

# Automotive

## Supra and Celica GT-S fit bill for sports-car purists



**Gary Witzenburg**

**M**y doctor and I have a great professional relationship: I give her free car advice. She charges a reasonable fee for my annual physical. At least I think it's reasonable.

She and her husband (a surgeon) both love their Porsche 911s; but their kids are growing. Soon, she'll need a larger back seat. What should she buy?

Considering that this woman hopes to retain most of the prestige and performance of her Porsche, wouldn't be caught comatose at the wheel of any four-door and won't consider anything domestic at all, yet she doesn't want to spend \$40,000-plus for a high-zoot German sports coupe, I haven't had a good answer for her.

Now, maybe I do: Toyota's new Supra. But that's the end of this little story; let's flash back to its modest beginnings.

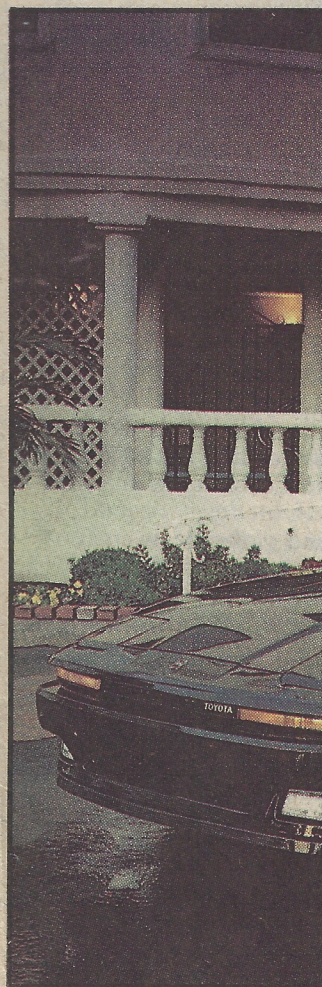
Toyota was still peddling tiny tinny Corollas and shovel-nosed Coronas when some product planner in Tokyo got the bright idea of a small affordable sporty car. This was hardly a new idea, of course, since Ford had invented the "ponycar" with the Falcon-based Mustang in 1964.

But it was obviously a good idea. America's emerging baby-boomer buyers were already snapping up Mustangs, Camaros, Firebirds and the rest in ever-increasing numbers when Toyota decided to invent the Japanese ponycar. That first small, sporty Toyota coupe to hit U.S. shores in '71 was called Celica.

It was a big hit, of course, and was joined in '76 by a Celica "Liftback" model, a hatchback version that even looked from the rear almost exactly like a scaled-down late-1960s Mustang fastback.

Two years later came a lovely second-generation Celica styled by Calt Design, Toyota's then-new U.S. design center; and for '79, a stretch-nosed six-cylinder version called Supra. These Calt Celicas proved vastly popular in North America, but their cleanly sculpted bodies didn't play very well back in Japan.

As a result, the third-generation Celica and Supra for '82 wore a wedgy, angular, somewhat busy body that tried to bridge that wide Pacific culture gap and apparently did. At that point the Supra also moved



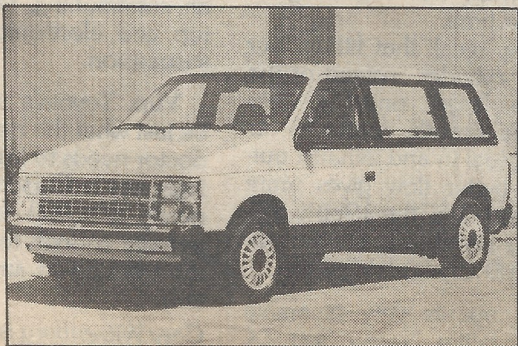
See SUPRA, page C-2

The Toyota Supra has sporty

## Dodge's hot-selling Caravan combines comfort, versatility

Combining passenger car comfort and convenience with the versatility of a rugged, smartly styled van, the hot-selling 1986 Dodge Caravan multi-purpose wagon is available in three price classes — Caravan, Caravan SE and Caravan LE — with seating configurations that can accommodate from five to eight passengers.

The standard power train for the Caravan is a 2.2-liter (135 CID) engine and a five-speed manual transaxle. The overall final drive ratio for manual transaxle is an impressive 2.78-to-1 for improved performance and on-the-road fuel economy.



Dodge Caravan launched new market segment.

A 2.6-liter engine and a three-speed automatic transaxle

# SUMMER SUPER-

# 5.9%

annual  
percentage rate

## FINANCING

ON SPECTRUMS, NOVAS,  
CHEVETTES, CELEBRITIES  
30 MOS. GMAC FINANCIAL

...the most compared to the same roads or desert trails

BRAN



# Supra

Story continued from page C-1

well upscale from its Celica siblings with a completely different (and longer) nose, a powerful twin-cam six-cylinder engine and a much higher level of luxury and content.

A new uplevel, higher-performance Celica GT-S model arrived in '83 to plug the hole between them, complete with the Supra's flared fenders and independent rear suspension. For '84 the GT-S also got the Supra's four-wheel disc brakes, and in '85 a pricey but excellent GT-S convertible was added to the line.

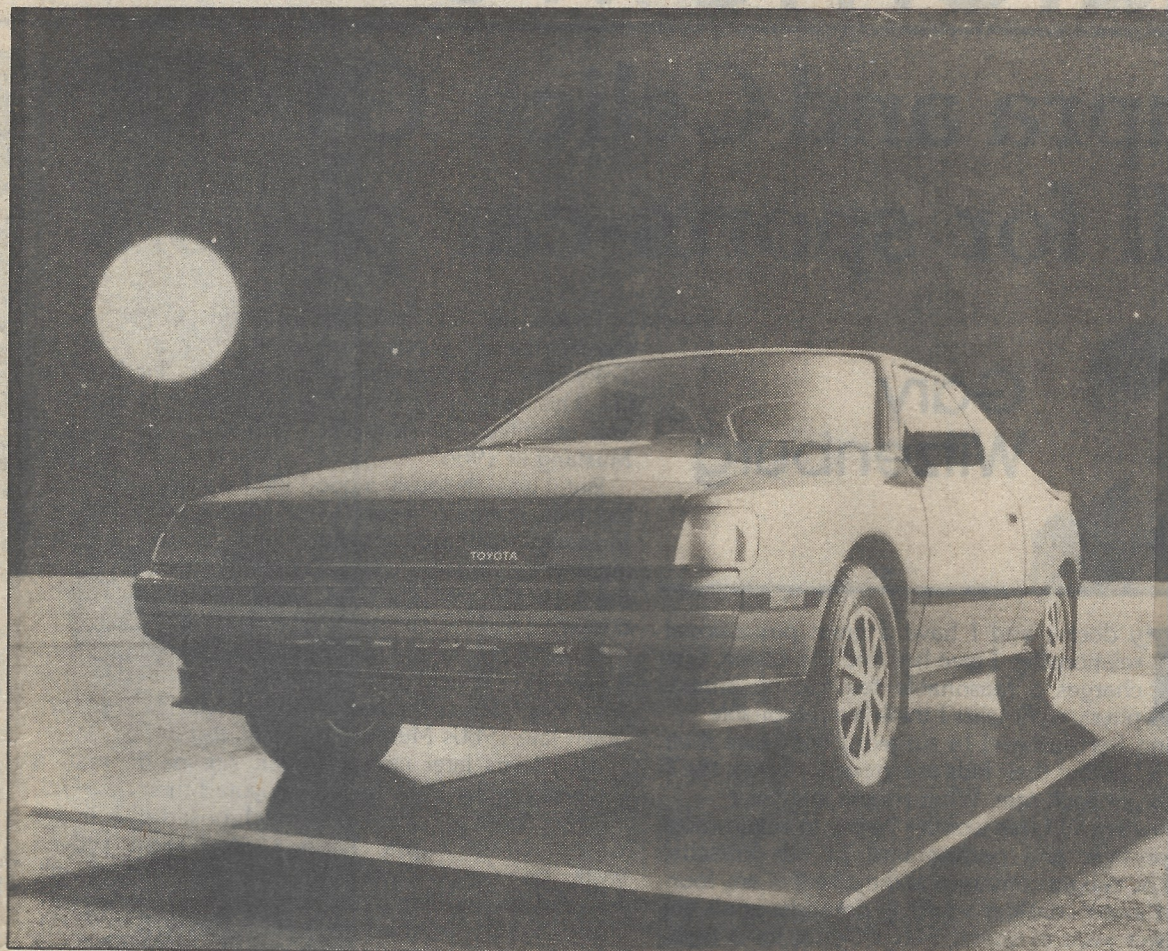
Now comes the all-new fourth-generation Celica, full of surprises. First, it's front-drive. Second, its smooth and slippery new contours are a tad radical even by U.S.-market standards. Third, the top-of-the-line GT-S is motivated by a hot new 16-valve, twin-cam, fuel-injected four that pumps out a cool 135 horsepower.

Obviously Toyota is not the same old conservative company we've known since the 1960s. Its U.S.-market substance and image transformation, which began three years ago with some fun and affordable 16-valve, twin-cam Corollas and accelerated two seasons back with the MR2 midengine sports car (powered by that same lively 1.6-liter 16-valve), has hit full stride with this exciting new Celica.

The base Celica ST (\$9,798) and midrange GT share a 97-horsepower version of the Camry sedan's 2.0-liter fuel-injected four, plus fully independent suspension with stabilizer bars and gas-filled shocks at all four corners. Power rack-and-pinion steering and equal-length half-shafts give a crisp handling feel and a near-complete lack of front-drive torque steer under all conditions.

But major news for driving enthusiasts is the very quick and agile Celica GT-S. Priced at roughly \$13,000 in both coupe and Liftback versions — with electronically controlled four-speed automatic transmission (instead of the standard five-speed manual) available only on the coupe — it's good for zero-to-60 bursts in the low-eight-second range and cornering stick in the neighborhood of .82g.

All this with a standard equipment list that includes tilt/telescopic sport steering wheel, eight-way power adjustable driver's seat and a user-friendly premium cassette stereo with "acoustic



The 1986 Celica GT-S is major news for driving enthusiasts with a 16-valve, twin-cam fuel injected four-cylinder e

button equalizer pre-set for your choice of jazz, rock, vocal and classical sounds.

Styling, as we've said, is highly subjective. Except for its no-face, blackout front (looks like the Lone Ranger with no eye holes in his mask), I love it. Others have had some trouble warming up to this Celica's ultra-round-cornered new shape, but I certainly see a lot of them on the street here in Southern California.

Keen observers at last fall's Celica intro couldn't help noticing that something important was missing: the Supra. That's because it's now a whole different car, completely separate from the Celica line. It retains rear-wheel drive and six-cylinder power, now with 24 valves. And it hit the street just this spring.

Now, this is a car that just might be the answer for my doctor and other maturing Porsche purists with expanding families. Or, for that matter, most any hard-to-please sports-car crazy seeking a bit more room, luxury and comfort without much sacrifice in status or speed.

No, it's not German or even European, but it's about as solid as

"heavy," with thick doors that go "thunk" and about enough chassis stiffness (for superior handling) for an armored personnel carrier.

No, it doesn't quite boast the panache of a Porsche, but it's a pleasing (if unoriginal) shape that most people seem to like. It also has sufficient room for belting a couple of nippers into the back seat. Just don't try it on adults.

No, it doesn't have six noisy, air-cooled cylinders hung out behind the rear axle. But it does have the sweetest, smoothest 24-valve straight six this side of Germany mounted up front where God and Mssrs. Daimler and Benz intended it to be from the beginning of automotive time.

You may recall that fitting four valves per cylinder, instead of the usual two larger ones, to any engine significantly improves its flow of air/fuel in and exhaust out. And that better flow gives more power. That's why the 1986½ 3.0-liter Supra six churns out an impressive 200 Clydesdale ponies.

That compares very favorably with the 3.0-liter Nissan 300 ZX V-6's 160 horses and the 5.7-liter Corvette V-8's 230. And it's identical (as is the 185 pound-foot max-

imum torque rating) to the 3.0-liter Porsche 911 six's 200. And that thing weren't so plush and heavy would be a whole bunch faster. Zero-to-60s in the low seven-second range and a 130-mph-plus top speed ain't shabby as it is.

Inside and underneath a Celica has all the right luxury/sport stuff, including all-independent suspension, rack-and-pinion steering, four-wheel disc brakes, big Goodyear "Gatorback" tires on 7-inch wheels, nine-way adjustable driver's seat, tilt/telescope steering wheel, standard cruise control, and the super "sound-flavor" stereo. Optional are such finishing touches as leather trim, automatic air conditioning, removable hard top and electronically modulated suspension.

Yup, Toyota's new Supra is just what the modern American doctor needs to break that increasingly costly Porsche habit. Yet, at nearly \$18,000 to start, it's expensive enough to hold its own in the valet lot at any AMA competition.

Gary Witzenburg is the most widely published automotive writer in America. Based in Woodland Hills, he is also a noted car consumer.