



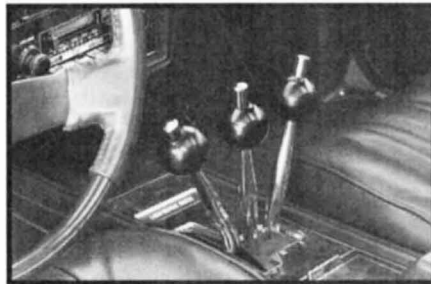
Hurst/Olds

A blast from the past.

• What better than a cliché version of the all-American muscle car to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the Hurst-Oldsmobile partnership? Take an Oldsmobile dealer's delight, the rear-drive Cutlass, add a big motor, a two-tone paint job, a (fake) hood scoop, a (fake) deck wing, chrome wheels, beaucoup trim, raised-white-letter Goodyear tires, and that icon of the drag strip, the Hurst performance shifter, and you have the eighth edition of the Hurst/Olds. If you have fond memories of Detroit's supercars, you'll be drawn to this shining, nostalgic hunk of iron.

You may, however, be a bit puzzled by the veritable asparagus patch of Hurst shift levers growing out of the console. But think back to the drag strips of your youth, where the Lenco transmission once ruled the roost in the Pro Stock category. Now the Oldsmobile Division of General Motors has taken the Lenco's a-lever-for-every-gear magic and boosted it one step further: the three levers in the new Hurst/Olds control *four* gears in an *automatic* transmission.

In truth it was Hurst, which makes shifters for Lenco, that first saw the marketing potential in a Lenco look-alike for the street, introducing its after-market Lightning Rods in the spring of 1982. To Hurst's surprise, the gimmicky shifter took off like gangbusters, out-selling its popular Dualgate ratchet shifter four to one. Dave Draper, president of Cars & Concepts, the parent company of Hurst, explains: "Apparently there's more rationale for a kid to put three levers in his car for a hundred and something dollars than for him to re-



place one lever with one lever. We offer him an improved shifter that really looks like he spent some money on it, and apparently, that's just what he wants. That's where the sales have been showing up."

Well, you can't argue with sales, and Olds didn't try. It placed its order, and Hurst went to work adapting Lightning Rods for the Oldsmobile four-speed automatic.

The Lightning Rods control the Turbo Hydra-matic through the same basic shift-cable device used in civilian versions of the Cutlass. In the H/O application, however, there's a special opera-

tional sequence to follow. You start by pulling all three levers back, then stand on the gas. When the tach hits the 5200-rpm redline, hammer on the furthest lever's balky push button and ram the stick forward. You're now in second. Run the revs up again and repeat the slam-bang shifter operation on the center lever for the two-three upshift. Finally, with the main stick, upshift to overdrive. A safety bar inside the shifter mechanism prevents the rods from being moved out of sequence.

It's a great party trick if the party happens to be inside your car, but on the whole, jerking around with three shifters made us feel like nerds. Our advice is to forget the two unwieldy levers and let the four-speed shift for itself, automatically. The lever closest to the driver also works like a conventional automatic floor shifter, and the transmission does a much cleaner, crisper job when left to its own devices. The four-speed is, in fact, one of the finest points of the car, working in concert with a 3.73 rear axle and a gutsy, 180-horsepower, 5.0-liter Olds V-8 engine to produce wheelspin at the low end, upshifts at or near the engine's power peak (wide-open-throttle upshifts occur at 5200, 4900, and 4200 rpm), and plenty of gear ratio for high-speed cruising.

Straight-line performance may not be as exhilarating as it was back in 1968 when a 390-hp, 455-cubic-inch V-8 monster powered the Hurst/Olds, but the 1983 model's 8.8-second zero-to-sixty time and 16.7-second quarter-mile are hardly anemic by any standards. A free-flow, low-restriction exhaust adds some bottom to the engine's lusty song. The car is a rolling invitation to a green-light grand prix.

The Hurst/Olds is in its element leaping off the line next to an old 442 or shooting wild-eyed down a wide-open stretch of Interstate, but it gets lily-livered when it leaves the straight-line stuff and enters the real world of lumps, bumps, and curves. Although the standard Cutlass suspension is buttressed with front and rear anti-sway bars, higher-rate springs, and stiffer shocks and bushings, the chassis armor still can't keep the body from squirming and shuddering on County Road 101.

Lest we get too critical here, let's remember that this car is a limited-edition blast from the past—a brand-new, old-style, bigger-than-life hot rod. Teaming the magic Hurst name with the popular Cutlass body virtually guarantees that every one of the 2500 Hurst/Olds bolides will be snapped right off the showroom floor, despite the five-figure price tag, despite the silly shifter.

So who are we to laugh if a few guys and girls want to reenact their youth in a Hurst/Olds?

—Jean Lindamood

Vehicle type:	front-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 2-door sedan
Price as tested:	\$13,658 (base price: \$11,845)
Engine type:	V-8, iron block and heads, 1x4-bbl Rochester Quadrajets carburetor
Displacement	307 cu in, 5033cc
Power (SAE net)	180 bhp @ 4000 rpm
Transmission	4-speed automatic
Wheelbase	108.1 in
Length	200.0 in
Curb weight	3620 lbs
Zero to 60 mph	8.8 sec
Zero to 100 mph	27.5 sec
Standing ¼-mile	16.7 sec @ 83 mph
Top speed	109 mph
Braking, 70-0 mph	219 ft
Roadholding, 282-ft-dia skidpad	0.74 g
EPA fuel economy, city driving	17 mpg
C/D observed fuel economy	12 mpg