



Now that all of the cars have been returned to their rightful owners and the phone calls have died down to a normal 900 message units an hour, it's probably safe to tell the real story. It took some fast talking at the time though. How can you explain away two—which is to say all—of the Pinto's headlights stoned out, or the "graunch" emanating from its rear, once for every time the wheels go around. . . . And a Toyota Celica, also minus a pair of headlights, which has flung half of its wheel covers irretrievably into the weeds and displays scuff marks two-thirds of the way up the sidewalls of its Dunlops. . . . Or, for that matter, the Opel 1900 Rallye whose tires now have terminal flat spots. . . . Or the rock crease the size of a .50 caliber round across the leading edge of the Mazda's hood. All of that is not exactly routine wear and tear, not even for a C/D road test.

Of course, this wasn't exactly a routine test either. It was a comparison test, the closest one in our history, but that still doesn't account for the carnage. The five-lap feature at the end was what did it. We were at Bridgehampton finishing up the third day of serious evaluation—the first day was confined to the skid pad and drag strip at New York National Speedway, followed by a day on the expressways and patchy blacktops of Long Island—when one of the staff's imitation Fangios suggested a five-lapper, "just to see which one of the Super Coupes really is the super-est."

It turned out to be a free-style event.

Those of the Parnelli Jones school, partly to straighten out the corners and partly to keep a good supply of rocks in the air, invariably hung at least one wheel off the inside of every apex. The only driver with a clean record here was the guy in the Celica, who had so much understeer to contend with he could never fight his way down to the inside of a turn.

Once we got going, nobody wanted to stop. The weaving pack was finally red-flagged to a stop, well after the five laps were up, when the Pinto lost a front tire on the hard, downhill righthander into Echo Valley and ended up sideways in one of Bridgehampton's speed-arresting sand dunes, hence the graunch in the rear. The Capri was the winner. It out-deeped the Mazda into a turn and, even though the Mazda could pull it on Bridgehampton's long (.6-mile) front straight, the Capri gradually moved away. It wasn't the most powerful car in the test and there were contenders with as good or better side-bite in the turns, but it clearly had the best combination.

Still, there is more than that to a Super Coupe. There is a feeling about them, part of which no doubt comes from their low financial profiles. You can practice your calling as a late-braking specialist (or whatever) with minimum distraction when you know that if you miscalculate and write the whole machine off—even smash every transistor in its radio—it will cost your insurance company maybe \$2500. Nowadays when the median "family sedan" prices

out at something over four grand, the bean counters hardly flinch at the sight of a bent Super Coupe. Not that you buy cars to bend. You buy them to drive, which is what Super Coupes do best. They are light and compact and nimble. They don't need power steering or power seats or power doors to make them tolerable in the daily grind. All they require is a driver, somebody who knows an apex when he hits one, a guy that can heel-and-toe and keep the revs up. Super Coupes do everything sports cars do and at the same time they're more comfortable and less costly. They are as right for the times as the Mustang was in 1964.

To keep the ifs, ands, or buts to a minimum, this test is a side-by-side comparison of all the Super Coupes presently available in the U.S. There are six that fit the class, and none of them costs over \$3000 unless you feel the need for air conditioning. And not surprisingly, four of them are imports. The Capri, bolted together by both Ford of England and Ford of Germany and introduced in Europe in the spring of 1969, was the first in this class. It is essentially a scaled-down Mustang with long hood/short deck styling and, like the Mustang, it was a runaway success from the start. In Europe the engine options range from a 1.3-liter Four to a 3.0-liter V-6 but a 2.0-liter overhead cam Four is the largest powerplant currently shipped to the U.S. Naturally, that option was chosen for the test.

The Opel 1900 Rallye, known as the Manta in Germany, made its first appearance in Buick showrooms a year

ago, about six months after its European introduction. Mechanically it borrows heavily from past

Kadetts and the Opel GT but now the machinery is all encased in a GM Tech Center-inspired body. And the sum is far greater than any of the parts. The Rallye is a very together car.

The newest Super Coupe on the market is Toyota's Celica. Toyota is the fastest growing importer in the U.S. and has a reputation of introducing new models which are about twice as quiet and twice as vibration-free as the models they replace. You may have reservations about the Celica's Tokyo-

esque styling and J.C. Whitney bolt-on hood vents but, after you drive it, only admiration for its engineering.

If any of the Super Coupes can be considered a harbinger of things to come it is the Mazda RX-2. General Motors is expected to have Wankel engines in production by 1974; Mazda has them now. The only hassle is that if you want the engine of the future you had better set up residence in Canada, California, the Pacific Northwest, or the southern tier of states no farther up than North Carolina. That is, if you want spare parts and factory authorized service. Mazda intends to increase its number of dealers by 50% in the next year but will not be nationwide for some time. It's a pity. As a Super Coupe the RX-2 is a pulse quickener; those who expect the car to be a hastily assembled showcase for a trick engine are in for a big surprise.

It's natural that the importers would offer the widest

SUPER COUPE COMPARISON TEST

A SHOWDOWN FOR THE NEWEST BREED OF ENTHUSIAST CARS

OPEL 1900 RALLYE



MAZDA RX-2



CAPRI 2000



TOYOTA CELICA ST



VEGA GT



PINTO



1
2
3
4
5
6

range of Super Coupes—small cars (and sports cars) have been big business to them—but they are not without competition from Detroit. Chevrolet brought to bear on the Vega GT all the cleverness that has made it number one in the U.S. That division's smallest model has an optional engine, fat polyglass tires on wide styled wheels and a special handling package, all surrounded by the sleekest styling package this side of Turin. In fact, if picking the best Super Coupe were purely a matter of styling, the Vega would win without ever turning a wheel.

If any test car's credentials as a Super Coupe is in doubt it is the Pinto's. It might be more realistic to consider it a heavily optioned economy sedan. In its favor is price. Even with a window sticker full of options it was the least costly car in the test. But along with its low price the Pinto does have other Super Coupe attributes—the tilt-up rear door for example and the fold-down rear seat which certainly add extra dimensions to the capabilities of any small car. Also, the Pinto has an optional 2.0-liter overhead cam engine, the same one that puts the muscle in the Capri, which guarantees a level of performance in the Super Coupe range. With the wide A70-13 Goodyears to help the handling we felt the Pinto might qualify . . . at least we wanted to find out.

Right off, however, we found the Pinto was at a disadvantage: it's uncomfortable. You sit very low inside a wide cockpit on a firm, unnecessarily upright bucket seat. The ride is harsh too, particularly at the rear. It feels like the axle is making mountains out of mole hills on any roughly surfaced road and there is just enough rear wheel hop under those circumstances to discourage attempts at rapid transit. Surprisingly, not everyone is offended by this. Certain of the staff members—those who feel a compassion for old British sports cars—were openly defensive about the Pinto. They *like* the way it bounces and batters. To them it suggested the good old sports cars of the Fifties.

And not just the suspension, either. The Pinto claims to have both high and low level ventilation, but as in old Austin Healeys, your feet are in a dead air space—any refreshing breeze that you feel is more likely because the side windows are not properly closed than by design intent. If anything saves the Pinto for the enthusiastic driver it's the strong, eager engine and the brisk, short-throw shifter. But, unlike the Vega, there is no optional instrumentation package for the Pinto so you end up shifting by ear and letting your conscience be your guide.

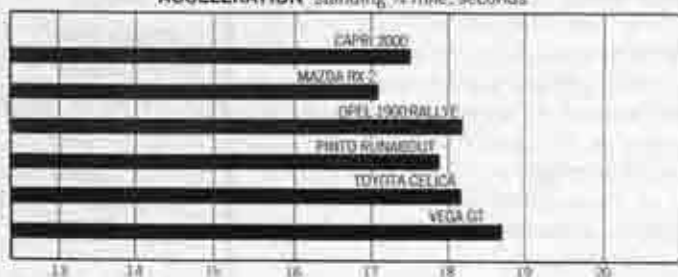
At the opposite extreme is the Opel—uncommonly well engineered for its price. It's German in the same way Porsches and BMW's are German. Sure, some of the wood trim and high-dollar leather upholstery of the aristocratic marques have been replaced with plastic, and the engine is a rudely cast, all-iron pushrod Four, but the Teutonic automotive know-how is still there. The engine has manners. It whirrs like a BMW and it never shakes the car. The suspension is German too. It tends to be harsh—the shocks are stiffer than necessary for American roads—but the ride is well controlled and the car never floats or wallows. It's reassuring; we like it that way.

We like the way the driver fits in the car, too. Again like Mercedes and BMW cars, the Opel has a high greenhouse—lots of glass. It's bright and airy inside and you have control tower visibility. The seat is high and softly padded and almost perfect in profile for all of our drivers. Unfortunately, it has no lateral support whatsoever.

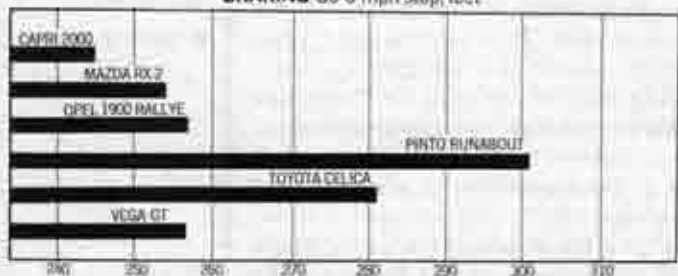
The driver's controls—steering, brakes and shifter—are

The Super Coupes don't need power steering or power seats or power doors to make them tolerable in the daily grind. All they really require is a driver.

ACCELERATION standing 1/4 mile, seconds



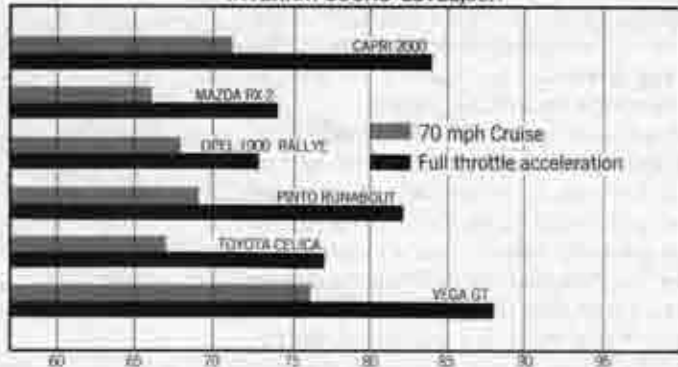
BRAKING 80-0 mph stop, feet



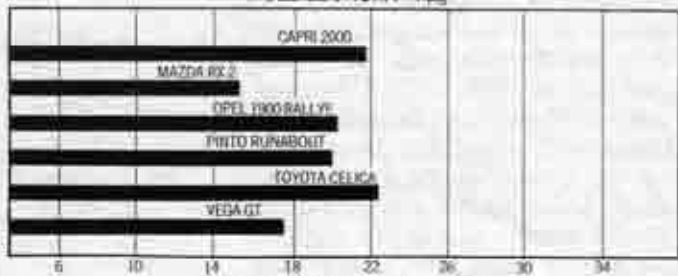
LATERAL ACCELERATION 200 ft. Skidpad, G's



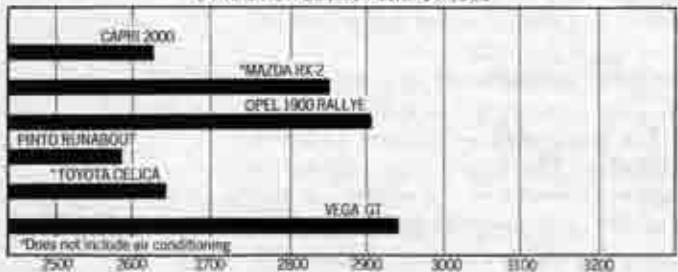
INTERIOR SOUND LEVEL, dbA



FUEL ECONOMY mpg



PRICE AS TESTED dollars x 1000



*Does not include air conditioning

all well located and light to the touch. The latter is surely a function of the Opel's low overall weight. It was the largest car in the test—171.0 inches overall length, 3.2 inches longer than the Vega—yet it was also the lightest, weighing only 2125 lbs. with a full tank of fuel. And the lightness in no way results from the deletion of important equipment. The Rallye has a full complement of gauges including a large tachometer mounted directly before the driver and an excellent sound absorption package. In fact, the Opel is the quietest of all the cars under full throttle.

For absolute silence, however, there is no match for the Mazda. The Wankel engine, with its low unbalance and its soft power pulses, deserves the credit. At highway speeds the RX-2 moves along with a velvety silence that is just not possible with the usual rough running in-line Four. None of the body panels buzz and the steering wheel doesn't tingle your fingers. At 70 mph the Mazda's interior sound level is only 66 decibels, one dbA (a noticeable amount) better than the Toyota, the next closest competitor, and a full 10 dbA better than the Vega.

The Mazda is one of those intricate cars that would be appealing even with a conventional engine. The car itself is tall and narrow, and, while it's smoothly sculptured, the shape is maybe one generation behind contemporary Japanese thought on the subject of car design. Inside, the front bucket seats are high, firm and rather flat and they position the driver for a commanding view of the black crackly instrument panel, finely detailed with chrome. It looks like a good piece of equipment, perhaps the front of a 28 band transoceanic radio. And right up front is the tachometer, redlined at 7000 rpm.

It's a car of sensations. The engine is quiet at idle but there is a certain roughness which eerily melts away as the revs pick up. The sounds of the exhaust, however, are those which should not be imitated in polite company. It has a wide repertoire of pops and snorts for low speed operation, all of which are replaced by a high-pressure aerosol hiss under full throttle. When coasting down, particularly if the throttle is held partially open, it occasionally lets go with a backfire that strongly suggests the need for a scatter shield around the muffler. For emission control, the Mazda uses a thermal after-burner—a device that will probably reach common usage on Detroit cars by 1975, and will put an end to the sharp and uncongested sports car exhaust note we've all known and loved. At least it will if the Mazda is any indication. The only good thing about all of these funny noises is that the driver can't hear them. They are all blown out behind. Instead, you can concentrate on the steering (which is extremely tight on center), and on the squarest-edged shift pattern in all the land.

Apart from its powerplant wonders, the Mazda has two other remarkable features. One is its flow-through ventilation system. It's so good that at 70 mph the wind roars out of the dash vents. And even if those openings are shut the outlets around the rear windows make a substantial contribution to the interior noise level. It's easily the best (and loudest) interior ventilation system we've ever encountered. The other Mazda feature we like and wish other manufacturers would imitate is the passenger-side seat back release. To get out, the rear seat passenger merely presses on a pedal which not only allows the back rest to fold forward but slides the whole seat ahead as well. And the system has a memory; when you push the seat back, it returns to its original position. It is a device of real value.

The Celica has its share of value too, and most of it is



It was inevitable that at some time during a Super Coupe test a race around Bridgehampton had to be held to discover which was the super-est.

SUPER COUPES COMPARED

ON THE STREET

(rated from a maximum of 6 to 1)

	Capri	Mazda	Opel	Pinto	Toyota	Vega
Front seat comfort	3	2	4	1	5	6
Ride quality	3	4	5	1	6	2
Noise	2	6	4	3	5	1
Ventilation	4	6	3	1	5	2
Visibility	3	5	6	1	4	2
Steering effort	4	5	6	2	1	3
Fuel economy	5	1	4	3	6	2

Street rating	24	29	32	12	32	18
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ON THE TRACK

	Capri	Mazda	Opel	Pinto	Toyota	Vega
Acceleration	5	6	2	4	3	1
Braking	6	5	3	1	2	4
Handling	4	2	5	3	1	6
Road Course	6	5	4	2	1	3
Controls & Instrumentation (location and precision)	3	4	6	1	5	2

Track rating	24	22	20	11	12	16
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BEST OVERALL	48	51	52	23	44	34
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OPEL 1900 RALLYE

Importer: Buick Division
General Motors Corporation
Flint, Michigan 48550

Vehicle type: Front engine, rear-wheel-drive, 4-passenger, 2-door coupe

Price as tested: \$2906.28

(Manufacturer's suggested retail price, including all options listed below, federal excise tax, dealer preparation and delivery charges, does not include state and local taxes, license or freight charges)

Options on test car: Opel 1900 Rallye, \$2828.37, vinyl roof, \$77.91

ENGINE

Type: 4-in-line, water-cooled, cast iron block and head, 5 main bearings

Bore x stroke	3.66 x 2.75 in, 93.0 x 69.8 mm
Displacement	115.8 cu in, 1900 cc
Compression ratio	7.0 to one
Carburetion	1 x 2-bbl
Valve gear	Chain-driven stem-in-head, hydraulic lifters
Power (SAE net)	75 bhp @ 4300 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	100 lbs-ft @ 2600 rpm
Specific power output	0.65 bhp/cu in, 39.5 bhp/liter
Max recommended engine speed	6200 rpm

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission	4-speed, all-synchr		
Final drive ratio	3.67 to one		
Gear	Ratio	Mph/1000 rpm	Max. test speed
I	3.43	3.6	35 mph (6300 rpm)
II	2.16	5.8	56 mph (6300 rpm)
III	1.37	14.0	88 mph (6300 rpm)
IV	1.00	19.2	100 mph (5200 rpm)

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase	95.7 in
Track, F/R	52.4/52.0 in
Length	171.0 in
Width	64.3 in
Height	53.3 in
Ground clearance	6.7 in
Curb weight	2125 lbs
Weight distribution, F/R	53.9/46.1%
Battery capacity	12 volts, 44 amp-hr
Alternator capacity	392 watts
Fuel capacity	11.9 gal
Oil capacity	2.9 qts
Water capacity	8.0 qts

SUSPENSION

F: Ind., unequal length control arms, coil springs, anti-sway bar

R: Rigid axle, tandem tube, two trailing arms, panhard rod, coil springs, anti-sway bar

STEERING

Type	Rack and pinion
Turns lock-to-lock	4.1
Turning circle curb-to-curb	32.3 ft

BRAKES

F	9.4-in disc, power assisted
R	9.1 x 2.0-in cast iron drum, power assisted

WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size	13 x 5.0-in
Wheel type	Styled, stamped steel, 4-bolt
Tire make and size	Goodyear 165-13R-45-13
Tire type	Tubeless, bias ply
Test inflation pressures, F/R	23/26 psi
Tire load rating	670 lbs per tire @ 32 psi

PERFORMANCE

Zero to	Seconds
30 mph	3.2
40 mph	5.3
50 mph	8.0
60 mph	11.6
70 mph	16.0
80 mph	22.3
90 mph	32.0
Standing 1/4 mile	18.2 sec @ 73.8 mph
Top speed (observed)	100 mph
80-0 mph	257 ft (0.83 G)
Fuel mileage	avg. 20.4 mpg on regular fuel
Cruising range	240 mi



MAZDA RX-2

Importer: Mazda Motors of America
2063 East 23rd Street
Long Beach, California 90810

Vehicle type: Front engine, rear-wheel-drive, 4-passenger, 2-door coupe

Price as tested: \$2852.00*

(Manufacturer's suggested retail price, including all options listed below, Federal excise tax, dealer preparation and delivery charges, does not include state and local taxes, license or freight charges)

Options on test car: Mazda RX-2, \$2750.00; Dealer preparation, \$50.00; AM radio, \$52.00; Air conditioning, \$358.00

*Does not include air conditioning.

ENGINE

Type: Two-rotor Wankel, aluminum rotor chambers, cast iron center and end plates, water cooled

Displacement	35.0 cu in/chamber x 2 chambers
Compression ratio	9.4 to one
Carburetion	1 x 4-bbl
Power (SAE)	120 bhp @ 7000 rpm
Torque (SAE)	110 lbs-ft @ 4000 rpm
Max recommended engine speed	7000 rpm

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission	4-speed, all-synchr		
Final drive ratio	3.90 to one		
Gear	Ratio	Mph/1000 rpm	Max. test speed
I	3.68	4.7	33 mph (7000 rpm)
II	2.26	7.6	53 mph (7000 rpm)
III	1.38	12.5	87 mph (7000 rpm)
IV	1.00	17.2	107 mph (6200 rpm)

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase	97.0 in
Track, F/R	51.0/50.0 in
Length	163.0 in
Width	62.0 in
Height	55.0 in
Ground clearance	6.0 in
Curb weight	2325 lbs
Weight distribution, F/R	54.9/45.1%
Battery capacity	12 volts, 60 amp-hr
Alternator capacity	480 watts
Fuel capacity	17.3 gal
Oil capacity	4.8 qts
Water capacity	8.4 qts

SUSPENSION

F: Ind., MacPherson strut, coil springs, anti-sway bar

R: Rigid axle, four trailing links, panhard rod, coil springs

STEERING

Type	Variable ratio recirculating ball
Turns lock-to-lock	4.4
Turning circle curb-to-curb	30.5 ft

BRAKES

F	9.6-in solid disc, power assisted
R	7.9 x 1.3-in cast iron drum, power assisted

WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size	13 x 4.5-in
Wheel type	Styled, stamped steel, 4-bolt
Tire make and size	Bridgestone 165 SR 13
Tire type	Tubeless, radial ply
Test inflation pressures, F/R	24/24 psi
Tire load rating	1010 lbs per tire @ 32 psi

PERFORMANCE

Zero to	Seconds
30 mph	2.7
40 mph	6.6
50 mph	6.6
60 mph	9.5
70 mph	12.8
80 mph	18.8
90 mph	22.1
Standing 1/4 mile	17.1 sec @ 80.5 mph
Top speed (observed)	107 mph
80-0 mph	254 ft (0.84 G)
Fuel mileage	avg. 15.3 mpg on regular fuel
Cruising range	260 mi



CAPRI 2000

Importer: Lincoln-Mercury Division
Ford Motor Co.,
3000 Schriber Road,
Dearborn, Michigan 48121

Vehicle type: Front engine, rear-wheel-drive, 4-passenger, 2-door coupe

Price as tested: \$2695.30

(Manufacturer's suggested retail price, including all options listed below, Federal excise tax, dealer preparation and delivery charges, does not include state and local taxes, license or freight charges)

Options on test car: Base Capri, \$2395.00; 2000cc engine, \$30.10; Decor group, \$119.20; AM radio, \$61.00

ENGINE

Type: 4-in-line, water-cooled, cast iron block and head, 5 main bearings

Bore x stroke	3.58 x 3.03 in, 90.8 x 77.0 mm
Displacement	122.0 cu in, 2000 cc
Compression ratio	9.0 to one
Carburetion	1 x 2-bbl Weber
Valve gear	Ball-driven single overhead cam
Power (SAE)	100 bhp @ 5600 rpm
Torque (SAE)	120 lbs-ft @ 3600 rpm
Specific power output	0.82 bhp/cu in, 50.0 bhp/liter

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission	4-speed, all-synchr		
Final drive ratio	3.44 to one		
Gear	Ratio	Mph/1000 rpm	Max. test speed
I	3.65	5.4	33 mph (6100 rpm)
II	1.95	10.0	61 mph (6100 rpm)
III	1.35	14.5	88 mph (6100 rpm)
IV	1.00	19.5	105 mph (5400 rpm)

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase	100.8 in
Track, F/R	52.0/53.0 in
Length	167.8 in
Width	64.8 in
Height	50.9 in
Ground clearance	5.5 in
Curb weight	2205 lbs
Weight distribution, F/R	53.7/46.3%
Battery capacity	12 volts, 55 amp-hr
Alternator capacity	420 watts
Fuel capacity	12.0 gal
Oil capacity	3.1 qts
Water capacity	8.4 qts

SUSPENSION

F: Ind., MacPherson strut, coil springs, anti-sway bar

R: Rigid axle, two trailing links, semi-elliptic leaf springs

STEERING

Type	Rack and pinion
Turns lock-to-lock	3.4
Turning circle curb-to-curb	33.2 ft

BRAKES

F	9.6-in disc, power assist
R	9.0 x 1.8-in cast iron drum, power assist

WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size	13 x 5.0-in
Wheel type	Stamped, styled steel, 4-bolt
Tire make and size	Plymouth P100 165 SR 13
Tire type	Tubeless, radial ply
Test inflation pressures, F/R	27/31 psi
Tire load rating	1080 lbs per tire @ 36 psi

PERFORMANCE

Zero to	Seconds
30 mph	2.8
40 mph	4.8
50 mph	7.1
60 mph	10.0
70 mph	14.0
80 mph	19.5
90 mph	23.5
Standing 1/4 mile	17.5 sec @ 27.0 mph
Top speed (observed)	105 mph
80-0 mph	245 ft (0.87 G)
Fuel mileage	avg. 21.8 mpg on regular fuel
Cruising range	260 mi



TOYOTA CELICA

Importer: Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.
2055 West 190 Street
Torrance, California 90501

Vehicle type: Front engine, rear-wheel-drive, 4-passenger, 2-door coupe

Price as tested: \$2648.00*

(Manufacturer's suggested retail price, including all options listed below, Federal excise tax, dealer preparation and delivery charges, does not include state and local taxes, license or freight charges)

Options on test car: Toyota Celica, \$2598.00; Air conditioning, \$345.00; AM radio, \$50.00
*Does not include air conditioning

ENGINE

Type: 4-in-line, water-cooled, cast iron block and head, 5 main bearings

Bore x stroke	3.30 x 3.15 in, 86.0 x 80.0 mm
Displacement	113.4 cu in, 1860cc
Compression ratio	9.0 to one
Carburetor	1 x 2-bbl
Valve gear	Chain-driven single overhead cam, mechanical lifters
Power (SAE net)	108 bhp @ 5500 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	117 lbs-ft @ 3600 rpm
Specific power output	0.95 bhp/cu in, 58.1 bhp/liter
Max recommended engine speed	6300 rpm

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission	4-speed, all-synchr		
Final drive ratio	3.70 to one		
Gear	Ratio	Mph/1000rpm	Max. test speed
I	2.88	5.1	32 mph (6300 rpm)
II	2.08	8.7	55 mph (6300 rpm)
III	1.40	13.0	82 mph (6300 rpm)
IV	1.00	18.2	100 mph (5500 rpm)

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase	95.5 in
Track, F/R	50.4/50.6 in
Length	164.0 in
Width	63.0 in
Height	52.0 in
Ground clearance	6.9 in
Curb weight	2310 lbs
Weight distribution, F/R	58.9/41.1 %
Battery capacity	12 volts, 50 amp-hr
Alternator capacity	480 watts
Fuel capacity	13.0 gal
Oil capacity	4.6 qts
Water capacity	8.4 qts

SUSPENSION

F: Ind., MacPherson strut, coil springs, anti-dive bar
R: Rigid axle, 4 trailing links, Panhard rod, coil springs

STEERING

Type	Recirculating ball, variable ratio
Turns lock-to-lock	4.2
Turning circle (curb-to-curb)	31.5 ft

BRAKES

F:	9.1-in solid disc, power assisted
R:	9.0 x 1.6-in cast iron drum, power assisted

WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size	13 x 4.5-in
Wheel type	Stamped steel, 4-bolt
Tire make and size	Clontop 155 SR 13
Tire type	Radial, tube type
Test inflation pressures, F/R	24/24 psi
Tire load rating	1080 lbs per tire @ 36 psi

PERFORMANCE

Zero to	Seconds
30 mph	3.0
40 mph	5.2
50 mph	7.8
60 mph	11.5
70 mph	15.7
80 mph	21.7
90 mph	39.0
Standing 1/4-mile	18.2 sec @ 74.6 mph
Top speed (estimated)	103 mph
80-0 mph	281 ft (0.76 G)
Fuel mileage	avg. 22.7 mpg on premium fuel
Cruising range	290 mi



VEGA GT

Manufacturer: Chevrolet Motor Division
General Motors Corporation
Detroit, Michigan 48202

Vehicle type: Front engine, rear-wheel-drive, 4-passenger, 2-door coupe

Price as tested: \$2946.20

(Manufacturer's suggested retail price, including all options listed below, Federal excise tax, dealer preparation and delivery charges, does not include state and local taxes, license or freight charges)

Options on test car: Base Vega coupe, \$2196.00; GT package, \$349.20; custom interior, \$115.35; rear window defroster, \$54.00; 4-speed transmission, \$52.95; tinted glass, \$37.05; AM radio, \$61.15; paint stripe, \$47.65; swing-out rear window, \$32.85

ENGINE

Type: 4-in-line, water-cooled, aluminum block and cast iron head, 5 main bearings

Bore x stroke	3.50 x 3.62 in, 88.8 x 91.8 mm
Displacement	140 cu in, 2300 cc
Compression ratio	8.00 to one
Carburetor	1 x 2-bbl
Valve gear	Belt-driven single overhead cam
Power (SAE net)	90 bhp @ 4800 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	138 lbs-ft @ 3200 rpm
Specific power output	0.64 bhp/cu in, 45.0 bhp/liter
Max recommended engine speed	5500 rpm

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission	4-speed, all-synchr		
Final drive ratio	3.38 to one		
Gear	Ratio	Mph/1000rpm	Max. test speed
I	3.43	6.2	34 mph (5500 rpm)
II	2.16	9.8	53 mph (5500 rpm)
III	1.37	13.4	85 mph (5500 rpm)
IV	1.00	21.1	95 mph (4500 rpm)

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase	97.0 in
Track, F/R	55.1/54.1 in
Length	169.7 in
Width	65.4 in
Height	51.9 in
Ground clearance	4.6 in
Curb weight	2440 lbs
Weight distribution, F/R	52.9/47.1 %
Battery capacity	12 volts, 45 amp-hr
Alternator capacity	448 watts
Fuel capacity	11.0 gal
Oil capacity	3.0 qts
Water capacity	6.5 qts

SUSPENSION

F: Ind., unequal length control arms, coil springs, anti-dive bar
R: Rigid axle, 4 trailing links, coil springs, anti-dive bar

STEERING

Type	Recirculating ball
Turns lock-to-lock	4.5
Turning circle (curb-to-curb)	33.0 ft

BRAKES

F:	9.6-in disc
R:	9.0 x 1.2-in cast iron drum

WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size	13.0 x 6.0-in
Wheel type	Styled, stamped steel, 4-bolt
Tire make and size	Goodyear A70-13
Tire type	Tubeless, fiberglass belted
Test inflation pressures, F/R	24/24 psi
Tire load rating	1060 lbs per tire @ 32 psi

PERFORMANCE

Zero to	Seconds
30 mph	3.5
40 mph	5.7
50 mph	8.6
60 mph	12.2
70 mph	17.2
80 mph	25.7
90 mph	40.0
Standing 1/4-mile	18.7 sec @ 72.3 mph
Top speed (observed)	95 mph
80-0 mph	253 ft (0.83G)
Fuel mileage	avg. 17.6 mpg on regular fuel
Cruising range	190 mi



PINTO RUNABOUT

Manufacturer: Ford Division
Ford Motor Company
Rotunda Drive
Dearborn, Michigan 48121

Vehicle type: Front engine, rear-wheel-drive, 4-passenger, 2-door coupe

Price as tested: \$2595.00

(Manufacturer's suggested retail price, including all options listed below, Federal excise tax, dealer preparation and delivery charges, does not include state and local taxes, license or freight charges)

Options on test car: Pinto Runabout, \$2067.00; 2000cc Engine, \$50.00; Disc brakes, \$32.00; A70-13 tires, \$87.00; AM radio, \$61.00; Console with clock, \$42.00; Luxury door group, \$118.00; Protection group, \$68.00; Fold-down rear seat, \$36.00; Flipper quarter window, \$29.00

ENGINE

Type: 4-in-line, water-cooled, cast iron block and head, 5 main bearings

Bore x stroke	3.58 x 3.03 in, 90.8 x 77.0 mm
Displacement	122.0 cu in, 2000cc
Compression ratio	8.2 to one
Carburetor	1 x 2-bbl
Valve gear	Belt-driven single overhead cam
Power (SAE net)	86 bhp @ 5400 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	103 lbs-ft @ 3200 rpm
Specific power output	0.70 bhp/cu in, 43.0 bhp/liter

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission	4-speed, all-synchr		
Final drive ratio	2.55 to one		
Gear	Ratio	Mph/1000rpm	Max. test speed
I	3.55	5.5	30 mph (5480 rpm)
II	1.97	10.1	55 mph (5480 rpm)
III	1.37	14.6	79 mph (5400 rpm)
IV	1.00	20.0	97 mph (4850 rpm)

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase	94.0 in
Track, F/R	55.0/55.0 in
Length	163.0 in
Width	69.4 in
Height	50.1 in
Ground clearance	5.1 in
Curb weight	2220 lbs
Weight distribution, F/R	55.2/44.8 %
Battery capacity	12 volts, 45 amp-hr
Alternator capacity	532 watts
Fuel capacity	11.0 gal
Oil capacity	3.0 qts
Water capacity	7.0 qts

SUSPENSION

F: Ind., unequal length control arms, coil springs
R: Rigid axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs

STEERING

Type	Rock and pinion
Turns lock-to-lock	4.1
Turning circle (curb-to-curb)	31.7 ft

BRAKES

F:	9.3-in vented disc
R:	9.0 x 1.4-in cast iron drum

WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size	13 x 5.0-in
Wheel type	Stamped steel, 4-bolt
Tire make and size	Goodyear A70-13
Tire type	Belted, tubeless
Test inflation pressures, F/R	24/24 psi
Tire load rating	1060 lbs per tire @ 32 psi

PERFORMANCE

Zero to	Seconds
30 mph	2.9
40 mph	5.0
50 mph	7.6
60 mph	11.3
70 mph	15.4
80 mph	21.2
90 mph	29.5
Standing 1/4-mile	17.9 sec @ 75.2 mph
Top speed (observed)	97 mph
80-0 mph	301 ft (0.71G)
Fuel mileage	avg. 20.0 mpg on regular fuel
Cruising range	246 mi



The Super Coupes are a future generation of enthusiast cars. Right now you can get anything from an overhead cam Four to a Wankel—and you get it, fully equipped, for under \$3000.

integrated into the basic car. Even though it is a hardtop body style, the structure is extremely solid—there is none of the cowl shake you experience in the Vega or Pinto—and the sound deadening is so good that, at idle, the interior noise level is only 43 dbA, 3 dbA less than the Mazda under the same conditions and 12 dbA less than the Capri, the loudest of the group.

The Celica is one of those exceedingly competent cars that will probably never be fully appreciated. Not only is it silent, but it is the most economical in terms of fuel, the controls are precise, the shifter is excellent, the cloth-and-vinyl covered front buckets are extremely comfortable (some thought the best of the group) and have more lateral support than most true sports cars. In addition, the dash is fully instrumented with precisely marked gauges, ventilation is better than all but the Mazda, and the car has good directional stability on all kinds of roads. Even so, after one test run, most of the staff members shied away from the Toyota. Young ladies we encountered along the way thought it was terrific, but the men had other ideas. Most of the negative reaction has to do with styling—which has so many stripes, swoopy swan emblems and chrome fins that it looks like a cartoon car—and handling, which we'll talk about later.

We've always thought of the Vega as a well engineered car but many of its virtues are blocked by some equally impressive vices. For one thing, it's noisy—the noisiest car in the test—and most of it can be blamed on the long stroke Four which vibrates the hell out of the car. Under full-throttle acceleration, there is a period at 4800 rpm (47 mph in second and 74 in third) that registers a full 88 dbA at the driver's ear and that, friends and neighbors, is *NOISE*. None of the other test cars were even close. And the Vega is considerably noisier than the others at a constant 70 mph too. The really sad part about this is that the Vega has an elaborate sound package—a thick blanket under the hood, padding under the carpet and deadening material stuck onto many of the body's underpanels, all of which contribute to it being the heaviest and slowest car in the test—and it's still noisy.

As a driver, you sit low in the Vega. This particular car had the optional, cloth-covered, full foam bucket seats which are so inviting and compliant they would enhance the ambiance of any Madison Avenue cocktail lounge. A standard part of every Vega GT is a fully instrumented dashboard and a soft, molded, 4-spoke Porsche-style steering wheel. Unfortunately, the latter blocks a good deal of the former. Something seemed to be blocking off the outlet for the flow-through ventilation too, because one of the rear windows had to be flipped open to make the system work, and even then, the driver's feet were always hot. Taken all together, the Vega is not as kind to its driver as it should be. Its ride quality is smooth enough on expressways but it gets very jouncy in the rough, and the cockpit environment suffers in comparison to its imported competitors.

The Capri is not much better. It's noisy too, exceeded only by the Vega, and the two cars are very similar in ride quality. To the driver, the Capri has a very Mustang-like feeling. You sit low inside, looking out over a broad, flat hood, and glass area is smaller than the other Super Coupes—although you don't quite have the sensation of looking at the world through a mail slot like you do in the Mustang. Controls end up being both the best and worst

(Continued on page 68)

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SUPER COUPES COMPARISON

(Continued from page 32)

parts of the Capri. Through the padded-rim steering wheel you feel a really direct and friction-free rack-and-pinion gear—as good as any sports car ever possessed—and the shifter is quick and sure. But the accelerator is a trial. The first eighth-inch of travel gets you from 0 to 50 mph, which makes it a little tricky to order up exactly what you want, particularly when you are just starting away . . . it ends up sounding like a student driver is at the wheel. In cruising, the throttle's quickness makes it doubly difficult because, in addition to its non-linear response, the pedal is very close to the driver, so close that there is nothing to support his leg. He has to hold it as steady as he can for the duration of the trip.

The Capri qualified as a Super Coupe by virtue of its body style and its performance—certainly not because of its comprehensive instrumentation package. There is nothing there that you wouldn't find in a Mercury Marquis. In Europe, there is a complete instrument option including a tach, but Lincoln-Mercury, the import division of the Ford Motor Company, can't be bothered with that on U.S. cars. For some reason however, the plastic, between-the-seats console is brought in, which has as its only moving part a small electric clock way down there by your ankle. (Those of you who were hoping for some kind of tunnel top storage compartment—like in the Toyota and Mazda and Opel—are out of luck.)

Where the Capri shines is in performance. It had the best brakes in the test, stopping from 80 mph in 245 feet (0.87G), and it scored high in both acceleration and handling. But the acceleration part deserves some explanation. The Capri was the only 1971 model in the test—all of the others were '72s. In almost all respects however, the '71 is identical to the '72. The only significant difference is in the engine. The '72 models have to meet tougher emission laws and therefore will have slightly less horsepower in most cases. Still, we think this only partially explains the Capri's acceleration superiority over the Pinto. Although the 2.0-liter engines are ostensibly the same for both cars, there are subtle and important differences. Ford of Europe sets up the emission control system on the Capri; Dearborn engineers do the Pinto. The Capri has a Weber carburetor; the Pinto has a Holley, made under a Weber license. The Capri also has a different air cleaner, a different spark advance curve and it drives its water pump and alternator at a slower speed. It has been our experi-

ence in the past that Capris are usually faster than Pintos and we expect that that will be the case for the 1972 models as well. When asked, Dearborn engineers were unable to add anything more concrete, claiming never to have dynoed a Capri engine.

On the skid pad, the Capri tied with the Opel for second place, but the feel of the two cars, because of the tires used, was entirely different. The Capri had Phoenix radials (Dunlop and Uniroyal are alternatives) which have only one sidewall ply. They act more like conventional bias-ply tires than radials when it comes to handling. They are very gradual and develop huge slip angles and the car feels loose, even at low lateral accelerations. Some of our drivers were put off by the feel, but those who have been caught by the sudden breakaway of some radials feel the Phoenix way is the good way.

All of the Super Coupes in this test understeer but at least the Capri was manageable. It was clearly the fastest on the road course because it had more power than all but the Mazda, and that car it could take care of in the corners. Braking has very little to do with lap times of Super Coupes on a normal road racing course. These cars handle well enough and have low enough straightaway speeds so that only a touch of brake is necessary for the turns.

The Mazda's long suit is power. On the drag strip it wasn't even close. The RX-2 cleared the eyes at New York National in 17.10 seconds at 80.50 mph, a full 3.5 mph and almost 0.4 seconds faster than the Capri. Unlike some of the others—the Vega for example, which starts to breathe hard as it approaches the redline—the Mazda gets stronger and stronger as the tach needle swings up. So you just stand on the gas and pull the lever when the needle points to 7000 rpm. When you want to stop, the brakes are up to the task.

Its handling does not sparkle, however. The RX-2 is a narrow-track car with skinny, 4.5-inch wide wheels and 0.69G was the best it could do on the skid pad. It would do better if the rear wheels did more of the cornering—if it had less understeer. That would require stiffer rear springs or a rear anti-sway bar, neither of which are optional, at least in the U.S. On the road course it is certainly no moving chicane however, primarily because most of the other Super Coupes can't catch up to it. With a little bit better handling, the Mazda would set the pace.

The Opel has plenty of handling; it needs power. The Rallye is the only car in the test that has no bad habits. It's the most fun to drive because the controls are all accurate: there's a good shifter, its

wheels never hop, and, overall, it has finely balanced handling. It was the only import in the test to have a control arm front suspension rather than the increasingly popular MacPherson strut arrangement (the rear is also unusual in that the axle is located by a torque tube). It was also the only import without radial ply tires. We tend to look askance at the spindly European Goodyears but they do the job. The Opel, with its nearly neutral handling, ranked second on the skid pad.

Where it suffered was on the drag strip. The little hydraulic-lifter Four will wind right up to the 6200 rpm redline but the engine has only a mild camshaft and a 7.6-to-one compression ratio and it just doesn't make much horsepower. With a best quarter-mile of 18.19 seconds at 73.80 mph, only the Vega was slower.

Still, that was enough power, when combined with its exemplary handling, to make it the third fastest around Bridgehampton. It could motor away from the Vega, and the Rallye zapped both the Pinto and Toyota in the turns.

If the Opel suffers for lack of power, the Vega is in agony. Actually, its 18.70-second quarter-mile times at 72.3 mph are misleading. This particular Vega had a severe rear axle hop problem. To avoid power hop, the acceleration runs had to be made without wheelspin. So the Vega should do somewhat better . . . but not much. The 1972 Vega engine, with its air pump for emission control, peaks out early. It seemed to work best on the road course when shifted into fourth at about 4500-4700 rpm.

The Vega stopped fairly well in the braking test despite its axle hop. It shook screws loose in the body and it's hell on the driver's nerves, but the car will stop—257 feet (0.83G)—and do so in a fairly straight line, even if the rear wheels are off the ground about half the time. It turns out that the only advantage the Vega claims is handling. It was the quickest around the skid pad (0.75G) by a good margin and it is a very tolerant car at its limit. It is the closest to neutral of all the Super Coupes and sends out ample warning before it finally gives up and falls off the road. It would be better, however, if the steering ratio were faster than the current 4.5 turns lock-to-lock.

Because the Vega's exceptional handling can only make up for about half of its power deficiency, it finished fourth at Bridgehampton. It could always cut inside the Toyota on a turn and the Pinto could be dispatched with some tricky maneuver or another, but by then the others were way down the road.

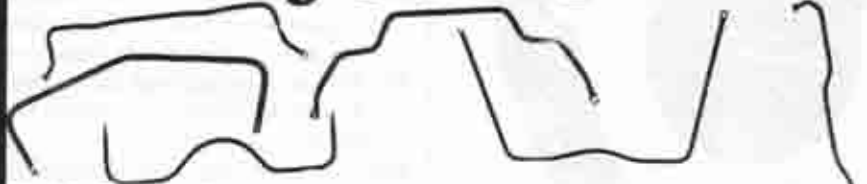
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SUPER COUPES COMPARISON

(Continued from page 69)

The Pinto suffered from gross uncoordination. It had really incredible axle hop under braking, so bad that the rear drums had to be partially faded before we could record a measurable stop. Then it was OK but in an emergency it's the first stop you have to worry about, not the third or fourth (it should be noted that the hop usually doesn't occur if all the wheels are firmly locked up immediately after the driver applied the brake. The trouble comes when you try for a controlled, no-lock-up stop). In addition, we feel that the Pinto's pedal pressure is too high for maximum braking effectiveness.

In performance, the Pinto scored approximately in the middle of the pack in both acceleration and on the skid pad but at Bridgehampton it ended up fifth, chiefly because its controls and the car's responses are so uncoordinated that the driver has to work so much harder.

The slowest of the Super Coupes around Bridgehampton was the Celica, all because of its gross understeer. It has this in common with every Corona we've ever driven. In acceleration, the Celica is relatively quick at 18.17-seconds at 74.60 mph in the quarter. The engine is the same 1858cc Four that is used in the Corona series and it's really quite a satisfactory powerplant, smooth and torquey in the mid-range and always quiet. The Celica's central problem, it would seem, is poor weight distribution. The test car (equipped with air conditioning, as was the Mazda) had 58.9% of its weight on its front wheels and that was with a full fuel tank. The accompanying lack of traction definitely compromised the drag strip performance; and while for handling the forward weight bias could be partially compensated by a rear anti-sway bar, it wasn't. So, it was slow in the turns. And until Toyota decides to do something about it, that's the way it will be.

Usually, at about this point in your standard C/D comparison test, the entire editorial staff leaps in, shrugging off the likelihood of retribution from wounded advertisers, and ranks the contestants as we see them. And, friends, this time will be no exception. Given our choice of every Super Coupe between the Atlantic and the Pacific, we would take the Opel Rallye. It works. Sure, it's a few horses low on power and the plastic interior is maybe a little more humble than you would like but the machinery has that good German car feel that has always cost at least a BMW 2002 price before the Rallye arrived on the scene. Besides, the Opel has excellent handling and no bad manners, which can't be said of any of the others.

Trailing, by the most microscopic of margins, is the Mazda. Not only is it the most powerful car in the test, with its appeal fortified by a novel powerplant, but it's a well-detailed machine with more amenities than any of the others. Its biggest drawback is the lack of a nationwide dealer network.

Third in the balloting, with all of the precincts reporting, is the Capri. It's got go-power and it's fun to drive—two qualities central to the Super Coupe movement. Unfortunately, the Lincoln-Mercury Division doesn't understand—it still sees the Capri as a competitor to the old Opel Kadett and to the VW squareback. So until there is a change of mind in Dearborn, and the Capri is brought in with some of the good European performance options, it will never be the number-one car in the class.

Behind the Capri, the field spreads out. We picked the Toyota fourth, primarily on the strength of its behavior in everyday traffic. The gut level feeling of many of the staffers was to rank it last but those with engineering backgrounds wouldn't hear of it. The Celica has been skillfully developed—unfortunately with some of the wrong priorities.

It was just the other way around with the Vega. Those who conspired against the Celica were attracted to the Vega—they liked its styling enough to put up with its noise and lack of power. But reason prevailed in the end and Chevrolet's Super Coupe was relegated to the fifth spot.

Which leaves the Pinto to be last. After driving it, and driving it some more, we've concluded that it doesn't belong with the others. It's a compact sedan, not a Super Coupe. Those who are hooked on old British sports cars will defend it to their death, but who is going to defend them?

Aside from discovering who builds the best Super Coupe, there is one other message to be gleaned from this test. We don't think it's a coincidence that the two American entries finished off at the bottom of the list. First, there is the little matter of production cost: it will take more than Nixon's 10% surcharge to put Detroit on the same footing as the imports, particularly the Japanese. The imports have costly features that Detroit can't match and still be competitive in price. Power-assisted brakes for example, which all of the imports have as standard equipment are not even available on the Vega and Pinto. And engineering refinement lavished on the Japanese cars would surely push the Vega up into the Camaro price class. The point is, if you have your heart set on an American Super Coupe and you won't settle for second best, you'd better get together with Leonard Woodcock. He's the key man. ●

CAR and DRIVER