

Recent DeVilles pleasure to drive

by JEREMY CATO

For CanWest News Service

EDMONTON - Thanks to a new chassis, the 2000 Cadillac DeVille - big, traditional and comfortable as the Queen Mary - became a pretty good luxury sedan.

A pleasant land yacht. Yes, yes, 2000-2003 DeVilles aren't perfect - especially in styling. The most recent DeVille is a design even a Swiss banker might describe as low-key.

But honest to goodness, these most recent DeVilles are a pleasure to drive and they handle much, much better than you might think, given how big a DeVille truly is.

Quality has proven to be good, also. And prices on the used market are affordable. So if you're looking for a slightly used full-size luxury sedan, here you go. Let me say this, too: this DeVille may not be terribly fuel-efficient, but if you spend any time in tiny cars seemingly designed for sardines and supermodels, piloting a roomy American sedan like the DeVille will come as a pleasant shock.

So to the details. When I said this version of the DeVille is big, I wasn't kidding. This car is 5,258 mm long (that's more than 17 feet) and genuinely has room inside for five grown-ups - six if you find one with a standard front bench seat. Rear leg room is massive and the trunk is vast.

Luxury features? All you'd expect in a luxury car, from rain-sensing wipers to ultrasonic rear parking assist to a somewhat gimmicky Night Vision system for seeing objects in the dark.

Let me also note that for 2000 Cadillac cleaned up what had been a busy dashboard in the previous generation model (1994-1999). The white-on-black electroluminescent gauges are excellent - clean, stylish and no-nonsense. Chrome interior door pulls look slick, though as I recall for a 2001 road test, a female passenger said they were hard to grab without risking her fingernails. And the seats? Comfortable, if you excuse the fact the cushions could use more lateral support and sturdier padding.

Now for some details about the chassis switch. The much-stouter Seville chassis turned the previous-generation DeVille into a vastly better car. Cadillac engineers added better suspension tuning for 2000, as well. The end result has been a sedan with a pampering ride, yet surprisingly lithe steering and road feel.

If you're looking at the higher-performance DeVille DTS, it has come with Cadillac's continuously variable road sensing suspension (or CVRSS). This so-called active suspension has sensors to measure the road surface and the handling forces affecting the car and adjust the shock damping for the best ride and handling.

What does all that mean? This Cadillac can quickly firm up the front left shock during a hard right turn, while allowing more rebound for the right rear shock, enhancing tire grip and keeping body roll to a minimum.

Pretty nifty, although for the used car buyer take note that these high-end dodads will eventually wear out and will need to be replaced. The DeVille has also been sold with the StabiliTrak stability control system and the previous

note holds true for this sophisticated device, also.

Which brings us to power. A 4.6-litre, 32-valve Northstar V-8 power plant is the engine. Loads of grunt here, which means the front-drive DeVille will exhibit a bit of torque steer - the tendency of the front wheels to pull to one side during acceleration - if pushed hard. It's well-managed by various electronic systems and the suspension geometry, but it can still pop up at times, detracting from what should be a seamless luxury feel.

So to sum up: generally speaking a nearly new DeVille offers pretty good value in a big, big luxury sedan.

Current Red Book Pricing (avg. retail): Cadillac DeVille DHS
2003-\$48,350 (\$63,590 original MSRP)

2002-\$40,000 (\$62,025)

2001-\$32,550 (\$60,880)

2000-\$25,125 (\$59,795)

1999-\$20,100 (\$54,815)

1998-\$16,475 (\$54,750)

1997-\$12,425 (\$52,820)

1996-\$10,150 (\$48,125)

Check The Specs

2000 Cadillac DeVille DHS

Engine: (front engine/front-wheel drive) 4.6-litre V-8 (DOHC); electronic engine management/sequential fuel injection; 275 h.p. at 5,600 r.p.m.; torque rated at 300 ft-lbs at 4,000 r.p.m.

Transmission: four-speed electronically controlled automatic.

Steering: power-assisted rack-and-pinion.

Brakes: front disc and rear disc with anti-lock and traction control.

Tires: P225/60SR16 radials.

Wheelbase: 2,929 mm or 115.3 in.

Curb weight: 1,840 kg or 4,056 lb.)

Pros

■ Huge and comfortable cabin

■ Better road manners than you might think

■ Luxuriously equipped

Cons

■ Not easy to park such a big car

■ With all that size and weight, fuel economy won't be brilliant

Overall Score: 7.5 (out of 10)

Road Test Report Card for 2000 DeVille DHS

Access: A-

Driving position: B+

Instruments/Controls: B+

Visibility: C+

Climate Control: B

Steering: B

Brakes: B

Handling: B

Acceleration: B

Engine: B+

Transmission: B

Interior space: A

Trunk/Cargo: A

Noise/Vibration/Harshness: B+

Durability/Reliability Report Card

Overall: B

Mechanical: B

Hardware/Body/Paint/Trim: B

Safety Report Card

Anti-lock braking: yes

Air bags (driver/passenger): yes/yes

Traction control: yes

Driver/Passenger Front Crash Protection (0-5 stars with five stars the best): three stars/four stars



CanWest photo

The 2000 Cadillac DeVille DHS is loaded with luxury features and plenty of room.

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Toyota set to introduce new Double Cab

TORONTO — Toyota Canada Inc. (TCI) announced the newest addition to its lineup of hard-working Tundra pickup trucks — the 2004 Tundra Double Cab, to be introduced in early 2004.

The Double Cab is the longest, widest, deepest and roomiest Tundra that Toyota has ever built. The biggest difference, however, may be on the inside, where seating for five passengers reaches a level of comfort and convenience that will set a new standard among full-sized pickups.

This is most evident in the new, larger rear passenger compartment, with back seat room comparable to Toyota's Sequoia full-sized SUV.

In the additional space, comfortable seats offer excellent thigh support and a full segment-leading 24 degrees of reclining seatback angle. A 60/40 split also permits the seats to fold and tumble for the maximum combination of comfort and utility.

"With the Tundra Double Cab, we've created a truck with the most comfortable rear seating in its class," said Tony Wearing, managing director of TCI. "This fits perfectly with Toyota's goal, which is to provide owners with the most versatile truck lineup in the industry.

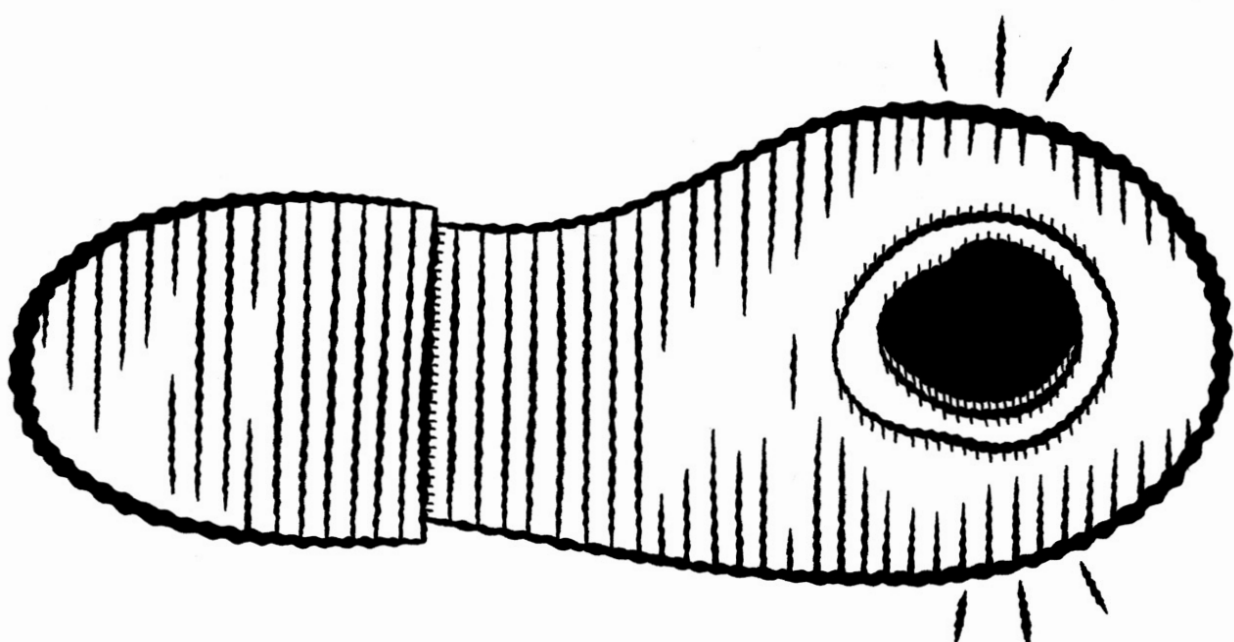
"Tundra sales are building as customers realize that Toyota trucks offer a combination of ride, comfort, sophisticated handling, and rugged utility that other manufacturers simply cannot match."

Available in both 4X2 and 4X4 configurations, the Tundra Double Cab rides on a stout ladder-frame chassis that is longer than the chassis shared by the 2-door Tundra Standard Cab and the 4-door Tundra Access Cab. From nose to tail, the Double Cab is nearly 330 mm longer for a total length of over 5,842 mm. The Tundra Double Cab's wheelbase has grown by more than 30 mm, adding approximately 76 mm of rear track and overall width, and 76 mm of overall height.

With a truck-bed depth that has been increased by about 102 mm, the Tundra Double Cab provides exceptional utility.

In addition to its comfort and roominess, the Tundra Double Cab is equipped with the segment's first standard vertical power sliding full rear window with rear defroster. The rear window is similar to the power sliding window on the full-sized Sequoia SUV in design and operation.

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