

# LONG TERM REVIEW

## The Redesigned 1997 Toyota Camry: Short On Looks; Great Personality

By Blair S. Walker

The redesigned 1997 Toyota Camry LE V6 is the proverbial girl (or boy) you bring home to mom: Not too flashy, solid and predictable as sunrise.

The head turner of the Toyota clan, the road-scorching Supra coupe, is for styling and profiling. The dependable Camry, on the other hand, is a people hauler for the masses. Hardly a glamorous role, but a crucial one for Toyota. The Camry is one of the most popular cars in the United States, along with the Ford Taurus and the Honda Accord. More than 3 million Camry's have been sold since 1983.

So, the redesign of the fourth-generation Camry, unveiled in September, wasn't undertaken lightly. The weak-selling coupe and station wagon versions have been unceremoniously dispatched to the great dealership in the sky.

Rather than go the radical redesign route of the Ford Taurus and risk a similar sales dip, Toyota played it safe. The result: A vehicle appreciably sleeker than the old Camry, even somewhat handsome. It'll never set hearts aflutter, though.

The paint job on our mid-level LE long-term test vehicle



was an unappealing violet, which Toyota calls Frosted Iris. The bland gray cloth interior displayed typically high levels of Toyota fit and finish.

Fortunately for the Camry, which is listed for \$25,200, beauty is more than skin deep. The car's allure grew with each turn of the ignition. The LE's 194-horsepower 3-liter six-cylinder engine is quiet as a mouse and does the 0 to 60 mph routine in a respectable 8.3 seconds. All of this while delivering an estimated 19 miles per

gallon in the city and an excellent 26 mpg on the highway.

Thoughtful interior touches abound, such as a power outlet for portable phones and radar detectors, a built-in rear child restraint seat and generous rear leg room in a car just 0.7 inches longer than its predecessor.

The LE didn't care for potholes or big bumps, which sent an unpleasant booming through its chassis. And the incessant slap-slap slapping of highway expansion joints by the Dunlop 205/65HR15 tires got old fast.

But on the whole, mom would probably applaud your decision-making abilities if you brought a Camry LE V6 home.



how you get around.



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