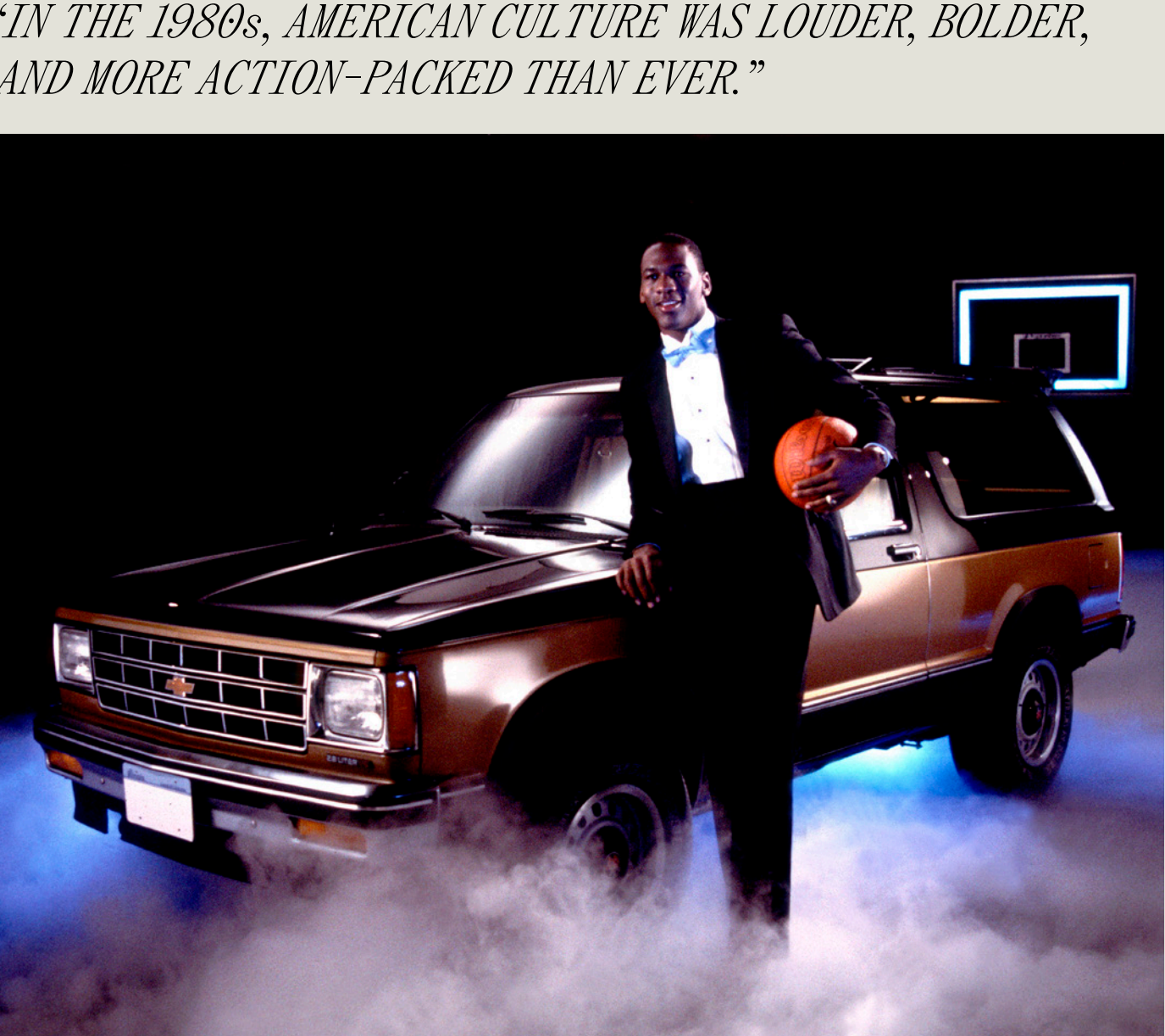




American Express ran an extravagant promotion in its Christmas 1980 catalog: a DeLorean with 24-karat gold plating. Only two were ever sold.



Top left: Tommy Lee, drummer for iconic hair-metal band Mötley Crüe, at the height of his fame. Bottom left: The Sony Walkman brought truly personal music to the masses. Right: Michael Jordan was the highest-scoring player in the 1986 NBA season, leading the Chicago Bulls to single-season records.



“IN THE 1980s, AMERICAN CULTURE WAS LOUDER, BOLDER, AND MORE ACTION-PACKED THAN EVER.”

Following the challenges of downsizing in the 1970s, American carmakers finally had a grasp of practicality. The Chrysler minivans carved out a brand-new niche when they debuted in 1983 by combining the versatility of full-size vans with the driving dynamics of a compact platform. That platform, in fact, was the K-car, a front-wheel-drive layout versatile enough to underpin everything from minivans to Shelby-tuned sports cars—and even the ultra-luxurious Chrysler convertible TC by Maserati, which Chrysler chairman Lee Iacocca called the prettiest Italian immigrant since his mother.

Ford turned its back on the traditionally styled LTD with the Taurus. In both design and development, it was

quietly revolutionary: interior and exterior designers and engineers formed a cohesive unit, working under a new culture of quality and incorporating aerodynamics not yet seen on a family sedan. Shorn of chrome, and even devoid of a grille, the Taurus was a design risk for such a mainstream vehicle. Yet, the make-or-break strategy worked, reversing nearly \$3 billion in losses Ford had suffered in the past four years.

Within the teeming halls of GM, Oldsmobile sought to demonstrate the new Quad 4 series engines—so in the guise of the Aerotech concept, the four-cylinder turbocharged units were tweaked to 900 horsepower, wrapped around streamlined bodies, and driven by Indy 500

legend A. J. Foyt to 275 mph (443km/h). Even Chevrolet took its long-aging, detuned, and hopelessly exaggerated Corvette and completely revamped it from the ground up with the innovative C4 generation, featuring impressive performance credentials that could successfully compete against the era’s top supercars.

That wasn’t enough for Callaway Cars, whose nearly 900-horsepower Sledgehammer set a record-breaking top speed of 255mph (410 km/h) in 1988. Like the rest of the era’s iconic supercars from Ferrari and Porsche, it was bold, unstoppable, and brimming with more power than it knew what to do with—much like Schwarzenegger, back-to-back in *Commando* and *Predator*.