

## NEW CARS: THE PRO'S PICKS

## Rating the best buys of '87 models

Gary Witzenburg, an automotive engineer, race driver and president of Car Consultants of Agoura Hills, Calif., gives his picks for 1987:

## Econocar

The least expensive and the most fuel-efficient autos on the market.

■ **WINNER: CHEVROLET SPRINT.** Cute, solid, sprightly and inexpensive. The two-door hatchback starts at just less than \$6,000.

The economy special ER version gets 54 miles per gallon in the city and 58 miles per gallon on the highway.

■ **HONORABLE MENTION:** Toyota Tercel, Nissan Sentra, Mitsubishi Mirage and Dodge/Plymouth Colt.

## Econosport

The higher performance, crisper-handling, sporty versions of econocars and small sedans. Most of these cars list for less than \$10,000.

■ **WINNER: VW GOLF GT** — The hot 16-valve GTI's more affordable sibling, gives maximum grins per dollar. Less than \$10,000.

■ **HONORABLE MENTION:** Ford Escort GT, Renault GTA, Toyota Corolla FX-16, Mitsubishi Mirage Turbo, Dodge/Plymouth Colt Turbo.

## Small sedan

Family four-doors (and some two-doors and wagons) less than 175 inches in length.

■ **WINNER: PLYMOUTH SUNDANCE/DODGE SHADOW.** Nicely equipped, crisp-handling, hatchback with the look of an upscale sedan. Under \$8,000.

■ **HONORABLE MENTION:** Ford Escort, Toyota Corolla and Mazda 323.

## Medium sedan

Autos that are between 175 and 190 inches long.

■ **WINNER: FORD TAURUS/MERCURY SABLE.** Sleek, good looks and the smoothest, road-grippingest rides this side of Europe. Prices start around \$10,000 for Taurus, about \$11,000 for Sable.

■ **HONORABLE MENTION:** Toyota Camry, Nissan Stanza and Mazda 626.

## Large sedan



**CHEVROLET SPRINT:** Fuel pincher gets best mileage of any car on highway, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.



**FORD TAURUS:** Medium-sized sedan was named 1986 Car of the Year by *Motor Trend*.



**ACURA INTEGRA:** Sports coupe combines handling ability with hatchback utility.

■ **WINNER: CHEVROLET CAPRICE.** A lot of comfortable bulk for the buck. The basic Caprice starts at a bit more than \$11,000.

■ **HONORABLE MENTION:** Pontiac Bonneville, Ford LTD Crown Victoria, Mercury Grand Marquis.

## Luxury sedan

Regardless of size, those cars with base prices more than \$15,000.

■ **WINNER: AUDI 5000CS QUATTRO.** All-wheel drive, anti-lock brakes and turbo power. The ultimate all-weather cruiser. Fully equipped at about \$30,000 sedan, \$31,500 for the wagon.

Acura Legend, Volvo 740/760 and Saab 9000.

## Sports sedan

This fast-growing class includes special four-doors with higher performance, tauter suspensions and a sporting character that makes them especially enjoyable to drive.

■ **WINNER: DODGE LANCER/CHRYSLER LE BARON GTS.** Roomy, handsome hatchback with European-style handling and optional turbo power. These cars list at about \$9,500 for the base Lancer, about \$9,800 for the GTS.

■ **HONORABLE MENTION:** Pontiac 6000STE, Nissan Maxima SE, Mazda 626 GT and VW Jetta GLI.



**PLYMOUTH SUNDANCE:** Small sedan includes 47 hp as part of standard equipment.



**CHEVROLET CAPRICE:** Last of the full-size, full-frame sedans available from General Motors.



**LINCOLN MARK VII LSC:** Comes with fuel-injected V-8, electronically controlled air suspension and anti-lock brakes.

## Sports coupe

The stylish two-door coupes and hatchbacks that cost less than \$15,000.

■ **WINNER: ACURA INTEGRA.** It's a delightfully, lively twin-cam, 16-valve hatchback from Honda's upscale Acura division. The cost of the Integra starts at under \$10,000.

■ **HONORABLE MENTION:** Ford Thunderbird, Mercury Cougar, Chrysler LeBaron Coupe, Dodge Daytona and Toyota Celica.

## Luxury coupe

Stylish two-door sports coupes and hatchbacks costing more than \$15,000.

■ **WINNER:** LINCOLN

**MARK VII LSC.** T-100 V-8 horses, road-suspension, anti-lock brakes. About \$25,000.

■ **HONORABLE MENTION:** Jaguar XJS.

## Sports/GT

Both two-seat and high-performance coupes.

■ **WINNER: MAZDA RX-7.** Lusty rotary power, sleek shape and tricky suspension. About \$14,000 for the turbo. ■ **HONORABLE MENTION:** Chevrolet Corvette, Ford Fiero GT, Ford Mustang, Dodge Daytona, Toyota MR2, Mer-