

# Inevitable comparisons

BY JOE SAGE

There are two ways to count generations, due to origins as a Celica Supra before becoming a freestanding model. Everyone seems to have a favorite generation Toyota Supra. For us, it's generation two (from 1981-85), partly for personal reasons of discovery, though its appeal has endured.

And we like the new gen-five. It suits itself just fine as a two-seater. It's purpose-built, lightweight and strong. With so much cookie cutter uniformity on the road, its styling stands out from any angle.

We've caught up with the Toyota GR Supra 3.0 many times—at its reveal at Barrett-Jackson last year, driving it in comparo events, on track at Wild Horse Pass, then for another week, and now another. And we've kept track of its news and evolutions.

About a year ago, Toyota announced they would expand the GR Supra line, with new models above and below the 3.0. Despite an initial commitment to an inline-six (from decades of Supra tradition), there would be a GR Supra 2.0 with 255-hp turbo-four. And there would be a straight-to-racetrack 430-hp GR Supra GT4. They would also bump the existing GR Supra 3.0 from 335 up to 382 hp, not only for a better Supra 3.0 in its own right, but creating a balanced stairstep among all three Supras.

Recall also the Toyota 86 (formerly Scion FR-S), a 200- or 205-hp (auto or manual) entry-priced sports

coupe. This now gives a whole class of shoppers a wide set of four sports coupes from Toyota. (Might the future hold a rebadging of the Toyota 86 as a Supra 86, formalizing a four-Supra family identity for what we think we already see? We could easily make a branding and marketing case for that.)

We had figured the Supra coming up on our calendar might be the new 2.0 turbo-four, this year's big news. But no, we would have the GR Supra 3.0 again. That is not to be dismissive—this car is always worth another visit, and its 14 percent horsepower boost would be worth checking out.

Coming straight from a higher-powered luxury roadster briefly impacted our feel for the Supra, but at a fraction of the prior car's weight, Supra 3.0's power-to-weight ratio is notably higher—it was a quick adjustment. Give it a good punch, and it's a rocket, with a smooth, transparent 8-speed shift sequence in that range (though around town we noted early torque-dropping shifts at lower speed). There is no manual transmission available.

Sport mode is accessible via one prominent flat panel console switch. While there is appeal in customizable and other modes, having just one option provides great immediacy—one choice, one tap. A console dial for the screen menu provides clean and immediate control via a four-way slide-

and-twist dial and additional flat switches, all set in a carbon fiber field (see inset photo). The screen is small, dictated by the size of the car itself; if we changed one thing it would be to add contrast where some key lettering is now grey-on-grey.

In our experience, auto start-stop also shut off HVAC, unacceptable in Arizona in the summer even for a moment. We'll look into this further. We turn this off, anyway, and its switch is just above Sport, for a convenient one-two punch at every startup.

Performance suspension and steering describe in straightforward terms, and prove quick, accurate and true—accelerating through tight S-curves, seeking advantage in tight freeway lanes, or hitting the canyons on open mountain highways.

Door openings are low—tight for entry-egress if you're tall. We learned to push our own head down with our own hand, like someone being put in the back of a squad car on a TV police show. Inescapably part of the styling, try this on for size.

At the GR Supra 3.0's reveal, Toyota identified target competitors, in one example noting that it should not be compared with a Nissan 370Z (starting at \$30k) but more accurately with the NISMO Z (at closer to \$50k). Comparisons with Germans



were along similar lines.

While GR Supra 3.0's carefully determined price point has generated wide opinions, the arrival of both less and more expensive versions will have several impacts. Supra purists may lament the 2.0 model not having an inline-six, but if that costs Toyota a few mighta-boughts, it will surely be offset by notable numbers of now-I-can-buys. In the broader comparison, Supra is no longer just one car at one price; there's much more to compare.

Conversations around town included a twist: if the Supra 3.0 costs about twice what the Toyota

86 costs, would you rather have two 86s or one Supra, and how about in a household with two drivers? A few people suggested \$120k comparisons to the Supra, so we added an uphill version of that same two-fer riddle. Discussions vary, but the Supra 3.0's value for price became clear in all.

Against the competition or within the Toyota sport stable, the more you reflect upon the Supra, the better its position is defined. Supra's appeal lies within itself, and this is where having a family of three—or four, with the Toyota 86—can keep the comparisons under one dealer's roof. ■

## SPECIFICATIONS

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| ASSEMBLY PLANT     | .....Graz, Austria   |
| SEATING CAPACITY   | .....two   |
| ENGINE             | .....3.0L inline-6 w twin-scroll turbo<br>24v DOHC, chain drive, VVT   |
| HP/TORQUE          | .....382 hp / 368 lb-ft  |
| COMPRESSION RATIO  | .....10.2:1  |
| DRIVETRAIN         | .....RWD   |
| TRANSMISSION       | .....8-spd automatic   |
| SUSPENSION         | .....F: double-joint type<br>MacPherson strut; R: multi-link 5 arm   |
| STEERING           | .....electric power steering   |
| BRAKES             | .....F: 13.7" vented disc w<br>Brembo four-piston floating caliper;<br>R: 13.6 or 13.0" vented disc w<br>single piston floating caliper      |
| WHEELS             | .....forged alum F: 19x9.0; R: 19x10.0   |
| TIRES              | .....Michelin Pilot Super Sport<br>F: 255/35 ZR19; R: 275/35 ZR19<br>In case of flat: puncture repair kit                                    |
| LENGTH / WHEELBASE | .....172.5 / 97.2 in   |
| TURNING CIRCLE     | .....34.1 ft   |
| HEADROOM           | .....38.2 in   |
| LEGROOM            | .....42.2 in   |
| CARGO CAPACITY     | .....10.2 cu.ft  |
| GROUND CLEARANCE   | .....4.5 in  |
| WEIGHT             | .....3400 lb   |
| FUEL / CAPACITY    | .....premium / 13.7 gal  |
| MPG                | .....22/30/25 (city/hwy/comb)  |
| BASE PRICE         | ..... <b>\$54,490</b>  |
| NITRO YELLOW PAINT | .....425   |
| DRIVER ASSIST PKG: | dynamic radar cruise control (full speed), blind spot monitor, rear cross traffic alert, parking sensors w emergency brake function.....1195 |
| CARPET CARGO MAT   | .....80  |
| DESTINATION CHARGE | .....995   |
| TOTAL              | ..... <b>\$57,185</b>  |

*(At right) Do you like driving modes? GR Supra 3.0 has Sport when you need it. And only Sport. So you don't need to look away to make the change, nor to confirm it in your binnacle. Conveniently enough, the switch to defeat ever-annoying auto start-stop is just above it. Easy to do and good to go.*

