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OCTOBER 1986

# ALASKA AIRLINES

M A G A Z I N E

The 1987  
New Car Line-Up





By Gary Witzenburg

# CARS AND HYPES FOREVER



*Celebrating the  
1987 American  
automotive line-up.*

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**T**HOSE OF US BORN post-World War II and pre-Atari are truly fortunate. We remember what a proper new-car introduction was like.

Somewhere around mid-September, when the air was growing cooler and the baseball season was just beginning to get interesting, all the local dealers would cover their showroom windows with giant banners.

Inside, we knew, were the most beautiful and exciting new cars the world had ever known.

At last, one by one, they would be unveiled. The dealers would throw introduction parties with balloons and cake and ice cream. We'd drag our moms and dads down to

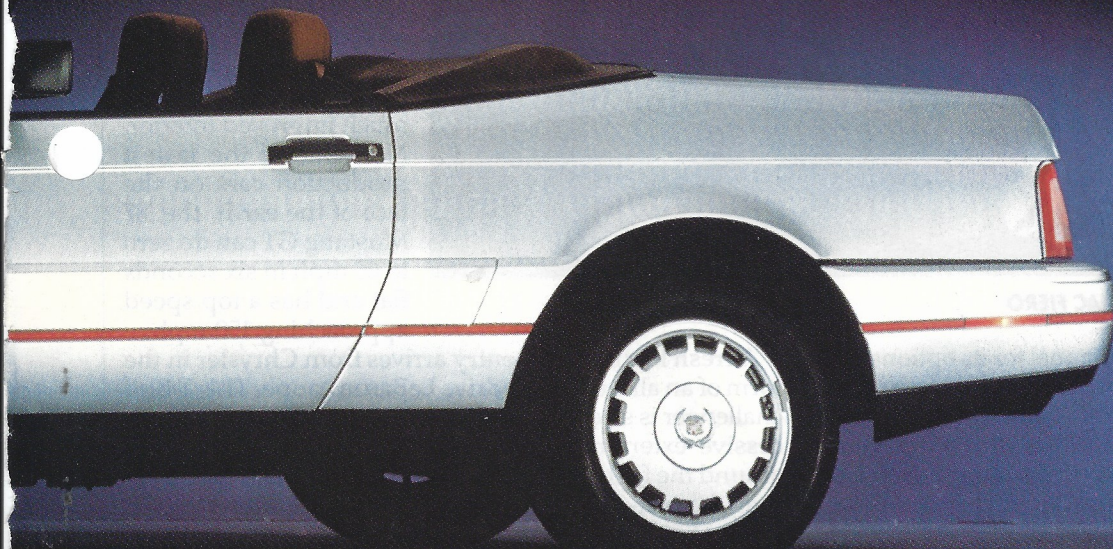




CHEVROLET SPRINT



ABOVE: FORD THUNDERBIRD TURBO COUPE  
BELOW: CADILLAC ALLANTE



have a look, and off would come the wraps to a chorus of oohs and aahs.

More often than not we'd return home, disappointed, in the same old boats we'd come in. But the excitement of the annual autumn introduction was something we would look forward to for another whole year. Almost like Christmas.

Now new cars come out whenever they're ready. There's still a fall introduction, but it's nowhere near the same. The publicity mills have been cranking out "sneak" pictures, and the really hot stuff has been on the covers of car-nut magazines long before it actually hits the showrooms.

In a way, this is good. It eliminates some needless hype

and makes us better-educated shoppers and buyers. But the anxious anticipation, the once-a-year thrill, is gone.

And that's a shame. Especially since more and more of today's new cars really *are* more exciting, more revolutionary, more worthy of a genuine 50s-style introduction than almost any that have gone before.

Beginning with the biggest, GM's Chevrolet division has new Turbo versions of both its three-cylinder Sprint and its subcompact Spectrum. Both baby Chevies are Japanese-built: Sprint by Suzuki, Spectrum by Isuzu. Both are worthy new entries in the "pocket rocket" econosport class. Due early next year from the Bow-Tie Boys are the



Corsica sedan and the Baretta coupe, the latter being the long-awaited Monte Carlo replacement.

After a half-year delay, Chevy also introduces the mighty 5.7-liter-V-8-powered Camaro IROC-Z. While its muscular motor is essentially the same as the 230-horse "Tuned Port Injection" (TPI) V-8 in Chevy's \$30,000 Corvette sports car, it's downrated to a mere 220-hp in the IROC-Z. Available only with four-speed automatic, it can launch the slick but heavy IROC-Z from zero to 60 mph in 6.5 seconds.

Pontiac unveils an all-new front-drive full-size car with a familiar name—Bonneville—for '87. A close cousin to Oldsmobile's latest Delta 88 and Buick's LeSabre, Bonneville sports a more rounded and contemporary look and a slightly sportier interior, except for the dated imitation wood on its dash. It's driven by a 3.8-liter port-injected V-6 and smooth four-speed automatic.

Also raising pulse-rates at the "We Build Excitement" Division are additions to the Firebird line. One is a reborn Formula series priced well under the vaunted Trans Am, a Trans Am GTA with the IROC-Z's 5.7-liter TPI V-8. The other is the nicely facelifted Fiero sports car, now with five-speed manual for its optional V-6.

A step down in size and price are GM's fastest front-drive cars, the turbo'd Pontiac Sunbird GT and Buick Skyhawk Sport Hatchback. Members of GM's compact J-car family, both are powered by Pontiac's overhead-cam turbo four, which is boosted in size from 1.8 to 2.0 liters and in power from 150 to 165 horses. It's also water-cooled and available with a five-speed manual transaxle.

There's not much new from Oldsmobile except a sporty Toronado called Trofeo, but Cadillac makes a bold move around the first of the year with a high-tech, high-buck Mercedes 560-fighter called Allante. A two-seat front-drive convertible with both hard and soft tops, it's expected to list in the \$50,000 range. Its crisply handsome body will be built where it was styled, at the famous Pininfarina coach-

works in Turin, Italy. Then it will be flown across the Atlantic to be mated with a shortened Eldorado chassis and transverse front-drive V-8 powertrain.

Ford's famous Thunderbird Turbo Coupe gets powerboosting intercooling for its 2.3-liter turbo four and now packs a potent 190 ponies under its long hood with standard five-speed. It also sports a fresh new look inside and out, plus substantial interior improvement, and it can fly from zero to 60 mph in just 7.5 seconds. Addition of standard ABS anti-lock brakes and Automatic Ride Control (computer-controlled shock absorbers) underneath make it as good a stopper and turner as it is a goer.

On the Ford ponycar front, the sophisticated but slow-selling Mustang SVO is gone, but the GT's awesome 5.0-liter V-8 gets another muscle boost to 225 hp with standard five-speed. Like Ford's Thunderbird and its Mercury cousin, Cougar, Mustang also boasts a pleasant facelift and a much improved interior. Now one of the fastest production cars on the face of the earth, the '87 Mustang GT can do zero to 60 mph in six seconds flat and has a top speed approaching 150 mph.

A fresh luxury/sport entry arrives from Chrysler in the form of an all-new front-drive LeBaron coupe. This T-Bird challenger is sleekly handsome, if over-decorated with excessive exterior chrome and interior woodgrain. Due around the first of the year, it is slightly smaller and lighter than the rear-drive Bird and has optional turbo power. Expected by spring is a lovely convertible version, but not a more tastefully trimmed or stiffly suspended sport model. Early 1987 should also see the much-hyped Chrysler-Maserati two-seater, which will have both soft and hard tops, like Allante, but will probably sell for half as much.

New in the small-car class, Chrysler's Dodge Sundance and Plymouth Shadow subcompacts—available with both regular or turbo 2.2-liter four and a choice of five-speed manual or optional automatic—are good lookers as well



**PONTIAC FIERO**



**DODGE SHADOW**



**PONTIAC BONNEVILLE**



**DODGE CARAVAN**



## READY FOR NEW "PONYCARS" AND "POCKET ROCKETS."



ABOVE: CHRYSLER MASERATI. BELOW RIGHT: MERCURY SABLE

as crisp handlers. Their fun-to-drive factor is surprisingly high despite their practical hatchback/sedan shapes. But if sheer dollar value gets your attention, check the crude but nicely equipped Dodge Omni and Plymouth Horizon "America" models, priced at less than \$6,000 base.

Dodge's Daytona gets a slick facelift, complete with pop-up headlamps, and an intercooled "Turbo II" version of Chrysler's tough 2.2-liter turbo motor in a hot new Shelby Z model. Addition of an intercooler and other refinements boosts the Turbo II's power to 175 hp and the Daytona's zero to 60 squirt into the mid-seven-second range. If that's not quick enough for you, cowboy, watch for a special Shelby-brand version of the Charger hatchback coupe with Turbo II power and other Shelby tweaks. Available only at authorized Shelby dealers (specially selected Dodge stores), this limited-edition muscular mini will be called Shelby Charger GLH-S and should be capable of zero to 60 mph in the low sevens.

Compact van fans will be thrilled to know that Chrysler's popular Plymouth Voyager and Dodge Caravan will be offered early next year in a new, longer variation with more leg, luggage and back-seat room. A new V-6 engine also becomes available in both regular and stretch versions.

AMC/Renault joins the pocket-rocket race with a quick and agile Alliance-based Renault GTA, available in two-door coupe and convertible versions. A new 2.0-liter engine gives 95 lively horses and sub-ten-second zero to 60 acceleration. According to AMC, beefed-up suspension and boy-racer tires and wheels give handling and cornering power superior to the class-lead-

ing VW GTI. Special spoilers, trim and a sporty monotone paint scheme complete the package.

Also new from AMC is Wrangler, the classic CJ-7 Jeep's able replacement. Except for contemporary rectangular headlamps and a much more modern instrument panel, you almost can't tell this new basic Jeep from the old one—until you drive it. Then it comes across as vastly superior in every way, especially in ride and handling on the road, where most owners will use it most of the time.

VW of America, for its part, will pull the wraps off its Brazilian-built, sub-\$6,000 Fox minicars early next year. And watch for the Golf-based GTI, America's original econosport, to get the Scirocco sports coupe's lusty 16-valve engine in early 1987, along with optional all-wheel drive.

New-car supplies are up, interest rates are down, and such factory incentives as rebates and cut-rate financing continue. The result: dealers are willing to bargain more than they have been for years. For those who view their wheels as both personal statement and driving excitement, the performance, handling and pure fun-to-drive quotients of today's new cars have never soared higher. ▲

Gary L. Witzenburg has written for Playboy and other national publications.

### TEN BEST CAR BUYS



	1986	1987
<b>ECONOCAR</b>	Chevrolet Sprint	Chevrolet Sprint
<b>ECONOSPORT</b>	Volkswagen GTI	Volkswagen GTI
<b>SMALL SEDAN</b>	Mazda 323	Plymouth Sundance/ Dodge Shadow
<b>MEDIUM SEDAN</b>	Ford Taurus/Mercury Sable	Ford Taurus/Mercury Sable
<b>LARGE SEDAN</b>	Chevrolet Caprice	Chevrolet Caprice
<b>LUXURY SEDAN</b>	Audi 5000CS Turbo Quattro	Audi 5000CS Turbo Quattro
<b>SPORT SEDAN</b>	Dodge Lancer/Chrysler LeBaron GTS	Dodge Lancer/Chrysler LeBaron GTS
<b>SPORT COUPE</b>	Toyota Celica	Acura Integra
<b>LUXURY SPORT COUPE</b>	Lincoln Continental Mark VII LSC	Lincoln Continental Mark VII LSC
<b>SPORTS/GT</b>	Mazda RX-7	Mazda RX-7

NOTE: A "Best Buy" is not necessarily the *best* car in its class in every way, or the least expensive. It does offer the best combination of quality, styling, engineering, performance, handling, standard and optional features, reliability, value for money and resale value. Some cars are not "Best Buys" simply because they are more expensive than competitors.—G.W.