



MATTHEW RUDY / CAMARO SS

RETRO ROCKET

SOME CARS COME WITH a glowing target attached, right from the factory. Eliciting maximum attention is often the point: The guy in the yellow Lamborghini really, really wants you to know about that *sixth* million he made last year. But not all attention is good. The new Camaro SS we took on a four-day golf trip from Denver to Santa Fe, N.M., attracted more looks than any car twice the price, but owning one would be like setting up a speed trap in your front yard. Driving down a

deserted road near Independence Pass in Colorado, my co-pilot got zapped for a 20-over speeding ticket by a charisma-deficient state trooper, even though the cruise was set for 61 in a 55-miles-per-hour zone. And when our chase car pulled up behind to wait, the trooper went back and gave them a ticket, too. It was as if the Camaro's inferno-orange paint job triggered an automatic-penalty phase.

In defense of the trooper, the reincarnated Camaro—GM resurrected it this year after killing it off in 2002—looks fast even when parked. It's a cartoon superhero of a car—all exaggerated angles and curves and glowing

interior door panels—and that's with the "economical" 304-horsepower V6. Check the SS option box and your Camaro comes stuffed with a monster 426-horsepower V8 and 20-inch wheels to walk the talk. Bigger, wider, and more civilized than the previous generation, the new Camaro is designed for the baby boomer who had a pony car back in the day but now needs more legroom and a place to stick his Diet Coke.

Call it domesticated muscle.

The first hint? The bolstered seats are fantastic, with long bases that keep your legs and lower back happy over long hauls. Even the back

seats aren't a total penalty box. With a bendy partner, you could totally make out back there.

The six-speed automatic's conservative low-end gearing keeps you from accidentally smashing into the car in front when you leave a light, but once underway, you won't have to call Scotty from the bridge if you want to go to warp speed. There's unlimited grunt available for passing the random tractor trailer, even on a steep incline. The 3,850-pound Camaro isn't as nimble as, say, a Porsche 911—or even a Mustang—but it's way, way more car than 99 percent of its owners will ever require. And it didn't matter if we parked



Left: Inferno orange fits the color scheme at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve in Colorado. Below: The 373-yard second at Black Mesa offers dramatic views of sandstone ridges.

at a hotel in Aspen or a diner in Chama, N.M.: Everybody wanted a look. It's like that yellow Lamborghini without the psychological implications. People buy a car like this for the spectator whiplash, and on that score it's a home run.

Taking the High Road out of Taos, N.M., down through the Sangre de Cristo Mountains into Santa Fe, we stopped at Black Mesa Golf Club, Golf Digest's Best New Affordable Public course in 2003. Black Mesa looks like a

series of green carpets laid out on the torsos of jagged sandstone outcroppings. Designer Baxter Spann's minimalist approach—he worked around the bluffs instead of dynamiting them out of the way—preserved the natural setting and kept the course, situated on the Santa Clara Pueblo Reservation, at a reasonable price. At peak times, the fee is \$87 with cart, and you can walk during the week for \$62.

Not many courses anywhere offer the combination of views, challenge and conditioning at this price, but Black Mesa comes with a notable caveat: You'll need to play it again to get the full experience. Half a dozen times, my playing partner and I looked

back toward the tee from the green and said, "So *that's* how you play it." I hit what I thought was a perfect 5-wood second shot to the left-center of the landing area on the 565-yard sixth only to be left with a blind pitch shot over rocks. I would have been better off 20 yards to the right and 50 yards back. Still, the replay fee is \$35, making 36 an enticing proposition.

Heading back to Denver to return the Camaro, I grudgingly moved to the right lane on the Interstate and set the cruise at six over. A brick-like Honda Fit trundled by doing 85. I couldn't find a target anywhere on it. Sometimes anonymous isn't a terrible way to travel.

VITAL STATISTICS



THE TRIP Denver to Santa Fe, N.M., via Aspen, Colo., and Taos, N.M.: 890 miles.

THE CAR GM's eight-cylinder, 426-horsepower 2010 Camaro SS. Base V6 models start at \$22,995 (and get 29 miles per gallon on the highway). The top-of-the-line SS with a six-speed automatic and 20-inch wheels costs \$37,460.

THE COURSE Black Mesa Golf Club (★★★★) sits on the Santa Clara Pueblo Reservation 30 minutes north of Santa Fe, in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Several holes require forced carries off the tee, but wide fairways give you room to miss left and right.

