

**SHO ON THE ROAD: LIFE WITH THE TOP TAURUS  
SUBARU TRICK TRANS 🏁 LONDON RACE CAR SHOW**

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North American International Auto Show, Detroit

# DETROIT AWAKENS

*And puts on an auto show international in scope, rich in character, and befitting a town that calls itself the Motor Capital of the World*

By Cynthia Claes and Christopher A. Sawyer  
Photographs by Jeff Dworin and Joe Wilssens

If there was ever any doubt about Detroit's continued grasp on its title of Motor Capital, the North American International Auto Show in Detroit went a long way toward dispelling that notion. The powers that be decreed that Los Angeles would no longer hold the upper hand when it came to concept cars and automotive excitement. This was to be the year that Detroit arrived.

And it was.

No fewer than 25 new models made their debuts in Detroit, and they were joined by concept vehicles from nearly every manufacturer. From the Dodge Viper R/T-10 to the Mitsubishi HSR, Cobo Hall—home to the show—was awash in the future. Los Angeles, on the other hand, was left singing the praises of production sporty cars and the rest of the 1989 lineup. A distinction intensified by the fact that—except for the simultaneous debuts of Lexus and Infiniti in both Detroit and L.A.—Japanese automakers mostly ignored La-La Land and concentrated on the Motor City.

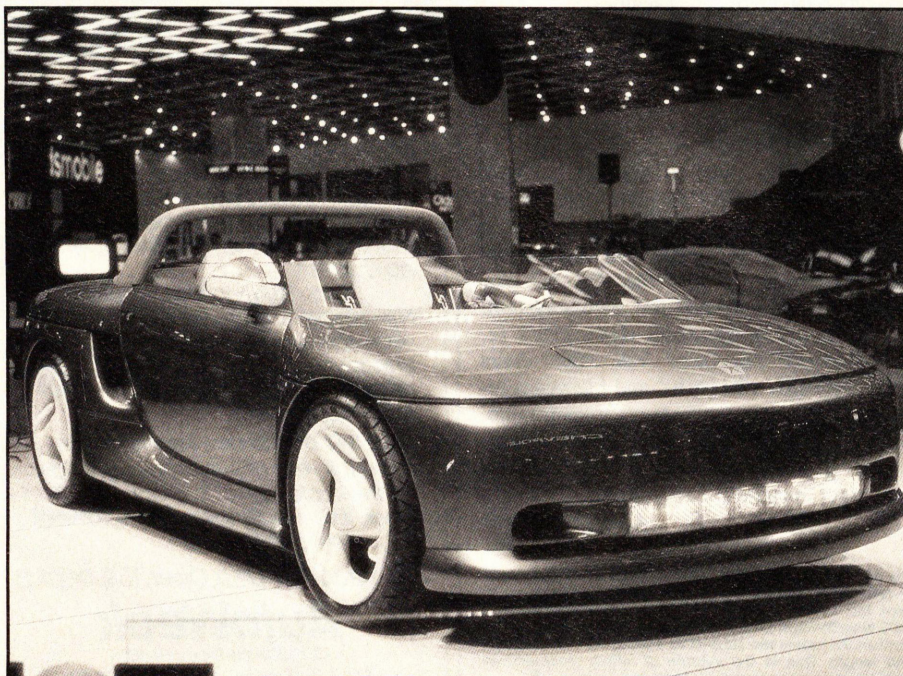
Said one European journalist in Detroit: "There are only two shows of any real importance, Tokyo and—now—Detroit." His observations were based on the premise that to constitute a truly "international" auto show, the event must include introductions of

significant new models—and Detroit certainly did that.

Ten years ago, or even five, the Japanese would not have felt confident—or welcome—enough to walk into the domestics' den. But this year was different. Besides the Infiniti and Lexus kickoffs, Mazda used the show to introduce its 4wd MPV and Mitsubishi officially debuted its Diamond-Star coupe, the Eclipse.

The display layout in Detroit's newly expanded exhibit hall—with domestic carmakers' wares occupying stage center, flanked by light trucks and imports—mimicked the market. In fact, at Detroit, imports grabbed 42 percent of the floor space, more than their share of retail sales.

And L.A.? Well, behind the hype and hyperbole could be heard the self-examination that comes from being blindsided by an opponent previously thought unequal to the task. The success of the North American International Auto Show surprised and stunned the West Coast—and even some in Motown. Rumors of moving Detroit's show to early fall have been dispelled. The '90 show is slated for January. The gauntlet has been thrown, and the movers behind the L.A. show hope to disprove the international press gathered in Detroit. Next year, if they have their way, the shows to watch will be Tokyo and Los Angeles, not Tokyo and Detroit. ■



## PLYMOUTH SPEEDSTER

*Best Toy*

A product of Chrysler's design staff at its West Coast Pacifica studio, the Plymouth Speedster fairly screams *drive me!*

Each of the large, three-spoke wheels contains a cross-drilled disc brake, and the body is drawn tightly around the wheels. The front hood and fenders are joined in a one-piece unit that flows neatly into a low windscreen. Just behind the front bumper, a pop-up light bar supplements the fixed lower light grid.

The 130.2-inch-long Speedster is 61.2 inches wide, 45.2 high, and sits on a short 81.7-inch wheelbase. Power is supplied by a mid-mounted Chrysler inline four.

Inside, a molded plastic tub forms the fixed seating surface—covered in wet suit material for easy cleaning—and the steering wheel and pedals move fore and aft. ■



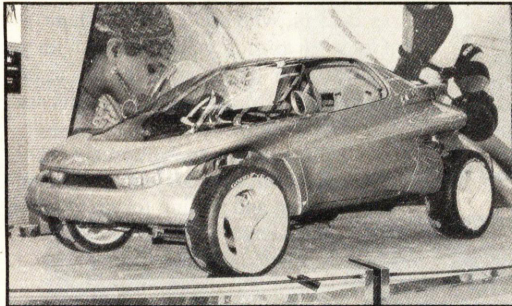
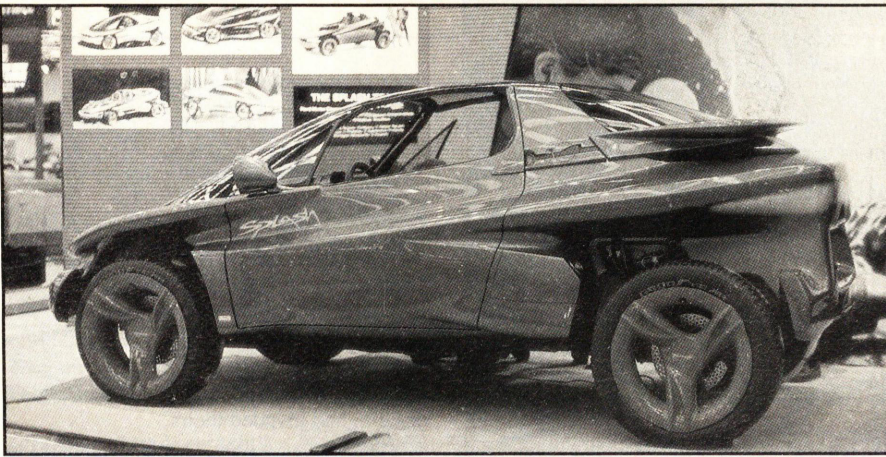
# Best Concept

## FORD SPLASH

If Plymouth's Speedster is a four-wheeled motorcycle, then Ford's Splash must be the next best thing to a BMX bike.

Created by four transportation students at Detroit's Center for Creative Studies, the Splash puts flexibility at its core. A four-wheel-drive vehicle, the Splash has a suspension system that is driver-adjustable for ride height and attitude. Around town, ground clearance can be set low, like a conventional car. Off-road, the Splash rises to the occasion with enough clearance to negotiate rough and uneven terrain without bottoming for the best of both worlds.

The roof panel, side windows, and hatch are removable for a top-down feel. And like Plymouth's Speedster, wet suit material—in fluorescent blue with magenta accents—covers the interior surfaces. For safety, there is a built-in roll cage and four-point seatbelts. The Splash stretches 143 inches and sits on a 93-inch wheelbase. ■

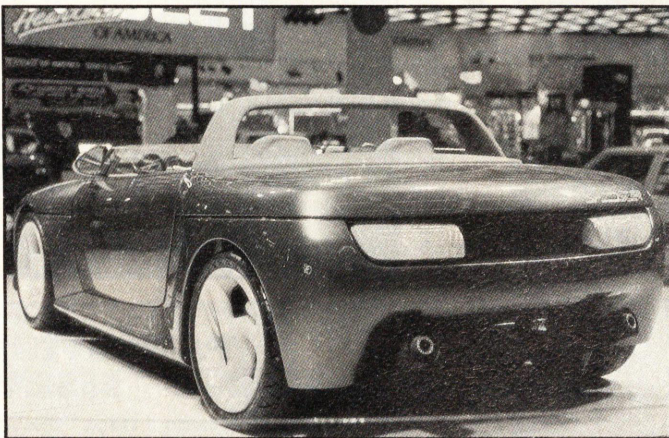
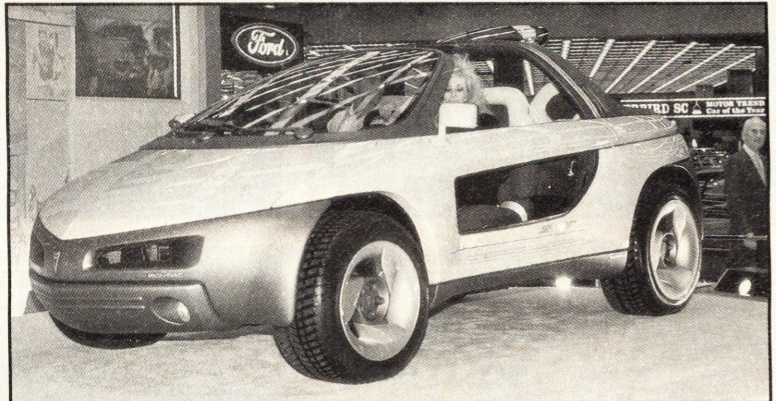


Beneath the steeply wedged bodywork and wild wheel/tire combination rests the heart of a Festiva. The engine sits under a cover with a clear insert (left), and the mudflaps are retractable. With its combination of sports car handling and off-road ability, the charming Splash would probably even wow the locals in Tokyo. Our kudos to the designers

## PONTIAC STINGER

Pontiac calls the Stinger an "attitude car." It should appeal to drivers under 35 years old, interested in sport-utility vehicles. But no Blazers for these folks.

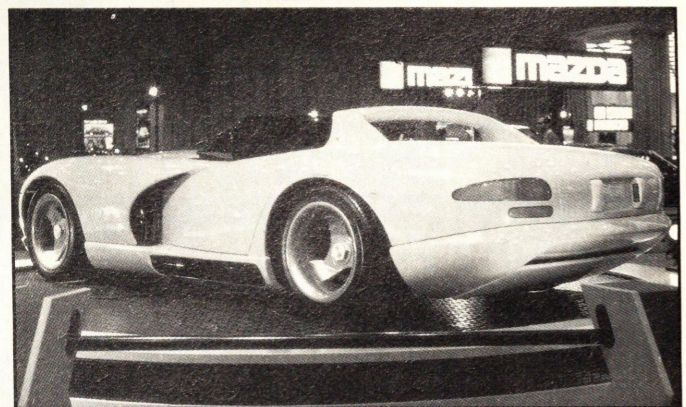
Powered by a 3.0-liter, 170 hp, 16-valve four-cylinder mated to the drivetrain from a 6000 STE AWD, the Stinger has seating for four and stowage for all sorts of, er, stuff. There's a pull-out radio with carrying case, hand-held vacuum, electrical extension cord, camp stove, flashlight, picnic table, tool box, first aid kit, sewing kit, dust pan—well, you get the idea. Call it a mobile, off-road Swiss Army knife. ■



Just what the doctor ordered to chase away the blues. Plymouth's Speedster takes the minimalism of motorcycling and applies it to a sports car. Frivolous, but a hit, to be sure



## DODGE VIPER R/T-10

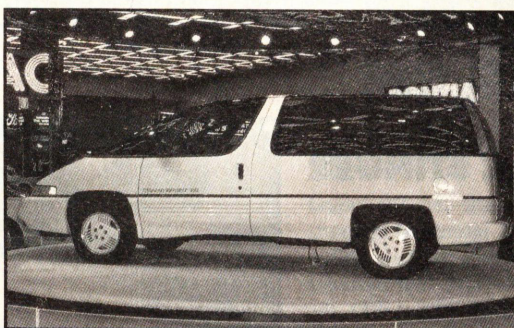
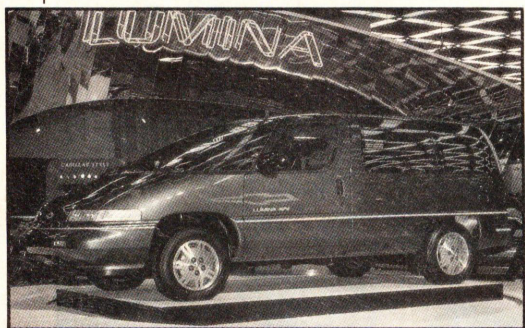


If Dodge or Carroll Shelby ever put this puppy into production, Chevy's ZR1 had better watch out. Powered by a tuned V10 truck engine, the Viper takes yestertech to its modern, performance car conclusion. No decision has been made to put the Viper into the fleet, but specialty manufacturers are anxious to build the car. Speed the day!





GM enters the popular minivan market with Silhouette (above), Lumina (below left), and Trans Sport. A Pininfarina-assisted design, the coated windshield keeps heat down and baby cool in traffic



## SILHOUETTE, LUMINA APV, TRANSPORT

Looking for all the world like a Detroit version of Disney World's monorail, GM's APV (All Purpose Vehicle) trio invaded Chrysler's fwd minivan territory. And Oldsmobile, if you listened to the Chevrolet dealers, had invaded theirs.

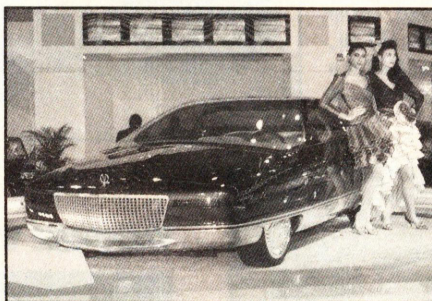
After intensive lobbying, Olds joined the APV brigade—much to the chagrin of Chevy dealers, who don't want to share what they see as their golden goose with yet another division. To separate the trio in the public's mind, GM has given each division an exclusive package.

Oldsmobile, as the upscale division, gets the leather interior option and seating for up to seven passengers. Pontiac's version is sportier and comes with lower bodyside cladding, and an SE version that has modular seating for six. Chevrolet, GM's bread and butter division, has an exclusive on the cargo version.

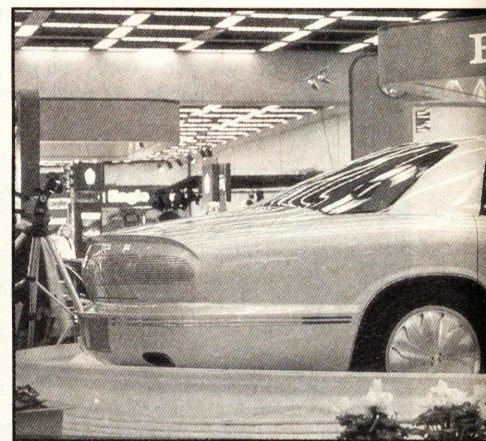
All exterior panels, except for the fenders and fascias, are made of fiberglass composites, and the side panels and roof are bonded to a galvanized steel space frame. ■

## CADILLAC SOLITAIRE

Despite disappointment over Solitaire's uninspired styling, the real news lurked under the hood. There, a 6.6-liter Lotus-engineered, 430 hp V12 that drives the rear wheels held court. Rumors have the engine powering the Lotus M300 supercar, and a rear-drive Cadillac coupe. The engineers should have told the designers about the Solitaire earlier, however, so they could build something other than a two-door Voyage with an Eldorado roofline. ■



From the front (above) the Cadillac Solitaire looks like last year's Voyage showmobile. The rear three-quarter view (below), however, molds "formal" with "aero" for an uninspired ending



## PARK AVENUE ESSENCE

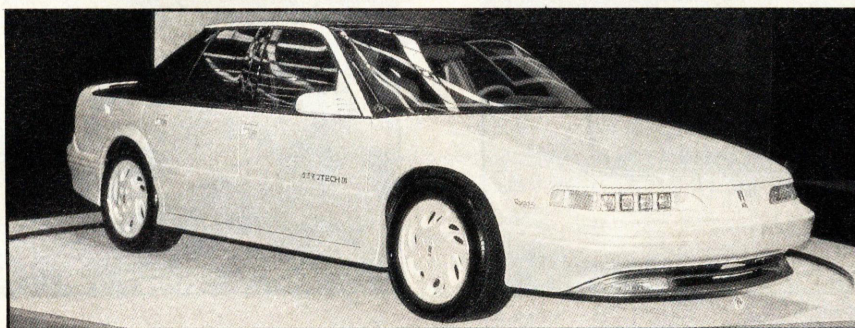
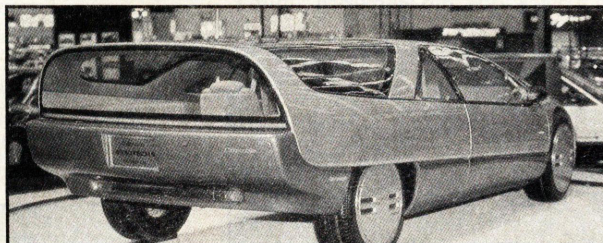
Named because it is the "essence of Buick's design future," the Park Avenue Essence is a large (210.1 inches) car with such niceties as power-operated footrests, indirect lighting, wraparound rear seat, and a color television for rear seat passengers.

Most living rooms should be this well appointed. When parked next to the Solitaire, the Essence proved that Buick can still show Cadillac a thing or two about pleasing luxury car design. ■

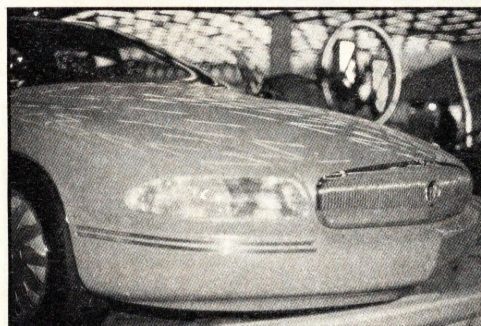
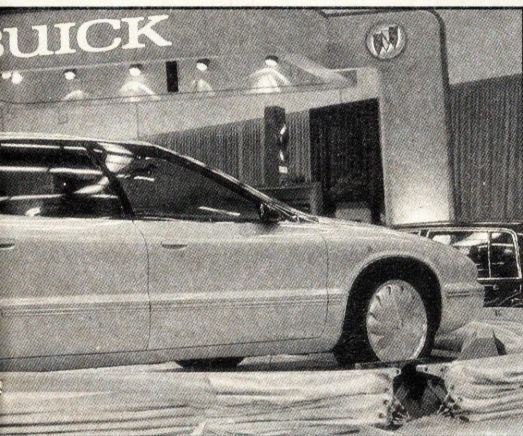
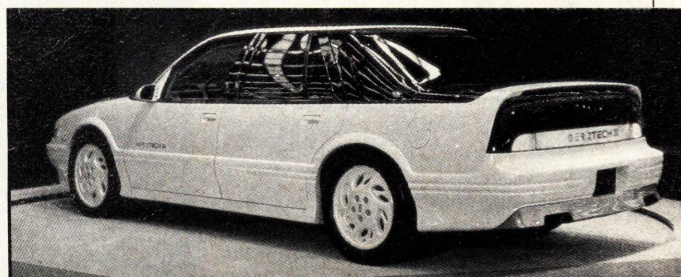




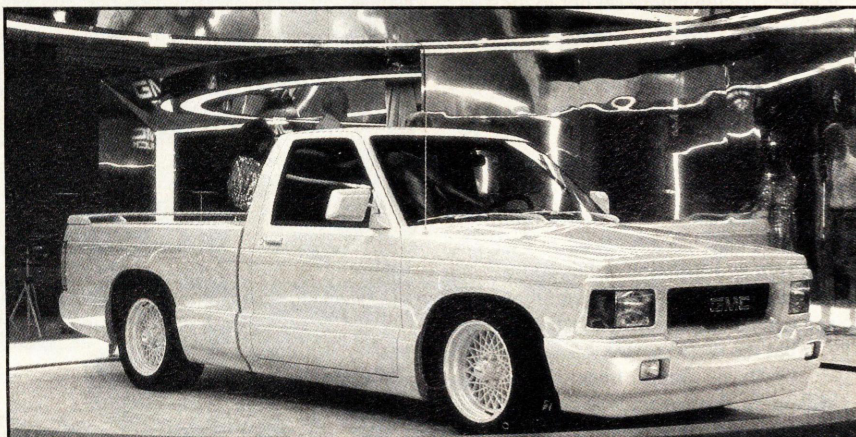
The stunning Aerotech II (above, right) is definitely not your father's Oldsmobile, which may be why it never made production. But its holographic center stoplight is now entering production on Pontiac's Grand Am



Aerotech III (above, right) shares only its name with the 267 mph Aerotech I. Basically a GM10 four-door, the concept Olds uses a vented wheel design that is echoed in the nose and mirrors.



Buick's Park Avenue Essence has "aggressive elegance." Powered by a 185 hp, 3.8-liter V6, it can do 0-60 mph in about 9.0 seconds



**GMC SYCLONE** GMC's Syclone should be the star of a movie called *The Engine That Wouldn't Die*. The S-15-based pickup is powered by a 270 hp, 3.8-liter V6 version of Buick's Grand National engine. Sitting on P245/50VR-16 Eagle GT tires, the truck will romp from 0-60 mph in under six seconds, and run the quarter-mile in 14 seconds at 103 mph. GMC has no firm production plans for the Syclone. ■

## OLDSMOBILE AEROTECH II, III

Oldsmobile showed a pair of Aerotech concept cars at Detroit, one for each end of the production spectrum.

The Aerotech II, powered by a 230 hp, supercharged version of the Quad 4 driving the front wheels, almost reached production as Oldsmobile's division-specific entry in the luxury car sweepstakes. But rather than dilute GM's efforts in that segment, the Aerotech II was let loose on the auto show circuit instead.

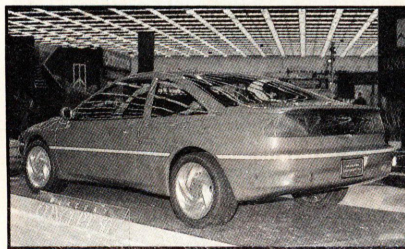
The large rear expanse of glass is hinged in the middle and opens—DeTomaso Mangusta style—to reveal a large cargo area. Below, a Honda CRX-like window gives an unobstructed rear view. The rest of the interior is done up Top Gun style, and would look at home in a flight simulator.

The Aerotech III, is a 1990 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme four-door hiding under a full loaf of gingerbread. Also powered by a supercharged Quad 4, the Aerotech III's silhouette, large rear lamps, and wraparound rear glass are straight from next year's production car. Of course, the show car has a rear-facing radar unit (that looks for obstructions when reversing), and Buck Rogers interior. But without the toys, Olds couldn't have shown it at Detroit. ■

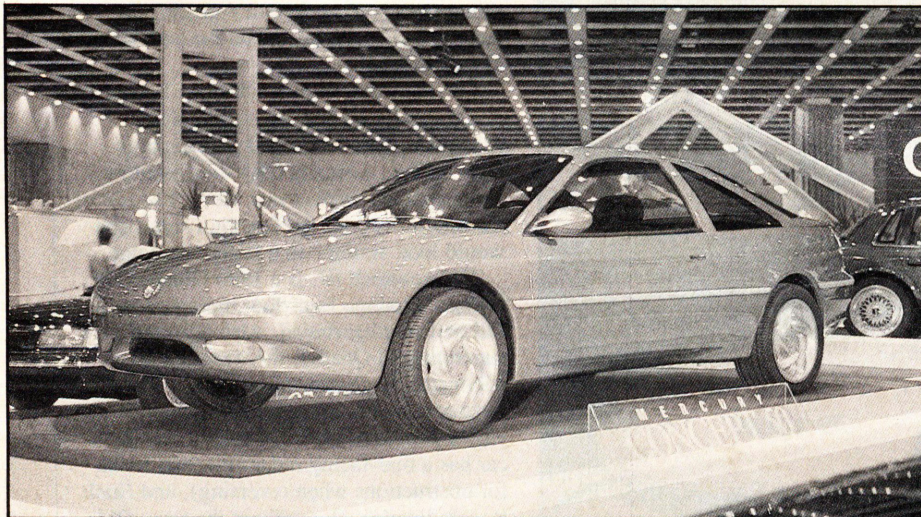


## MERCURY CONCEPT 50

About the same size as a Topaz two-door, the long-wheelbase Concept 50—a commemoration of Mercury's 50th anniversary—has a production car look. With an XR4Ti-like lower body and broad-shouldered stance, tightly drawn aerodynamic lines and European flair, the Concept 50 could be the replacement for Tempo/Topaz and Sierra (XR4Ti). ■

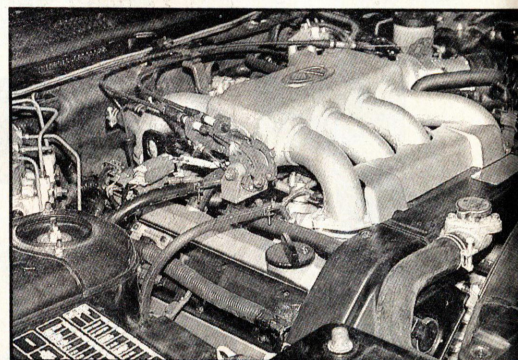


Rear says "Mercury" (above), but the side shape says "XR4Ti." Is Concept 50 a quick look into Mercury's future?



## Most Significant I INFINITI Q45

Most Detroiters probably thought *From Here to Eternity* best described the time that would elapse before a Japanese company would debut a new model in Motown. They were wrong. Nissan launched its Infiniti division in quiet style with the top-line Q45 taking center stage. Amid polite protestations from the European manufacturers that the Japanese don't have the prestige to compete in the luxury market, Infiniti executives smiled politely and went about their business, playing to a receptive crowd. Somehow it all sounds so familiar. ■



## Best in Show

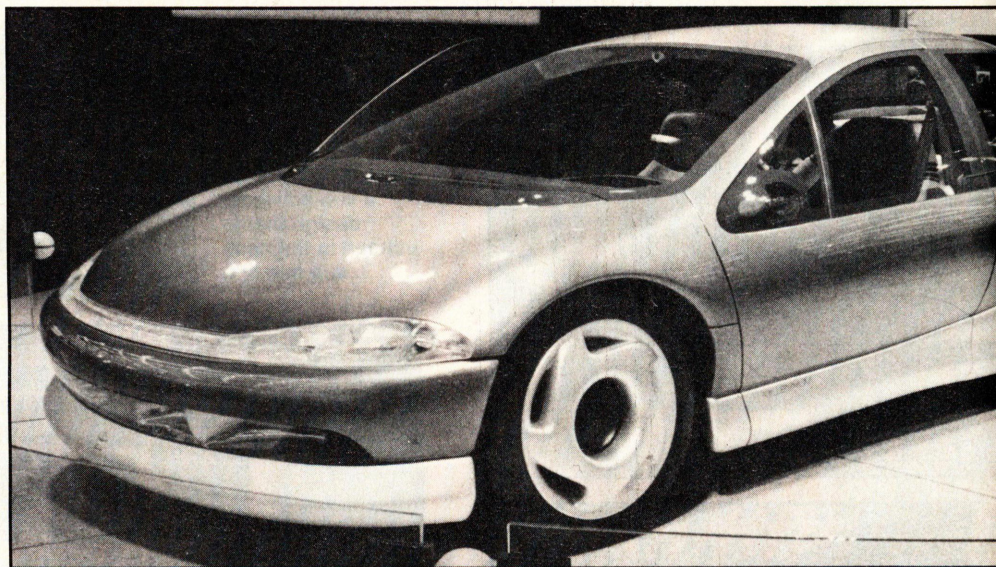
### CHRYSLER MILLENNIUM

Whoever said that safety doesn't sell didn't see it in a package as stylishly wrapped as Chrysler's Millennium.

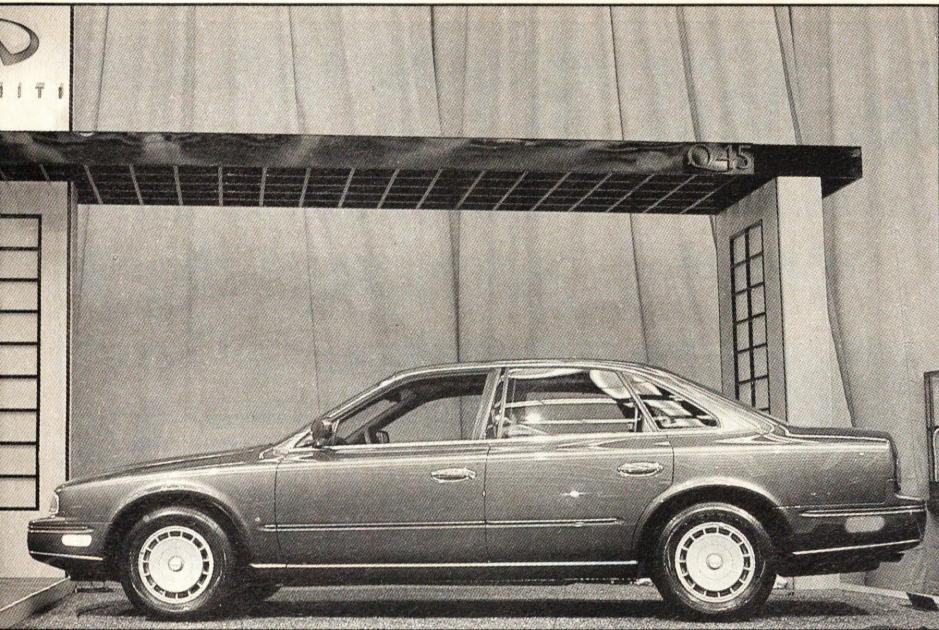
Using last year's Lamborghini Portofino show car as a starting point, Chrysler's Pacifica design studio set out to draw the definitive Chrysler shape of the 1990s. But the aerodynamic concept vehicle also serves as an example of how active and passive safety could be integrated into the cars of the mid-'90s.

Yes, the Millennium has airbags, ABS and rear seat head restraints. And it has some items that some of us would rather not see on future cars like rain-activated wipers, blind spot and collision radar, and a child safety seat that places junior at the same height as mom and dad. Just what the world needs, back seat drivers under three.

Millennium also has traction control, active suspension, front and rear vision enhancement, low tire/brake pad/fuel warnings, drunk driver interlock, head-up navigation display, and voice-activated controls. An electronics technician is optional. ■







## Debutant ball in Detroit intros latest excitement

### Twenty-five new models

The North American International Auto Show in Detroit marked the U.S. debut of a number of new automobiles. Appearing at dealers in the coming months:

- Audi: Audi V8
- Buick: Park Avenue Ultra
- Chevrolet: Lumina sedan and APV, Corvette ZR1
- Chrysler: Town and Country minivan
- Dodge: Spirit, Dakota convertible, Shelby CSX-VNT, Shelby Dakota V8
- Eagle: Talon
- Hyundai: Sonata
- Infiniti: M30 coupe and convertible, Q45
- Isuzu: Amigo
- Lexus: ES 250 and LS 400
- Mazda: MPV 4wd
- Mitsubishi: Eclipse
- Plymouth: Laser
- Pontiac: McLaren Turbo Grand Prix
- Porsche: 911 Carrera 4, 944 Cabrio, Speedster

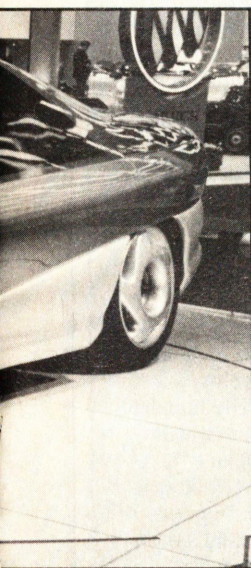
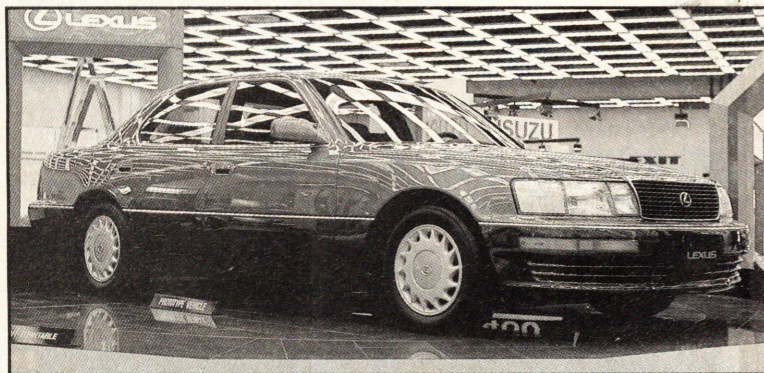
## Most Significant II LEXUS LS 400

Infiniti's Q45 (above) with its 4.5-liter, 32-valve, 270 hp V8 (left) and a 0-60 time just over 7.0 seconds emulates Coventry's luxury sedan both on the spec sheets and in the flesh. The Europeans claim to be unworried

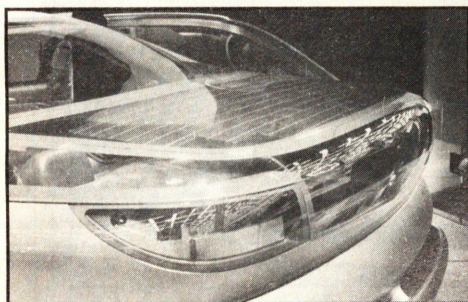
Lexus joined Infiniti in introducing its new line of cars in Detroit. Nissan used the lean, lithe lines of Jaguar's XJ6 for inspiration when drawing the Q45, but Toyota took a different tack. Germany provided the target for the LS 400, and Mercedes 300 overtones were evident.

Behind the scenes, however, all was not rosy.

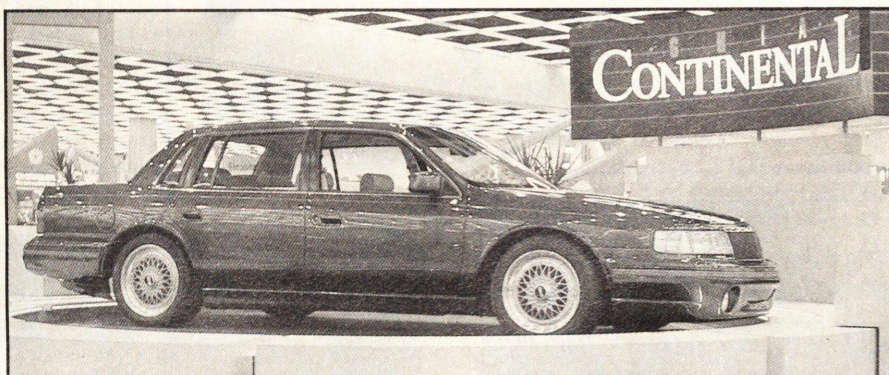
As the Detroit show opened, Mead Corp. and Toyota were in court over the Lexus name. Mead said that Toyota's use of the name infringes on its Lexis electronic library. One wag was heard to say that Toyota could save the Lexus logo—a stylized capital L in a circle—by changing the name of the company to Nose Motors. We figured that was a long way to go to blow a really bad pun. ■



Front or rear, the Millennium shows its Portofino heritage. The interior (below far left) is large, airy and modern. Solar cells (below) provide electrical power when the car is at rest or stopped



## LINCOLN CONTINENTAL GHIA



The Ghia Continental is more teaser than concept car. From the deep front spoiler to the wide, 225/50ZR-17 Pirelli P700-Z tires mounted on BBS wheels, this is one truly continental Continental. And imagining this car on the road will be very easy, if our sources are correct. Come 1992, a car very similar to this one should be on sale as the Continental LSC with power from a 4.6-liter, 225 hp, sohc V8. Upgraded brakes and a sport-tuned suspension will also be offered. As will the buttery leather interior