



LEGEND BIGGER THAN LIFE

In 1940, nearly half a century before the birth of the Wrangler, the military had its original General Purpose Vehicle, or GeePee, which soldiers naturally called the "Jeep." Its mission was clear and simple: get generals and dogfaces alike wherever they had to go, regardless of weather, terrain or incoming fire. These original 4wd vehicles were made for the U.S. government by Willys-Overland of Toledo, Ohio, the company that also made Willys and Overland passenger cars. During World War II more than 600,000 of them were built, which also means that tons of them were blown up. It was the only way to stop them.

But Willys-Overland foundered after the war and had to sell Jeep to Kaiser, the giant company built on cement, aluminum and steel. Kaiser also built cars, including the Kaiser, the Henry J, the Allstate and the Dragon. With the need for bulletproofing over, the Civilian Jeep, or CJ model, rolled off the assembly lines along with Jeepsters and Jeep station wagons. Kaiser eventually would get out of the car and Jeep business, selling its Jeep operation to American Motors Corp. AMC carried the CJ series through its final version—the CJ-7—before replacing it in 1986 with the wide-track Wrangler. The next year Chrysler replaced all assets of American Motors, including its

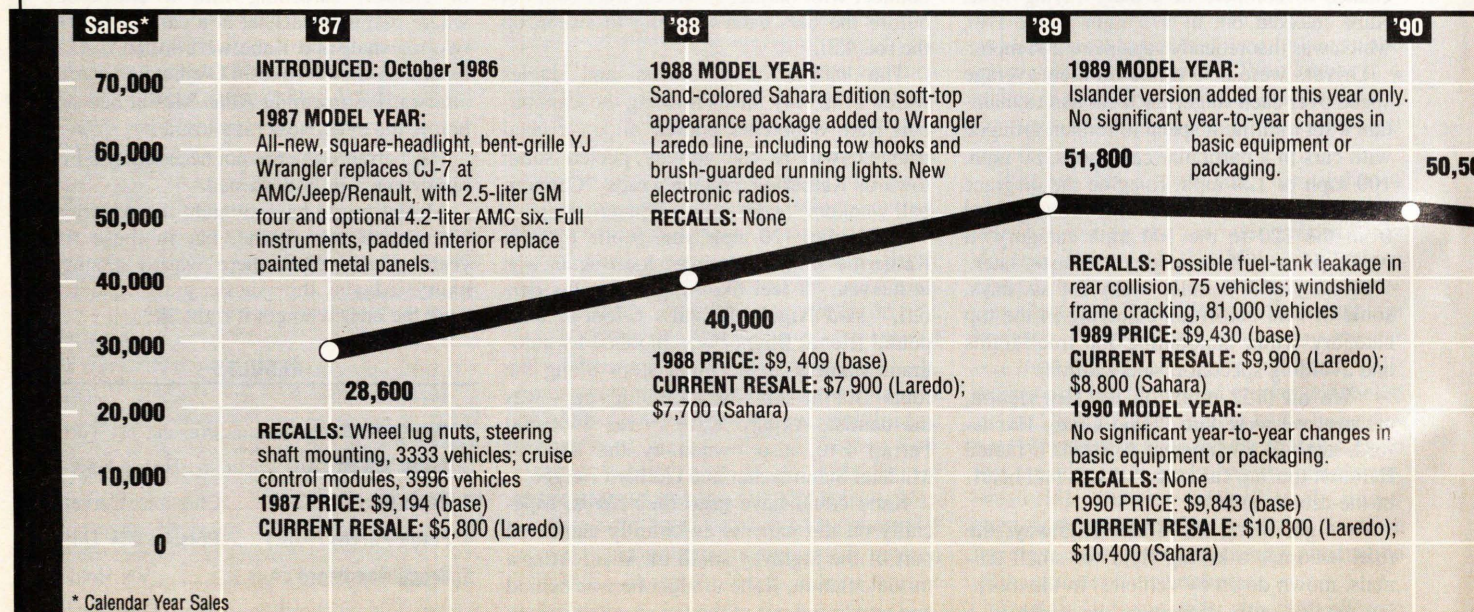


crown jewel, the trusty and beloved Jeep.

The Wrangler had arrived a little too late for AMC. By the time it was on the drafting boards, there were hundreds of millions of dollars worth of product liability lawsuits lodged by drivers and passengers of CJ-7s, and, in some cases, the families of late drivers and passengers. The CJ-7 had been

short, narrow and unstable, with a tendency to roll over like a dog begging to have its belly scratched. It was a feature dutifully reported by *60 Minutes*, which offered not a belly rub but the kiss of death.

Besides being a new name, the Wrangler was a new design. It started with a new frame that widened its track by three inches,



OPERATING COSTS

Engine	MPG	Fuel ¢/Mile	Operat. *Exps. ¢/Mile	Fixed **Exps. ¢/Mile	Total \$/Mo.	Running ¢/Mile
4.0 6cyl	16	6.25	11.65	35.6	\$583.33	47.6

*Operating expenses include fuel, oil, maintenance and tires
 **fixed expenses include insurance, depreciation, financing, taxing and licensing

Based on 15,000 miles per year, fuel costs of \$1.19 per gallon
 source: Runzheimer International

and a much softer semi-elliptical leaf-spring suspension front and rear, with leaves that were a full five inches longer than the CJ-7's. There were also Panhard rods and antiroll bars at both ends. These changes resulted in a ground clearance that was slightly higher than before, but a center of gravity that was much lower.

The Wrangler's designers had complete access to the new Cherokee's parts bin, and gave the Wrangler a new/old look they believed would please traditional buyers and attract new ones. It had rectangular headlamps instead of round ones, and a vertical

grille whose bars veered inward halfway up. The old flop-down tailgate was replaced by a side-hinged gate; there was a complete array of real instruments spread across the dashboard; upholstery and padding instead of painted metal inside; and removable half-doors for security. There was also a substantial roll cage, just in case.

Diehard CJ believers referred to the Wrangler as Le Jeep, because during the Wrangler's development the company had joined forces with Renault to raise capital.

The Wrangler's original powerplants were CJ carryovers: a 74-hp 2.5-liter TBI four, and an 88-hp carbureted 4.2-liter inline six, with a Peugeot five-speed manual avail-

able with either engine and a three-speed automatic optional with the six. The Cherokee's Command-Trac shift-on-the-fly drive system was borrowed for Wrangler, along with automatic locking hubs.

Appropriately, the new vehicle was fitted with

Goodyear Wrangler all-terrain tires.

It came in basic S and SE versions, with a Laredo luxury model at the top of the line. The high-zoot package included the six-cylinder engine, a stout hardtop, doors, windows, chrome grille and bumpers.

There hasn't been a lot of mechanical evolution during the seven-year run. And from a styling standpoint, both AMC and Chrysler believed that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. In other words, the traditional owner liked them basic. (Or was it the basic owner who liked them traditional?) Besides, in the late '80s, Chrysler didn't exactly have a lot of spare cash to spend on low-volume products like the Wrangler. The company concentrated on the high-profit Jeep Cherokee and its successor, the Grand Cherokee.

INDUSTRY VOICES

THE EXECUTIVE

Wrangler has a lot going for it: its open bodystyle and its price. We have young, adventurous buyers who really enjoy its fun-to-drive aspects. Wrangler's owners really resist changes in its basic character.

*Pat Dilworth
chief product planner, Cherokee/Wrangler*

THE DESIGNER

Aesthetically, it hasn't changed much from the first military Jeep. And it's the rugged quality—the attitude—that attracts; more so than its functional benefits as a passenger car, because there, it's limited.

*Cliff Ghatti
Ghatti Design*

THE ANALYSTS

The Wrangler is a young person's pure,



Though little has changed mechanically, Wrangler (left) had special models such as Sahara (upper left), Islander (above)

'91

1991 MODEL YEAR:

Upmarket Renegade model supplants the Laredo. The venerable 4.2-liter inline six is replaced by a 4.0-liter electronically fuel injected engine.

45,700

RECALLS: Certification label incomplete, 2800 vehicles
1991 PRICE: \$10,375 (base)
CURRENT RESALE: \$11,500 (Renegade); \$11,200 (Sahara)

'92

1992 MODEL YEAR: No significant year-to-year changes in basic equipment or packaging.

RECALLS: Brake hose/splash shield interference, 280,000

48,800

1993 MODEL YEAR:

ABS is made available on models with 4.0-liter six-cylinder engines only.
RECALLS: Possible electrical corrosion leading to starter shorting, 100,000 1991-93 model-year vehicles
1993 PRICE: \$11,410 (base)
CURRENT RESALE: \$17,000 (Renegade); \$15,700 (Sahara)

'93

65,600

1994 MODEL YEAR:

New torque converter for 4.0-liter six, three-speed automatic optional for four-cylinder models. CHMSL added to all models. Add-A-Trunk lockable storage option introduced.

RECALLS: None
1994 PRICE:

\$11,885 (S model)

CURRENT RESALE: n/a

31,321*



Performance **REVIEW**

Still, in 1988 it introduced the Sahara version, a sort of soft-top Laredo done up in green and tan. The bright, flashy, striped Islander showed up the next year. The biggest change came in 1991 when the Renegade package replaced Laredo at the top of the line, and the old AMC 4.2-liter carbureted six was retired in favor of the 180 hp 4.0-liter, EFI six also used in the Cherokee. Four-wheel ABS was added in 1993 to six-cylinder models. In 1994 the upmarket but slow-selling Renegade package was dropped at midyear.

Criticisms of the Wrangler are many: low gas mileage for its size and power (if you get 20 mpg, you're tiptoeing); generally poor build quality and a lot of rough edges; noisy engines; instruments that are hard to read; gears that are hard to shift; a

choppy highway ride; rigid seats with no lateral support; doors that flap in the breeze; a soft top that's very difficult to manage; warm air conditioning; a steering wheel mounted for people with real short arms; a cargo area made for people with few possessions; and on and on.

So it's basically a piece of junk, right? You're less likely to think that if you've taken a rousing run through the back country at the Wrangler's steering wheel. A few hundred-thousand rabid Wrangler loyalists can't all be idiots or masochists. Chrysler still sells almost as many as it can make.

The Wrangler offers things the CJ never could. There are functional items such as Trac-tion-Lok, ABS, off-road tires and a lockable storage cabinet; cosmetically, there's a leather-

wrapped steering wheel and extra brightwork. It can be tarted up for Saturday night or toughened up for Baja, with nearly 40 options or option groups on the 1994 list—and the Wrangler aftermarket is enormous.

In the final analysis, tempering the Wrangler's flaws—some would say outweighing them—are its basic simplicity. It has more guts than a government mule. Its stubby length, wide stance and torque enable it to do amazing things off-road or in muddy, snowy or icy highway conditions, things that the Japanese upstarts can't do. For all those loyal owners, the Wrangler retains the pure, in-your-face animal magnetism of that 50-year-old war hero. ■

off-road sport/utility vehicle, the only one that's really true to its heritage.

*George C. Peterson
AutoPacific Group*

The Wrangler is below industry average in both the 90-day Initial Quality Survey (IQS), and in the one-year Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) study as well. But it has improved consistently, year by year.

*John Rettie
J.D. Power & Associates*

THE MARKETING GUY

The Wrangler is as good a vehicle as it needs to be. Chrysler has been successful because they've kept it a safe vehicle and kept the price low. They could have twice the volume they have, but they have a capacity problem and they have other, more profitable Jeeps to sell.

*Jim Wangers,
Automotive Marketing Consultants Inc.*

THE COLLECTOR

The CJs were the last real Jeeps and are therefore more collectible than Wranglers. The Wrangler is more of an on-road vehicle with the look and feel of a Jeep.

*Eric Lawrence
Cars of Particular Interest*

THE SERVICE GUY

They run forever. We haven't seen any abnormal wear and tear, no major problems. We've replaced a lot of splash shields, but nothing mechanical. About the only thing the customers complain about is the tops and the window zippers.

*Stan Leverett, service adviser
Joe Ricci Jeep-Eagle, Detroit*

THE MEDIA

Low-rpm torque makes the Wrangler especially responsive at low speeds and off-road. Strong points: power/acceleration, maneuverability, four-wheel-drive capability, driving position. Weak points: ride comfort, steering/handling, noise, fuel economy.

AAA AutoTest, 1994

You can't crank the window down without banging your knuckles on the dash panel, and the utility/storage box that sits between the driver and passenger seats features a slanted cover that makes it useless as a place to set something down... It's rugged, appears to be well nailed together, and is even handsome in its distinctive no-nonsense way.

Field & Stream, August 1986

If you've never done it (and even many Jeep owners never have), cruising in an open Wrangler with doors removed is a profound hoot. If you can race across the beach, skimming the water and throwing roostertails of spray, you're having as much fun as the law allows in public, pal.

Motor Trend, March 1991

We found the Wrangler very stable in a slalom, much more so than most of its larger off-road competition. There is much less body roll, and the steering is quick and precise, if extremely numb in road feel. But the biggest thing you notice

is the tipsy feeling of the CJ is no more.

MotorWeek '88

It's in a class by itself, really. When you really want to go off-road, it will not only get you there, it will get you back. It still comes with four drain plugs, so you can hose it out when you get back!

Mike Anson, 'America On The Road'

OWNERS' VOICES

OVERALL

The Wrangler is a blast to drive. It will go anywhere and is very maneuverable. The six cylinder has good power and acceleration. The four-wheel-drive can be engaged at any legal speed.

*Larry L. Cotten
Argyle, Texas*

I've been driving the Jeep for the past year as my primary car. Although it is rough riding and noisy, it never fails to put a smile on my face. There's nothing better than putting the top down and enjoying the fresh air and the sun. In the winter, nothing comes close for getting through bad weather.

*Andrew M. Singer
Carmel, Ind.*

It's reliable, with regular easy maintenance. It has never failed me or failed to start. The addition of a steering stabilizer was an inexpensive and worthy investment in an aftermarket full of show/go parts. Dealer service has been good.

*Jay Lefkowitz
Coral Springs, Fla.*



Uplevel Renegade bowed in '91, as did EFI 4.0-liter six



This latest '94 iteration will be last of a line; a facelift incorporating some retro styling is due this fall as a 1995 model

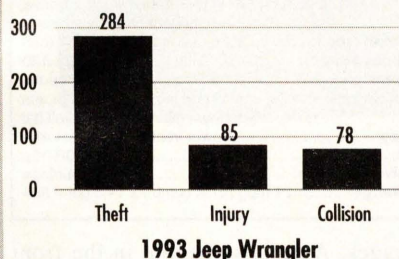
INSURANCE PAYOUTS

1987-93 Jeep Wrangler

	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94
Theft*	279	294	304	297	285	273	297	n/a
Collision*	70	78	79	72	79	78	76	n/a

Source: Highway Loss Data Institute

* Collision and theft loss relative average loss payment per insured vehicle year (100 = all passenger cars). n/a means data not available due to exposure considerations



The Highway Loss Data Institute compiles an index based on the frequency of insurance claims filed for injury, collision and theft losses per insured vehicle year. Cars scoring below 70 are substantially better than average, 70 to 79 better than average, 80 to 120 average, 121-130 worse than average, and above 131, substantially worse than average.

The Wrangler is unbeatable for fun as long as you're driving. It's a little rough going as a passenger, though.

*Ryan Wald
Clarkston, Mich.*

LIKES

Visibility is exceptional. Couple this with short overhangs and a phenomenal turning radius and you have the perfect city car. It fits the smallest parking spots.

*J. Eric Olson
Rockaway, N.J.*

I like the versatility. It's great with the

CRASH DATA

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) conducts 35-mph crash tests on selected new models each year to determine the possibility of serious injuries in accident simulations. Head injury criteria above 1000 indicate head injuries are likely. Chest numbers above 60 indicate a high likelihood of serious chest injuries. Femur loads above 1000 indicate a high likelihood of serious leg injury.

1987 Jeep Wrangler 4X4

Driver HIC	Pass. HIC
758	1229
Driver chest:	Pass. chest
44	40

Average Femur Loads

Driver	Passenger
929	899

THEFT DATA

NHTSA rates the Jeep Wrangler 37th out of 138 models in the latest car theft ratings. The Jeep's overall theft rate of 8.73 per thousand is considerably less than the current No. 1 Ford Mustang's rate of 22.8. The agency says that during 1991, only 392 out of the more than 44,000 Wranglers built were stolen.

hardtop and four-wheel-drive in the winter; yet it's fun in the summer as a convertible, both on- and off-road. For this type of vehicle, I'm especially impressed with its handling. The 4.0-liter six really flies. Yet the mileage (15-20 mpg) isn't much different from the four-cylinder.

*Jon Holbrook
Evergreen, Colo.*

I like the solid front axle. Independent front suspension has no place on an off-road vehicle. Also, I like the fact that you can still get them devoid of options. Vehicle content is getting out of hand these days. No leather seats or CD player here.

*Michael F. Krobe
Westchester, Ill.*

DISLIKES

I would like more adjustments on the seatbacks. Other companies' warranties are better. They will fix anything. My dealer doesn't do anything unless they're paid by the company or me. I'd like the dealer to be a partner and not just a taker. I'd also like more towing capacity.

*Bob Schmidt
Midland, Mich.*

MISCELLANY

Wrangler Owners Club:

- Chrysler market research shows that the Jeep Wrangler buyer's median age is 32 years (60 percent under 35), 48 percent married, 48 percent college educated and 44 percent professional, technical or managerial, with a median income of \$48,000 (20 percent over \$80,000) and a 73/27 percent mix of male and female buyers.

Competition:

- Chrysler has never actively sponsored the Jeep Wrangler line in any form of off-road competition, as it has with Cherokee and Grand Cherokee. But that doesn't mean there isn't a huge aftermarket and high-performance parts industry for the Wrangler. Its showroom competition would include the smaller Suzuki Samurai and Sidekick, and the Geo Tracker, and—at the high-end—the Land Rover Defender 90.

Kudos, Kudos, Kudos:

- The Wrangler, perhaps as a backlash to its replacement of the venerated CJ-7, has garnered no major magazine or industry awards for performance, quality or value during its lifetime.

The Next Big Change:

- Wrangler has kept Chrysler in a nicely profitable niche, and the company is not likely to mess with success. A new Wrangler should arrive this fall, to be sold by dealers as a 1995 model. Expect evolutionary refinement of the mechanicals and carryover drivetrains. The appearance will take a retro turn, with a return to the CJ's round headlights and many of the styling cues from the canceled JJ "small Jeep" project. ■

The tradeoff for good performance is poor fuel economy. The soft top fits snugly and doesn't leak in heavy thunderstorms, but it's very noisy in highway travel. Removing it is quite a job for one.

*Juan F. Quintero
Miami*

I immediately had problems losing coolant. It continued for six months. After five trips to dealers, and 14,493 miles, I turned to the California Lemon Law. My claim must have been strong. I won a repurchase decision. I think that says it all.

*Stephen Smilovitz
Belmont, Calif.*

OTHERS CONSIDERED

A Geo Tracker, an Isuzu Amigo and a Defender 90. The Tracker was too much of a toy. The Amigo was too expensive for a crude four-wheel-drive system and weak engine. The Defender was simply too expensive.

*Larry Cotten
Argyle, Texas*

None. My first one lasted from 1965 to 1983 until rust got the best of it; I passed a dealership a few years after losing it and bought a new one.

*Arthur Ashley
Troy, Mich.*