

SUPRA



Supra in a tuxedo, packing a Walther PPK

The large, sleek machine gracing the pages before you may seem vaguely familiar, in terms of the proportions at least

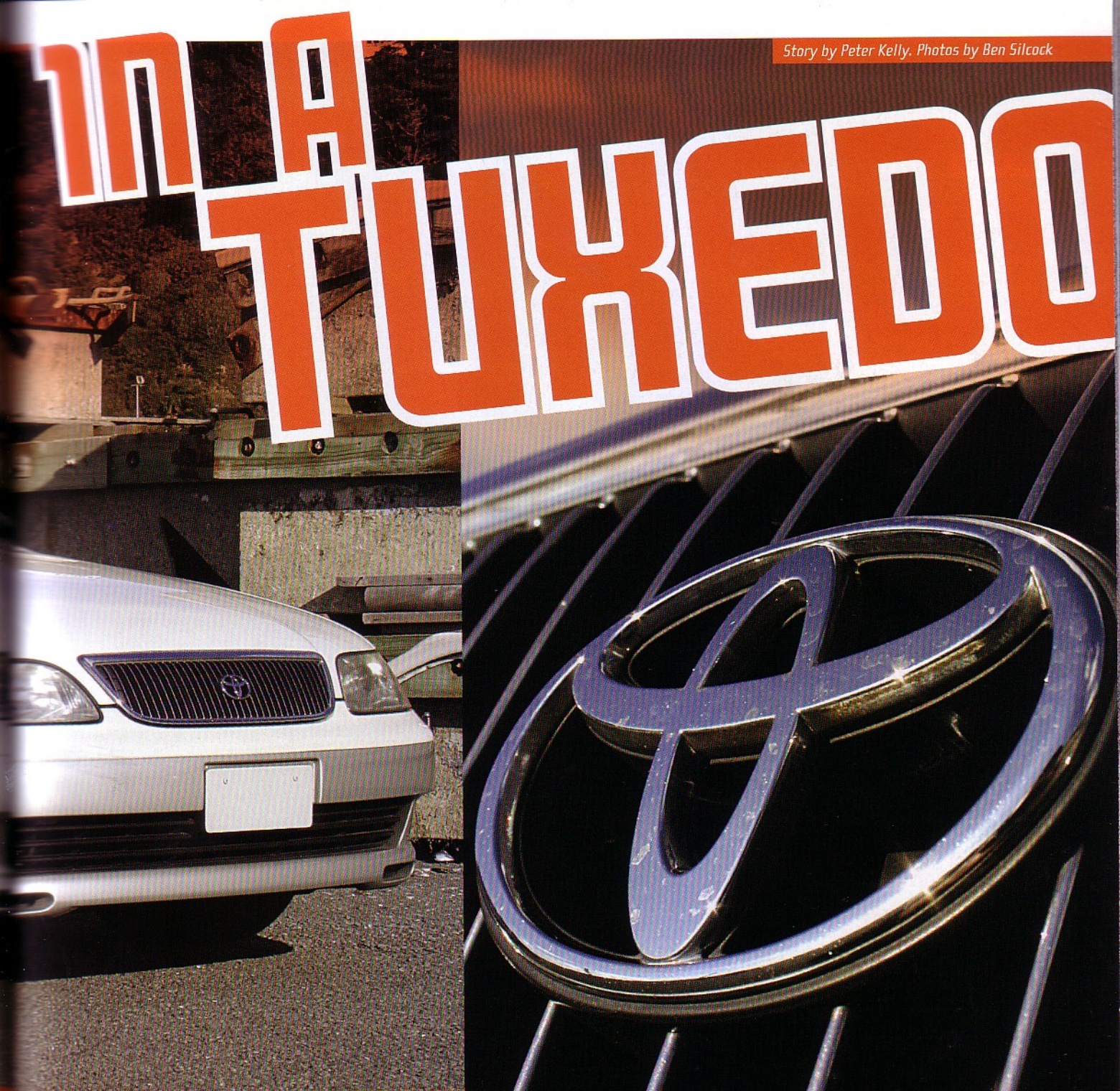
The JZS147 came before the JZS161, which we know as a Lexus GS300. In fact, the JZS147 was around for a long time, from October 1991 to August 1997. The 3.0V version came with a 2JZ-GTE twin-turbo 3L engine for the whole life of the model, so surprisingly enough it was using this engine before the release of the JZA80.

This particular test example is a 1996 Aristo 3.0V, the 'V' badge indicating the 2JZ-GTE twin-turbo power within, as opposed to the naturally aspirated 2JZ-GE powered 'Q' designated variety. Kindly provided by Daniel Dodson, the Toyota had 120,000km on the clock. The vehicle was in

remarkably good condition, which is quite typical for cars of this pedigree, due to the original Japanese owners taking a little more pride in their car than the usual efforts.

Barring the twin exhaust tips poking out beneath the conservative rear bumper, nothing else on the car screams aggression or speed – in truth, it is far more of a high roller look than anything else. At the time, Toyota was targeting cars like the E500 Mercedes or BMW M5, so it wanted to avoid a boy-racer look.

Opening the very solid feeling door, we were disappointed to discover the brown interior. There are two variations of grey that look much better, but for



some reason the original buyer of this car thought three shades of fawn was the go. Sure, it's incredibly comfortable, as you would expect any luxury car to be, and there is plenty of room, but it's very, very brown!

Other than the colour, the rest of the Aristo's interior is very well appointed, with eight-way adjustable seats, twin airbags (earlier examples had just one), cruise control, air purifier and, of course, all the usual mod-cons you would expect such as computerised air-conditioning and power windows.

What is surprising, however, even for a luxury car like the Aristo, is the very high-quality stereo gear. The standard CD

SPECIFICATIONS

1996 TOYOTA ARISTO 3.0V

FOR: 21Z POWER, STRENGTH AND
POTENTIAL, HIGH ROLLER LOOKS

AGAINST: BLAND INTERIOR,
NEEDS MUCH BIGGER WHEELS
TO LOOK COOL

ENGINE

- 21Z-GTE, 2997cc DOHC 24-valve twin
turbo straight six

COMPRESSION RATIO

- 8.5:1

POWER

- 206kW/280ps@5600rpm

TORQUE

- 431Nm@3600rpm

REDLINE

- 6800rpm

TRANSMISSION

- Electronic four-speed automatic with
two-way OD ECT-i

SUSPENSION

- Double-wishbone front and rear

WHEELS

- 16x7.5in alloys

TYRES

- 225/55R16

L/W/H

- 4920x1795x1420mm

KERB WEIGHT

- 1680kg

WEIGHT/POWER

- 8.15kg/kW

WEIGHT/TORQUE

- 3.89kg/Nm

400M

- 14.37secs

*Impressive standard stereo system,
complete with subwoofers and amp*

*Electronic four-speed auto is the
only option in the Aristo*

player controls no less than nine speakers throughout the cabin, including two 8in subwoofers powered by an amp stashed in the boot. These provide a good amount of bass – just enough to round out the aural experience, without rattling the numberplate off its bolts.

Upon turning the ignition key, you might have to glance down at the tachometer, just to make sure the engine is actually running. Toyota has managed to create an exhaust system so quiet that when combined with the hefty amount of interior sound deadening, it is barely audible, giving no indication of the power within.

Once moving, the big car glides effortlessly along the bitumen. The front and rear double-wishbone suspension, coupled with surprisingly stiff springs and shocks, inspires an astonishing amount of confidence

considering the Toyota's size and hefty 1680kg kerb weight. It really does feel as though you are driving a much lighter and more compact car.

The Aristo we tested was not equipped with a limited-slip differential, which became very obvious as soon as we flicked off the traction control and started to put any real power down through the corners. As far as the diff is concerned, it was just one of many optional boxes the original owner could tick when handing over the ¥4,790,000 for his brand-new car in 1996. Considering the prices they sell for in Japan, we would expect 1992 models to retail for around \$22,000–\$25,000 in Australia, with later, low-km examples commanding more like \$32,000–\$35,000.

Unfortunately, Toyota never produced a manual-gear-



Understated but still a high roller

box-equipped JZS147. Although, in saying that, you would be surprised at the number of units at Japanese auction yards that have collected an aftermarket six-speed Supra gearbox conversion. Other goodies that a used Aristo may or may not include are items like a CD changer, leather seats, sunroof, rear spoiler or even a pair of wider 16x8.5in rear wheels.

If you don't mind an auto box, on the other hand, then this is a good one to have. The electronically controlled four-speed auto is suited perfectly to the big, torquey engine, charging hard through every gear, all the way up to the computer-governed 180km/h speed cut.

The best thing about the Aristo is certainly Toyota's 2JZ-GTE. The twin-turbocharged 3L straight six is often regarded as one of the best performance engines to have

ever come out of Japan. It makes a factory quoted, and quite severely limited, 206kW with a whopping 431Nm of torque. As many tuners over the last few years have shown, it is not all that hard to get these brilliant units up to double the standard power output while still retaining the bulletproof standard internals.

Driving the car, it's the wall of torque hitting at around the 2500rpm mark that is the most impressive factor, helped along by the whistling twin ceramic CT12B turbochargers running in a sequential format. Probably the most successful sequential turbo system on the market, it uses two matching turbos and puts all of the exhaust gas through just one turbo at low revs, making it spool up quickly. Once a certain amount of boost is achieved, the exhaust gas is routed to both turbos, so that just after

ROAD TEST



Twin exhaust pipes, the only sporting pretension

4000rpm they are both delivering their peak output. Though the transition is noticeable, it is much smoother than other systems such as the Liberty B4. The smooth torque delivery pushes the driver back into their seat, right up to the 6800rpm redline.

This was enough to propel the hefty machine to 100km/h in 6.02sec and reach the quarter-mile marker in the low-14sec bracket, depending on how well you get off the line. Not bad for a standard luxury cruiser! The mind boggles at just how easy it would be to see those times tumble with a few thousand dollars spent in the right places.

Slowing the car down after the test was a very satisfactory experience, as Toyota once again raided the Supra parts bin by fitting the Aristo with the same brakes as the JZA Supra Turbo. Being a 1996 model, this car actually featured the updated four-piston calipers in the front and two-piston in the rear. After a good 15-minute flogging over a local mountain pass, there was absolutely no sign of brake fade.

Essentially, the Toyota Aristo 3.0V is a big, powerful, reliable machine with a whole lot of potential and could be seen as a genuine Japanese alternative to the dynamically inferior local Holden and Ford performance whales. Look at it this way: if the well known and much revered Toyota Supra was Tarzan, the Toyota Aristo would be the cunning and much better dressed James Bond. Where the Supra is all power and purpose, the Aristo is just as powerful but with a tinge of martini.

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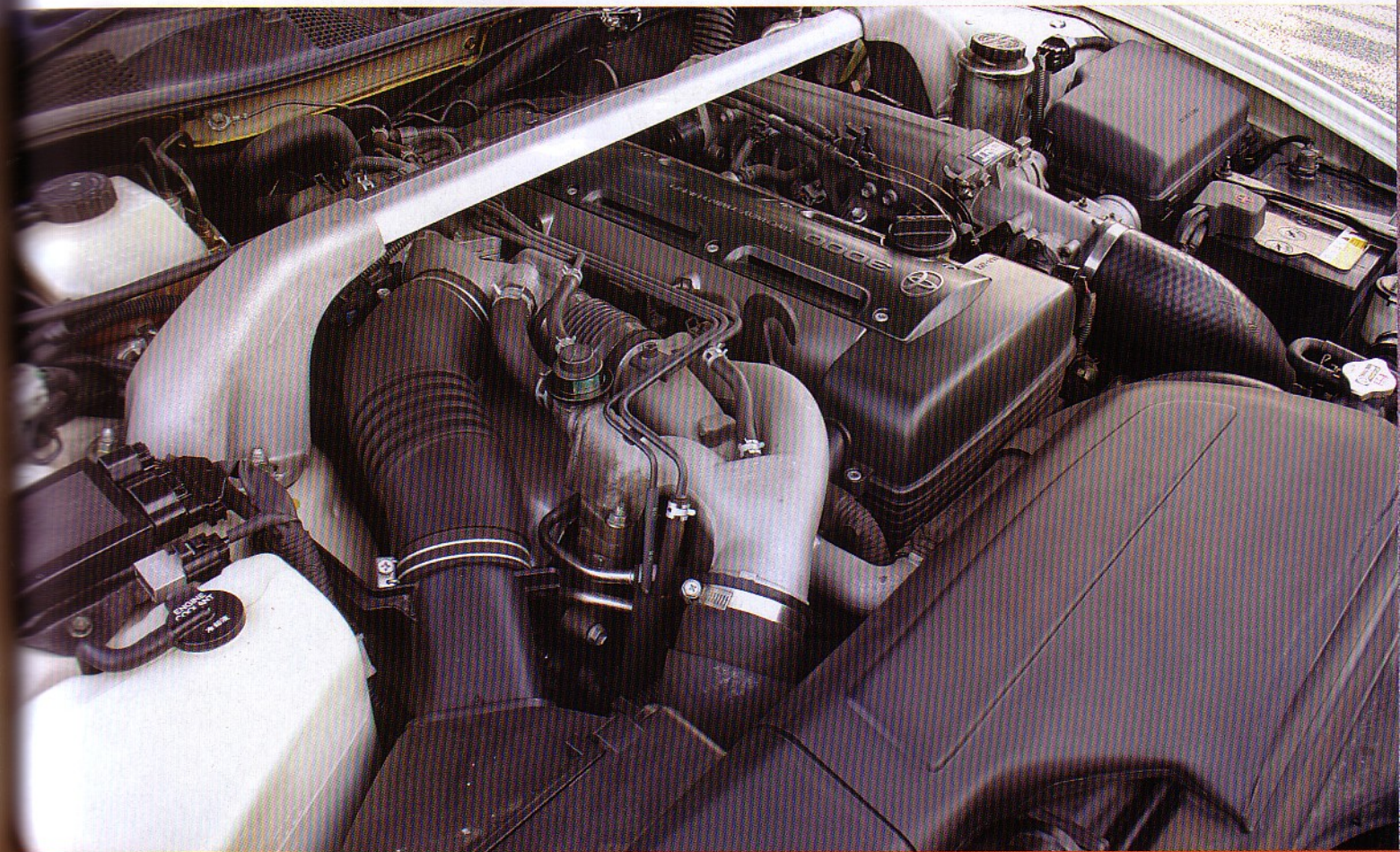
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Supra-style 2JZ power, the tower brace is standard too

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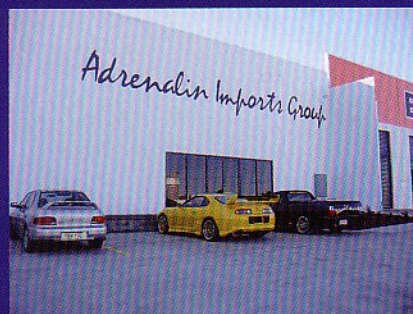
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Supra

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**EBC
BRAKES**



We would certainly choose the grey over this trim option



The first button you push after firing her up



Handling abilities were surprisingly good, despite the body roll

Best Motoring tested the Aristo 3.0V in February 1992. They managed to lap Tsukuba circuit in 1:10.68, then in July they tested it again in slightly damp conditions, where it still managed a 1:11.70. This outshone both the manual BMW M5 at 1:14.26 and the auto Mercedes 500E at 1:13.47. The 1680kg Aristo enjoys a slight weight advantage, but actually has a lower power-to-weight ratio than either of these German sports sedans.

Apart from the 3.0V, which is our favourite, two other Aristos were available: the base model non-turbo 165kW 3.0Q and a 4WD V8 version called the V8i-four. This used the 191kW 1UZ-FE V8 also found in the Soarer and Celsior (LS400). The 4WD transmission was auto-only, and was quite an expensive option. Based on power-to-weight criteria, the 3.0V and V8i-four are both eligible for SEVS compliance.

Aside from different wheels and the boot lid badges, there is nothing to distinguish the three versions. Even the base-model 3.0Q has twin exhausts. Many cars have a boot spoiler fitted, but this option seems to have been available on all models. Then, of course, there are the myriad aftermarket bodykits and wheels.

HPI