

AUTO SHOW

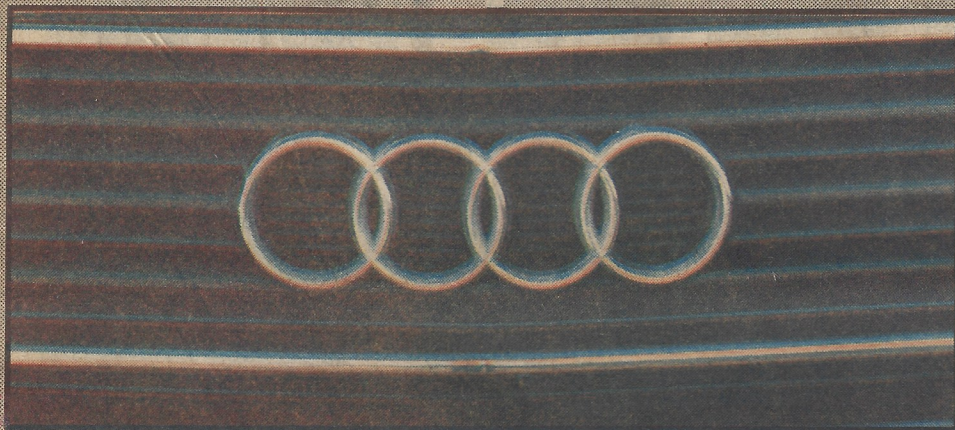
The Detroit News

Sunday, January

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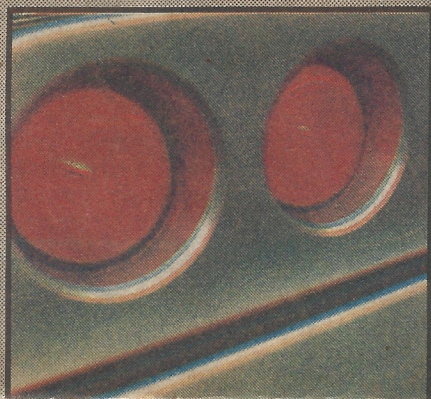
Choice

Our auto critic picks a dozen of his favorites



Audi 5000S Turbo

Audi's 5000S is the world's most aerodynamic 4-door, with an eye-opening drag coefficient of 0.33 in U.S. trim. Also, it is perhaps the most beautiful. Besides its obviously clean contours, such low-drag features as flush side glass, flush wheel covers and lipless fenders contribute to its remarkable slipperiness. Performance and fuel economy are improved and there is a near-total lack of wind



noise inside its spacious cabin. The Turbo version's new intercooled engine generates 140 horsepower (10 more than before) plus higher torque at lower rpm for smooth, turbine-like performance at any speed. The long list of standard features includes a trip computer, power everything and even stereo headphone jacks for rear-seat passengers.

Chevrolet Corvette

The new Corvette is a superbly styled and brilliantly engineered world class driving machine that should revive automotive patriotism across the land. The ultra-fast, 64-degree windshield and the body's beautifully sculpted wedge shape contribute to an excellent 0.34 coefficient of drag, while under the lovely fiberglass skin is a steel "birdcage" body-frame on

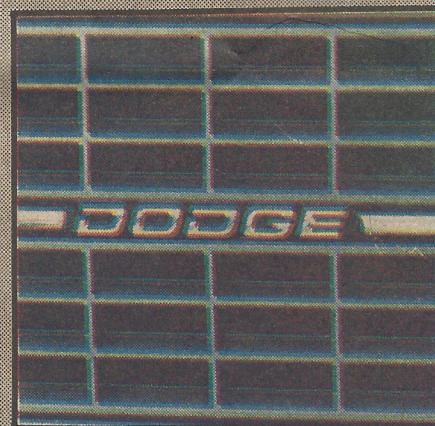
Gary Witzenburg, a freelance automotive writer whose road tests appear twice each month in The Detroit News, was asked to pick his favorite automobiles on the market. The result is 12 of what Witzenburg calls "the most exciting and interesting" cars on the road today. A former automotive company engineer, he races cars part time and has written Automobile Quarterly marque history books on the Ford Mustang, Chevrolet Camaro and the Pontiac Firebird.



an aircraft-quality lightweight chassis. The optional Z51 super suspension is harsh but spectacularly effective, and the very special Goodyear unidirectional ("gatorback") tires are simply the world's best. Performance is spectacular at 6.8 seconds in going 0-60 with the standard four-speed automatic, 6.2 with the available four-speed (plus overdrive) manual, with a top speed near 140 mph.

Chrysler Laser and Dodge Daytona

Chrysler's exciting new ponycars come in standard fuel-injected, 2.2-liter four-cylinder form or with the optional 142-horsepower turbomotor, with five-speed manual or three-speed automatic transaxle. The topline Chrysler Laser XE goes the luxu-electronic route while Dodge Division's Daytona can be optioned far up the street-fighter ladder with a full-race "Turbo Z" package. With that you get deeply contoured reclining bucket seats, Goodyear Eagle GTs on cast alloy wheels, a deep front air dam, a rear aerodynamic spoiler, "ground effects" skirts along the rockers and the best-cornering suspension yet devised for a front-drive performance car. Equal-length driveshafts and a power-hop damper help the turbo five-speed get off the line quickly enough to reach 60 mph in a tick more than eight seconds.



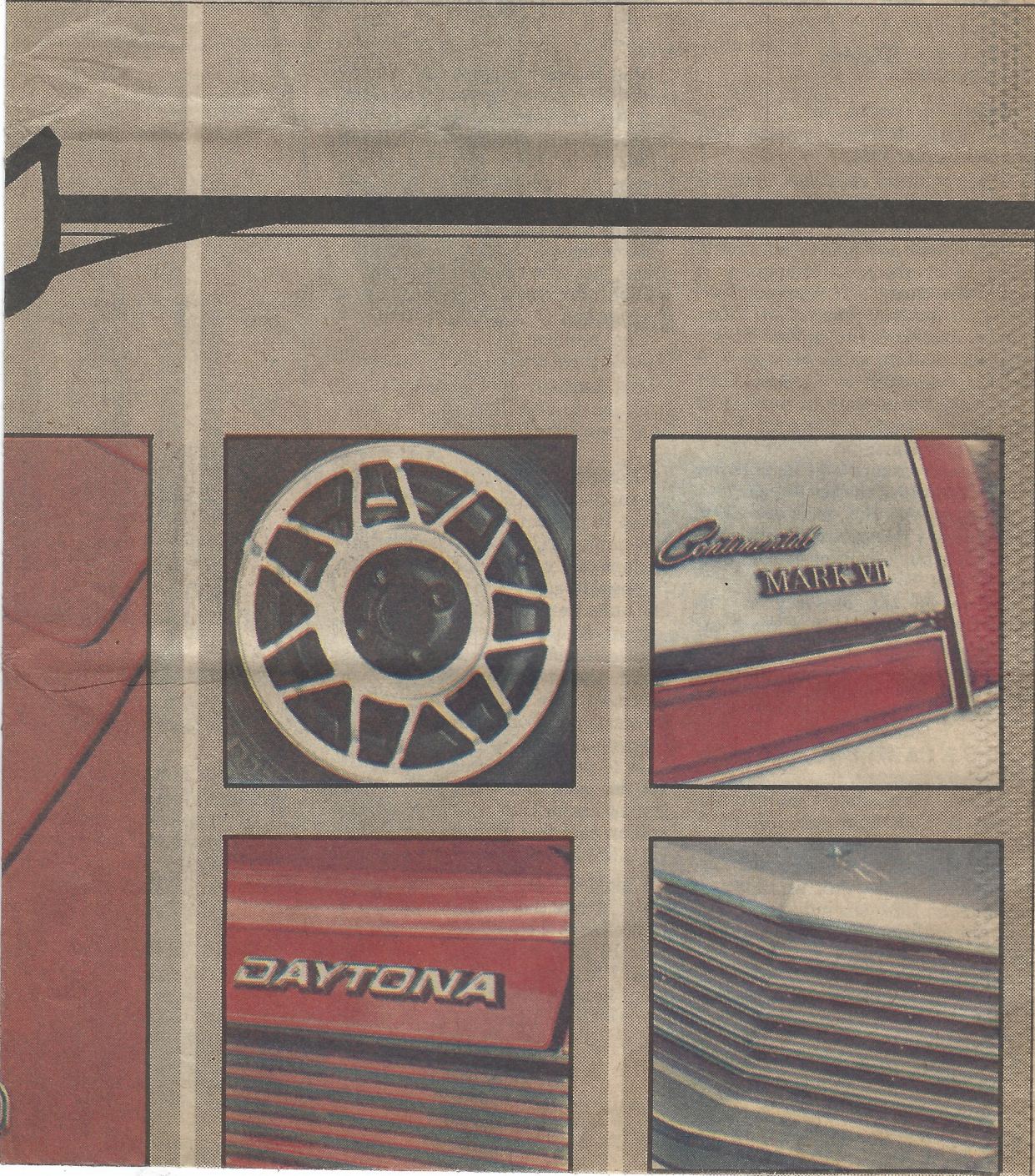
Mazda 626

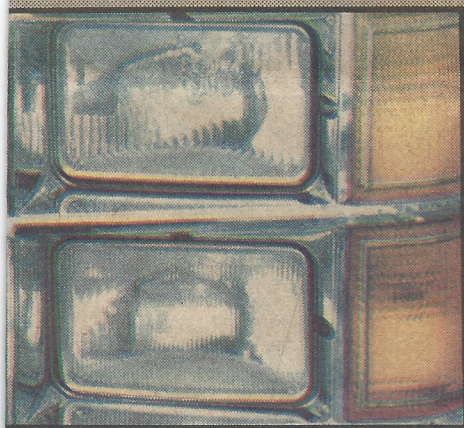
Mazda's new front-drive 626 is about as sweet a midpriced compact as ever rolled down the pike. It looks great, with clean, wedgy, contemporary, slightly rounded aerodynamic lines, and it feels terrific. Its new 2.0-liter, four-cylinder engine is peppier and much quieter than its predecessor and gives excellent 29-mpg city, 41 highway EPA economy with its standard five-speed manual transaxle. Luxury versions have gadgets galore, including electronically variable shock absorbers, twin fingertip-reach control nacelles on either side of the wheel, a 10-way adjustable super-seat for the driver and motor-driven ventilation vanes that circulate from side to side on demand. There's also an optional digital/graphic instrument display for those who like the Tokyo-by-night effect.

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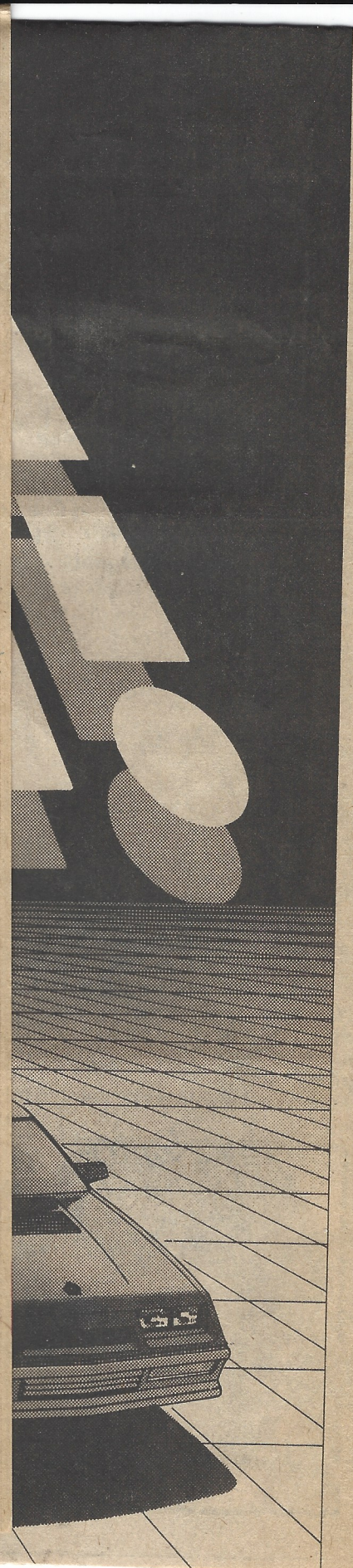
Dodge 600 ES Turbo

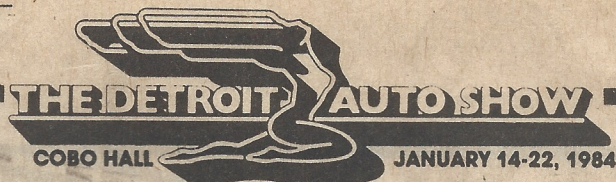
Slip the new Laser/Daytona's 142-horsepower turbo 2.2 into the very competent 600 ES Euro-sedan and you get Dodge's answer to Pontiac's STE, a roomy five-passenger, front-drive tourer that thinks GT. In standard fuel-injected (nonturbo) form, the ES sits on big blackwall tires on styled aluminum wheels, wears more black trim than chrome and sports a bit of



Mercedes style in its slightly chunky profile, its pentastar hood ornament, even the ID lettering on its rear deck. Tightened suspension and quickened steering give a delightful combination of compliant ride and nimble, sure-footed handling, but the optional turbo engine for '84 adds the measure of performance that the excellent ES chassis always wanted.

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Our auto critic picks his favorites

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Dodge Caravan Plymouth Voyager

America has needed small, fuel-efficient vans ever since the first fuel crisis of 1973-74, and gutsy Chrysler Corp. is the first U.S. maker to deliver them. The slick front-drive Caravan and Voyager will take three dressed-up couples to dinner (seven folks will fit with three abreast in back), carry home a day's accumulation of garage-sale goodies or transport a fair-sized family and two weeks' luggage cross-country. Just 176 inches long on a 112-inch wheel base, they look like tall station wagons, drive like compact cars, fit handily in any garage and give 24 mpg city and 39 highway EPA-rated economy with their 2.6-liter engine and five-speed manual transaxle. A larger 2.6-liter four, three-speed automatic and about anything else you can think of are among the available options.

Ford Thunderbird Turbo Coupe

Ford's new T-Bird, sleek, rounded and tastefully trimmed, has a high-tech German character about it. Its "aircraft style" doors, wrapping over the roof and "A" pillars, contribute to an exemplary drag coefficient of 0.35. Gas-filled shocks and variable-ratio power rack-and-pinion steering are standard, and serious drivers can order a serious driver's seat with plenty of manual and/or power adjustments. Best of all for enthusiasts is the Turbo Coupe, a very special model with everything from fog lamps and black-out trim to a sophisticated, electronically fuel-injected and turbocharged 2.3-liter four that pumps 142 very lively horsepower through a standard five-speed manual (or optional automatic) gearbox.

Ford SVO Mustang

Ford's Special Vehicle Operations (racing) group didn't horse around with the '84 SVO Mustang. A higher-output, intercooled version of the T-Bird Turbo's 2.3-liter port-injected

engine, governed by the industry's most sophisticated electronic controls, pumps out 175 V-8-like horses, while the chassis, adjustable Koni gas shocks and big Goodyear NCT tires give near Corvette-like traction in the curves. A five-speed manual transmission with Hurst linkage, increased-feel power steering, special seats and instrumentation, repositioned pedals (for heel-toe downshifting), a unique aerodynamic front end, a "bi-plane" anti-lift rear spoiler and power four-wheel disc brakes with heavy-duty pads are also part of the package.

Lincoln Continental Mark VII LSC

Besides its slippery contours and Euro-style flush headlamps (America's first), Lincoln's new Mark boasts a unique and wonderfully supple air-spring and gas shock suspension. The result is a terrifically smooth ride coupled with remarkable handling capability. The standard Mark VII is a huge improvement over the wallowy marshmallow Marks of the past, and the Euro-style LSC version's tauter-still suspension is a match for any luxury import on the market. A true driver's car, the sporty (imagine, a sporty Lincoln!) LSC also comes with quicker-ratio power steering, wider 15-inch alloy wheels and a higher numerical rear axle that coaxes surprisingly satisfying performance from the 130-horsepower, 5.0-liter, fuel-injected V-8 and four-speed automatic transmission.

Pontiac 6000 STE

Easily America's best performance sedan, Pontiac's STE is fast and feature-loaded, corners like a sports car and seats four or even five in quiet comfort. It's a very special version of the division's front-drive 6000 and worthy competition for the likes of Audi's more expensive 5000S Turbo and BMW's much more expensive 528e. Power from its 130-horsepower HO (high output) 2.8 liter V-6 reaches the front driving wheels through a modified, high-performance three-speed

automatic transaxle, while the supple ride and athletic handling come courtesy of beefed-up springs and sway bars, tightened and quickened rack-and-pinion steering and aggressive Goodyear Eagle GT radials on porosity-free aluminum wheels.

Pontiac Fiero ZM4

Pontiac's delightful, delectable little midengine Fiero is no high-performance rocket with its 92-horsepower, 2.5 liter fuel-injected four and four-speed manual (or three-speed automatic) transaxle, but it is a sexy and solidly built conveyance for two and wonderfully quick and responsive on the road. The interior is aircraft-inspired and driver-oriented, the form-fitting bucket seats are terrific, and there's plenty of room in the cozy cockpit even for the long of limb. Under the seductive body, a racing-type structural space frame forms the basis of a unique "driveable chassis" to which all other components are mounted, and the plastic outer "skins" are corrosion proof, damage resistant and easy to repair or replace.

Volkswagen Rabbit GTI

When VW's U.S. engineers set out to create a Rabbit-based pocket rocket, they started with meaty Pirelli P-6 rubber on extra-wide alloy wheels, added a high-performance suspension and topped it off with a muscular 90-horsepower, fuel-injected 1.8-liter engine. Brakes were upgraded with ventilated front rotors straight off the European GTI, a special low-back-pressure exhaust system was designed to improve performance, the five-speed transaxle's ratios were reshuffled from "economy" to "performance," and the final drive was raised from the regular Rabbit's 3.89 to a livelier 3.94:1. The package includes a subtle exterior treatment with blacked-out trim and red pinstriping, chin spoiler and fender flares plus special seats, steering wheel, shifter and gauges inside.