even better this year. We got only half the expected improvement. Despite a change in final drive ratio from 3.91 to 3.73: 1, the Liftback was as quick in the quarter mile (if you wish to pick nits it was 0.1 sec slower but 2 mph faster) and took 0.4 sec less to accelerate from 0-60 mph. However, we noticed some surging between 30 and 45 mph, especially in 2nd and 3rd gears, and after a hot start the driver had to be very gentle and smooth with applications of throttle or the engine would set up a pulsation that sent the Liftback down the street in a series of jerky and embarrassing leaps. We attribute this uncharacteristic behavior to a maladjusted carburetor - because during skid pad testing and on long sweeping freeway ramps the engine stumbled and stuttered badly when the car was cornering to the right. We have never before encountered this problem with a Celica, although a recurring Celica fault-a whining differential-reared its howling head once again. Just one lap on the 200-ft. diameter skid pad was enough to starve the differential gears of lubricant, too easy a feat with a car of the Celica's sporty pretentions.

We can't criticize the Liftback's brakes, however, and this is one area where Celicas continue to improve. The 14-in. diameter wheels allowed Toyota to increase the diameter of the front discs 1 in.; not only are stopping distances shorter than last year, but the Liftback's overall performance resulted in the first excellent rating we have ever given a Toyota.

Perhaps the most marked improvements compared to last year come in the areas oLride and handling. The longer wheelbase and larger-diameter steel-belted radials result in a substantial reduction in road harshness and pitching. The ride is softer but better controlled, and the Liftback isn't affected nearly as much by dips and culverts as previous Celicas. Even the staff member who owns a 1973 ST equipped with Semperit M 401 radials and Bilstein shocks had to grudginglyadmi t the 1976 Celica rides better than his car. Handling is also noticeably better, the Liftback being the first Celica to generate more than

PHOTOS BY JOHN LAMM

0.7g on the skidpad and improving on the 1975 GT's slalom speed by 1.7 mph. The handling is more neutral and there's less body roll, thanks not only to the wider track but again to the longer wheelbase which results in a three percent reduction in front weight bias. The steering is a bit heavy at parking speeds, but there's a much appreciated decrease in free play on center this year. One thing that hasn't changed is the tendency for the front end to become light at speed. If you drive fast we suggest you install a front spoiler.

Without a doubt the Liftback is the best Celica ever. There's more standard equipment than before, and the hatchback makes the car a more efficient carrier of people and things. The handling, ride and performance are improved, but you still get outstanding fuel economy (24 mpg in our usual test) plus the quality craftsmanship for which all Toyotas are noted. It's no wonder the Celica not only accounts for 20 percent of all Toyota sales in this country but is the best selling imported compact sporty car in the U.S.

PRICE

List price, all POE	$4699
Price as tested	$5129

GENERAL

Curb weight, lb	2560
Weight distribution (with driver), front/rear, %	55/45
Wheelbase, in.	98.3
Track, front/rear	53.1/51.6
Length	174.4
Width	63.8
Height	51.0
Fuel capacity, U.S. gal.	15.3

CHASSIS & BODY

Body/frame	unit steel
Brake system	10.0-in. discs front, 9.0 x 1.6-in. drums rear; vacuum assisted
Wheels	styled steel, 14 x 5½J
Tires	Bridgestone RD-106 185/70HR-14
Steering type	recirc ball, variable ratio
Turns, lock-to-lock	4.2
Suspension, front/rear:	MacPherson struts, lower lateral arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar/live axle on four trailing links, Panhard rod, coil springs, tube shocks

ENGINE & DRIVETRAIN

Type	sohc inline 4
Bore x stroke, mm	88.4 x 88.9
Displacement, cc/cu in.	2189/134
Compression ratio	8.4:1
Bhp @ rpm, net	96 @ 4800
Torque @ rpm, lb-ft	120 @ 2800
Fuel requirement	regular, 91-oct
Transmission	5-sp manual
Gear ratios: 5th (0.85)	3.17:1
4th (1.00)	3.73:1
3rd (1.39)	5.18:1
2nd (2.04)	7.61:1
1st (3.29)	12.27:1
Final drive ratio	3.73:1

ROAD TEST RESULTS

FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving, mpg	24.0

ACCELERATION

Time to distance, sec:	
0-100 ft	4.0
0-500 ft	10.3
0-1320 ft (¼ mi)	18.6
Speed at end of ¼ mi, mph	74.0
Time to speed, sec:	
0-30 mph	4.0
0-50 mph	8.7
0-60 mph	12.2
0-80 mph	22.3
0-90 mph	30.5

SPEEDS IN GEARS

5th gear (4900 rpm)	108
4th (5500)	106
3rd (5500)	76
2nd (5500)	52
1st (5500)	32

HANDLING

Speed on 100-ft radius, mph	32.6
Lateral acceleration, g	0.709
Speed thru 700-ft slalom, mph	54.7

CALCULATED DATA

Lb/bhp (test weight)	30.0
Mph/1000 rpm (5th gear)	22.2
Engine revs/mi (60 mph)	2700
R&T steering index	1.51
Brake swept area, sq in./ton	171

BRAKES

Minimum stopping distances, ft:	
From 60 mph	150
From 80 mph	252
Control in panic stop	very good
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop, lb	27
Fade: percent increase in pedal effort to maintain 0.5g deceleration in 6 stops from 60 mph	30
Overall brake rating	excellent

INTERIOR NOISE

All noise readings in dBA:	
Constant 30 mph	65
50 mph	70
70 mph	75

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph indicated is actually	29.0
60 mph	57.5
70 mph	66.0

ACCELERATION