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# SMORGASBORD OF FOUR-WHEELED EXCITEMENT

By Gary Witzenburg

**Quick, which city hosts America's biggest annual auto show? New York? Los Angeles? Detroit? Chicago?**

If you guessed Chicago, congratulations. That's right, Chicago's February auto extravaganza has long been the country's biggest and best. It began in 1901 with all of 10 cars and trucks—five of them electric and three steam-powered—and has prospered every peacetime year since. Nearly a million visitors are expected for this year's 79th annual show, which runs February 7-15 at McCormick Place.

Why Chicago? For one thing, the Midwest's largest and most sophisticated city and its suburbs are not only brim-full with potential new-car customers, it is also conveniently close to Detroit and easy to reach from everywhere else. The show's mid-winter date also catches Chicagoans at the peak of the seasonal blahs: bored, restless, aching for something exciting to do.

Largely because of its location and timing, The Chicago Auto Show provides a high-visibility launchpad for a variety of mid-year new models. Auto writers arrive from around the country to report these important debuts and are hosted and catered to by eager automakers for several days prior to the show's Saturday opening. The makers also send survey teams to question showgoers on their automotive tastes and preferences and what they would like on cars in the future.

What's to see? Some 800 different vehicles—including virtually all domestic and imported production cars and trucks; experimental, idea and future concept vehicles; competition and racing cars; kit cars and replicas; classics, antiques and special interest cars; custom-built limousines and just about everything else on wheels. Not to mention parts and accessories, cutaway vehicle displays, music, models, robots, magicians, participatory games with prizes and a variety of sports, radio, TV and showbiz personalities.

McCormick Place, the world's largest exposition center, is easily reached by train, bus, taxi and private car. There's on-site parking for 15,000 cars, plus free shuttles to and from Soldier Field and adjacent lots. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$1 for children (12 and under) and \$3 for seniors, and advance ticket sales are available.

If you're even *thinking* about a new car or truck, 1987 promises to be the best car-buying year in a long, long time. New-car supplies are up, demand has been down, and anyone who's ever heard of elementary economics knows that's good for consumers. Dealers are dealing, loan interest rates remain low, and factory incentives (rebates, cut-rate financing) continue to sweeten the pot.

Also important are higher-than-ever levels of new-car quality, serious cut-throat competition in the marketplace and the biggest-ever variety of

available transportation choices. Best of all for those who view their personal wheels as both social statement and driving enjoyment, the performance, handling and pure fun to drive (FTD) factors of the '87's new-car crop have never been higher.

We haven't the space to cover everything worth seeing, but here are some highlights:

## U.S. CARS

Chevrolet, General Motors' largest car division, unveiled its all-new '88 Baretta coupe and Corsica sedan models just last month, and you can bet these handsome compacts will be proudly displayed under the big Chevy Bowtie. Sized and prized between the division's Cavalier and Celebrity series, both are exclusive to Chevrolet (no Pontiac, Olds or Buick spin-offs) and both come well-equipped with standard fuel-injected four-cylinder power or optional V6 oomph.

Also at Chevy are Turbo versions of both the 3-cylinder Sprint minicar and the subcompact Spectrum. Both are Japanese built (Sprint by Suzuki, Spectrum by Isuzu) and both are worthy new entries in the "pocket rocket" econosport class. And don't miss the gorgeous new Camaro convertible and the mighty Corvette-engined IROC-Z.

Under the "We Build Excitement" banner, Pontiac Division will feature its all-new front-drive Bonneville sedan. A Euro-look cousin to Oldsmobile's full-size 88 and Buick's LeSabre, Bonneville boasts a more rounded shape and a slightly more sporty interior. Sharing the spotlight will be some mid-year excitement in the small-car class, Pontiac's all-new LeMans. Available in sleekly rounded 3-door hatchback and 4-door sedan variations, this little beauty is derived from a German Opel design and produced by Daewoo, GM's partner in Korea.

Also sure to raise showgoers' pulse-rates are two new additions to the popular Firebird line (a re-born Formula series priced well under the vaunted Trans Am and a Corvette-powered Trans Am GTA) and the smoothly facelifted Fiero sports car, now with a standard five-speed manual transmission for its optional V-6. The hot Sunbird GT's turbo engine is boosted in size and power (from 150 to 165 horses), its turbo bearings are water-cooled for added durability, and it comes for the first time with a standard five-speed manual transmission.

Oldsmobile's centerpiece will be a winged, bullet-shaped concept car called Aerotech, which the division actually plans to use for future high-performance testing. Just 40 inches tall (waist-high to the average man), the super-slippery Aerotech is powered by a special turbocharged

version of Olds' upcoming (for 1988) "Quad 4" 16-valve, twin-cam four-cylinder engine. Also new at Olds are a top-of-the-line Trofeo (for "trophy") version of the Toronado luxury coupe and a performance-oriented Touring Sedan addition to the full-size 98 Regency stable.

Along the same lines, one of Buick's shining stars will be a new T (for "Touring")-Type version of the division's sporty LeSabre fastback coupe. And while you're there, don't miss America's most powerful production car, Buick's Regal Grand National coupe. Its intercooled, turbocharged, port-injected V6 engine cranks out a rated 245 hp and rockets the car from 0-60 in less than six seconds.

Cadillac's major attraction will be the hightech, high-buck Mercedes 560-fighter called Allante'. A two-seat front-drive convertible with both hard and soft tops, it's expected to list in the \$50,000 range. Its crisply handsome body will be built where it was styled, at the famous Pininfarina coachworks in Turin, Italy, then flown across the Atlantic to be mated with a shortened Eldorado-based chassis and transverse front-drive V-8 powertrain.

Also among the full line of '87 Cadillacs on display will be the new Sixty Special, a front-drive Fleetwood Brougham with its wheelbase stretched five inches for added interior room. And look for the division's very interesting PPG CART Series Official Safety Car, a beefed-up but stock-appearing Seville capable of seven-second 0-60 acceleration and sustained 140-mph-plus speeds for use on CART's Indy Car World Series racing circuit.

At the GMC Truck Division display, you can count on seeing a Ducks Unlimited Edition Suburban or two. Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Ducks Unlimited wild fowl and wetlands conservation organization, these customized (by Starcraft) wagon-bodied trucks are available in camouflage green, Indian bronze or doeskin tan paint treatments. There may also be a sneak preview of GMC's all-new '88 Sierra pickup, though it's not scheduled for an official debut until April.

Ford Motor Company's Ford Division will be showing off its nicely restyled Thunderbird Turbo Coupe, which gets power-boosting intercooling for its turbo engine and now packs 190 ponies under its long hood. The big Bird sports a fresh new look inside and out and standard ABS anti-lock brakes and Automatic Ride Control (computer-controlled shock absorbers) underneath.

Ford's compact Tempo gets optional four-wheel drive for '87, while the Mustang GT's awesome 5.0-liter V-8 boasts another power boost (to 225 hp) plus a pleasant facelift and a much-improved interior. It's capable of six-second 0-60 launches and nearly 150 mph flat out. Most importantly,



Ford's entry in the growing minicar competition — the Japanese-designed, Korean-built four-cylinder Festiva — will be unveiled to the public for the very first time at the Chicago show.

Meanwhile at Lincoln-Mercury-Merkur the wraps will come off another all-new small car called Mercury Tracer. Larger and much plusher than the Festiva, and available in both three-door and five-door hatchback models, this one also has an interesting heritage: it's a handsomely re-bodied version of Mazda's 323, and it will be built in a brand new Ford plant in Hermosillo, Mexico. Chicago show attendees will be first in the nation to see it.

Mercury's Cougar, kissin' cousin to Ford's T-Bird, also wears a fresh new look for '87. The German-built Merkur XR4Ti sport coupe's long awaited stablemate, the Scorpio luxury sedan, likely won't make the Chicago show (watch for it by spring), but the Lincoln display will include a lovely convertible concept car called Lincoln by Vignale. With V8 power and both hard and soft tops, this could be a direct competitor to Cadillac's Allante one day, if produced.

Along the same line is Chrysler's much-hyped Chrysler-Maserati two-seater. It will also have two tops (the removable hardtop sporting goofy round porthole like the '56 Thunderbird's), plus turbo power and a plush Italian leather and wood interior. Look for a late summer debut and a \$30,000 price tag. A similarly-styled luxury/sport entry arrives now, however, in the form of an all-new front-drive Chrysler LeBaron coupe. A sleekly handsome T-bird challenger with optional turbo power, it will be followed by a sexy convertible version come spring.

New in the small-car class, Chrysler's Dodge Sundance and Plymouth Shadow subcompacts — available with regular or turbo 2.2-liter four and a choice of five-speed manual or optional automatic — are well-equipped good lookers as well as crisp, agile handlers. Their FTD factor is surprisingly high despite their practical hatchback/sedan shapes. But if sheer dollar value gets your attention, check the crude but nicely-trimmed Dodge Omni and Plymouth Horizon "America" models, priced to sell against the latest low-buck imports at just \$6,107.

While visiting the Dodge display, don't miss the sleekly facelifted Daytona sport coupe, complete with pop-up headlamps and an intercooled "Turbo II" version of Chrysler's tough 2.2-liter turbo motor in a hot new Shelby Z model. Addition of the intercooler and other refinements boosts the Turbo II's power to a potent 175 horses and the Shelby Z's 0-60 squirt into the mid-seven-second range. Also look for the special Carroll Shelby-brand version of the little Charger hatchback. Available only at authorized Shelby dealers (specially-selected Dodge stores), this limited-edition muscular mini will be called the Shelby Charger GLH-S and should be capable of 0-60 launches in the low seven-second range. (Shelby, as you may know, is the former world-class racer who created the Ford-powered Cobra sports car in addition to one of the world's tastiest chili recipes.)

The all-new Dakota mid-sized pickup will highlight Dodge's truck display, and compact van fans should check out the new stretched Plymouth Voyager and Dodge Caravan models with more back-seat leg- and luggage-room. A new V-6 engine becomes available in both regular and

stretch versions. The Chrysler-Plymouth and Dodge stands also promise a variety of show and concept vehicles including: a 1991 Dodge concept sports car similar to the sexy Mojave recently shown at Vancouver, B.C.'s World Expo; a custom convertible Dodge truck, a Shelby show car; a cut-away Voyager van with special styling and a high-tech electronic interior; and modified versions of the production Sundance, Shadow and LeBaron.

AMC/Renault joins the pocket-rocket race with a quick and agile Alliance-based Renault GTA, available in two-door coupe and convertible versions. A new 2.0-liter engine gives 95 lively horses and sub-ten-second 0-60 acceleration, while beefed up suspension and boy-racer wheels and tires give class-competitive cornering power, and special spoilers and trim and a sporty monotone paint scheme complete the GTA's visual package.

But the biggest stars under AMC's tent this year will be a couple of slick new imports from French partner Renault. The first is the compact Medallion, available in handsome and very roomy sedan and wagon variations and powered by a 107-horsepower fuel-injected four-cylinder engine. The second is the long-awaited Renault Alpine sports car. With 180 hp from its turbocharged V6 engine, this aerodynamic Corvette and Porsche challenger will do 0-60 in less than seven seconds and boasts a 147-mph top speed. Medallions are due in dealer showrooms by spring, while the Alpine is scheduled for a late summer or fall introduction. AMC isn't talking yet about its coming Canadian-built Premier mid-size sedan, but look for a sneak preview of it as well.

Also new from AMC is Wrangler, the Jeep CJ-7's able replacement. Except for contemporary rectangular headlamps and a much more modern instrument panel, you almost can't tell this new basic Jeep from the old — until you drive it. Then it comes across as vastly superior in every way, especially in ride and handling on the road, where most owners will use it most of the time.

You may not have heard of a small custom automaker called Zimmer, but be sure to see its new Quicksilver luxury sport coupe. They'd rather you didn't know its distinctive body was bolted onto a V6-powered Pontiac Fiero space frame, but it is. And that's a definite positive because (unlike others of its ilk) it should be as reliable as a stock Fiero and serviceable at Pontiac dealers.

## JAPANESE CARS

On the import front (beginning with Japan's largest), Toyota has more new product this year than ever before. First is a brand new, better handling, better performing and much better looking mid-size Camry, available for the first time as both sedan and wagon. Powered by the same 16-valve, twin-cam four found in the sporty Celica, the '87 Camry is also slightly larger, plusher and better equipped. Automatic passive shoulder belts — better than nothing for those who won't buckle up but a bother for those of us who do — are standard.

Then there's the restyled and upgraded Tercel. Besides slicker new three-door and five-door hatchback bodies (the oddball wagon goes unchanged), there's a more powerful 12-valve engine, rack-and-pinion steering, a redesigned rear suspension and a fuel-squeezing lock-up torque converter for the optional automatic.

See the 1987 Saab at any of these dealers:

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Hanley Dawson Toyota-Saab  
150 W. Ontario  
(312) 440-7400

### CHICAGO

Lynch Buick/Saab/Subaru  
5333 W. Irving Park Road  
(312) 685-1800

### DOWNERS GROVE

Downers Grove Saab  
2020 W. Ogden Avenue  
(312) 964-9500

### ELMHURST

Westlake Import Motors, Inc.  
466 W. Lake Street  
(312) 833-7945

### GLENVIEW

Fields Saab  
3 Waukegan Road  
(312) 998-5200

### LAKE FOREST

Lake Forest Saab  
778-780 North Western Ave.  
(312) 295-6560

### LANSING

Flikkema Motors, Inc.  
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(312) 474-1933

### McHENRY

Europa Motors  
2414 W. Route 120  
(815) 385-0700

### SCHAUMBURG

Patrick BMW Saab  
534 Mall Drive  
(312) 843-4000

### TINLEY PARK

Al Johnson Imports  
8425 W. 159th Street  
(312) 429-6600

### WEST CHICAGO

Wigglesworth Imports, Inc.  
705 E. Roosevelt Road  
(312) 293-1970



The Corolla FX16, Toyota's spirited new pocket rocket entry, not only goes and handles as well as it looks but is also significant as the first-ever American-built Toyota. Assembled at the joint-venture NUMMI plant in Fremont, California (alongside Chevy's Corolla-based Nova), the FX16 is well motivated by the MR2 sports car's 16-valve four-cylinder engine. There's also a lovely new Celica convertible, the Supra luxosport coupe line adds a new turbo version, the mid-engine MR2 gets an optional T-top, and the Toyota Van can now be had with four-wheel drive.

Meanwhile, arch-rival Nissan has revamped nearly its entire U.S. line. Last spring came a restyled subcompact Sentra, an all-new mid-range Stanza and a mildly facelifted luxury Maxima. Besides its more contemporary new look, the Sentra now features a more rigid body and added insulation for a quieter ride, plus a stylish new sport coupe model and a four-wheel drive option for the wagon. The Stanza's upgrade was a major one as both four-door sedan and five-door hatchback are now built on the more expensive Maxima's front-drive platform. It's now essentially a four-cylinder Maxima, while the popular Maxima itself (sedan, SE sport sedan, and wagon) retains its smooth and powerful V6 engine.

New this fall at Nissan were a versatile Pulsar NX sport coupe, a Pathfinder 4WD sport utility based on the "Hardbody" pickup, and a seven-passenger van that looks surprisingly similar to Toyota's. Like last year's new Nissan truck, both Pulsar and Pathfinder are efforts of Nissan's U.S.-based design house in La Jolla, California, and both have triangular-shaped rear side windows.

With its T-Tops and hatch removed, the Pulsar transforms into an almost-convertible, while a dealer-available "SportBak" upper rear section turns it into a tiny wagon. There's also an optional twin-cam, 16-valve engine, a much improved suspension and larger standard tires. The Pathfinder, amazingly roomy, comfortable and car-like for a compact truck, can also be a serious off-road prowler with its optional V6 engine and the segment's largest factory-available tires.

Nissan's 200-SX sports coupe and 300-ZX sports/GT both get attractive facelifts and important engineering improvements, the former with standard V6 power (replacing last year's available turbomotor) in the SE fastback model, the latter with suspension refinements for more stable high-speed handling.

Honda's 4WD Civic wagon boasts a new full-time 4WD system with a viscous coupling between the front and rear axles. Over at Honda's Acura Division, a new high-lux leather package for the Legend sedan is about all that's new until a sportier two-door Legend model arrives this spring.

Mazda offers optional ABS anti-lock brakes on its RX-7 sports car and four-speed automatic for its mid-size 626 coupe, sedan and hatchback line. A new station wagon model enhances the smaller Mazda 323 series, while a rugged new four-wheel drive truck will debut sometime after the first of the year.

Subaru joins the minicar wars with its three-cylinder Justy hatchback, another important mid-year model. Also significant are minor horsepower boosts and a more sophisticated full-time 4WD system for the sedan, wagon and XT sport coupe, the latter of which is scheduled for standard passive restraints by spring.

Already equipped with passive belts are Mitsubishi's Starion sports car and its Chrysler counterpart, Conquest. The subcompact Mirage (which doubles as the Dodge and Plymouth Colt) gets fresh front styling and more power from its optional turbo engine, and the pretty four-door version is added to Mitsubishi's own Mirage line. There's an all-new truck (called Ram 50 at Dodge), and a version of the Montero sports utility becomes Dodge's Raider. Finally, a new five-speed manual transmission and interior upgrades highlight the '87 Galant luxosedan.

Isuzu adds optional turbo power for its subcompact I-Mark (more widely available as Chevrolet's Spectrum), but leaves its Impulse sport coupe and Trooper sport utility alone.

## EUROPEAN CARS

Germany's Mercedes-Benz adds five new models, including three based on the mid-range 300E: a less expensive 260E, a 300D Turbo and a 300TD Turbo wagon, the latter two with a powerful new turbodiesel engine. The remaining two are a six-cylinder 190E 2.6 and a diesel-powered 190D 2.5, both versions of the compact 190 sedan. All Mercedeses come with a Supplemental Restraint System (SRS, consisting of a driver's side airbag and a passenger-side belt tensioner), most have ABS brakes, and the turbodiesel engine has a trap-oxidizer system that virtually eliminates smoke and odor.

BMW—now with six-cylinder engines, standard ABS brakes and anti-theft stereo in every U.S. model—introduces a sportier version of its mid-range 535i labeled "535is." Also on display will be a slick new 325 convertible and special high-performance "M" versions of the 5-series sedan and 6-series coupe (called M5 and M6, respectively) powered by a hot new 24-valve six-cylinder engine. Scheduled for later introduction (and not likely to be at the show) are the smaller M3 coupe and an all-new 7-series luxury sedan.

Porsche, with three new four-cylinder cars out of the box in '86 (an "entry-level" 924S and both 16-valve and Turbo versions of the wonderful 944), follows up in '87 with more power and a new transmission and clutch for the six-cylinder 911, plus major styling and engineering upgrades for the flagship 928. Awkwardly named the 928S-4 (because it's the fourth generation 928), Porsche's top-of-the-line luxury sports car finally achieves proper performance status to go with its near-\$60,000 price tag. Its 32-valve V8 engine now packs an awesome 316 hp, and its top speed is a heart-stopping 165 mph.

Volkswagen of America will use the Chicago show to unveil still another significant new small car: the attractive and surprisingly well-equipped VW Fox. A thoroughly German design produced by VW's subsidiary in Brazil, it's available in two-door coupe and four-door sedan body styles and powered by the same lively 1.8-liter four that motivates the U.S.-built Golf. Starting price: \$5,690.

Equally new on the VW stand is the quick and devilishly fun GTI 16V, which boasts the wonderful 16-valve twin-cam engine introduced last spring in the Scirocco 16V sport coupe. And the former GTI (nearly as zesty but more affordable) becomes the Golf GT, available in both three-door and

five-door hatchback variations. VW's Audi Division adds electronic engine control (and a resulting power increase) to its non-turbo five-cylinder engine while awaiting the spring introduction of a slippery new 4000 series. A new three-year, no-cost Roadside Assistance program covers all 1987 Audi models.

Sweden's Volvo debuts its Bertone-designed 780 luxury coupe, complete with a new aluminum V6 engine, ABS brakes and a supplemental restraint system (SRS) similar to Mercedes'. The smoother engine and ABS also enhance the 760 sedan (which gets SRS in March), and both ABS and SRS will be optional in four-cylinder 740s at that time as well. Volvo's turbo engine now has water-cooled turbo bearings, and a five-speed manual replaces the old four-speed/overdrive in the 240 DL. Also look for the 740 Turbo wagon with racing decals all over its chunky body. Yes, it was a serious competitor in the Sports Car Club of America's 1986 Escort (Radar Detector)-sponsored Showroom Stock series... and it did very well, thank you.

Saab freshens the face of its funky 900 models, increases production of the nifty 900 Turbo convertible, water-cools its own turbo's bearings and adds a 16-valve, non-turbo "S" model and four-speed automatic to its topline 9000 series.

Peugeot of France boasts two new fuel-injected engines (a 2.2-liter four and a 2.8-liter V6) for its handsome 505 sedans, electronic injection for its available turbodiesel engine, and ABS brakes for top-of-the-line 505s.

England's Jaguar offers an open roadster version (not the caged-in Cabriolet) of its V12 XJ-S while planning the spring launch of its new XJ-6 sedan. Rolls Royce unveils a sports-oriented Bentley Eight model (\$89,900) with firmer suspension, larger tires on alloy wheels and a nostalgic wire-mesh grille. Aston Martin adds fuel injection and a 20% power boost to its exclusive (\$114-\$169,000) line of hand-built beauties, while Lotus carries over its swift Esprit Turbo unchanged.

But the biggest news from Britain is the Rover-built Sterling version of the same mid-size sedan already available here as Honda's Acura Legend. With a pretty but conservative shape somewhere between Audi 5000 and Peugeot 505, the front-drive Sterling combines lush wood and leather interior appointments with Honda's 24-valve V6 engine and five-speed or automatic powertrain. This one should be a hit at \$19,000.

There's not much new to report from Italy, land of fiery red sports cars and fast exotics, as Ferrari, Lamborghini, Bertone (which still sells the former Fiat X1/9 here) and Alfa Romeo stand pat with their current hands. Maserati, however—celebrating its 60th anniversary this year—will add electronic fuel injection to its Biturbo coupe, 425 sedan and Spyder convertible later in '87. These Latin beauties are always worth seeing, though, so save some time and seek them out.

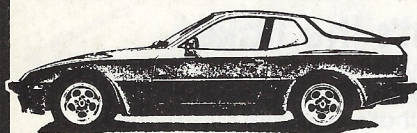
Finally, Yugoslavia's Yugo holds its \$3990 base price and will probably show its sporty new GVX model (with a larger engine, aero spoilers, five-speed gearbox, low-profile tires and alloy wheels) in Chicago.

Frankly, if you can't find something at this year's Chicago Auto Show that spins your turbo and gets your anti-freeze flowing, brothers and sisters, you'd better have your batteries checked.



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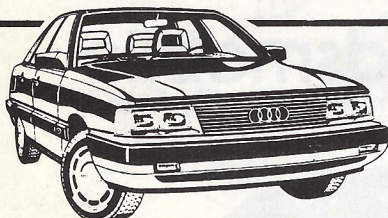
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## TEN BEST CAR BUYS FOR 1987

	1985	1986	1987
<b>ECONOCAR •</b>	Dodge/Plymouth Colt/Mitsubishi Mirage	Chevrolet Sprint	Chevrolet Sprint
<b>ECONOSPORT •</b>	Volkswagen GTI	Volkswagen GTI	Volkswagen GTI
<b>SMALL SEDAN •</b>	Toyota Corolla	Mazda 323	Plymouth Sundance/ Dodge Shadow
<b>MEDIUM SEDAN •</b>	Mazda 626	Ford Taurus/ Mercury Sable	Ford Taurus/ Mercury Sable
<b>LARGE SEDAN •</b>	Oldsmobile Delta 88	Chevrolet Caprice	Chevrolet Caprice
<b>LUXURY SEDAN •</b>	Cadillac deVille/ Fleetwood	Audi 5000CS Turbo Quattro	Audi 5000CS Turbo Quattro
<b>SPORT SEDAN •</b>	Dodge Lancer/ Chrysler LeBaron GTS	Dodge Lancer/ Chrysler LeBaron GTS	Dodge Lancer/ Chrysler LeBaron GTS
<b>SPORT COUPE •</b>	Nissan 200-SX	Toyota Celica	Acura Integra
<b>LUXURY SPORT COUPE •</b>	Lincoln Continental Mark VII LSC	Lincoln Continental Mark VII LSC	Lincoln Continental Mark VII LSC
<b>SPORTS/GT •</b>	Chevrolet Corvette	Mazda RX-7	Mazda RX-7

Though there's more to come mid-year, most '87 cars are in the showrooms and on the roads. And with more cars than buyers these days, it's truly a buyers' market for a change.

Gone are excessive extra mark-ups, at least in most locations, replaced by substantial factory incentives in the form of discount finance rates. And so good is the '87 crop that new-car shopping is no longer a question of separating the good from the bad but of choosing from varying degrees of good.

But with the selection so enormous and varied, how can anyone make an intelligent choice?

Glad you asked. First, try separating the huge new-car field into logical categories. Then compare price vs. value, quality, standard and optional features and all-around performance, and some clear "Best Buys" emerge. Others not so obvious manage to squeak out close victories over a number of worthy competitors.

My ten categories are logical, but a brief explanation will help:

*Econocars*, of course, are the least expensive and most fuel efficient autos on the market. *Econosports* are higher-performance, crisper-handling, far more 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 in length. *Medium Sedans* fall between 175 and 190 inches long, and *Large Sedans* are over 190 inches. *Luxury Sedans*, regardless of size, are defined as those with base prices over \$15,000.

The fast-growing *Sports Sedan* class includes those special four-doors with higher performance, tauter 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, *Sports Coupes* costing less than \$15,000 and *Luxury Sports Coupes* costing more. Finally, the *Sports/GT* group includes both two-seat sports cars and high-performance 2+2 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, Camaros and Firebirds are Sports Coupes, but Mustang GTs, Camaro Z-28s and Firebird Trans Ams are Sports/GTs. Pontiac's 6000 is a Medium Sedan, but the limited-production 6000 STE is very much a Sports Sedan. You get the idea.



Here, then, are the "Best-Buy" picks of this impressive '87 litter—plus, for the first time, some "Honorable Mentions" worthy of note:

**1. Econocar: Chevrolet Sprint**—The jury's still out on Yugo and Hyundai, Japanese subcompacts keep moving upscale, and VW's new baby Fox has yet to arrive. So Chevy's Suzuki-built Sprint remains the "Best-Buy" fuel-squeezer for 1987. Cute, solid and sprightly, the Sprint 3-door hatchback starts at just under \$6,000 (a couple hundred more for the slightly longer 5-door hatchback), and the economy special "ER" version offers 54 mpg EPA city, 58 highway. Honorable mention: Toyota Tercel, Nissan Sentra, Mitsubishi Mirage, Dodge/Plymouth Colt.

**2. Econosport: Volkswagen GTI**—A bundle of taut sinew in plain but efficient VW Golf clothes. A lot of grins per dollar for less than \$10,000. Honorable mention: Ford Escort GT, Toyota Corolla FX-16, Chevrolet Sprint Turbo, Mitsubishi Mirage Turbo, Dodge/Plymouth Colt Turbo.

**3. Small Sedan: Plymouth Sundance and Dodge Shadow**—Handsome, well-equipped, crisp-handling hatchbacks with the look of upscale small sedans. Choice of three-door or five-door, optional turbo power and five-speed manual or three-speed automatic. Finer-driving small sedans can't be found for under \$8,000. Honorable mention: Ford Escort, Toyota Corolla, Chevrolet Nova, Mazda 323, Volkswagen Golf.

**4. Medium Sedan: Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable**—Domestic Audi 5000s with futuristic good looks, V6 power and the smoothest, road-grippingest suspension this side of the Atlantic. Ample room for six (five with front buckets), plus user-friendly controls and a convenience list as long as a Carson commercial break. Prices start around \$10,000 for Taurus, \$11,000 for Sable. Honorable mention: Toyota Camry, Nissan Stanza, Mazda 626.

**5. Large Sedan: Chevrolet Caprice**—America's big-car value leader for '87. Standard V6 or optional V8; choice of two-door, four-door or wagon. A lot of comfortable bulk for the buck at a bit over \$11,000. Honorable mention: Ford LTD Crown Victoria, Mercury Grand Marquis, Pontiac Bonneville.

**6. Luxury Sedan: Audi 5000CS Quattro**—Audi's flagship sedan weds all-wheel drive, anti-lock brakes and turbo power under a roomy, slippery-sleek four-door body. The ultimate all-weather cruiser, fully equipped at about \$30,000 sedan, \$31,500 wagon. Honorable mention: Acura Legend, Saab 9000, Volvo 740/760.

**7. Sports Sedan: Dodge Lancer and Chrysler LeBaron GTS**—Best buys for the buck for the third year straight in this highly competitive class. These roomy, handsome hatchbacks give glued-to-the-road handling with optional 2.5-liter balance-shaft engine or available turbo power. Amazingly, about \$9,500 for the base Lancer, \$9,800 for the GTS. Honorable mention: Nissan Maxima SE, Mazda 626 GT, Pontiac 6000 STE, Volkswagen Jetta GLI.

**8. Sports Coupe: Acura Integra**—Powered by a wonderfully lively twin-cam, 16-valve, four-cylinder engine with standard five-speed gearbox, this thinly-disguised Honda hatchback coupe is marketed by Honda of America's brand new "upscale" Acura Division (also home of the slightly longer Integra 5-door hatchback and the \$20,000 Acura Legend luxury sedan). Integra starts at under \$10,000. Honorable mention: Ford Thunderbird, Mercury Cougar, Dodge Daytona, Chrysler LeBaron Coupe, Toyota Celica, Volkswagen Scirocco.

**9. Luxury Sports Coupe: Lincoln Continental Mark VII LSC**—The completely competent hot-rod Lincoln. Two hundred V8 horses with port fuel injection, road-hugging air suspension, standard anti-lock brakes and plenty of quiet, comfort and luxury for \$25,000. Honorable mention: Jaguar XJ-S.

**10. Sports/GT: Mazda RX-7**—Lusty rotary power, a sexy new body and a trick rear suspension move Mazda's RX-7 well into Porsche territory in both looks and performance. Bend it into a curve and the rear wheels point slightly outward to help turn it in, then they shift inward on cue to keep the back end stable. About \$14,000 base, a bit over \$20,000 for the super-fast Turbo. Honorable mention: Chevrolet Corvette, Pontiac Fiero, Ford Mustang GT, Dodge Daytona Shelby Z, Toyota MR2, Merkur XR4Ti.

Five of these ten are designed and produced in America. One, Audi's 5000CS Turbo Quattro, is thoroughly German; another, Volkswagen's GTI, is a German design built in VW's Pennsylvania plant. The other three are Japanese; but one, the Suzuki-built Sprint, is imported and marketed by General Motors' Chevrolet Div.

Keep in mind that a "Best Buy" may not be the absolute best in class, and it is probably not the least expensive. What it does offer is the best estimated overall combination of price, value, quality, styling, engineering, performance, handling, features, reliability and probable future resale value. A lot of very excellent automobiles are not considered "Best Buys" because they are simply more expensive (due to either high list prices or excessive dealer markups) than otherwise comparable competitors.

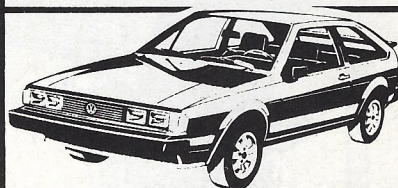
Whatever you do, shop carefully and compare feature-for-feature. Don't buy on impulse or without test-driving first. Most importantly, buy a car that you really like. One that suits your needs, lifestyle and self-image. One that feels good on the road, and that you're proud to be seen in.

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.

Note: A "Best Buy" is not necessarily the best car in its class in every way, or the least expensive. What it does offer is the best estimated overall combination of quality, styling, engineering, performance, handling, standard and optional features, reliability, value for money and probable future resale value at a reasonable price. A lot of very excellent automobiles are not considered "Best Buys" simply because they are more expensive (due to either high list price or excessive dealer mark-up) than comparable competitors.

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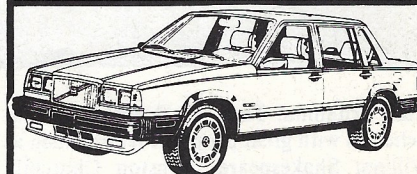
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