

L.A. show steals some of Detroit's thunder

Continued From 11B

design is "evolutionary" rather than revolutionary, with familiar styling cues from the past 'Vettes.

General Motors Corp. kept costs down on the new Corvette by designing an aluminum V-8 engine that uses older push-rod technology rather than a more expensive overhead-cam design. But that could make the new 'Vette less attractive to technology-savvy sports car buyers with \$40,000 or more to spend.

Peterson describes the new Corvette as "reasonably priced, gold-chain-and-hair-on-the-chest sort of transportation" that probably won't deliver on GM's hope to attract younger, import-leaning buyers.

"The new Corvette is a better car than it has been in the past," he said. "It's easier to

get in and out of, it's faster, but it's still a relatively crude, fiberglass-bodied American sports car."

From Germany are two roadsters aimed at carving up the market BMW's Z3 has tapped.

The mid-engine Boxster is Porsche's first all-new model in 19 years. Its name is derived from its horizontally opposed, 2.5-liter, 6-cylinder "boxer" engine and roadster chassis. Like the SLK from Mercedes, its styling is reminiscent of German roadsters of the 1950s.

The SLK features an unusual automatic retractable hardtop and a supercharged, 2.3-liter, 4-cylinder engine. But Mercedes disappointed many sports car fans by announcing it doesn't plan to offer a manual transmission - a requirement for true, high-performance driving - on the North

American version.

Both the SLK and Boxster will be priced above the Z3 in the \$40,000 to \$50,000 range, considered "affordable" by Mercedes or Porsche standards.

For those with even more to spend, Italian automaker Ferrari's F133 will have its North American debut at Detroit.

The sport coupe market, which also has been in a sales slump, will get some new entries at the Detroit and L.A. shows. The 1998 Mercedes CLK will have its world debut at Detroit, while the 1998 Volvo C70 will have its North American debut at Los Angeles.

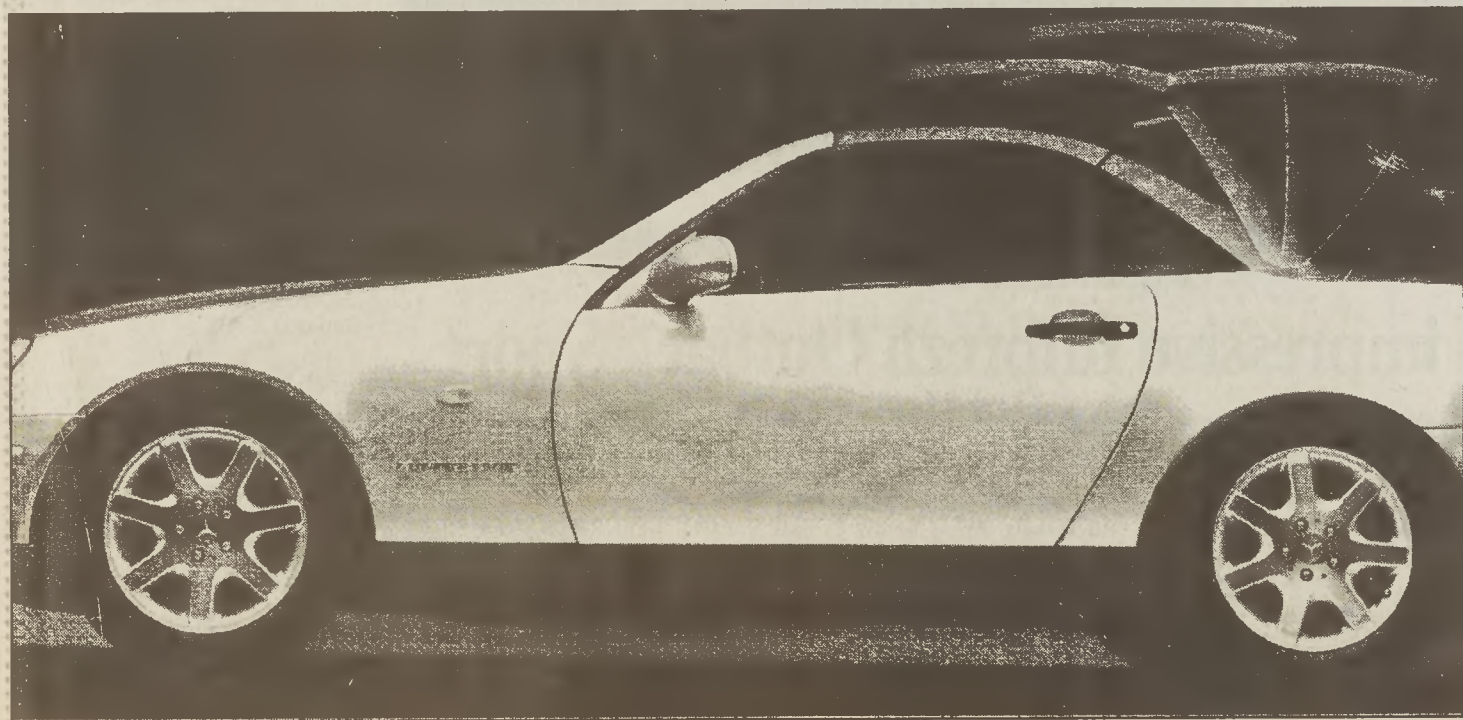
Other new-model debuts include:

-Toyota's Kentucky-made, front-drive 1998 Sienna minivan, based on the Camry chas-

sis, will have its world debut at Detroit.

-Several new sport utility vehicles will debut at Detroit: the midsize '98 Dodge Durango, to be built off the new Dakota pickup platform; the full-size '98 Lincoln Navigator, an ultra-luxury version of the Ford Expedition; the compact '97 Honda CR-V, which is already a big hit in Japan; and a new compact, car-based Forester SUV from Subaru for 1998. South Korea's Kia will unveil its '98 Kia Sportage convertible at Los Angeles.

-Oldsmobile's new midsize Intrigue sedan makes its world debut at Los Angeles. The '98 Intrigue, which will replace the Cutless Supreme in mid-1997, takes styling cues from the Olds Aurora and Antares concept car.



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