

Toyota Camry wagon a popular car

When the Car of the Year Awards were announced at the Toronto International Auto Show, one North American manufacturer stomped out in a huff because its cars did not place first in the three categories in which it had entries.

One senior press relations officer working for this manufacturer made fun of the Car of the Year Awards (COYA) calling them the "Tokyo Oscars."

In fact, only the Ford Explorer placed first in the awards, Japanese products sweeping the board in everything from sports cars to family sedan to Car of the Year.

There was a time, only two decades ago, that when you said family sedan you meant Chevro-

Road Worthy

By JIM ROBINSON

let Impala; Pontiac Parisienne; Plymouth Fury; or Ford Galaxie.

Today people say family sedan and the cars mentioned above simply aren't made anymore - even their nameplates are in disuse. When people say family sedan today, they increasingly mean Honda Accord and Toyota Camry.

This week's test car is a Camry LE wagon. It doesn't look like much, just a straight-forward, rather plebian wagon with four doors.

From the driver's seat, the instruments are set in a pre-

ergonomic dashboard with switches here and there. Some are hidden by the steering wheel, others (like the digital clock) are fitted into a notch where the dash and the instrument binnacle are glued together.

Turn the key and the 2.5-litre, 24-valve dual overhead cam engine swings silently into motion. You have to push down on the gas to make the engine roar just to be sure it's running. The main instruments are big and legible. It takes a day or two for the message of why this and other Japanese cars are so successful to

sink in.

The message is everything works marvelously, no make that unfaillingly, well. And everything was a light, yet substantial, feel to it. The stalk for the windshield wipers is sized perfectly for my right hand and is just far enough away from the steering wheel.

The power locks make this big, audible "thunk" when engaged - no peering inside the car to look at the door knob here. The optional antilock brakes have just the right firmness in the pedal. The four-speed electronic overdrive automatic transaxle driving the

front wheels shifts smoothly.

This car came with a host of standard features such as cruise, power everything and some of the finest interior trim materials I've ever seen at \$23,568. The Touring Group package with 15-inch alloy wheels, antilock brakes and power moon-roof lifted the price by another \$2,990. Add the \$360 ski rack and the price as tested came out to \$26,918.10. Where this car excels is being pleasing, if not outstanding, in every category. In terms of price, features, space, etc. it is as good as anything in its class.



The Toyota Camry makes a great family car at an affordable price. It has many features which makes it a desirable car for car columnist Jim Robinson.

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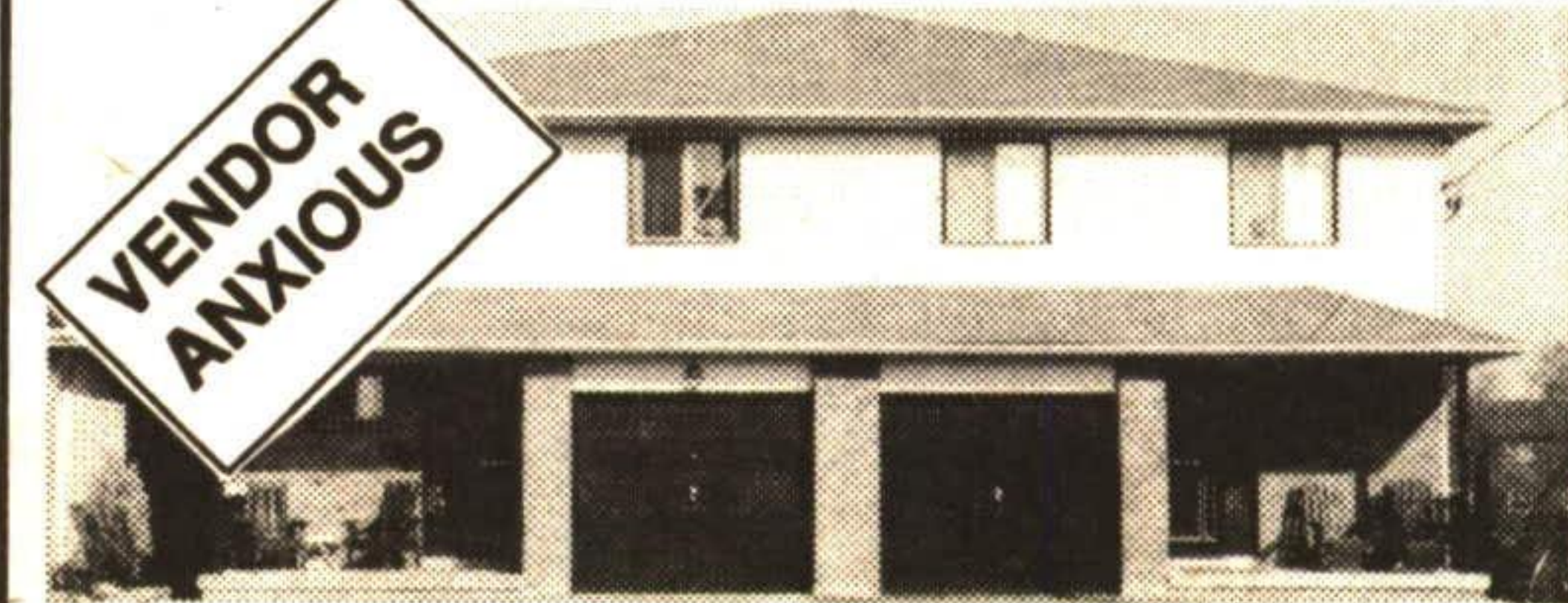
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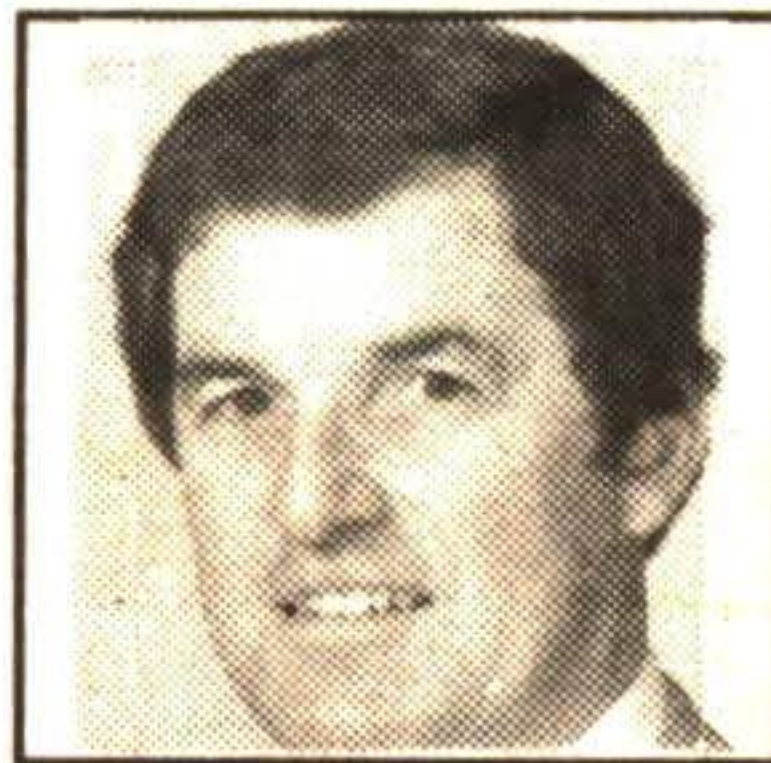
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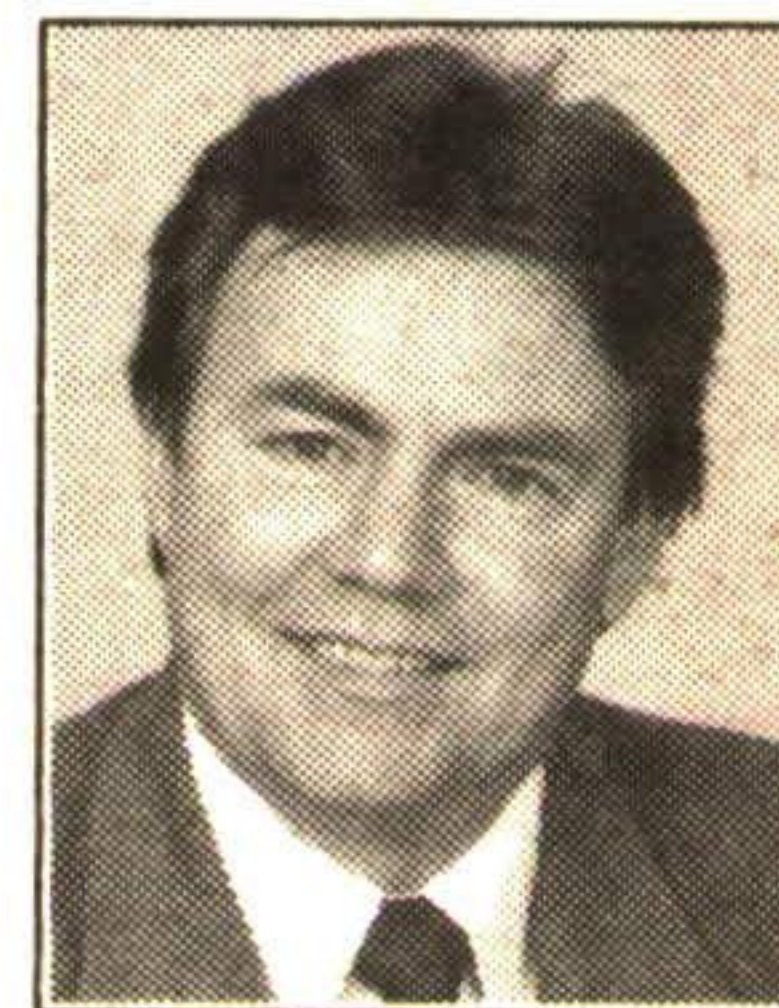
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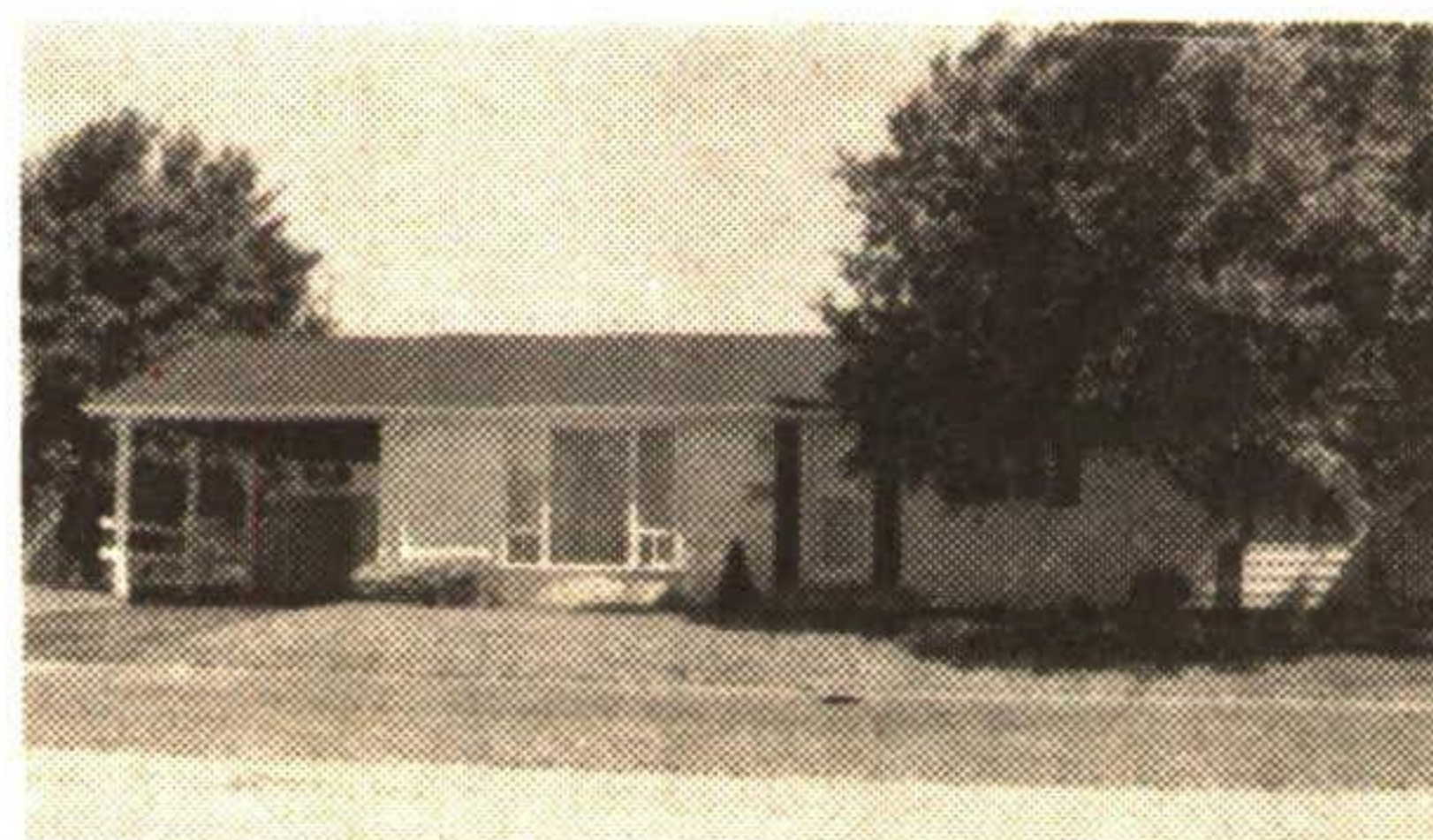
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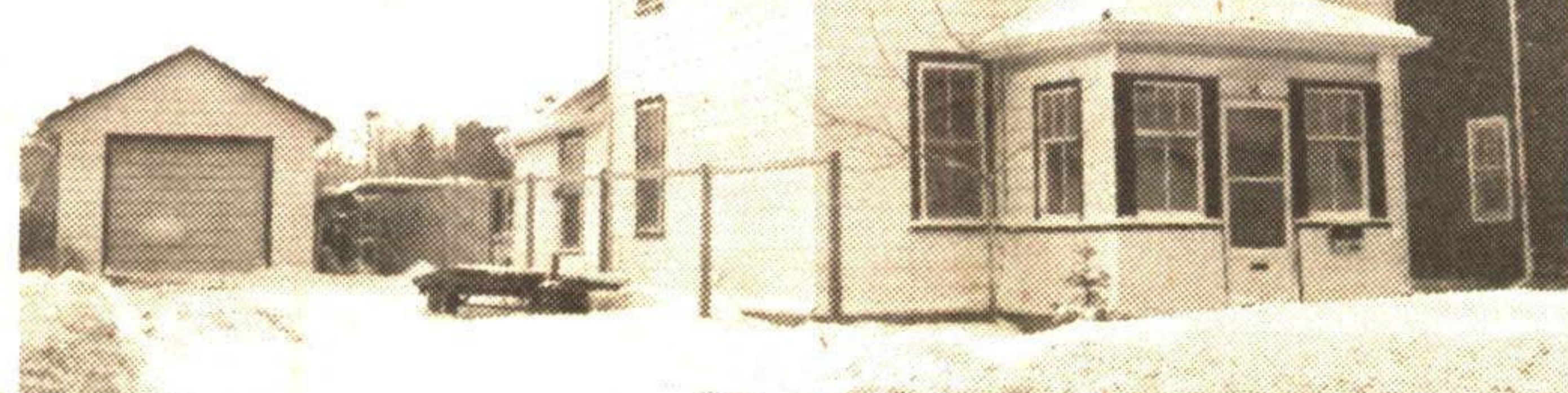
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