

2007 Saturn Sky Redline
Turbocharging Helps Fulfill the Promise
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For: The Wheel



Just a few months ago, we reviewed the Sky's sibling, the Pontiac Solstice and we had a love/no love relationship with it. (You can find the review at www.hookedondriving.com, then clicking on Reviews). That car reflected its rapid move from concept to production, and left us with impressions on both ends of the satisfaction spectrum. Our big complaint was the drivetrain. We used the metaphor of a baseball game – Pontiac hit a long fly late in the game, tantalizing the fans, only to disappoint, as the center fielder made the catch of what was, in the end, a long out. But there was hope – we reported that it was only the 7th inning of the ballgame. You see, we had already been informed of the rapid development of a turbo version, leaving the possibility of our cleanup hitter getting back to the plate by the ninth inning. Well – the Redline version of the Sky – thanks to its turbocharging and upgraded transmission, has come through in the clutch – so to speak. We'll not be shy about this car – it's a home run.

The Sky Redline is a two-seat convertible, weighing about 2900 lbs. With a four-wheel independent “short arm” suspension, Bilstein coilover monotubes and a limited slip differential coming stock, you can expect and get great handling. This car's chassis and suspension delivers one of the best turn-ins of any car we've driven. While not jostling you on the freeway potholes, GM has found the magic here to provide decent yet firm ride and outstanding overall sports car feel. This is a car to have fun with. We felt a bit like we'd been given a new 8 week old puppy and we just wanted to get down on the floor and play with it...and so we did. With its confidence inspiring turn-in capability, we went quicker in the twisties than we normally do – going in hard, turning in nicely and getting on the torque early enough to let 'er drift just like a pro. This is a Fun car to drive with a capital F. With the handling clearly determined to be a strength of the Sky, our desperate hopes for ample power have come true with its new 16 valve turbocharged four banger pumping this unit up to 260 horses and 260 ft lbs of torque. Folks, that's enough to make this car scoot like a cherry pit being squeezed between your forefinger and thumb. You'll feel like you're in a smaller, more nimble version of the Corvette. The only minor negative is its lack of sexy sounds...she moans just a bit rather than sings. Our sample was

equipped with an electronically controlled 5 speed automatic transmission and we were shocked that the automatic did not rob us of having fun. Shifts were quick, and we – before reading the owner’s manual – discovered what the “I” setting was on the gearshift readout by simply giving it a try. Standing for “Intermediate,” this setting will hold the car in a gear one step lower than it would otherwise shift to. While GM says this is for holding a gear while driving down a hill, we found it very useful in maintaining the car in its power band while driving in a “sporting” manner. Not sure why GM didn’t call this “Sport” mode –maybe the legal department got involved. You might ask about the dreaded turbo lag, the tendency for turbocharged engines to hesitate in responding to throttle input while building boost. Nope – none here. In fact, the true test of torque on demand comes from a stop sign. OK – don’t tell anyone we did this – but in a discreet, undisclosed location, with no traffic in site, we turned off the traction control system, held the brake with the left foot, fed about ¼ throttle, and the car snapped to attention, the rear tires broke loose, and as I punched it and released the brake the Sky did a burnout to make any muscle car proud. The boost is on right away and this car launches with the best V8’s.

Other items of note include a very basic interior. We expect something pretty simple in a car with this performance that’s still priced at \$30K. But we NEED gauges. The dash cluster leaves much to be desired, with very a deep-set and dark speedo and tach. And no other gauges except a hard to see fuel gauge. Yikes, not even a temperature gauge. The interior, overall, is very serviceable and we actually give the optional leather seats a thumbs up with decent bolstering and a driving position that worked well on a longer drive. However, there is an unacceptable lack of storage for your stuff. No cup holders, console, or door storage, a small glove box and a very hard to get to compartment on the back wall of the interior. This really was annoying. And then there is the trunk, or lack thereof. Suffice it to say that two small soft sided bags will be the limit in the Sky. Especially with the top down, there’s slim pickins’ in the boot. Last on our nitpick list are the chrome 18” wheels. We liked the 18” part, but we hate chrome (they call them “polished alloy” but it looks like chrome). This seems to reflect that apparent confusion on the part of GM as to whether this is a sports car or a sporty commuter. Believe us, the turbocharged Sky Redline is a sports car. And we hope that this article helps get the word out to the import buyers: Take a test drive in this car before you buy the more common choices of sports cars in this category. The Sky Redline definitely deserves your consideration, and quite possibly your affection!

