

# STEAL OF THE CENTURY

Drive - Buy



Editor **Ben Klemenzen** gets behind the wheel of one of his all-time favourite modern-day muscle cars: Cadillac's STS

**P**SSST.... Wanna buy a bargain super car at a fraction of the cost? It sounds like the kind of thing you'd heard in some dodgy east-end pub frequented by handlers of stolen goods, but guess what – It ain't! If you've been reading *Classic American* for a while then you'll know we're big fans of the Cadillac STS (Seville Touring Sedan) which up until recently was on sale in this country in UK spec. Sadly, the STS, along with the Camaro, Blazer and Corvette did not sell in sufficient numbers to justify GM continuing to supply them new in this country and the decision was taken to withdraw them from the UK market.

We can only imagine the losses GM must have made on this exercise – the cost of tooling plants up to build some of these vehicles in right-hand drive alone (STS and Blazer) must have been mind-boggling. However, to the canny second-hand car buyer or practically-new car buyer it means there's a wealth of good low-mileage or 'as-new' cars out there (remember some of these cars, despite being a year or two old, have never even been registered!).

There's no doubt about it, despite the British public's luke-warm reception to the STS, it is a world-class luxury car, and a powerful performance machine too. In fact, the STS is the fastest front-wheel drive production car in the world, and a casual hunt on *Auto Trader's* website ([www.autotrader.co.uk](http://www.autotrader.co.uk)) will reveal that today some early examples are in the sub-£15,000 price territory, some even under £10,000! Not bad for a three-year old luxury car, with exceptional levels of equipment that easily puts it in the same league as Mercedes, Jaguars and BMW.

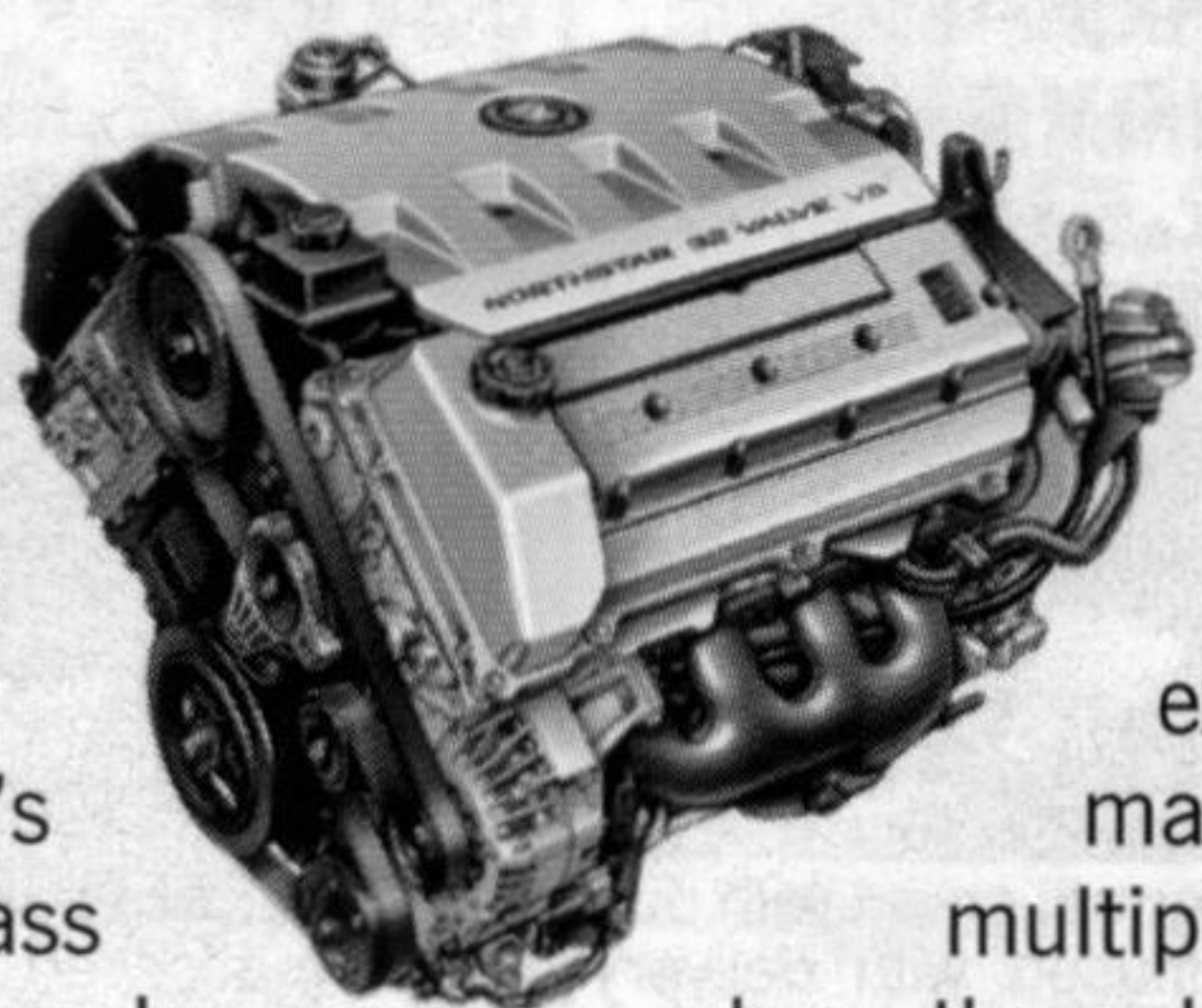
Most price guides seem to list the STS at anywhere from £8800 for a '98 R-reg to about £17,000 for a '01 model. And get ready to watch those prices tumble further, unless, as some observers suggest, the prices start to firm up again as we get a more realistic representation of what these cars are truly worth.

So what do you get for your money? How about one of the finest

100 years of  
*Cadillac*



ABOVE: 'L' IS FOR LUXURY IN AN STS  
BELOW: THE LEGENDARY  
NORTHSTAR V8



modern V8 engines on the market: Cadillac's legendary Northstar V8. This unit alone is worth buying the STS for, but the fact is that the STS is an extraordinary car when it comes to sheer luxury. There's practically an entire beef herd in that leather interior and the Bose stereo is probably one of the finest in any American production vehicle in the last decade.

Take an STS down to the strip (don't laugh, one of the Cohen brothers from American Car Imports was spotted doing precisely this!) and you'll be amazed at this car's performance: It'll do the quarter-mile in 14.8 seconds at 95mph and can hit 60 in 6.5 seconds. But it's not all just straight-line performance; despite its ample size, the STS handles beautifully and is probably one of the best-handling American luxury cars ever – a real BMW - Merc beater.

Likewise the 300bhp, 4.6-litre all-aluminium engine is an absolute peach, and not that thirsty considering its size. The STS also benefits from an exceptionally high-tech suspension-steering system that makes use of pitch and yaw sensors, traction control and multiple computers. Perhaps the only fly in the ointment is how these high-tech gizmos will fare as they get older. No doubt GM and Cadillac will maintain that their self-diagnostic features will mean that any 'problems' are quickly and easily identified – but how many garages will have the necessary diagnostic facilities to identify and cure these problems and at what cost?

American car enthusiasts are renowned for their resourcefulness, so the possibility of high-tech gremlins unlikely to be too much of a disincentive for them when faced with the prospect of a bargain super car: there are plenty of garages, dealers and other businesses who advertise within *Classic American* with access to the correct diagnostic equipment and parts to keep an STS running perfect forever. So what are you waiting for? Why not find out why Cadillac still truly is the Standard of the World, but this time at a bargain basement price! ■