars have six cylinder engines and manual six speed transmissions as well as computer controlled automatics. Both cars will hold five adults and get you to the opera or racetrack. Yet from the moment that you walk up to the TL, you know this car is going to stand out. The distinctive Acura front grille is flanked by Xenon body contoured headlamps, while lower down in the fascia there are large air intakes for both the engine and brakes. Large doors make entry and exit an easy task. The roof line comes down to the rear deck lid, which looks deceptively short when it actually hides a spacious trunk. Climb behind the steering wheel and all the gauges and controls are easy to see, reach and use.

Brian Kelly, general manager of Acura Centre of Saskatoon, says, "you don't need to be an engineer to be able to drive the TL and enjoy it." It takes little time to adjust the power actuated, leather seat into a comfortable driving position. Once you are settled, a brief familiarization will show you where Acura puts all the switches. Then it is time to bring the 270 horsepower, Double Over Head Cam, four-valve-per-cylinder, 3.2 litre V6 to life.

As soon as you let go of the key, the engine is idling smoothly. Acura's variable valve timing and variable intake manifold allow this engine to go from pussy cat to cheetah with a stab of the gas pedal. With the six speed manual (Dynamic Package only), you will be so busy shifting that you won't realize you could break every speed limit in Canada by the time you reach third gear. If you choose to drive in a more leisurely manner, you still need to pay attention. The TL is so smooth and quiet that speeds just seem to creep up, unless the cruise is on. Corners that in other cars make you slowdown somehow

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seem straighter and more comfortable. Road surface irregularities, better known as pot holes and tar strips, don't upset the handling of the TL. On a corner, you hear a thump as the tire hits but stay on your cornering line. On the straights, you hear the same thump and maybe a bit of a jar in the seat of your pants. When driving around larger holes, the gigantic four wheel disc brakes shed enough speed that you do not do any damage to the four wheel independent suspension.

With a lock on power and handling, Acura turned to the interior to ensure owners are appropriately pampered. Features include the first DVD audio system in an automobile. Made by Panasonic, the 225 watt, eight speaker system supports regular CDs, but the quality of the DVD-A media is reported to have up to 500 times the signal resolution and carries over six tracks as opposed to a more conventional two tracks. The record industry hopes this format catches on – it is nearly impossible to pirate.

On the safety side, the new TL is one of the safest cars on the road. Its first line of defence is active, meaning the Acura has given you the acceleration, braking and handling to get out of trouble in most situations. Traction control, stability control, brake assist and more are there to help. A navigation system that recognizes voice commands can help keep you from getting lost, and the passive safety features include enough air bags to get a majority in the legislature.

Brian, when he's not managing the Acura dealership, is a car enthusiast. He summed up the latest TL. "It has always been a luxurious car. Now it is back to being a performance car as well!" 🍀



The 2004 TL is now available at the Acura Centre, 655 Circle Drive East in Saskatoon.



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