

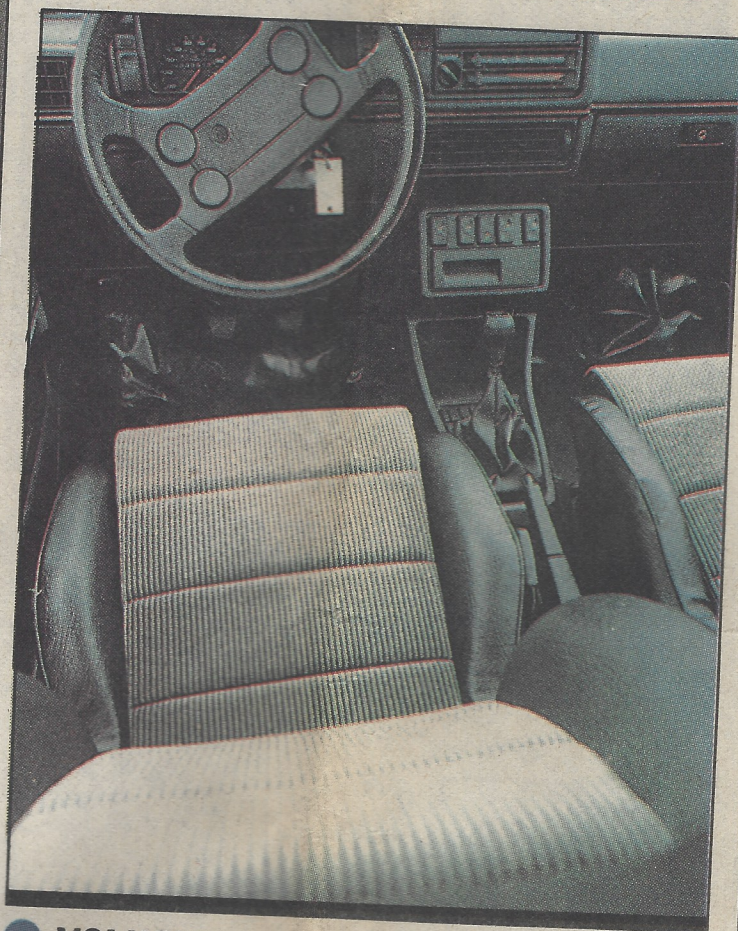
The Hartford Courant

AUTO SPECIAL

The Best '86



HONDA PRELUDE SI boasts larger tires on alloy body-color front airdam and rear spoiler.



● **VOLKSWAGEN JETTA GLI** has the same great sport seats, instruments and functional controls as the Golf but strikes a classier profile.

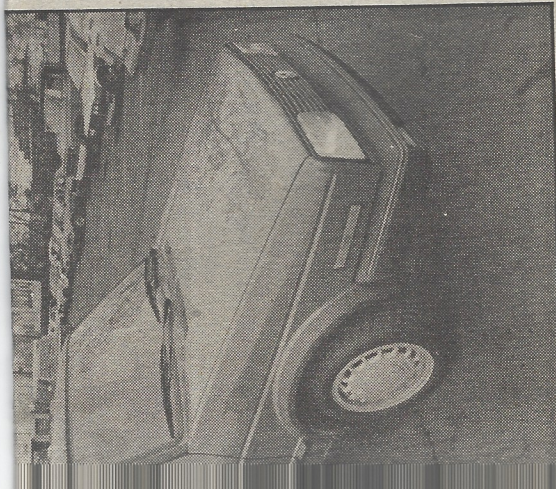
As the Connecticut International Auto Show approaches, we asked Gary Witzenburg, The Courant's auto critic, to pick his favorite 10 cars of the '86 crop.

Some of his choices are pictured here and the complete list is on Page 2. His selection of the 10 best buys is on Pages 12 and 13.

You can make your choices at the auto show, Friday through Sunday in the Hartford Civic Center.

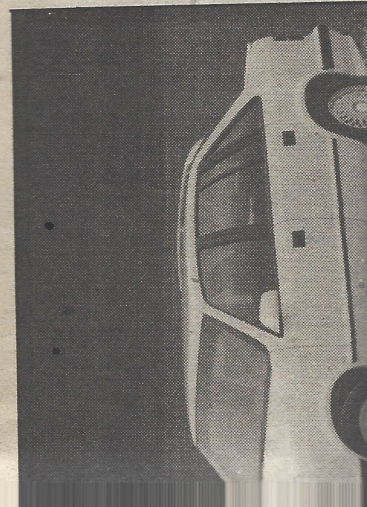


● **PONTIAC 6000** sport sedan, a favorite knowledgeable enthusiast.



GLI

sed GTI. It's a first-rate pocket rocket — sired and built. But, let's face it, the Golf VW's Jetta GLI cost exactly one G more at profile and offers more equipment and a otherwise, its essentially the same. Same engine, same eager suspension and four-reat sport seats, instruments and function-ounds heavier and a half-second slower 0-TI's 9.0), but its steering is quicker and manual. A fair trade-off, I think, for a made-in-Germany sport sedan.



Special to The Courant
Gary Witzenburg, the country's most widely published auto writer, is a former auto engineer with 20 year's racing experience who has reported on new cars since 1973. He has written three Automobile Quarterly books and is a contributing editor to Playboy and Motor Trend. His articles appear in a wide variety of publications and he writes a car review twice a month for The Courant.

Critic Picks Personal Favorites

By GARY WITZENBURG
Special to The Courant

There's little money or security in this crazy car-writing business, but the fringe benefits are great.

Imagine testing a couple hundred brand new cars each year, some at race tracks and proving grounds, others on some of the world's greatest roads, a chosen few for a week at a time around home. And getting paid to write about it.

I know, I know, it's pretty tough duty. But somebody has to do it.

Still, you can get jaded after awhile. The Cutlasses and Cavaliers and Corollas of the world

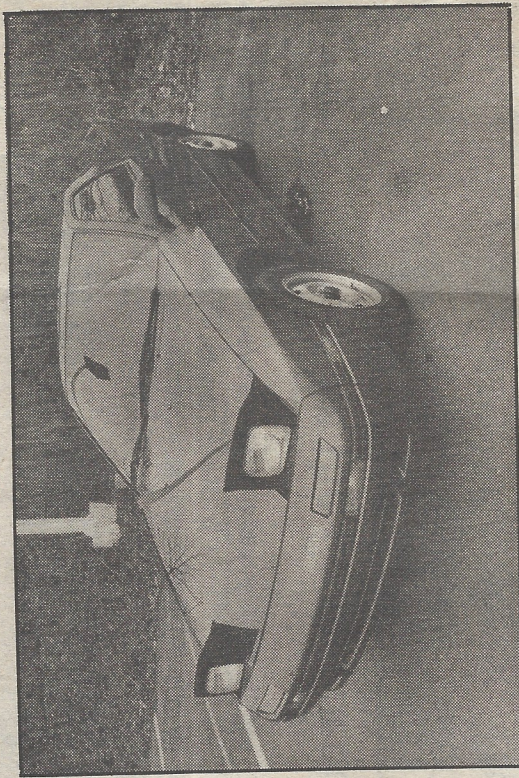
start blending into the scenery, and a car has got to be really something to get your adrenaline pumping.

Witzenburg offers his best buys. Page 12.

Every so often, you encounter one that is. A car that looks good and feels good and makes you feel good every moment you're behind the wheel.

Ten such cars are presented below. Not "Ten Best Buys," mind you, but ten personal, highly subjective favorites.

Chances are, if you like cars and driving anywhere near as much as I do, you'll love 'em, too.



Mazda RX-7

■ Porsche's 944 used to be my favorite sports car. Now it's Mazda's all-new RX-7. Its slippery new body resembles the 944's in front, its doors are similar to the Chrysler's Laser's, and its back end has a lot of Camaro in it. Not boldly innovative, but better looking, more aggressive and more "upmarket" than before, and it parts the wind with an excellent .31 drag coefficient. '29 with the optional aero package. The fuel-injected rotary engine's power is up to 146, good for eight seconds 0-60 and 128 flat out. The racing-type four-wheel power disc brakes are superb, and the trick rear suspension toes the outside back wheel slightly out going into a corner, then points it in for amazing stability through the turn. Prices start around \$12,000 for the two-seater, \$12,500 for the new 2+2.



Price, Value Are Combined For Selections

Continued from Page 12

But it does offer, in my view, the best overall combination of price, value, quality, styling, engineering, performance, handling, standard and optional features, reliability and resale.

Four of these ten are designed and produced in America.

One, Audi's 5000 is thoroughly German; another, Volkswagen's GTI, is a German design but built in VW's Pennsylvania plant.

The other are Japanese; but one, the Chevrolet Sprint, is imported and marketed by General Motors' Chevrolet Division.

The categories are logical, but a little explanation is in order: Econocars, of course, are the least expensive and most fuel efficient autos on the market.

Econosports are higher-performance, crisper-handling, fun-to-drive sporty versions of certain econocars and small sedans, most listing for less than \$10,000.

Small sedans, for classification purposes, are family four-doors (and some two-doors and wagons) less than 175 inches long.

Medium sedans fall between 175 and 190 inches in length, and large sedans are those over 190 inches.

Luxury sedans, regardless of size, are defined as those with base prices over \$15,000.

The fast-growing sport sedan class includes those special four-doors with higher performance, tighter suspensions and a certain sporting character that makes them especially enjoyable to drive.

The many stylish two-door coupes and hatchbacks on the market are divided into two classes, sport coupes costing less than \$15,000 and luxury sport coupes costing more.

Finally, the sports/GT group includes both two-seat sports cars and high-performance four-seat coupes.

Under this system, different versions of the same car can fall into different categories.

The basic Dodge and Plymouth Colts, for example, are econocars, while uplevel versions are small sedans and Colt turbos are definitely econosports.

Mustangs and Camaros are sport coupes, but Mustang GTs and Camaro Z-28s are sports/GTs.

Pontiac's 6000 is a medium sedan, but the limited-production 6000 STE is very much a sport sedan. You get the idea.

Whatever you do, shop carefully and compare feature-for-feature.

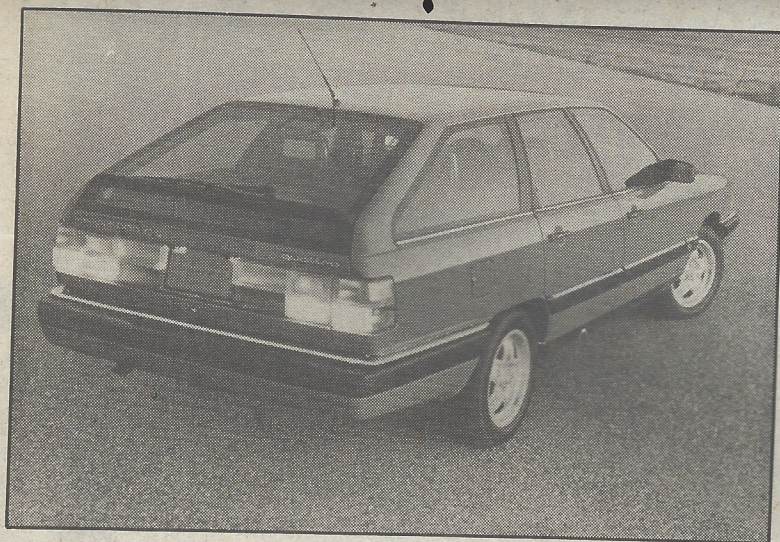
Don't buy on impulse or without test-driving first.

Most importantly, buy a car that you really like, one that suits your needs, lifestyle and self-image, one that feels good on the road and one that you're proud to be seen in.

Because if you really like your car, you'll take better care of it.

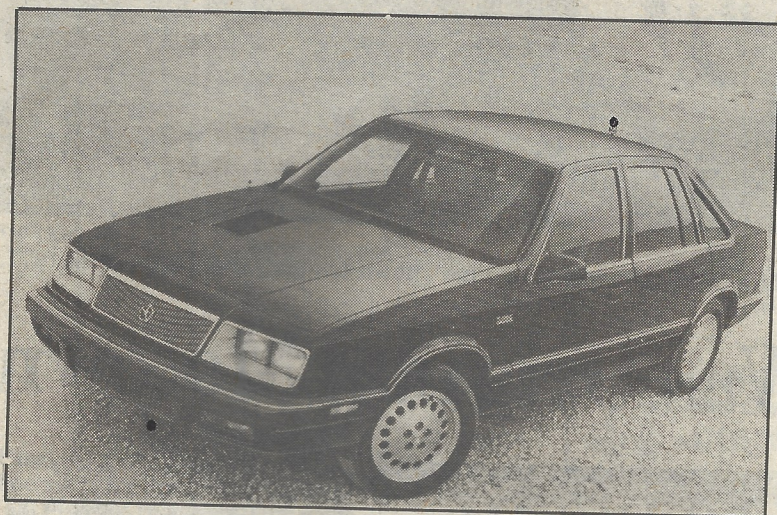
It will serve you better, you'll get more back from it at resale time, you'll put up with its shortcomings more cheerfully, and your whole ownership experience will be a happier one.

Gary Witzenburg is a Los Angeles-based free-lance writer. His car reviews run twice each month in The Courant Motoring section.



Luxury Sedan: Audi 5000CS Quattro

■ Audi's flagship sedan weds all-wheel drive, anti-lock brakes and turbo five-cylinder power under a roomy, slippery-sleek four-door body. The ultimate all-weather cruiser, fully equipped at \$27,975 sedan, \$29,185 wagon.



Sport Sedan: LeBaron GTS, Dodge Lancer

■ Still Best Buys for the buck in this highly competitive class, these roomy, handsome hatchbacks give glued-to-the-road handling, a new optional engine with vibration-smoothing balance shafts and available turbo power. About \$9,400 for the base Lancer, \$9,750 for the GTS.

