

USA '85: ALL THE NEW CARS

CORVETTE IN EUROPE: NEW TECH BLITZES THE OLD WORLD

MOTOR TREND

'85 PREVIEW TESTS

CAVALIER Z24 V-6

SHELBY CHARGER TURBO

210-HP MUSTANG GT

LE BARON GTS TURBO

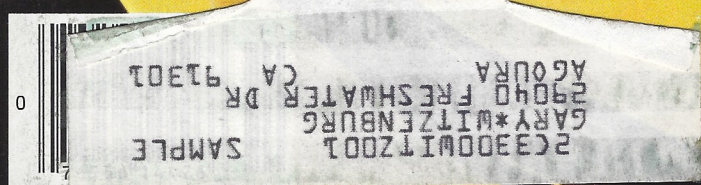
BUICK SOMERSET REGAL

OCTOBER 1984

F=FASTER FANTASIES

GM'S F-CARS FOR 1985

Port-Injected Trans Am
215-hp IROC-Z



PREVIEW TEST

Once upon a time just a few years ago, as the American auto industry lay writhing in agony with a bad case of Fuel Crisis II, it was assumed that gas would cost \$2-2.50 a gallon by the mid-1980s. The CAFE fleet fuel economy requirements loomed large on the horizon, and it was painfully clear to GM upper management that they'd never cut the mustard without another round of serious downsizing.

The new front-drive A-cars (Celebrity, 6000, Ciera, Century), intended to replace the aging midsize As, were first to emerge. Soon to follow, according to plan, were smaller front-drive replacements for the "A-special" coupes (Monte Carlo, Grand Prix, et al.), the "personal luxury" E and K-cars (Toronado, Riviera, Eldorado, Seville), the full-size Bs, and the still-larger luxury Cs.

But a funny thing happened on the way to production: After the crisis ended, fuel supplies swelled and gas prices actually *decreased*. This threw a king-sized wrench into the General's master plan, because it helped lift the old midsize-and-larger iron to unforeseen heights of renewed popularity. No auto executive worth his bonus wants to replace hot-selling

and highly profitable old cars with unproven new ones; so things have been a little muddled ever since.

The new A-cars were slid in next to the old ones, which were redesignated "G-cars," and all but a few quietly phased out over the last three model years as their heirs gained popularity. This spring, the '85 luxury C-cars were inserted next to their predecessors, which remained in production through 1984, with some big rear-drive Caddies remaining for 1985. The smaller Es and Ks were rescheduled for 1986, and the new front-drive B-cars for a 1987 introduction.

That leaves the "N-cars" (or, under a new coding system, "GM-20s"), originally intended as G-special (formerly A-special) successors: the Pontiac Grand Am, Oldsmobile Calais, and Buick Somerset Regal (Chevy opted out of the program). These become an all-new model series for 1985, replacing nothing—not the X-cars (the slow-selling Pontiac Phoenix and Olds Omega versions of which are nevertheless discontinued), nor the Pontiac Grand Prix, Olds Cutlass Supreme or Buick Regal, which remain some of the corporation's most popular models and will be around for several

years to come.

Notice the old, traditional midsize names. Notice also the near-vertical "formal" rear roof. These and certain familiar front, rear, and interior styling "cues" are indicative of GM's continued conservatism and, yes, insecurity as its new-generation cars are brought to market. No one dares offend even one traditional, older (and older-thinking) GM buyer while all give lip service to attracting new, younger, more import-oriented ones.

Pontiac's Grand Am is the sportiest and most contemporary of the three and, in base form, the N-car price leader. Olds' Calais, as expected, is the most conservative through and through. Buick's Somerset Regal takes the middle ground.

The standard Coupe has integrated soft-fascia body-color bumpers, premium base-coat paint, P185/80R13 steel-belted blackwall all-season radials, full electronic instrumentation, cloth-trimmed reclining bucket seats, a full center console, and a remote fuel door release. The high-lux Limited edition, by contrast, is distinguished by chrome bumpers, velour trim, a bright perimeter molding around its mini-Riviera grille, and (of course) additional standard stuff.

All-new
in the old tradition

by Gary Witzenburg

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID FRANKLIN

1985 Buick Somerset Regal



Performance is respectable with the four and downright reasonable with the V-6 automatic

All N-cars share the same MacPherson-strut front and trailing-beam rear suspension, power front disc and rear drum brakes, and rack-and-pinion steering with optional power assist. Our test car, equipped with the standard semi-soft suspension (no handling-package cars were available) and optional P205/70R13 all-season radials rode nicely and handled securely but proved, uh, less than exciting in spirited cornering by understeering doggedly at the tires' traction limit.

Powertrain choices are a 2.5-liter four with 5-speed manual or 3-speed automatic and an automatic-only 3.0-liter V-6. The former, an upgraded "Tech IV" version of the tried-and-true Pontiac pushrod four, now has roller hydraulic lifters (for increased performance and economy along with negligible wear) and electronic throttle-body injection. The latter, a new port-injected Buick V-6, is similar to the beautifully trimmed 3.8-liter unit available in '85 A and C-cars and features cast-aluminum manifold and rocker covers, Buick's Computer-Controlled Coil Ignition, and various oth-

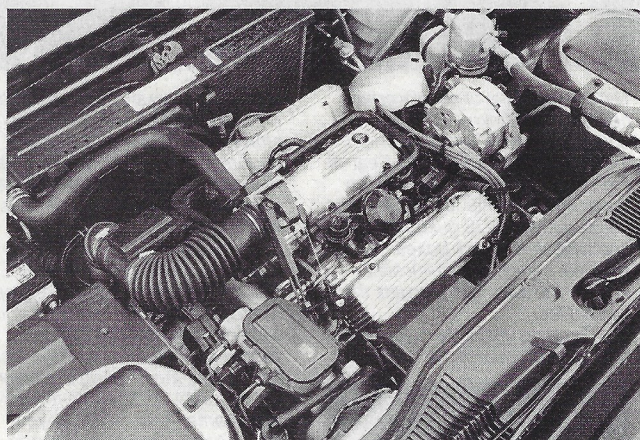
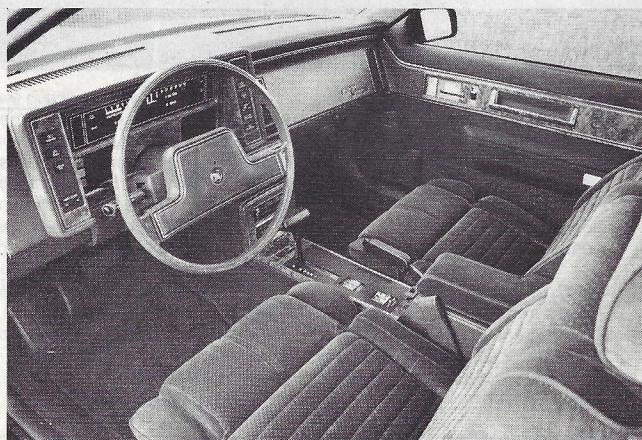
er modern marvels of electronic engine control. Both are shortened and modified for transverse mounting in the fairly narrow (J-car-based) engine compartment. Performance is re-

spectable with the four (about 12 sec 0-60 with 5-speed, 13 with automatic) and downright reasonable (11 sec) with the V-6 automatic.

The Somerset's speedometer is digital, and the fuel gauge on its left is a line graphic, expandable at the touch of a button to an enlarged representation of the last quarter-tank. On the right, selected by a second button, is your choice of four additional graphic gauges—tachometer, oil pressure, coolant temperature, or battery voltage. AM radio is standard, but optional systems include GM Delco's latest high-tech stereo/cassette with equalizer, the famous Delco-Bose super system, and even a neat new remote-head full-feature stereo with line graphics for tone, balance, and equalizer settings.

GM sees its new N-cars as competition for the likes of the Honda Prelude, Nissan 200-SX, and Toyota Celica. We see them as a whole new domestic class—sort of baby Grand Prix, Cutlasses, and Regals—between the smaller J-car and larger A-car 2-doors. Either way, there should be plenty of takers. MT

DATA	
Buick Somerset Regal Limited	
POWERTRAIN	
Vehicle configuration	.....Front engine, front drive
Engine configuration	.....90° V-6, OHV
Displacement	.....2966 cc (181 cu in.)
Max. power (SAE net)	.....120 hp @ 4300 rpm
Max. torque (SAE net)	.....150 lb-ft @ 2000 rpm
Transmission	.....3-sp. auto.
Final drive	.....2.84:1
CHASSIS	
Suspension, f/r	.....Independent/twist axle
Brakes, f/r	.....Disc/drum
Steering	.....Rack and pinion
Wheels	.....13 x 5.5-in. alloy
Tires	.....P205/70R13
DIMENSIONS	
Wheelbase	.....2626 mm (103.4 in.)
Overall length	.....4572 mm (180.0 in.)
Curb weight	.....1153 kg (2542 lb)
Fuel capacity	.....51.1 L (13.6 gal)
PERFORMANCE	
0-60 mph	.....11.54 sec
Standing quarter mile	.....18.28 sec/75.2 mph
Braking, 60-0	.....161 ft



Reclining bucket seats and full-length center console are part of the Somerset's standard interior trim. The extra performance of a 120-hp port-injected 3.0-liter 90° V-6 is an extra-cost option.

