

About That Car: 2014 Toyota Corolla

by Frank S. Washington

SAN DIEGO – If the Camry is Toyota’s bread then the Corolla is certainly the company’s butter. What’s more, it was the Corolla that cracked the American car market wide open for Toyota. The car was the right prescription at the right time. It was small, it was fuel efficient and most importantly it was reliable.

If not for the Corolla becoming an icon of small, gas sipping, sturdy cars, it is doubtful that Toyota would have become the automotive juggernaut that it is today.

But a yellow caution light has come on and with the 2014 Toyota Corolla the company hopes to snuff it out before it gets too serious. On the one hand, the Corolla is Toyota’s second bestselling nameplate with 300,000 annual sales last year. But on the downside the average age of a Corolla buyer is about 53-yers-old.

That number needs to be lowered, that’s one reason why the advertising and marketing campaign for the new Corolla leans heavily on digital and social media. Still, the automaker should take pains as not to tick-off current owners with a new Corolla that doesn’t appeal to them.

That’s the probable reason why the 11th generation of the 47-year-old Corolla is bigger a lot bigger. That should appeal to older as well as younger buyers. Toyota’s new compact can carry four adults comfortably.

The wheelbase was lengthened by 3.9 inches; the overall car was also 3.9 inches longer; it was 0.6th of an inch wider and 0.6th of an inch lower. The key was moving the hip point of the rear seats back 3 inches. That created a back seat area that was as spacious as some midsize sedans.

Does that extra space make the 2014 Corolla a perfect car? It sure didn’t. The steering could have been a little tighter, a

colleague noted that the brake pedal was a little spongy and the car could have used a bit more low-end torque for better acceleration from 65 mph.

That’s the problem when automotive companies and the cars they make become icons. There is a danger of always expecting more despite the facts. And the fact is that the 2014 Toyota Corolla is a compact car that starts at less than \$20K no matter what model you get.

Trim lines begin with the \$16,800 L, there’s the \$18,300 LE, and the LE Eco starts at \$18,700 and the 2014 Toyota Corolla S starts at \$19,000. Buyers have the option of three transmissions. There is a four-speed automatic; Toyota doesn’t expect to sell many Corollas equipped with it. There’s a six-speed manual gear

1.8-liter four cylinder engine that is a carry-over from the last model, though it has been enhanced. It made 132 horsepower and 128 pound-feet of torque. The manual got 28 mpg in the city and 31 mpg on the highway. The four-speed automatic got 27 mpg in the city and 31 mpg on the highway while the C V T



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box but the real effort has gone into the new continuously variable transmission (CVT).

It has been tuned to simulate gear shifts; the Corolla S equipped with a CVT comes with paddle shifters. This transmission was so quiet it made you forget that it was a CVT. Gone was the unnerving whine of CVT transmissions.

Either transmission can be paired with a

got 29 mpg in the city and 32 mpg on the highway.

With the “Valvematic” valve train variable control feature, the same engine will generate 140 horsepower. Toyota said it increases overall fuel economy by 5.3 percent.

On the road the 2014 Corolla handled well. The CVT was virtually unnoticed. Acceleration was good for normal traffic. And except for a bit of wind noise around the side view mirrors, the car was quiet. A retuned suspension resulted in a great ride.

Although the new Corolla was a little bit wider, the interior felt like it was a lot wider. Gone was the center stack, replaced by standard audio controls, with climate controls underneath and then the gear shifter. The clock sat atop the dash.

Depending on the model, there was either a three analogue instrument layout in front of the driver: odometer, speedometer and fuel gauge. Or there was a two instrument

layout with a TFT screen in the middle.

The 2014 Toyota Corolla was a very capable car. Traditional buyers should love its size, its price and its features. With its standard LED headlights, backup camera, upgraded interior materials, fresh exterior design, Bluetooth, driver knee airbag and passenger cushion airbag, it is a value purchase that fits the times.

But Toyota needs lightening in a bottle in the form of an advertising and marketing message to attract a younger buyer. The 2014 Toyota Corolla is equipped with the latest generation of the company’s Entune multimedia system.

It is more than a radio. The system has iPod and USB jacks, Bluetooth with internet streaming and voice controls, a navigation system with an app suite that includes Facebook Places, Bing search engine, Pandora customized Internet radio and MovieTickets.com. There are 10 apps and two data services.

Toyota has the right car and it has the right features. Now it needs the right message targeting the right market to hold on to the buyers it has while attracting the younger buyers that the Corolla needs to maintain its iconic standing within the company and within the market.

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