The FR-S comes standard with Scion Service Boost, a complimentary plan covering normal factory-scheduled maintenance for two years or 25,000 miles, whichever comes first, and two years of 24-hour roadside assistance.

By Steve Schaefer

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I've eagerly awaited the arrival of the Scion FR-S. Jointly developed with Subaru, it offers both companies' buyers a real, affordable sports coupe in sales volumes that may actually be profitable.

I spent a fun week with a Hot Lava orange model with a six-speed manual transmission. This car delivers the goods, with taut handling, a short-throw transmission with the metal-on-metal precision of a Miata, and the low-slung, quick feeling you want in a car built for driving pleasure.

FR-S stands for Front-engine, Rear-wheel drive, Sport. I still am not a big fan of acronymic car names, especially new ones. The Subaru is called the BRZ. I have no idea what that stands for. In my opinion, this is a car that just screams to be called a Toyota Celica, but Toyota is giving this to Scion as a "halo car." The brand needs more fresh products, too.

There are Toyota historical references. The company directs us back to the beloved "hachi-roku" (8-6 in Japanese) AE86 Corolla, which offered sparkling performance at a reasonable price point. They even installed a surprisingly weighty-looking "86" chrome badge on the front fenders that combines the "hachi-roku" with a horizontal piston, indicating the flat, horizontally opposed engine (a Subaru specialty). This is the first use of this type of engine in a front engine, rear-wheel-drive configuration.

Although Subaru was the main engine developer, Toyota added its special touch. Their D-4S injection system incorporates both direct and port injection for each cylinder, one injecting fuel directly into the combustion chamber, the other a port injector located above the intake valves. Both cars share this technology, and it means that they get 200 horsepower and 151 lb.-ft. of torque from just 2.0 liters of displacement, without a turbocharger. However, like turbo models, the engine uses premium fuel, which at last report from my local 76 station (not related to 86) was running a sobering $4.41 a gallon. I got 26.9 mpg, and the EPA awards the car 22 City, 30 Highway, and 25 Average.

I took the car on my normal errands, but also swung by Palomares Road, a slithering stretch of north-south two-lane not too far from home. As I expected, the FR-S stayed stable in various radius turns, leaped forward in the short sections of straightaway, the steering was responsive and, in the narrow sport seats, it was all grins for me. I kept it in second and third gear the whole time, and didn’t need to hit anywhere near triple digits to have a blast.

The car looks fierce, with sharp, eagle-eye headlamp clusters, lots of creases and character lines, and a ready-to-pounce look that suits a car with this job to do. The press notes say the profile is inspired by the Toyota 2000GT, a fine and rare car indeed. The Subaru version has a somewhat different face but is mainly distinguished by offering a few things the Scion doesn’t, such as automatic climate control and a rear spoiler.