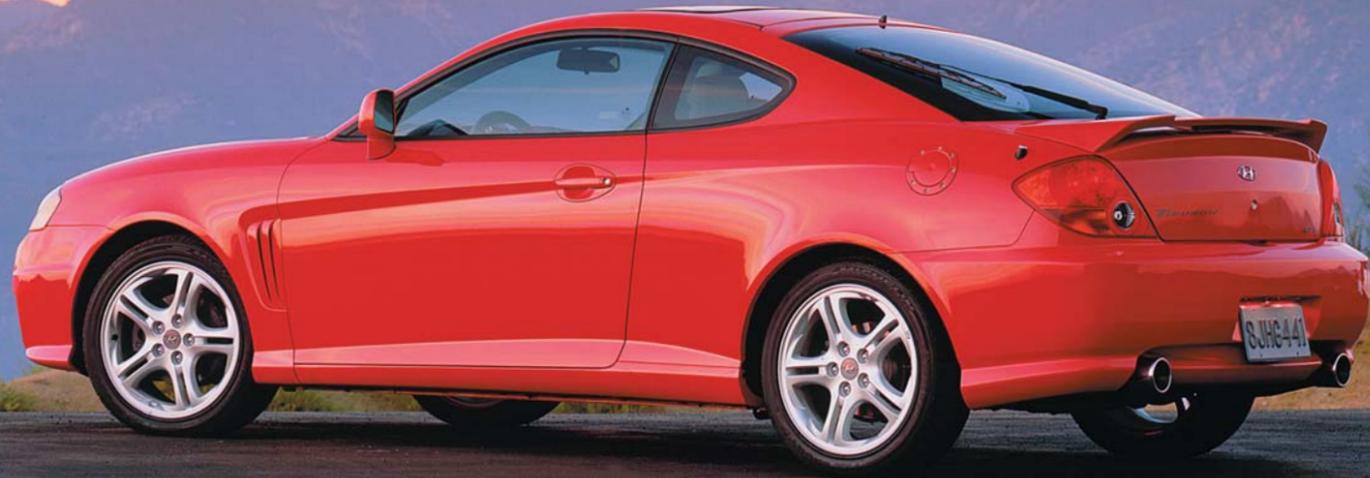


Pocket-Change Rocket!



by Larry Edsall

"The interior really reminds me of an Audi TT," a friend said as he admired the design features inside the car. As another walked up from behind the vehicle, he expressed his delight with the big exhaust tips that peek prominently from beneath the rear bumper, and with the way the 17-inch wheels and tires so nicely fill the space below the coupe's rear fenders.

A man in a nearby office saw us and decided to come out into the parking lot to take a look for himself.

The vehicle that attracted all this attention is the newest Hyundai Tiburon GT V6.

The Tiburon's Powertrain

Tiburon is the Spanish word for shark, and this shark-shaped coupe packs a shark-like bite thanks to its 2.7-liter V6 engine. The engine is the Hyundai-developed Delta powerplant that also powers the Santa Fe sport/utility vehicle and the mid-size Sonata sedan. The engine has an aluminum alloy block and heads and uses double overhead cams to generate 181 horsepower and 177 pound-feet of torque.

That horsepower figure is almost

identical to the 180 ponies provided by the 1.8-liter four-cylinder engine in the Toyota Celica GT-S and falls well short of the 200 hp produced by the 2.0-liter four in the Acura RSX Type S. However, what separates the Tiburon from its competitors is torque; its 177 pound-feet figure dwarfs the Celica's 150 and even the Acura's 142.

While a high-output four-cylinder usually needs to be spun well up into its rev range to produce its power, the Tiburon's V6 feels strong even when the needle on the tachometer is far below redline, and the immediate and direct pickup of the car's clutch and the quick and direct shifting of the six-speed gearbox let the enthusiast driver make use of that power.

There's nothing finicky about this clutch and gearbox combination. You don't need fancy footwork to get them to work together. You don't have to hunt for the pickup point, nor do you have to hunt to move the shifter into an adjacent gear. Its throws are sure and certain whether you're going up, down or diagonally through the pattern.

In timed testing, *Motor Trend* magazine clocked the Tiburon GT V6 from zero to 60 mph in 7.01 seconds on its way to a 15.34 second quarter-mile time at 90.80 mph.

The engine is strong enough that you do have to be careful to avoid spinning the front tires off the line, but once they grip, the car pulls steadily as you work your way up the gearbox, even after you've reached sixth gear and gone well beyond the posted legal limit.

But you don't have to exceed the speed limit to enjoy this powertrain, or the package around it.

TIBURON IS SPANISH FOR SHARK, AND THIS SHARK-SHAPED COUPE PACKS A SHARK-LIKE BITE

Remarkable Value

There's at least one more thing that separates the Tiburon from the Toyota or Acura: price. The Celica GT-S has a base price of \$21,555. The Acura RSX Type S starts at \$23,170. The Tiburon GT V6 we drove lists for \$18,744 and that figure includes destination charges and the optional UltraSports Package 1, which for a mere \$250 includes a six-speed manual transmission, aluminum throttle, brake

and clutch pedals, a rear spoiler and cloth sports seats.

The Tiburon GT V6's \$17,999 base price includes leather seats, but Hyundai understands that enthusiast drivers who want things such as six-speed manual gearboxes and aluminum pedals also want cloth seats that hold them in place much better than slippery leather seats when they're out doing autocrosses or driving on twisting mountain roads, so they're part of the UltraSports option.

Tiburon in the High Country

We took a day and did a nearly 600-mile drive, heading east from Phoenix on US 60, then turning off at Globe on US 70



Photos: Hyundai

■ The Tiburon boasts changes inside and out.

through Safford. Just beyond Solomon we caught US 191 which takes you from the desert floor on a climb to more than 9,000 feet, where instead of tall saguaro your view is much taller Ponderosa pines.

The road is known as the Coronado Trail, but used to be called Route 666, and certainly lives up to that devilish designation with switchback twists and turns.

Generally speaking, the Tiburon was angelic on the drive. For most of the 100 or so miles up, into and over the mountains, the gearbox got a workout as we toggled back and forth between third and fourth gears.

However, early in the route, in an uphill, right-hand hairpin well dusted by a nearby mining operation, we were reminded how front-wheel-drive cars tend to understeer, even if their front wheels are wrapped by grippy, Z-rated Michelin Pilot Sport tires with their deep V tread pattern. We also learned that anti-lock brakes are an option on the Tiburon, an option not included on our test car. Don't worry; nothing horrible happened; we just used a little more of the pavement than we'd expected, and then took subsequent hairpins a little

slower and wiser.

Unfortunately, ABS is not a stand-alone option, and to get it on your Tiburon GT V6 with a six-speed gearbox you have to order the UltraSports Package 3 that includes a power sunroof and costs \$1,998. Maybe Hyundai doesn't "get it" quite as much as we thought.

The V6 and six-speed provided plenty of power for the sometimes steep climb into the mountains, and the Michelins,



■ The Coronado Trail offers hairpin curves and elevation changes, a great workout for the six-speed.

mounted on unique five-spoke wheels, worked with the 11.0-inch front and 10.2-inch rear disc brakes and with the sport-tuned GT suspension to make the drive an enjoyable experience.

Totally New and Turning Heads

There was no 2002 model Tiburon; the '03 is all new. The original 1997 Tiburon was built on the Elantra sedan platform. But the 2003 gets its own chassis, which is stiffer, provides a 2.2-inch longer wheelbase and an inch-wider front track. The chassis includes a front subframe and revised hydraulic engine mounts.

The front suspension is MacPherson struts with offset springs and with the antiroll bar mounted directly to the strut. At the rear is a strut-based multi-link setup. The GT gets stiffer springs and shocks, with revised rebound valving, and thicker antiroll bars front and rear.

The car was remarkably quiet and confidently surefooted, even at substantial straight-line speeds. At reasonable speeds, we had time to appreciate such things as the seven-speaker Infinity audio system with its CD player (and cassette, too) with an eight-inch subwoofer

mounted in the cargo hold.

The GT V6 has a thick, leather-wrapped, tilting three-spoke steering wheel, a grippy shifter, black and gray cloth seats, intuitive switchgear and large air conditioning vents. The front seats were supportive yet comfortable, and we didn't suffer even after nearly 600 miles on the road in a single day.

The interior has some nice touches that could go unnoticed on short drives. For

example, there's a notch where the center stack meets the floor console, and that notch provides some room for the driver's right knee, which doesn't have to rest against a hard surface.

Front seat-mounted side airbags are standard in the GT V6. So are remote entry, air conditioning, cruise control, variable intermittent wipers, carpeted floor mats and the Infinity audio system.

The '03 Tiburon is more than two inches longer, more than an inch wider and half-an-inch taller than the '01 model, and beneath that sheetmetal it provides 81.9 cubic feet of passenger space, plus 14.7 cubic feet for cargo. But don't try to sit in the back seats.

We tried—tried being the operative word—because we quickly discovered that even a short adult male cannot sit there. Even Hyundai has installed a warning sticker on the hatchback roof, reminding someone loading the cargo area not to slam the hatch closed while someone is sitting in the back seat.

Hyundai publicity materials say the chrome-ringed gauges are "easy-to-

KEEP RIGHT >>

Auto Dealers - Specialty

PHOENIX • SCOTTSDALE

AZ Thunder Cars/Cycles

15001 N. Hayden Road, Suite 111
Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-905-3200

Auto Network USA

8135 E. Butherus Drive • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-951-8040

Dream Machines

14825 N. 82nd St. Suite C • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-951-9524 • www.dreammachinesonline.com

Gephart Classic Cars

7360 E. Acoma Drive, Suite 14
Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-948-2286

Motor Sports of Scottsdale

8230 E. Raintree Suite 110 • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-483-9300

Route 66 Motor Corp.

8295 E. Raintree Suite A • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-905-1001

Scottsdale Lotus

8355 E. Raintree Suite 170 • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-922-6242

Auto Dealers

PHOENIX • SCOTTSDALE

Airpark Chrysler Jeep

15656 N. Hayden Road • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-556-7400

Audi North Scottsdale / UnitedAuto

18000 N. Scottsdale Road at Loop 101
Phoenix AZ 85054
480-538-4000

Honda of Scottsdale

7875 E. Frank Lloyd Wright Blvd.
Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-778-2440

Porsche North Scottsdale / UnitedAuto

18000 N. Scottsdale Road at Loop 101
Phoenix AZ 85054
480-538-3850

Lou Grubb Ford / AutoNation

8555 E. Frank Lloyd Wright Blvd
Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-991-3333

Legend Cadillac

7901 E. Frank Lloyd Wright Blvd
Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-483-4000

Ed Moses Dodge North Scottsdale

7801 E. Frank Lloyd Wright Blvd.
Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-998-7772

Scottsdale Audi / UnitedAuto

6855 E. McDowell Road
Scottsdale AZ 85257
480-941-0000

Lou Sobh Pontiac Buick GMC

15333 Hayden Road • Scottsdale AZ 85257
480-367-1234

Towing Service

VALLEYWIDE

Hayden Towing

8180 E. Raintree Drive • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-922-3779

Service & Repair

PHOENIX • SCOTTSDALE

Airpark Auto Service

8115 E. Raintree • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-998-1605

Greulich's Auto Repair

8180 E. Raintree • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-483-8186

Jiffy Lube

14704 E. Frank Lloyd Wright Blvd.
Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-767-0337

Off Road Unlimited

8150 E. Raintree, Suite E • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-443-2559

Zuffenhausen Motors

7725 E. Redfield Road, Suite 103-B
Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-991-2377

Body & Paint

VALLEYWIDE

Dentz Etc.

Valleywide Mobile Service
602-864-3898

PHOENIX • SCOTTSDALE

Greulich's Auto Body & Collision

8180 E. Raintree Drive • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-483-0355

Raintree Auto Body

8120 E. Raintree Drive • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-951-3441

Ultimate Auto Body Works

16049 N. Greenway-Hayden Loop, Suite B
Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-991-5153

Auto Glass & Tinting

VALLEYWIDE

Raceway Auto Glass

Gilbert based - mobile valleywide
480-545-9575

PHOENIX • SCOTTSDALE

A-1 Quality Glass

15001 N. Hayden #109 • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-991-5655

Vision Autoglass Systems

8149 E. Evans Rd. Suite 5 • Scottsdale AZ 85260
602-684-1858 • 877-744-3530

Car Audio & Electronics

PHOENIX • SCOTTSDALE

Arizona Automotive Accessories

602-722-3532 • 866-MOBIL TV

Auto Parts

PHOENIX • SCOTTSDALE

NAPA

8241 E. Evans Road • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-991-0161

Parts Plus

7777 E. Paradise Lane • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-368-8812

Aftermarket / Accessories

NATIONWIDE

PartsRack.com

Everything for the Dodge Viper
360-837-3937 • www.PartsRack.com

Molten Image Design

PO Box 741 • Springville UT 84663
866-489-7287 • www.moltenimagedesign.com

Tires & Wheels

PHOENIX • SCOTTSDALE

C&R Tire-Tatum LLC

17225 N. Tatum • Phoenix
602-867-7466

Discount Tire Co.

15736 N. Pima Road • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-607-6546 • www.tires.com

Group A, Inc.

251 E. Chilton Drive • Chandler AZ 85225
866-764-8729

Jax Wheel & Tire

7333 E. Butherus Drive • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-607-2248

Gas / Car Wash / Convenience

PHOENIX • SCOTTSDALE

Cobblestone Auto Spa & Market

15816 N. Pima Road • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-596-1200

Food Court Texaco

15111 N. Hayden Road • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-561-2622

Motorcycle Dealers

PHOENIX • SCOTTSDALE

AZ Thunder Cars/Cycles

15001 N. Hayden Road • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-905-3200

Hacienda Harley-Davidson

15600 N. Hayden Road • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-905-1903

Desert Motorsports

15001 N. Hayden Road • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-443-4567

Vespa Scottsdale

15060 N. Northsight Blvd • Scottsdale AZ 85260
480-348-8773

Listings represent no specific affiliation with nor endorsement by Arizona Driver magazine.

Photo: Larry Edsall

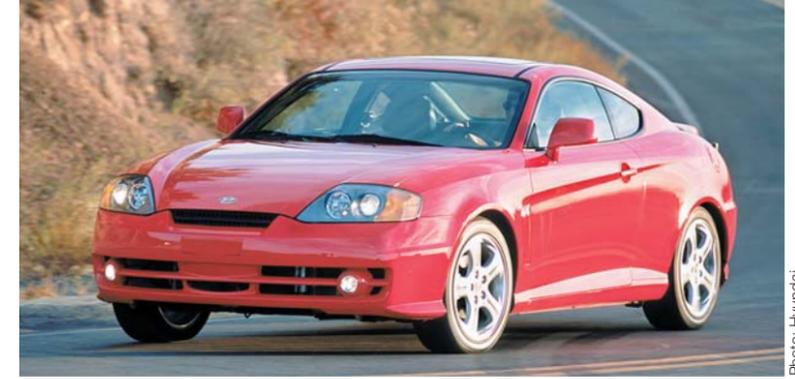
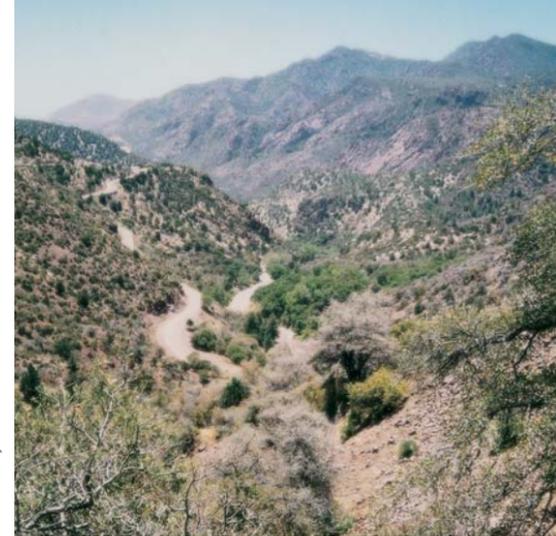


Photo: Hyundai

■ The Coronado Trail is a serpentine route that snakes its way from the desert floor to elevations of more than 9000 feet in the mountains near the Arizona-New Mexico border. Hyundai's new Tiburon sports coupe provides a comfortable and stylish way to enjoy the views, and this little road shark packs a nice bite for eating up the miles.

>> cont'd from page 27

read," and they are at night when they provide red-orange numbers against a black background. But in daylight, we found them almost impossible to read through sunglasses.

Tuned and Ready

Hyundai is racing the Tiburon, modified for competition with all-wheel drive and a 398-horsepower, turbocharged four-cylinder engine, in the SCCA ProRally series

and Hyundai and aftermarket companies have done Tiburon tuning that includes stainless steel exhaust, 19-inch wheels, 13.5-inch Brembo front brakes (with cross-drilled rear rotors) and Eibach springs that lower the car nearly an inch and a half.

But even in its standard skin, this Shark looks menacing and muscular. The body pinches inward between the flared front and rear fenders. There even are gill-like slits behind the front wheels. The car has a high waistline and a short, TT-like greenhouse with broad C-pillars that can

inhibit the driver's peripheral vision.

The headlights are chromed, multi-reflector units, a large and small one on each side of the small grille, set in gray-metallic housings behind covers that bulge out like a shark's eyes. Taillights also are stylish, multi-reflector units.

This Tiburon has no dorsal fin, but there is that high-mounted rear wing that warns of its presence. ■

Group A, Inc.
251 E. Chilton Dr.
Chandler, AZ 85225
(866) ROH-USA9
(866) 764-8729
fax - (480) 813-0044
autotrend@msn.com

SIMMONS WHEELS
"Engineered for Excellence"

ROH Wheels

F Series
17" x 18"

Adrenalin
16" / 17" / 18" x 7"

Modena
16" / 17" / 18" x 7"
Splice modular wheel

OM-Series
17" x 18"

RT
16" / 17" x 6" / 18" x 8" x 10"

Fury
17" x 8" / 18" x 6" / 18" x 8"

Let's Face it, most cars are designed with the average driver in mind, providing average appearance & average performance. These days, most people are looking for more than average and are demanding more from their vehicles. To an enthusiast, a car is not just a means of travel, it is an extension of their personality and an important part of their lifestyle. They are passionate about their lifestyle, and particularly their vehicle. Fortunately our products can stimulate that passion. The results are that for over a decade Group A has helped cars like yours handle, perform, and look more spectacular.

Offering you quality products from these manufacturers:

**ROH Wheels - Simmons Wheels - Centerline Wheels
Eibach Springs - Tokico Shocks - Sumitomo & Toyo Tires**

More wheel styles and information on the web at www.groupawheels.com