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AUTO WORLD OCTOBER 1977/\$1.50

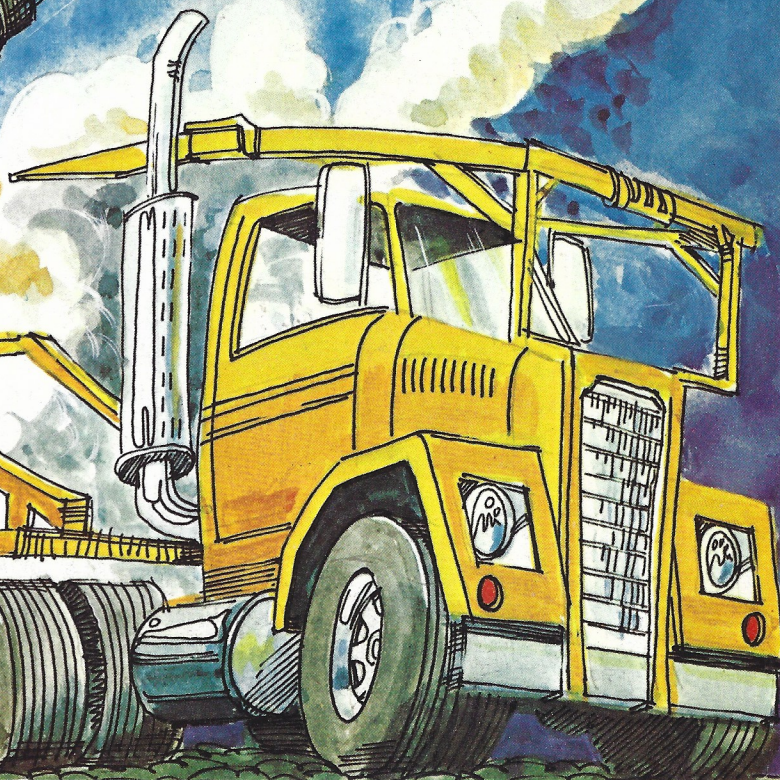
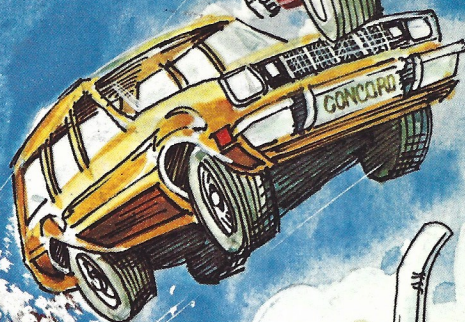
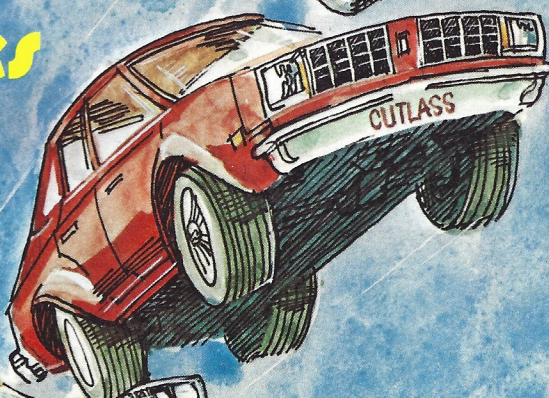
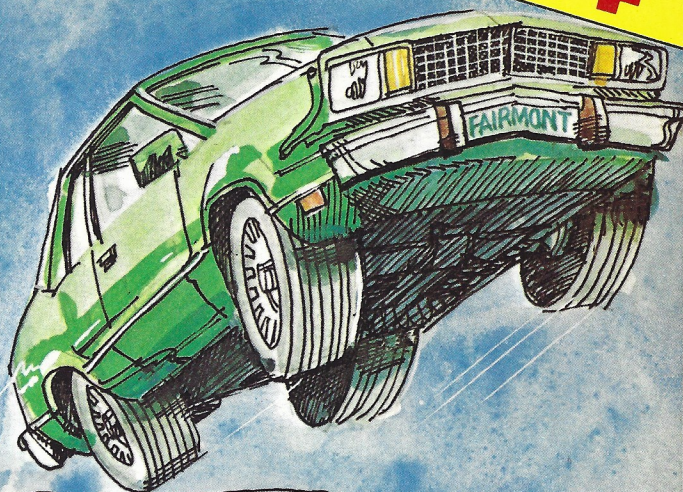
**THE '78s
TAKE OFF**

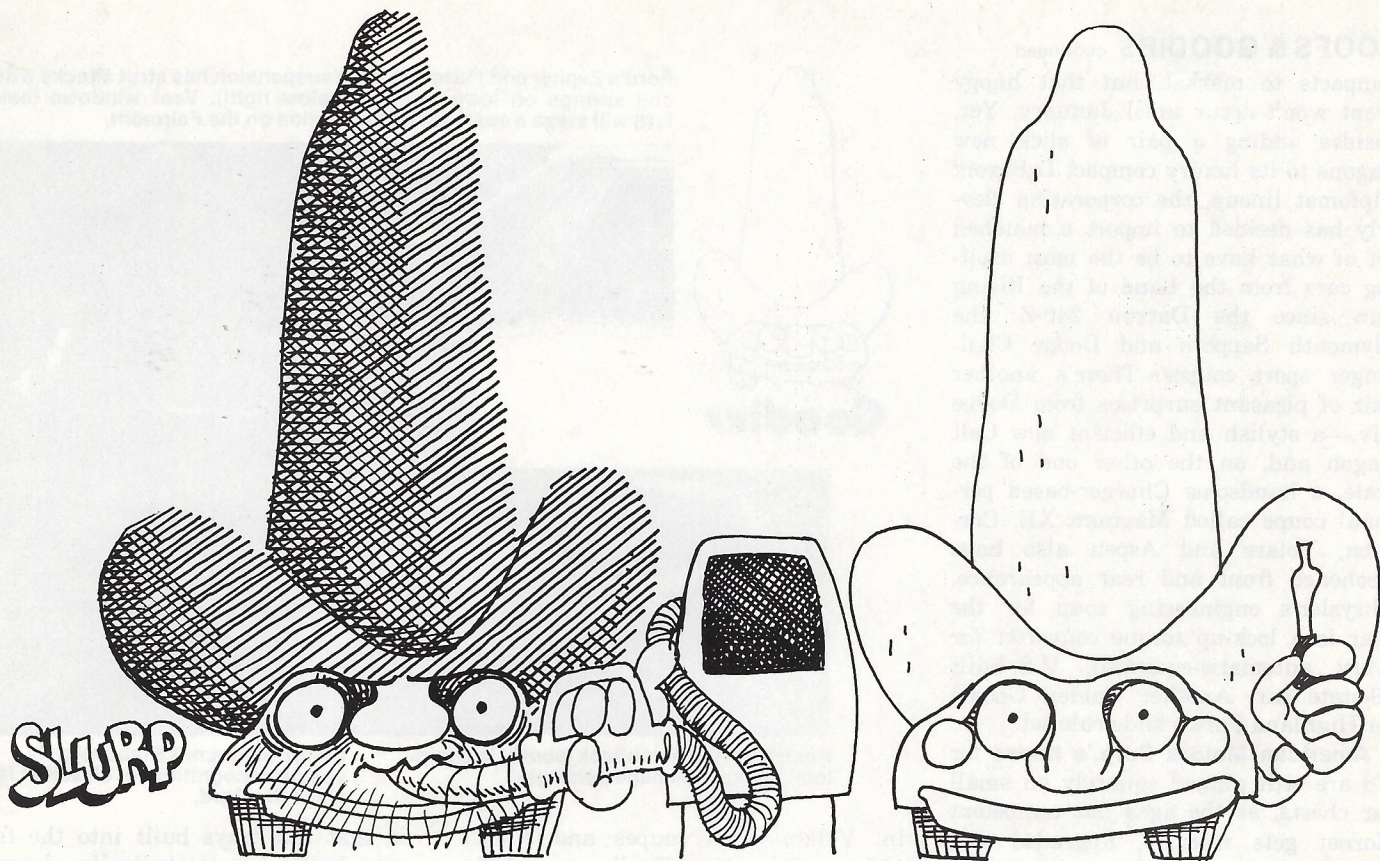
Rating the '78s

Marketing the '78s

**Goofs & Goodies
in the '78s**

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Goofs & Goodies

in the '78s

by Gary L. Witzenburg

Now that the energy game officially begins in the 1978 model year—a Goof now can involve costly penalties—Detroit's new lineup promises the car-buying public a giant, collective Goodie in terms of fuel efficiency.

To no one's amazement, General Motors Corp. managed to be the first domestic auto company to downsize its big cars last year. Now GM is back in '78 with a complete re-do of its intermediates. But this is the first model year in which its U.S. competitors are in the fuel economy game for keeps. Federal law requires a corporate fleet average of 18 miles per gallon.

GM, undisputed king of the '77 big-car class, is going to make waves with its '78 intermediates—unless its marketing moguls are boggled by the problem of explaining why the new intermediates at 108.1 ins. are actually 3 ins. shorter in wheelbase than the company's existing compact models. But GM was well aware that these entries in the big selling intermediate class would have to be nothing short of spectacular—and they are.

There are a few other tricks up GM's

sleeve: a 5-door Chevette with a new grille and some honest room inside; retouched styling for Camaro, Corvette and Monza; a complete set of luxury-compact Pontiac Phoenix cars to replace Ventura; a smooth Oldsmobile V-8 diesel engine; two turbocharged Buick V-6s; the dumping of the ill-starred Vega nameplate but the addition of the former Vega hatchback and wagon to the Monza line; and Astre, too, falls by the wayside but its subcompact wagon body becomes a Sunbird version.

Nothing would please the people at Ford Motor Co. more than to upstage GM at model introduction time. And while they haven't quite done that this year, they have very nearly

earned equal billing with their all-new pleasant, pretty, efficient and extremely European Fairmont/Zephyr compacts, which mercifully replace the hoary old Maverick/Comet.

With 2- and 4-door sedans, a 2-door sport coupe and 4-door wagon versions, and with projected prices starting at around \$3,500, Ford's Fairmont/Zephyr (F/Z) should give GM's Nova group and Chrysler's Volare/Aspen absolute fits, and highline versions may even compete successfully with the new GM intermediates.

A WAW Golden Goodie, then, to both of the biggest automakers for these fine new car lines.

Ford also scores with its tidy, front-drive, German-built Fiesta mini, and may gain a few points with the Granada/Monarch-based Versailles luxury car—both of which are already on the market and were discussed at length in WAW's '77½ article (see WAW—p.50, May '77).

Granada and Monarch also have been facelifted, which will help set them apart from Versailles.

Chrysler has been busting a gusset, meanwhile, to bring its own new sub-

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GOOFS & GOODIES continued

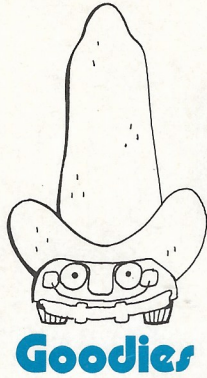
compacts to market, but that happy event won't occur until January. Yet, besides adding a pair of slick new wagons to its luxury compact LeBaron/Diplomat lineup, the corporation cleverly has decided to import a matched set of what have to be the most exciting cars from the Land of the Rising Sun since the Datsun 240-Z: the Plymouth Sapporo and Dodge Challenger sport coupes. There's another pair of pleasant surprises from Dodge Div.—a stylish and efficient new Colt wagon and, on the other end of the scale, a handsome Charger-based personal coupe called Magnum XE. Cordoba, Volare and Aspen also have freshened front and rear appearance. Chrysler's engineering coup for the year is a lock-up torque converter for every automatic-equipped, U.S.-built 49-state car. Another Golden Goodie for Highland Park's slide rule set.

American Motors Corp.'s hopes for '78 are still pinned squarely on small car chests, as the aged but competent Hornet gets restyled, upgraded and changed in name to bring it into the luxury compact field. Besides creating this fresh compact series called Concord (without the "E"), AMC has given its Pacer a new shot of adrenalin via optional V-8 power, a raised hood to accommodate the taller engine and a new grille to freshen its frontal appearance.

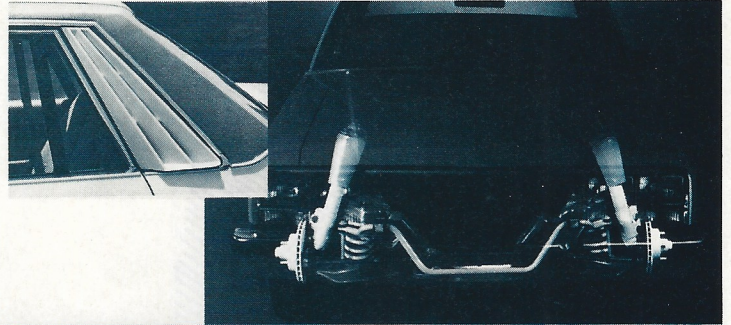
Chrysler has dropped its entire Gran Fury and Royal Monaco lines and the big Chrysler wagons, leaving only Newport and New Yorker coupes and sedans to carry the tattered full-size corporate banner. Chrysler's expert on emissions and fuel economy, Charles M. Heinen, says that the corporation expects a '78 fleet average of "18.5 to 19.2" mpg—but the company admits that it will have to monitor its sales mix carefully.

Ford has severed its heavy LTD II and Cougar station wagons from the mid-size lineup and will be helped by sales of captive-import Fiesta and the super-efficient F/Z compacts. But Ford also could find itself in trouble on gas mileage if big Fords, Mercurys and Lincolns and the remaining very inefficient intermediates and specialty coupes continue to sell strongly.

GM's problem of compacts larger than intermediates is just one aspect of the size confusion that will reign in '78, for all the automakers are on differing downsizing schedules. GM's '78 intermediates thus fall neatly into the compact class between Chrysler's 108.7-



Ford's Zephyr and Fairmont front suspension has strut shocks with coil springs on lower A-arms (below right). Vent windows (below left) will stage a comeback as an option on the Fairmont.



Restyled AMC hatchback (above) is sharp-looking macho-image package.



Dodge Magnum XE (above) gets special recognition for classiest face since the Cord.

in. Volare/Aspen coupes and AMC's 108-in. Concords. Ford's new F/Zs, which the company chooses to call "compact mid-size," are 2.6 ins. shorter in wheelbase than the new GM entries—but 1.1 ins. longer overall!

And what do you call a pair of small luxury cars (LeBaron/Diplomat) that are built on the 112.7-in. Volare/Aspen 4-door chassis? Chrysler properly calls them "intermediates," but American buyers are used to cars in that category as large as 119 ins.

The biggest news in Motor City for '78 is GM's Big Downsize Gamble, Phase Two. While all GM's intermediates (except Chevrolet's extended-length El Camino car/truck) share a common 108.1-in. wheelbase, lengths vary from 192.7 ins. (Chevrolet Malibu coupe) to 201.2 ins. (Pontiac Grand Prix), depending on the four divisions' particular interpretations and styling needs. Interiors are slightly more generous than the '77s in terms of leg- and head-room—and even rear hip-room in the coupes.

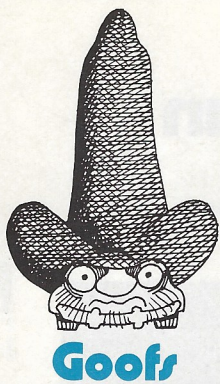
Front legroom in all GM models is especially impressive thanks to increased seat travel, but rear knee- and legroom is still not sufficient for tall and/or long-legged people, despite efficient new thin-shell front seats. GM boasts the cars will still carry six adults and that overall interior roominess has been retained compared to '77 models—but conveniently forgets that the much bigger '77 intermediates were cramped to begin with. One Goof

is that ash trays built into the front seat backs are strategically placed to interfere with rear passengers' knees. Still, a qualified Goodie to the packaging people for what they've accomplished.

Under the new GM "A-body" rests a full-perimeter frame, with sigma-section side rails, box-section members fore and aft, welded front- and rear-suspension crossmembers and a bolted-in tubular transmission support. Body mounts (14 of them) are tuned and located for maximum noise and vibration absorption. Suspension is conventional GM: unequal A-arms with a stabilizer bar in front, four-link rear, and coil springs all around. The goal of improved ride and quietness over the '77 intermediates (despite substantial 550-lb. to almost 1,000-lb. per car weight reduction) seems to have been met, and with much better handling and maneuverability as a bonus—a WAW Golden Goodie to the A-car suspension tuners.

Body shapes are clean and pleasing, as well as aerodynamically sound. They're not as severely squared-off as the larger B-cars, but they're much less roly-poly than the inefficient models they replace. Chevrolet and Pontiac notchback coupes and six-window sedans should be more popular at first, while the Olds and Buick "aero" fast-back designs likely will be slower to catch on. Station wagons look like a cross between last year's B- and A-body

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Chevrolet Monza gets a squared-off front end which clashes with swooping design of the rest of the car.



Ford King Cobra (left) sporting the macho look, was definitely overdone.

Rear-seat comfort is hindered by misplaced ash trays piercing long-legged passengers' knees in GM A-cars.

GOOFS & GOODIES continued

wagons—efficient but not especially pretty—and feature swing-up rear windows with fold-down gates, and taillamps recessed into the rear bumpers. Although the sloping Olds and Buick “aero” coupe and sedan roofs look tailor-made for hatchbacks, there is no hatched offering yet from either division—a Goof destined to be corrected before long.

A much improved interior ventilation system should draw rave reviews from front and rear occupants alike—but critics may harp about fixed rear door windows in all of GM's new A-body models. It's one thing to adjust to fixed windows in coupes, but buyers may balk at four-door cars with this deficiency. Recessed arm rests (where the roll-down mechanism ought to be) and swing-out rear vent windows (optionally power-operated) only partly compensate for this omission—which could be the biggest Goof in the whole car, as far as the public is concerned.

All (Federal and California) models are powered by V-6 engines as standard equipment, with various small V-8s optional depending on the division and the geographical location for which the car is intended. Chevrolet's new 3.3-liter (200-cid) V-6 is exclusive to Malibu while both Pontiac and Oldsmobile use Buick's 3.8-liter (231-cid) veteran, as does Chevy's Monte Carlo. Buick itself specifies a new, destroked, 3.2-liter (196-cid) version of its even-

fire V-6 for Century coupes and sedans and the even-fire 3.8-liter for wagons, plus 2-bbl. and 4-bbl. versions of the turbocharged 3.8 V-6 as options for certain models.

Instrument panels on GM's new A-cars are highly modular and designed with serviceability firmly in mind—a welcome change from the nearly inaccessible gauges and controls in some past GM models. Dimmer switches are column-mounted, and functional dials and switches are grouped around the driver's immediate field of vision for extra convenience. Heater/vent/AC and entertainment system controls, on the other hand, are in a separate center-located cluster within easy reach of both driver and passenger. On the negative side, the dashes generally lack the richness associated with medium-priced cars; and the minuscule, bin-type glove box is woefully inadequate.

Brakes are 10.5-in. vented discs in front with 9.5-in. by 2-in. finned drums bringing up the rear (aluminum on some models, cast iron on the rest), which should be adequate—except that a power assist is optional. This is a cost-cutting Goof in a mid-priced car, particularly because it's hard to find a non-vacuum-assisted brake system in any import these days, regardless of price.

Inherited from the B-car is the modern GM mini-fuse block and the single-reel, continuous-loop restraint system with a tension-relieving “window-shade” mechanism on the shoulder

strap—Goodies both, except that the shoulder belt (as in the B-car) waits until you open the door, then traps your arm as it retracts. Additional Goodies: a turning circle more than 2 ft. tighter than the '77 intermediates and estimated fuel economy about 3 mpg better than '77s. Goofs: No reclining seats for drivers (except in Pontiac's Grand Prix) and too much engine noise through the center vents.

Discussing his new project's genesis, A-Body Chief Engineer Norman D. Sholler voiced one of today's most pressing car-design questions: “What's the ideal mid-size?” he asked. “How big is big? How small is small? Where's the middle between the two?”

Doubtless these were the same questions asked in Dearborn when Ford's new Fairmont/Zephyr was still graphite in its designers' pencils. Significantly, the Big Two arrived at remarkably similar solutions, at least in terms of dimensions.

Ford's problem was far simpler than GM's, though. While GM was faced with downsizing the industry's leading intermediates and intermediate specialty lines, Ford needed only to supersede a pair of aging and inefficient low-dollar compacts.

Yet the Ford design team excelled in fulfilling this task, and its reward should be nothing short of overnight domination of the so-called “compact” U.S. market segment.

At 105.5 ins., the F/Z's wheelbase is shortest of any car in the intermediate/compact segment except for AMC's Pacer, yet its interior roominess is competitive in most dimensions. It's about the same length, height and width as the old 109.9-in. wheelbase Maverick/Comet 4-door sedan, but it weighs some 300 lbs. less, is more aerodynamically efficient and should average about 6 mpg better in 4-cyl. form.

Front headroom in the 2-door at 38.5 ins. is more generous than any other domestic 2-door short of full-size and the new F/Z also leads all other U.S. compact/intermediate 2-doors in rear headroom (37.7 ins.) and trunk capacity (16.8 cu.ft.). At a base curb weight of 2,725 lbs., it is the lightest domestic car outside the subcompact class, and it's second only to AMC's Concord in rear seat legroom. Unfortunately, front legroom is not so generous. At 41.8 ins., it is exceeded by all but AMC's Pacer and Concord, Ford's own Granada/Monarch and the GM Nova series.

The Ford packagers do, however, score an impressive Goodie with the

F/Z wagon. Its 79.5 cu.ft. cargo capacity is beaten only by the very large Matador and Fury/Monaco in the intermediate segment. The wagon's only cargo-hauling deficiency, in fact, seems to be its narrow (37.5-in.) distance between wheelhouses due to the chassis' tight rear tread dimension.

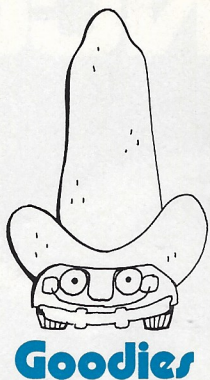
But F/Z's Euro-American design blend is nowhere more apparent than under the skin. The best of both schools of suspension thought are skillfully combined to produce the best-handling Ford chassis in memory—without sacrificing the comfortable ride and lack of noise, vibration and harshness for which the company is best known.

Standard F/Z engine is Ford's 2.3-liter (140-cid) "four." Optional choices are either the 3.3-liter (200 cid) "six" or the 5.0-liter (302-cid) V-8. Standard transmission is a 4-speed with floor-mounted shifter, and the optional automatic can be ordered with its lever either on the column or on the floor. Driveline noise and vibration-dampening Goodies include special voided synthetic rubber bushings for the transmission cross member, a specially damped and lined driveshaft and even rubber isolation for the clutch cable.

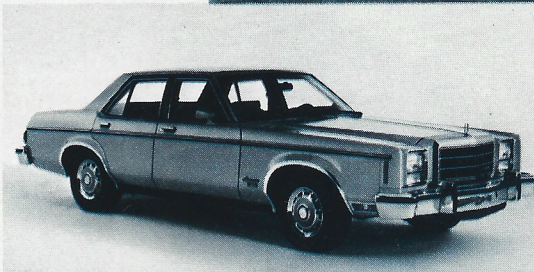
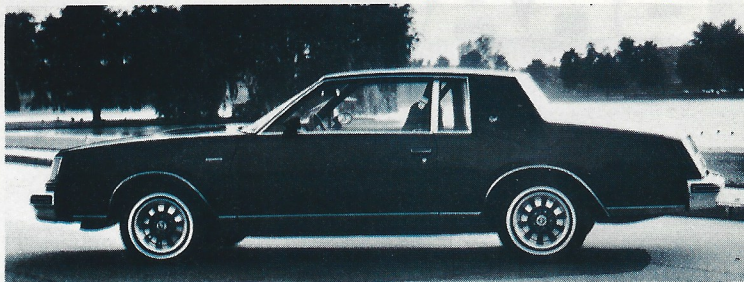
The engineers' fine chassis and the designers' attractive exterior shapes get standing ovations and cries of "encore!" But Ford cost-cutters rate a rousing round of boos for stripping the base F/Z nearly bare of interior appointments and standard equipment in their blind quest to chop a pound here and a penny there. The two-dial instrument panel seems stark and featureless.

Highline upholstery is fine and comfortable, but the tissue-thin base seat covers would look more appropriate in a postal truck. The bin-type glove box is rudimentary at best, and the flip-down, thin plastic ash tray is strictly bargain-basement.

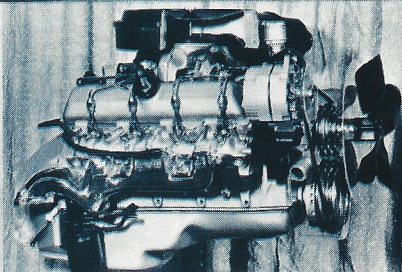
Interior ventilation is greatly helped by functional C-pillar vents—but they're optional, and you have to crawl into the back seat to open or close them. Even such basic stuff as a day/night inside mirror, cigarette lighter, rear seat ash trays, glove box lock and inside hood release cost extra; and the option list sadly lacks such convenience equipment as power windows, door locks and seats, all common fare on today's domestic mid-size entries.



Classic design of Buick Regal Sport Coupe receives kudos this year.



Front and rear styling changes on the Granada ESS make it the best looking yet.



GM's V-8 diesel, a first in the domestic industry, will be in full-size Olds, and Chevrolet and GMC light trucks.

Luckily, there are a few comfort, convenience and interior Goodies that the bean counters must have overlooked. Even the base engine gets a coolant recovery system, and windshield washers are mounted on the wiper arms for best effectiveness. Front seat belts are the continuous-loop type favored by European makes (and recent domestics), highline bucket seat-backs have molded-in cutouts for rear passengers knees, and 2-door F/Zs have inertia-lock front seat back releases instead of the dreaded "Nader-buttons."

Chrysler Corp. has two aces up its sleeve in a pair of sporty subcompacts called Plymouth Sapporo and Dodge Colt Challenger. Built by Chrysler's Mitsubishi affiliate in Japan, these little beauties are sleekly styled, richly appointed and loaded with features.

A canopy vinyl roof, sport steering wheel, overhead console with electronic digital clock, a full set of gauges and tachometer, dual electric remote control outside mirrors, inside hood and decklid releases, tilt steering column and an electrically heated rear window are all Goodies in these sporty little cars.

Challenger, the sportier of the two, also features multi-colored body side stripes, C-pillar louvers, cast-aluminum wheels and a red-painted (ugh!) split, horizontal bar grille. Both have extra-comfortable front bucket seats with adjustable lumbar support and

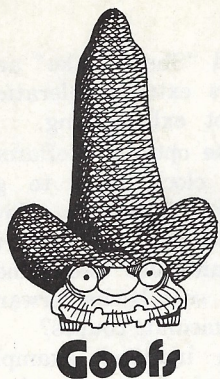
a memory feature in the reclining seat-backs (they re-set themselves to their original positions after being moved). Rear seats also are bucket-shaped with legroom exceeding that of the Volare/Aspen 2-door coupe. Another Goodie is a pleasant chime instead of the usual annoying buzzer for seatbelt and ignition warnings.

Perhaps the biggest Goodie on all '78 Chrysler/Mitsubishi cars is the innovative MCA-Jet lean combustion system, which uses a tiny, swirl-producing third valve in each cylinder to speed combustion, resulting in low emissions and high fuel economy with little loss of power. Chrysler engineers estimate that the California 1600-cc MCA-Jet engine will show a combined city-highway EPA mileage improvement of 4 to 9 mpg over last year's California 1600, and should be nearly equal to the 49-state version.

A second special treat for Dodge small-car fans is the new Colt wagon. Sharing the Sapporo/Challenger's 99-in. wheelbase chassis and running gear, this new Colt is larger and roomier than its predecessor and cleanly-styled enough to be an Opel or Vauxhall straight out of GM's European studios. Inside, it boasts one of the most attractive and best-laid-out instrument panels in memory and one which domestic small-car designers should study carefully.

American Motors' best hope for '78 lies with its new Concord, which is

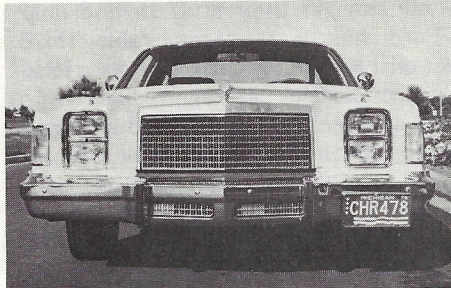
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Opera windows which seem out of sync with roof and beltline, and odd-shaped license depression hurt rear appearance of AMC's Concord.



Fake hold-down straps on T-Bird are gaudy additions while "Diamond Jubilee" version is too much.



Chrysler Corp.'s Cordoba gets popular stacked rectangular headlamps, making it look less distinctive than last year's.

GOOFS & GOODIES continued

really little more than a warmed-over Hornet—but reasonably well done, to give due credit. New front and rear styling and a formal roof with opera window highlight the exterior changes. A brand new, fairly attractive dash, plusher interiors and much-improved suspension and noise insulation make the Concord a far nicer car than its predecessor.

Besides adding a standard front sway bar, Concord also inherits Pacer's four-leaf rear springs for an improvement in ride and handling. Further improvements include upgraded lower IP ventilation, a low-maintenance antimony battery (standard on all '78 AMCs), improved floor carpeting, 18-in. wiper blades (replacing the previous 16-inchers), and a couple of new options to help support its more luxurious image: a digital clock and AM/FM stereo/CB radio.

Standard powertrain is AMC's 232-cid "six" coupled to a 3-speed floor shift, and also standard are an inside hood release, rear bumper guards, various bright moldings and (of course) a hood ornament. Not standard are whitewall tires, day/night mirror, rear seat ash trays, trunk carpeting and several other trinkets that really should be part of what purports to be a "luxury" compact.

Other Goofs include a very shaky 4-speed transmission linkage (inherited from Ford), insufficient front legroom (only Ford's Granada/Mon-

arch and AMC's own Pacer have less in the compact field), the smallest trunk capacity by far in its class, and an optional gauge cluster (shared with Gremlin and Pacer) that apparently is mounted as an afterthought, way down over the transmission tunnel where it's next to useless.

GM Design cops the Michaelangelo Styling Trophy, as usual, for its new intermediates, and Ford gets a well-deserved place position with the Fairmont/Zephyr effort. Individual divisional design kudos go to Pontiac, Buick, Lincoln-Mercury and Dodge.

Pontiac's LeMans is easily the most pleasing of the new A-cars to our jaundiced eye, and Grand Prix is clean and classy. Particularly impressive are the LeMans and GP instrument panels, which connect the primary and lower cluster areas with scads of big, round dials and air outlets and absolutely put the other GM divisions' IPs to shame.

Buick garners a close second in exterior treatment with its interpretation of the fastback coupe and sedan, and especially for its elegant Regal coupe.

Lincoln-Mercury shines with its impressive (and Seville-like) Zephyr front end and attractive Monarch facelift, while Dodge garners a heavy round of applause for its new Charger derivative, Magnum XE—featuring probably the classiest face on a car since Cord invented big horizontal grille bars.

Honorable mentions also go to both

Dodge and Plymouth for their Aspen/Volare facelifts, Ford Div. for its well-done Granada ESS, Cadillac for its classy Seville Elegante, Oldsmobile for its Calais version of the Cutlass Supreme, AMC for its restyled macho-image AMX, and Chrysler-Plymouth for some slick new Arrow paint treatments.

And Chevrolet has outstanding new front and rear looks for old-favorite Camaro, plus a pair of fresh faces for its enlarged Monza line.

WAW brickbats go to designers at Chevrolet, both Ford and L-M divisions, Chrysler-Plymouth and AMC for what we consider styling Goofs.

Chevrolet's Malibu Classic coupe seems to have its basically nice shape lost in a blizzard of busy details, conflicting lines, curves, shapes and surfaces around headlamps, taillamps and roof pillars; and the black plastic instrument cluster surround looks cheap even in the base Malibu . . . especially so in the highline Classic and Monte Carlo interiors.

Ford Div., having let the past Cobra II's success go to its head, has created an ugly, monochromatic King Cobra with an outlandish cow-catcher front spoiler, plus a very garish T-Bird with fake hold-down straps on its rear deck and even a "Diamond Jubilee" version with padded-over rear quarter windows that provide the best excuse we've seen yet for federal visibility standards.

In our Let-Well-Enough-Alone department, Chrysler has facelifted its popular Cordoba, giving it the currently fashionable stacked rectangular headlamps—not a bad effort, except that the new front looks much like other cars on the road.

Finally, AMC could and should have done a classier job with its Concord. The big, single rectangular headlamps are nice, but the grille is basically Gremlin, an odd-shaped license surround hurts the new-look rear, and the 2-door's opera window seems way out of sync with the car's roof and beltline.

(Styling is highly subjective, and one man's trash may be another's treasure; but these are WAW's opinions for what they're worth.)

On the engineering front, AMC scores by shoehorning its spunky 304 V-8 into the Pacer, although it appears to make the car's short engine compartment into a real mechanic's nightmare. And sound insulation and ride and handling improvements have

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GOOFS & GOODIES continued

been passed around to the entire AMC lineup. There's also a plush Barcelona package this year for the heavy but super-spacious Matador sedan.

Chrysler still seems to have a surge problem with its 360 4-bbl. lean burn engine, which varies from car to car. And the 318 V-8 coupled to the very low 2.45:1 standard rear axle gives anemic performance at best in the heavy Cordoba/Charger and LeBaron/Diplomat models. On the other hand, an average weight reduction of 300 lbs. per car and the industry's first lock-up torque converter are important fuel efficiency Goodies.

Ford's '78 engineering Goodies include practically its whole Fiesta car, especially the simple, lightweight rear axle and coil spring suspension, and Fiesta's outstanding serviceability from headlamp to tailpipe. A new 15-lb. cast aluminum intake manifold for the 302 V-8, which replaces the 45-lb. iron unit in certain Granada/Monarch models, subtle aerodynamic refinements for the company's big cars, and the sweet-handling ESO (European Sport Option) suspension package for Fairmont/Zephyr are other Goodies for '78.

In comfort and convenience, there are still too many Goofs in old and new cars alike, many of which involve such recurring items as tiny glove boxes, cheap plastic ash trays, inadequate interior and trunk room, and restraint systems that twist and won't retract, rub on necks and have over-sensitive inertia reels.

Oldsmobile's A-car chime-type warning system is nice, and the Cutlass roof hatches now have a convenient, one-hand removal mechanism. But those hatches also create too much wind noise and likely leak water as well as air.

Pontiac's Trans Am is one of the best-cornering cars on the street, yet its bucket seats have woefully deficient lateral support to keep occupants in place during cornering. However, Pontiac's Grand Prix is the only new A-body to offer reclining seats for both driver and passenger.

Chevrolet's Chevette 5-door is a nice-looking and reasonably efficient package, but the cost-cutters didn't even see fit to put a hold-open stop in the rear doors! Goofy! Also, there's still no reclining seat available for alleged GM small-car import-fighters Monza/Sunbird/Skyhawk series, and their inexcusable non-adjusting front seats are raked way too far back for our liking. And why doesn't GM do

'Chevrolet, happily, has dropped the gutless 1.4-liter Chevette engine ...'

something about the flimsy shoulder belt guides that continually come adrift from their seatback mounts? Finally, Corvette gets a nice, new glassback roof and a resulting increase in luggage capacity—but why not a hatch so people can get their stuff in and out?

Ford has a new removable third seat cushion that greatly increases lockable, underfloor storage capacity in LTD and Marquis wagons. But Ford's German-built, front-drive Fiesta scoops up our Comfort and Convenience Grand Prize for '78: Generous room in a tiny exterior package, fully reclining front buckets, generous glove box and sectioned dash-top oddments shelf, floor-level hatch opening and a good-sized underfloor storage bin are just some of the reasons. Leave it to the Germans.

Chrysler rates commendation for its space- and weight-saving thin-back front seats (which put GM and Ford "thin-shells" to shame) and optional recliners in some models, plus deepened trunk floors that raise Volare/Aspen cargo capacity to 16.4 cu.ft. and a trick, push-button electronic search tune stereo radio available in Cordoba/Charger/Magnum and LeBaron/Diplomat.

Ford Goofs include a very noisy Fiesta engine and some items carried over from last year, such as the sloppy, wallowy handling of standard LTD II/Cougar models and Capri II's clumsy shifter and over-sensitive throttle linkage.

Chevrolet, happily, has dropped the gutless 1.4-liter Chevette engine and added an optional "high output package" to give five additional horsepower to the 1.6 "four." But moving in the opposite direction with super-low rear-axle ratios in other car lines has cost too much performance. One Malibu tried by WAW having a 4-speed and 2.29:1 axle couldn't even move off the line without badly bogging its 305 V-8 engine. Also, the 4-speed linkage in that car was abominable.

Oldsmobile's diesel is reasonably smooth and has fair performance, but it "cycles" up and down and emits a bit too much noise at idle. Its THM 400 automatic transmission also had a rough first-to-second upshift in the car we drove. Conversely, Buick's even-fire 231 V-6 is a big improve-

ment over the old "Shaky Jake" and the 4-bbl. Turbo's extra acceleration is welcome if not exhilarating.

But why did the optional LeBaron/Diplomat digital clock have to go into the already inadequate glove box? And why does one still have to drop everything and use two hands to move the front seat backs forward in Chrysler's intermediate coupes?

Having set an industry example years ago with Matador's generous glove box and substantial ash tray, AMC has done it right again in the new Gremlin/Concord dashboard.

However, the poor Pacer still suffers with its stingy bin-box, lack of an available floor console and inconvenient, door-mounted ash trays in some models. The smallest U.S. automaker remains the domestic leader in reclining seat availability, however, (except in Gremlin) and has made the neat luxury D/L package standard equipment on Pacer.

Many all-new cars coming later in calendar '78 or beyond include GM's downsized, front-drive compacts and radically redesigned Eldorado, Toronado and Riviera; Ford's downsized big cars and front-drive Pintos, Mustangs and Capris; Chrysler's front-drive Omni/Horizon and (you guessed it) downsized intermediates; and AMC's new lightweight small entries, as previewed in this summer's Concept 80 traveling road show.

What Goodies they'll contain are presaged on the new entries already here. Reducing exterior size and weight are obvious goals, but greater passenger comfort and convenience, better maneuverability and handling, improved corrosion resistance and the mushrooming use of electronics are just some of the encouraging directions in which designers are moving.

Ford is introducing a built-in electronic garage-door opener and an electronic miles-to-empty meter on high-dollar Lincolns this year, and Cadillac shortly will have a magical, mystical nine-function "Trip Master" machine (optional on Seville) that will compute instantaneous and average fuel economy, miles to destination, estimated arrival time and do practically everything but route the trip itself.

Perhaps by 1985 the engineers will figure an electronic process to exhaust cleaner air than the engine takes in, eliminate accident-causing driver error and get 27.5 miles per gallon in the bargain. The promise of all Goodies and no Goofs is exciting to think about.

But don't bet on it. □