

## 2008 Honda Accord

### #1 Four-Cylinder Mainstream Sedan



# THE BUZZARD-AND-BALONEY BRIGADE

WE COMPARE SEVEN OF AMERICA'S MOST POPULAR FAMILY SEDANS, SEARCHING FOR VALUE AND VERVE, AND WHETHER THERE'S REALLY ANY MEAT IN THE MIDDLE.

BY JOHN PHILLIPS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON KILEY

» We drive south to Ohio's Hocking Hills often, not only for the challenging byways but also for the roadside amusements. You'll find Martha Hitler Park and the Pumpkin Festival in Circleville, which is also home to the Ted Lewis Museum. Lewis was the vaudevillian who called himself "the high-hatted tragedian of song" and whose signature line was, "Is everybody

happy?" In Laurelville, there's the world's best cider from Bob Bowers. There's the Washboard Music Festival in Logan. And on the way down, we can stop in homely Waldo to dine at the G&R Tavern, famous for its bologna sandwiches (\$3.50), bologna salad (\$2.50), and braunschweiger sandwiches (\$2.25). On a good day, the G&R serves 180 fried-bologna sandwiches, each featuring a half-

inch slab of ground, smoked sausage hidden beneath a crush of pickles, tomato wedges, lettuce, and a hunk of onion large enough to choke a longshoreman. Everything is served on paper plates, including the half-pound slices of cream pie. And yes, they pronounce it *baloney*.

As it turned out, the baloney theme was appropriate, because we were evaluating salt-of-the-earth



DODGE  
AVENGER SXT

HYUNDAI  
SONATA LIMITED

FORD  
FUSION SEL

NISSAN  
ALTIMA 2.5S

TOYOTA  
CAMRY LE

CHEVROLET  
MALIBU LT

HONDA  
ACCORD EX

"BOB"  
THE BUZZARD

COMPARISON TEST

FOUR-CYLINDER MAINSTREAM SEDANS

C/D RESULTS		BEST IN TEST		PRICE (\$)		DIMENSIONS (inches)					WEIGHT			FUEL TANK (gal)	OCTANE RATING	INTERIOR VOL (cu ft)		
*EST	VEHICLE	BASE	AS TESTED	LENGTH	WIDTH	HEIGHT	WHEEL-BASE	FRONT TRACK	REAR TRACK	CURB (lb)	% FRONT	% REAR	FRONT			REAR	TRUNK	
	CHEVROLET MALIBU LT	\$20,955	\$21,905	191.8	70.3	57.1	112.3	59.6	60.0	3470	60.1	39.9	16.3	87	54	44	15	
	DODGE AVENGER SXT	\$20,195	\$20,195	190.9	71.8	58.9	108.9	61.8	61.8	3307	60.6	39.4	16.9	87	55	45	13	
	FORD FUSION SEL	\$20,510	\$26,945	190.2	72.2	57.2	107.4	61.6	61.3	3399	60.2	39.8	17.5	87	54	46	16	
	HONDA ACCORD EX	\$24,495	\$24,495	194.1	72.7	58.1	110.2	62.2	62.2	3365	61.1	38.9	18.5	87	56	45	14	
	HYUNDAI SONATA LTD†	\$24,395	\$24,485	188.9	72.1	58.0	107.4	62.0	61.4	3353	60.8	39.2	17.7	87	58	47	16	
	NISSAN ALTIMA 2.5S	\$21,205	\$23,665	189.8	70.7	57.9	109.3	60.9	60.8	3226	60.3	39.7	20.0	87	58	42	15	
	TOYOTA CAMRY LE	\$21,735	\$23,883	189.2	71.7	57.9	109.3	62.0	61.6	3343	60.3	39.7	18.5	87	53	47	15	

†2009 model year.

Everyman family sedans, a segment that accounts annually for two million U.S. sales. Each of our competitors was fitted with a DOHC 16-valve four-cylinder engine and an automatic transmission. We aimed

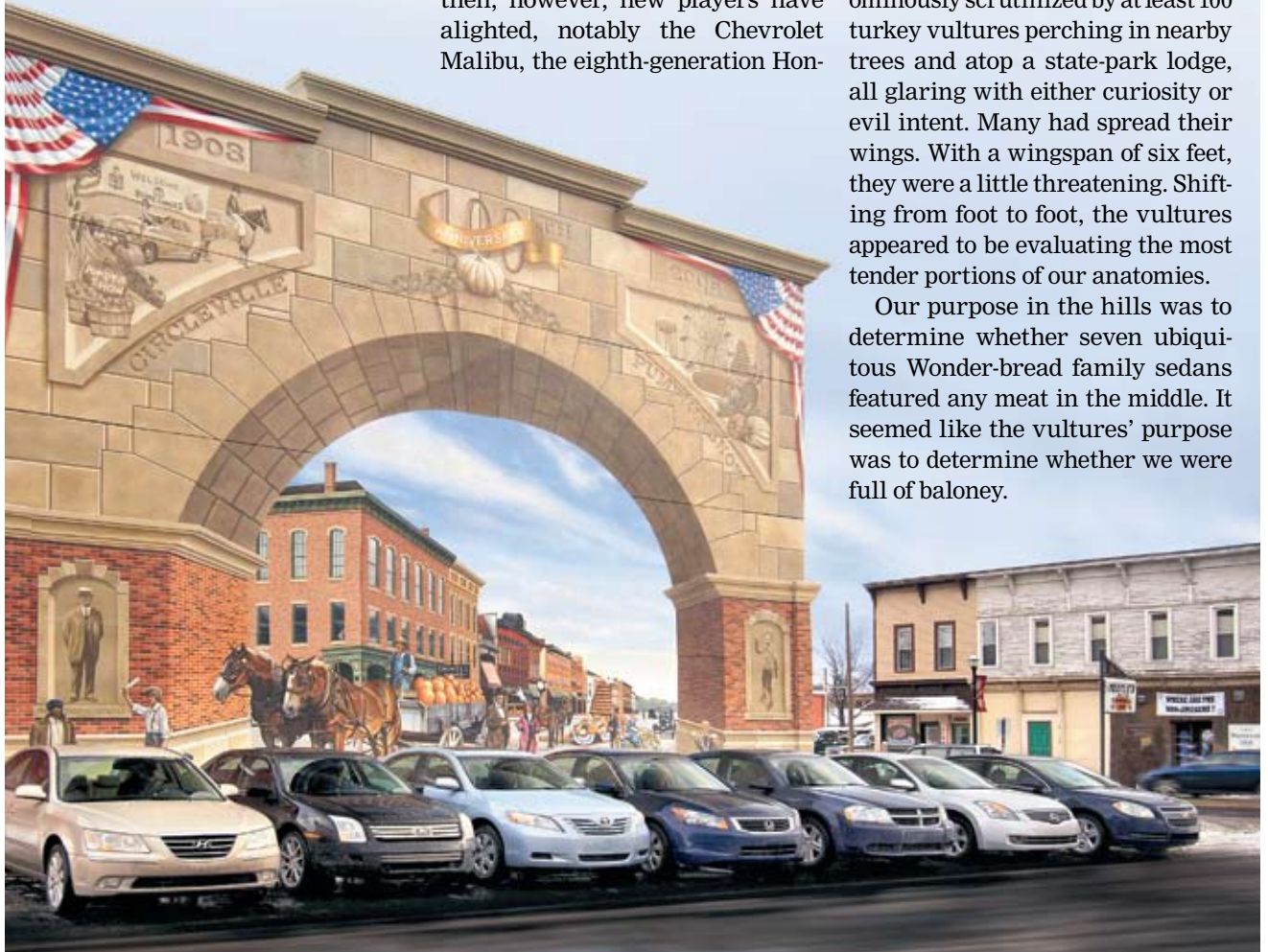
for base prices in the \$22,000 vicinity, although we wound up with a \$4300 variance—a sum sufficient to purchase 1228 bologna sandwiches.

We conducted a similar comparison as recently as February 2007. Since then, however, new players have alighted, notably the Chevrolet Malibu, the eighth-generation Hon-

da Accord, and a freshened Hyundai Sonata. The Chrysler Sebring that we included in the last outing was this time replaced by its Dodge Avenger sibling.

During a photo shoot, we were ominously scrutinized by at least 100 turkey vultures perching in nearby trees and atop a state-park lodge, all glaring with either curiosity or evil intent. Many had spread their wings. With a wingspan of six feet, they were a little threatening. Shifting from foot to foot, the vultures appeared to be evaluating the most tender portions of our anatomies.

Our purpose in the hills was to determine whether seven ubiquitous Wonder-bread family sedans featured any meat in the middle. It seemed like the vultures' purpose was to determine whether we were full of baloney.





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# HONDA ACCORD EX

## THE HIGHS

Telepathic interplay among chassis, engine, and transmission.

## THE LOWS

Needlessly complex center stack, could use more steering feel.

## THE VERDICT

Another Accord? We've pretty much run out of nice things to say.

» In its 32-year existence, the Accord has landed on *C/D*'s 10Best Cars list 22 times. We must have cost Honda a pile of cash in trophy cases alone. In this group, our Accord carried the highest base price, but it was because we wanted to sample the 190 horsepower that comes with the EX, rather than the base LX's 177. It paid

off. Our test car was the second quickest to 60 mph.

The Accord's essential goodness, however, doesn't derive from power alone. Even with the standard stability control chipping away, our EX was also the fastest through our lane-change test.

Honda has simply nailed the econosedan

formula, and it isn't just a matter of building the highest-revving engine, the most competent suspension, and the most ergonomic interior. The trick is getting every component talking openly and honestly to every other component. It's that sonorous mechanical interplay that lends the Accord its agility and charm. Throttle tip-in reminds us of a BMW 3's, and there's steady power delivery right up to 7100 rpm. Steering heft and linearity are spot-on, although some of us noted that this new rack doesn't



## SPACE SHUTTLE

Thirty-four buttons on the Accord's center stack—why? Honda's interior is plenty roomy, though.



transmit road textures as clearly as did its forebear. The taut-yet-frictionless chassis makes up for it, however, posting regular updates on available grip. The brakes are easy to modulate. The thin A-pillars let you see around turns. In short, no car in our cast was as eager to establish a friendly rhythm when the roads got tricky.

Although the Accord was tied with the Avenger for loudest idle, it was merely a matter of our microphones registering quantity of sound versus quality.

Like the Sonata, the Accord is now officially a large sedan, with the extra room paying dividends abaft. For two or three adults, the rear seat proved the most spa-

cious in this group. But try it yourself—the seatback is steeply reclined. We loved the three-tier dash, whose bulges and contours place all secondary controls at your fingertips. Which is lucky, because the center stack—*ahem*—contains 34 buttons.

We wish the Accord came with a manual, but you can shift manually by pulling straight back from D, to D3, to 2, to 1. Left to its own devices, the five-speed is prescient about holding lower gears on downhill grades and during spirited driving.

Like its predecessors, this latest Accord contains real meat in the middle. And that ain't no baloney. ●



*OBJECTIVE BEST IN TEST		VEHICLE													POWERTRAIN					CHASSIS					EXPERIENCE		GRAND TOTAL	
RANK	MAXIMUM POINTS AVAILABLE	DRIVER COMFORT	ERGONOMICS	REAR-SEAT COMFORT	REAR-SEAT SPACE*	TRUNK SPACE*	FEATURES/AMENITIES*	FIT AND FINISH	INTERIOR STYLING	EXTERIOR STYLING	REBATES/EXTRAS*	AS-TESTED PRICE*	SUBTOTAL	1/4-MI ACCELERATION*	FLEXIBILITY*	FUEL ECONOMY*	ENGINE NVH	TRANSMISSION	SUBTOTAL	PERFORMANCE*	STEERING FEEL	BRAKE FEEL	HANDLING	RIDE	SUBTOTAL	GOTTA HAVE IT		FUN TO DRIVE
		<b>1</b>	<b>HONDA ACCORD EX</b>	10	9	4	4	4	7	10	9	8	0	16	81	19	4	5	9	8	45	19	4	5	9	9	46	21
<b>2</b>	<b>NISSAN ALTIMA 2.5S</b>	9	9	3	3	5	6	9	8	8	1	17	78	20	5	4	8	8	45	19	4	5	9	9	46	19	20	<b>208</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>CHEVROLET MALIBU LT</b>	9	9	3	4	5	7	9	8	8	0	18	80	18	4	4	8	8	42	18	4	4	8	9	43	18	18	<b>201</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>HYUNDAI SONATA LTD</b>	9	9	4	5	5	10	9	8	6	0	16	81	17	4	5	8	9	43	17	4	4	7	9	41	16	17	<b>198</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>TOYOTA CAMRY LE</b>	9	9	4	5	5	5	9	7	6	1	16	76	16	5	5	9	9	44	16	4	4	7	10	41	16	16	<b>193</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>FORD FUSION SEL</b>	8	8	3	5	5	8	9	8	9	1	13	77	15	3	4	6	6	34	19	4	4	8	8	43	17	16	<b>187</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>DODGE AVENGER SXT</b>	8	8	3	4	4	3	8	5	5	1	20	69	17	4	5	6	7	39	17	3	3	7	7	37	10	14	<b>169</b>

\*These objective scores are calculated from the vehicles' dimensions, capacities, rebates and extras, and/or test results.

