

PSA MAGAZINE

CHIEF JUSTICE

A NEW ORDER
IN THE COURT—
CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT
CHIEF JUSTICE
**MALCOLM
LUCAS**
TAKES THE BENCH

SOFT SPOT FOR RAGTOPS

A red classic convertible car is parked on a rocky shore next to the ocean. The car is shown from a side profile, with its top down. The background features large, light-colored rocks and the dark blue water of the ocean under a clear sky.

THE WIND'S IN, BUT THE BUGS ARE OUT IN A NEW GENERATION OF CLASSIC CONVERTIBLES

BY GARY WITZENBURG

Most of us have fond convertible memories from our misspent youths. If we weren't lucky enough to have one, we probably knew someone who was.

For those not blessed with dashing looks or athletic stardom, a convertible—any convertible—meant instant popularity. It didn't have to be new. It didn't have to be expensive. It had only to have a top that removed or retracted.

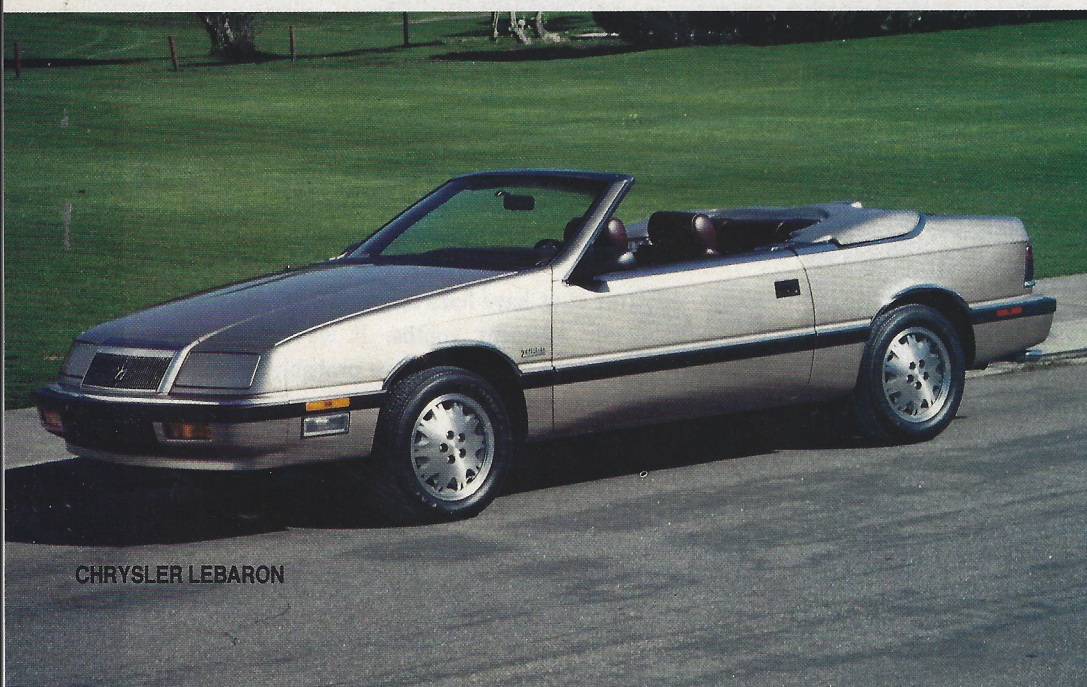
In those days, at least, no better magnet for the opposite sex



BMW 325i



RENAULT GTA



CHRYSLER LEBARON

had yet been invented.

Then one day they were gone. First the compacts and intermediates, then the "ponycar" Camaros and Mustangs, then the rest. Last to go among the domestics (in 1976) were the Chevy Corvette and Cadillac Eldorado. And that left only VW's Rabbit ragtop on one end of the scale, with the megabuck Mercedes, Rolls-Royce and Aston Martin on the other, and a handful of aging imported roadsters in between.

The reason convertibles went away was simple: people stopped buying them. The government turned anti-car; the country grew conservative; OPEC turned off the oil. Safety, economy and environmental concerns dominated the industry's and most car buyers' minds. And since convertibles are expensive to build, the carmakers logically quit making them once demand had ebbed to a trickle.

Credit Lee Iacocca and Chrysler Corporation for boldly kicking off today's convertible comeback: It was 1983 when a new Chrysler LeBaron ragtop (and its sportier Dodge 400 sibling) hit the streets. Then came an open-air Mustang from Ford, then Buick Riviera and Cadillac Eldorado luxury softtops from General Motors, then drop-top versions of Chevy's Cavalier, Pontiac's Sunbird, Porsche's 911, Toyota's Celica, Saab's 900, AMC's Renault Alliance and the new-generation Corvette. From Europe came sexy softtops from Jaguar, Alfa Romeo, Ferrari and Maserati.

So here it is, summer 1987, and America's in love with convertibles again. No

	Renault GTA	Chrysler LeBaron	Chevrolet Camaro	Toyota Celica	BMW 325i	Jaguar XJ-S	Cadillac Allanté	Porsche 911 Turbo
WHEELBASE (IN.)	97.8	100.3	101.0	99.4	101.2	102.0	99.4	89.5
OVERALL LENGTH (IN.)	163.8	184.9	188.0	173.6	175.6	191.7	178.6	168.9
WIDTH (IN.)	65.0	68.4	72.8	67.3	64.8	70.6	73.4	69.9
HEIGHT (IN.)	53.1	52.2	50.0	50.8	54.3	47.8	52.2	51.6
CURB WEIGHT (LBS.)	2,291	3,250	3,279	2,700	3,015	4,040	3,494	2,976
STANDARD ENGINE	2.0L 4-CYL.	2.5L 4-CYL.	2.8L V-6	2.0L 4-CYL. 16V	2.5L 6-CYL.	5.3L V-12	4.1L V-8	3.3L 6-CYL. TURBO
MAXIMUM HORSEPOWER (@ RPM)	95 @ 5,250	100 @ 4,800	135 @ 4,900	115 @ 5,200	168 @ 5,800	262 @ 5,000	170 @ 4,300	282 @ 5,500
MAXIMUM TORQUE (@ RPM)	114 @ 2,750	133 @ 2,800	160 @ 3,900	124 @ 4,400	164 @ 4,300	290 @ 5,000	230 @ 3,200	278 @ 4,000
OPTIONAL ENGINE	—	2.2L 4-CYL. TURBO	5.0L V-8	—	—	—	—	—
STANDARD TRANSMISSION	5-SPD. MANUAL	5-SPD. MANUAL	5-SPD. MANUAL	5-SPD. MANUAL	5-SPD. MANUAL	3-SPD. AUTO	4-SPD. AUTO	4-SPD. MANUAL
OPTIONAL TRANSMISSION	—	3-SPD. AUTO	4-SPD. AUTO	4-SPD. AUTO	4-SPD. AUTO	—	—	—
BASE PRICE	\$13,264	\$14,000*	\$15,208	\$17,298	\$28,875	\$47,000*	\$54,700	\$78,415

*ESTIMATED

fewer than eight new rag-roof models have joined the list since fall, and more are on the way. From the lively Renault GTA to Porsche's awesome 911 Turbo Cabriolet, the choice for topless motoring has never been better.

RENAULT GTA

VW brought the "pocket rocket" brand of motoring fun to America with its Rabbit GTI in '83, and now nearly everyone sells affordable, sporty spinoffs of everyday econocars. But only one has a retractable top. Compared to the workaday Renault Alliance it's derived from, AMC's \$13,264 GTA con-

vertible has a livelier 95-horsepower engine, close-ratio five-speed gearing, front and rear spoilers, "ground effects" side skirts, high-performance brakes, suspension, wheels and tires and a racy monochromatic paint scheme available in black, white, red or silver.

CHRYSLER LEBARON

Not to be confused with the shoe box-shaped traditional LeBarons or the contemporary Euro-style LeBaron GTS sedan, this lovely new Chrysler is a purpose-designed (not converted) stablemate to the new LeBaron coupe introduced last fall. It

comes with a smooth fuel-injected four-cylinder or optional turbo power, and with a choice of five-speed manual or three-speed automatic transmission. Power rack-and-pinion steering, gas-charged shocks, electronic instruments, a trip computer and a pull-out holder for your morning coffee are standard for around \$14,000.

CHEVROLET CAMARO

The last factory convertible Camaro was built in 1969, eighteen years ago. Now this latest sexy Chevy joins the Cavalier and Corvette converts in Chevrolet's growing softtop stable. Available on

any Camaro model from base coupe to IROC-Z, with V-6 or V-8 power (up to 190 horsepower) and five-speed manual or four-speed automatic transmission, it's a factory-authorized conversion by veteran converter ASC, Inc. "There's really one main reason to have a Camaro convertible," says Chevy chief engineer Don Runkle with a grin. "It's a fun car to drive." Price: \$15,208.

TOYOTA CELICA

When Toyota's popular Celica was redesigned for 1986, most agreed it was a beautiful job. The all-new

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RAGTOPS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 52

chassis was front-wheel drive and fully independent, the curvaceous new body was sexy and sleek as a mackerel, and the top-of-the-line GT-S boasted twin-cam, sixteen-valve, four-cylinder power. But the excellent Celica convertible was gone. That oversight is corrected for '87. Now all Celicas have sixteen-valve fours, and the GT convertible's is good for 115 horsepower. Power top, mirrors and rear quarter windows are standard for a semiaffordable \$17,298.

BMW 325i

Yuppie favorite BMW, which had not built a factory convertible since the 507 roadster of the late fifties, now offers this crisply designed open-air 325i. Standard equipment includes ABS antilock brakes, alloy wheels, leather seats, power windows, automatic air-conditioning, an on-board computer and a killer premium stereo for a sobering \$28,775.

JAGUAR XJ-S

Jaguar's luxury sports coupe appeared on our shores in 1976, followed by a semiconvertible Cabriolet version (with fixed-roof structure and window frames) a full decade later. Now comes this lovely factory-authorized conversion by coach builder Hess & Eisenhardt of Cincinnati. The power top folds deeply into the big cat's body without affecting its trunk, but the rear seat is sacrificed for additional storage. A silky 262-horsepower V-12 engine, burl walnut and posh leather interior and most everything else imaginable is standard for about \$47,000.

CADILLAC ALLANTE

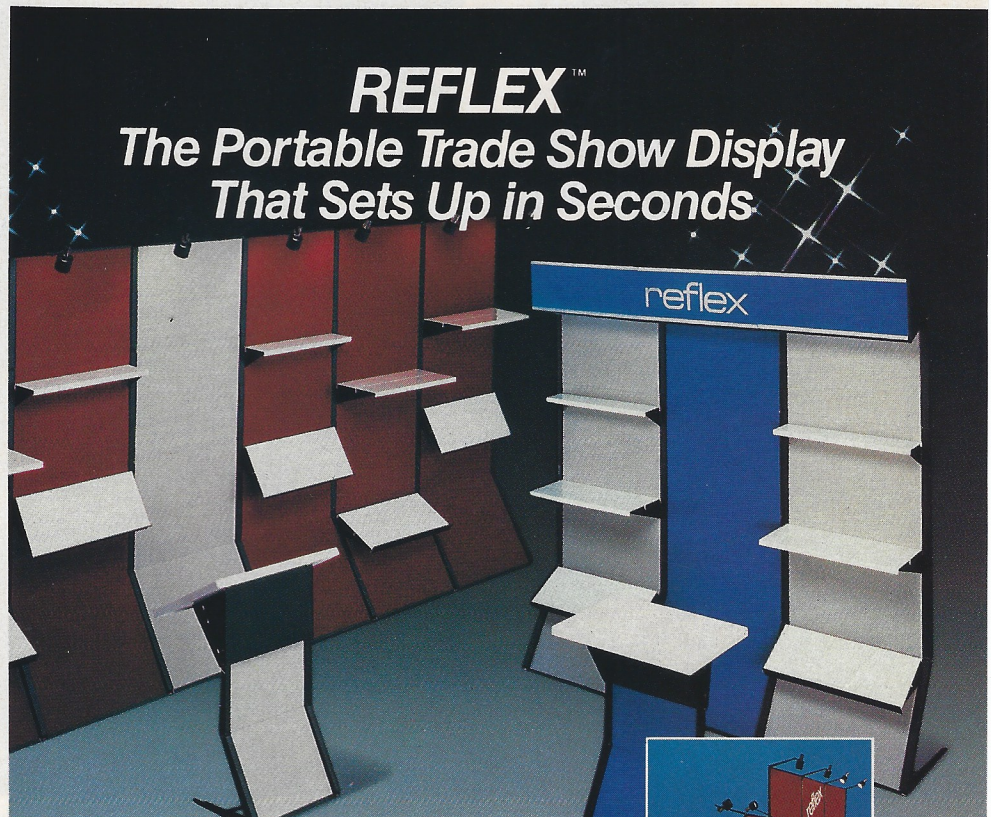
The famed Pininfarina design house of Turin, Italy—which styled this twin-top, two-seat convertible with Cadillac cooperation—assembles the bodies and interiors. Special 747s deliver them to Detroit for mating with their power trains and suspensions on a mini-assembly line. The warranty is seven years/100,000 miles, the price is \$54,700, and fewer than 8,000 a year will be produced.

PORSCHE 911 TURBO

There's nothing new about the whale-

tailed Porsche Turbo, and the 911 Cabriolet has been around for several years. But now there's a 911 Turbo Cabriolet. Combining the breathtaking performance of the 282-horsepower Turbo with the Cabriolet's charisma results in the consummate show-off machine. Imagine

top-down 0-60 acceleration runs of 5.5 seconds and 150-mile-per-hour bugs in your teeth. A mere \$78,415 buys this ultimate road-going Porsche; or you can ante up another \$23,826 for the newly introduced, racing-derived slant-nose body option. ■



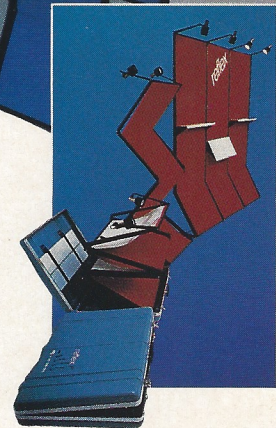
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