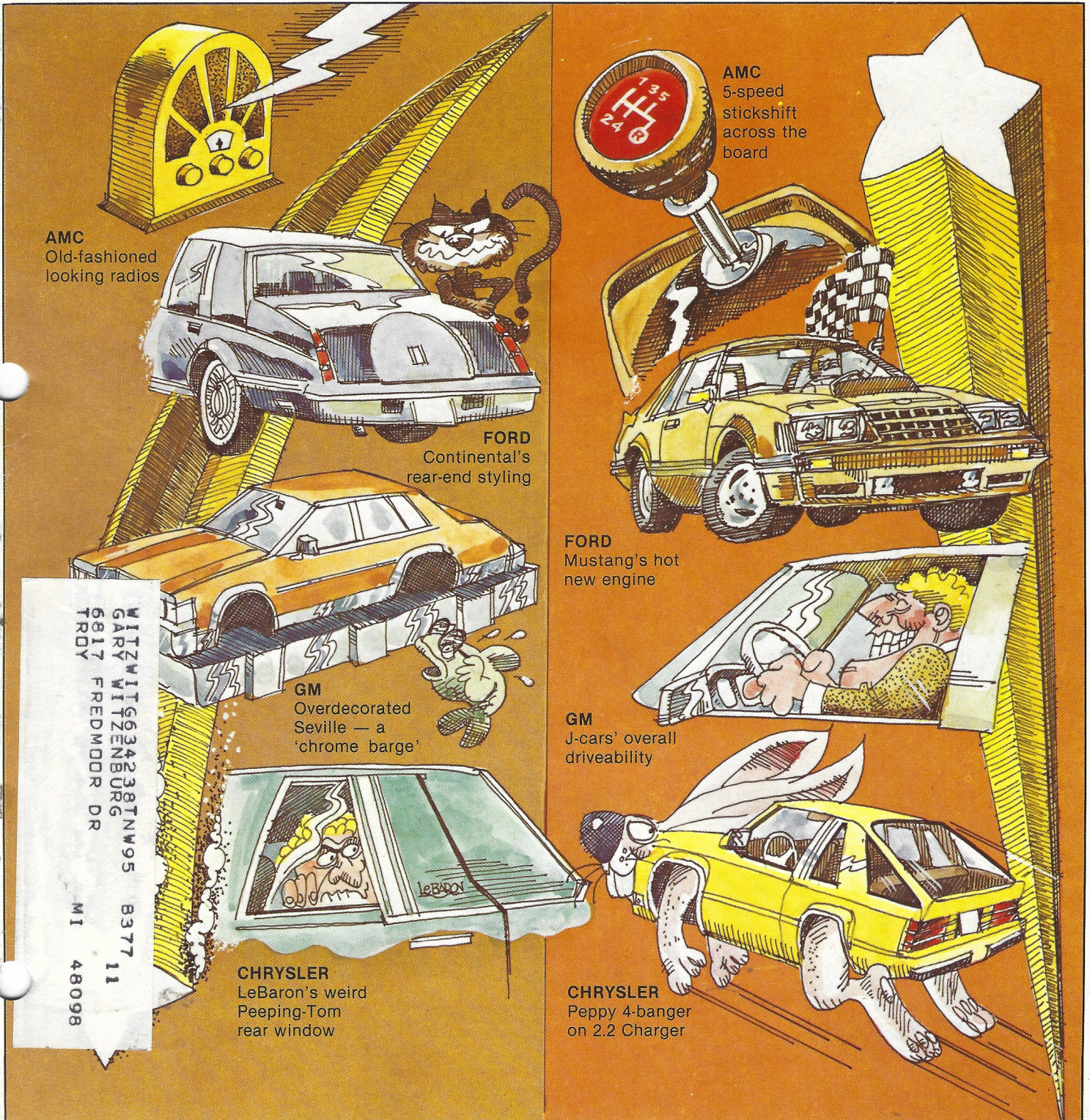


# WARD'S AUTO WORLD

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## Goofs and Goodies in the '82s



**AMC**  
Old-fashioned looking radios

**FORD**  
Continental's rear-end styling

**GM**  
Overdecorated Seville — a 'chrome barge'

**CHRYSLER**  
LeBaron's weird Peeping-Tom rear window

**AMC**  
5-speed stickshift across the board

**FORD**  
Mustang's hot new engine

**GM**  
J-cars' overall driveability

**CHRYSLER**  
Peppy 4-banger on 2.2 Charger

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# Goofs and Goodies in the '82s

Contributors to this article are Detroit freelancers Gary L. Witzenburg and James Dunne, WAW's Daniel F. McCosh, Mike Scanlon, and David C. Smith. It was written by Mr. Smith.

It is, as the sages say, written in the stars. In scrutinizing engineering features of 1982-model U.S. cars, WAW awards Shooting Stars for all those Goodies out there and doles out Sputtering Stars for the Goofs.

All domestic automakers get their share of both awards. At press time Volkswagen of America Inc. had not yet revealed its '82s, but WAW understands that, except for imports from West Germany, VWA's U.S.-built offerings are changed little for the new-model year.

Indeed, Detroit's stretched-out '82 intros leave a goodly batch of new models still waiting at the starting gate as WAW goes to press. Even so, our eagle eyes have at least scanned General Mo-

tors Corp.'s new A-body front-wheel-drive (fwd) intermediates bowing early next year. We've also had a glimpse of GM's new F-body Chevrolet Camaro/Pontiac Firebird specialty subcompacts, which also arrive in showrooms several months from now.

As usual, we take a hard look at past Goofs that have been corrected and continue our harangue for those that carry over once again.

Lacking a great deal of new sheet metal — at least during initial stages of the new-model run — WAW presents its Golden Goody of '82 to Ford Motor Co. for its new Continental, and additionally hands over its Better-Late-than-Never trophy to Ford for adding a 4-door version of Ford Escort/Mercury Lynx. Ford's new aluminum V-6 and small-car transmission refinements likewise are Goodies, but Ford's tardiness in bringing 5-speed manual gearboxes to market gains our Super Goofy medallion.

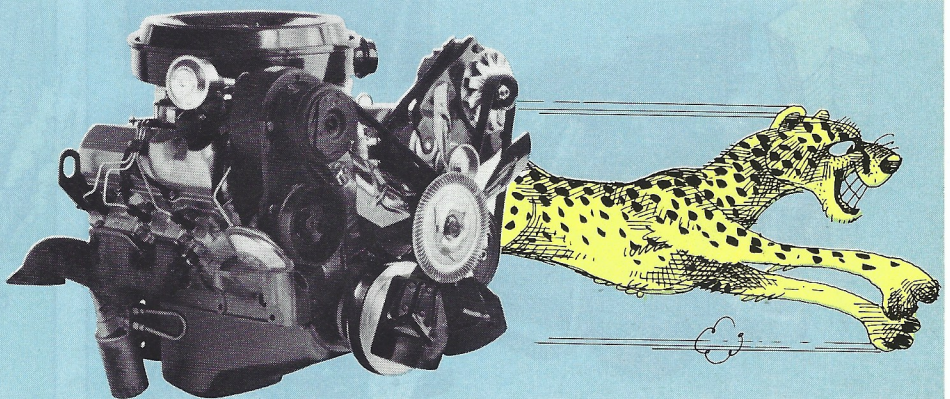
GM's A- and F-cars unofficially cop WAW's New Faces of '82 prize, sight unseen. The aerodynamic, European-influenced A-cars will prove more than capable of pulling traditional full-size buyers down into smaller packages. The freshly restyled F-cars bring some real pizzazz back into motoring. Most of all, GM rates the WAW Golden Technical Goody trophy for its dazzling array of new engines for '82.

Chrysler Corp. tries hard to compete in the rough-and-tumble midsize market with its new K-car-based fwd Chrysler LeBaron and Dodge 400, but for a variety of reasons misses the mark. The new series is too close to the much less-expensive Ks in styling and doesn't make up for it with some suspension Goodies that can't be denied. Nontechnically speaking, however, the No. 3 automaker takes home a Goody award for keeping down its '82 prices in a

continued next page

## Golden Goodies

Beauty is more than skin deep: Except for GM's as-yet-unveiled new A- and F-cars, '82 is no back-slapper for styling. But under the sheet metal, technical advances abound. Olds wins WAW's Golden Technical Goody prize for its lively new V-6 diesel (right) that fits either front- or rear-wheel-drive intermediates. Cadillac and Ford also boast new engines for '82 as well as myriad advancements in drivetrains and suspension systems.



# Goofs and Goodies

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market where sticker shock is paralyzing new-car prospects.

Then there's little old American Motors Corp., with hardly a new design wrinkle for '82, but plenty of wrinkles incurred through the aging process. Never mind the tired iron: AMC still walks away with WAW's coveted Goody Gear-box of the Year trophy for its new 4- and 5-speed manual transmissions supplied by Warner Gear Div. of Borg-Warner Corp.

Here's a look at the stars of the show — those that fizzled as well as soared — starting with GM.

## GM

GM's J-body fwd subcompacts were introduced last spring, but that doesn't make them immune from WAW's magnifying glass. The Js contain a goodly share of Goodies but also a handsome serving of Goofs.

As a group the Js lack refinements that would have made them true import fighters. Their standard 1.8-L Chevrolet-

built 4-banger can push them from 0-60 mph (96 kmh) in 14 seconds, but it takes a heavy foot. By comparison, most imports can match or exceed that with relative ease.

Second, GM Goofed in failing to provide a 5-speed manual gearbox for the Js. Those are coming in '82, but why not be competitive and offer them at the outset? Recognizing that demands on cash and time place constraints on U.S. automakers, WAW nonetheless believes GM should have built 5-speed into its early thinking. "That strikes me as myopic planning — by people who haven't shifted a gear since 'three on the tree' went out of style and who don't understand why everyone doesn't want automatics," says one outspoken WAW contributor.

Cadillac Div.'s Cimarron J-car comes under heaviest criticism. Besides looking like other less-expensive J-cars, Cimarron's automatic transmission, combined with the Chevy-built engine, produces performance substantially below other midprice luxury cars with which it's supposed to compete. "Cimarron is

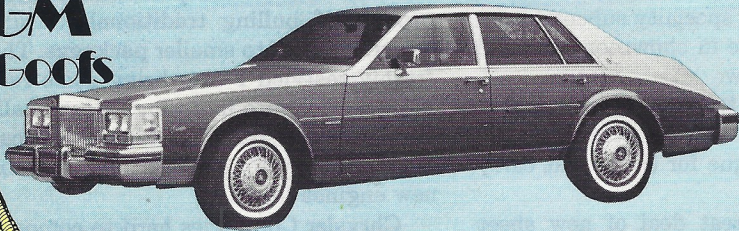
good in so many ways, but its powertrain is strictly low-rent," says one WAW evaluator. A beefed-up 2-L version of the base 1.8-L 4-banger, due early next year, will help. So will a 5-speed, which also reportedly comes early in '82. Good.

GM also may have Goofed in failing to develop the Js in a slightly smaller and certainly lighter package. They're too close in weight to compact fwd X-cars that, in turn, come close to the soon-to-be introduced new fwd A-cars. In short, GM will have three car lines quite close to one another, perhaps confusing buyers. Meantime, there's nothing between the Js and the aging rear-wheel-drive (rwd) Chevette/Pontiac T-car — and likely won't be until 1985.

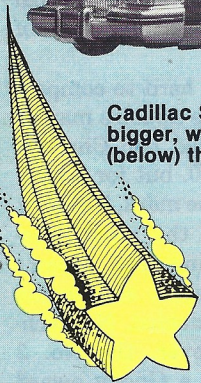
Looking at the GM divisions, WAW finds these nuggets:

**CHEVROLET** — Chevy Cavalier J-car wins honors as the least attractive of GM's J-cars. There's too much chrome and other stuff on a car that's supposed to be as clean as tasteful imports. Like other Js, Cavalier's instrument panel, as one WAW evaluator puts it, is too big

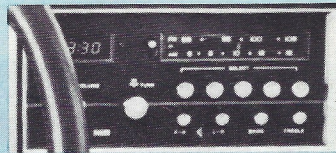
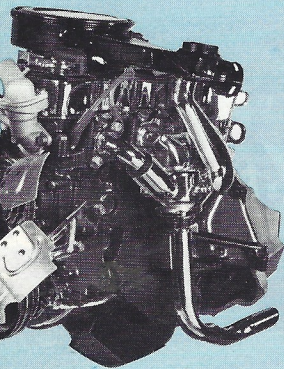
## GM Goofs



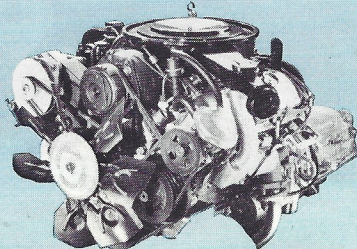
Cadillac Seville (top) retains chrome-barge look, making it seem bigger, while J-cars are criticized for having bulky dashboards (below) that look like the China Wall.



## Goodies



Pontiac's electronically fuel-injected 2.4-L 4-banger (left); GM's newly designed radio (above); and Cadillac's 4.1-L V-8 take home trophies.



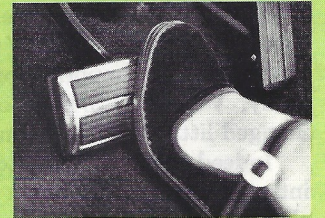
## Chrysler



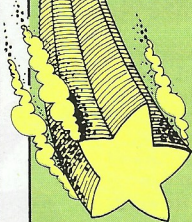
LeBaron's blacked-out rear-quarter window treatment (left) wins WAW's Peeping Tom trophy, while K-cars and new Dodge 400 and LeBaron still have brake pedal too close to floor (below).



## Goofs



## AMC Goofs



AMC offers an optional advanced, electronically tuned radio, but it still looks old-fashioned.

Concord's anachronistic rear-window treatment wins applause from vinyl manufacturers, but hardly anyone else.



and bulky and thus "looks like the China Wall." Still, Cavalier shares the J's generally high quality, rating it a mark in the Goody column. Chevette adds a 5-speed gearbox and diesel from Isuzu Motors Ltd., GM's Japanese affiliate. Both definitely are Goodies. Corvette's dual throttle-body injection (TBI) 5.7-L V-8 with fresh-air hood is a Goody, but Chevy Goofed by offering only automatic transmissions for '82 and restricting the near-rear hatch to the most-expensive model — the Collector Edition. Camaro's revamped styling is outstanding. So is its handling. But Chevrolet Goofed in failing to certify a manual transmission with the dual TBI V-8.

**PONTIAC** — The restyled Firebird, featuring hidden front headlamps, strolls off with WAW's Delightful Design trophy and wins additional plaudits for its 5-L V-8 engine, shared with Camaro. Styling Goodies include the best of J-cars, especially hatchback. But Pontiac Goofed with its Bonneville intermediate G-body model. It represents everything that was bad about the "old" Pontiac: tons of chrome, fake-wire

wheels, padded roof — all the design cliches. Says one WAW critic: "Son of Chromewagon. I realize there are still some who like gorped-up domestic luxury barges and that this is a transitional car to appease dealers for loss of old, full-size Bonnevilles. But Pontiac's new philosophy is supposed to *lead* taste among domestics, not *follow* tired tradition." Pontiac's 2.5-L engine with electronic TBI, however, makes a good engine even better for economy and driveability.

**OLDSMOBILE** — Olds' 4.3-L V-6 diesel engine — transverse for new A-body cars and north-south for G-cars — is peppy and yet gets 28/42 mpg (8.4 L/100 km/5.6 L/100 km) and hits 60 mph (96 kmh) in 16 seconds powering fwd A-cars. It also is available in rwd G-cars (the old A- and A-specials) and incorporates all engineering features added to V-8 diesels over years of a sometime painful learning curve: fast-start, water-in-fuel warning and separation system, and roller lifters.

**BUICK** — Performance-and-response improvements to Buick's turbocharged V-6 are Goodies without question, as is

improved internal oiling to allow change intervals of 7,500 miles (12,000 km) rather than 3,000 miles (4,800 km). So-called Gran Touring suspension extends to Skylark, another Buick Goody.

**CADILLAC** — The luxury division's eagerly awaited 4.1-L aluminum-block V-8 with special twin-injector electronic TBI and a "Fuel Data Panel" in the cockpit are definite Goodies. Tasteful, de-chromed, Euro-look Eldorado touring coupe models also capture a star, as does the touring suspension for Eldorado and Seville. But Seville retains its overdecorated chrome-barge appearance, which makes it *look* bigger, heavier and less fuel efficient than it really is.

## Ford

**Continental:** Ford's major new offering for 1982 generally is a car that rates a passel of Goodies. In effect, it's a Cadillac Seville with many better ideas. Aesthetically, Continental is the best of the bustlebacks with nicely integrated vertical taillamps and a rear deck slope matching its rear roof shape. The high-line model, like Seville, is wedding-cake

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## Goodies



Dodge Charger 2.2 (above) has plenty of scat — a winner. Chrysler also has changed K-car platform interior door handles (left), eliminating an '81 Goof. 4-door Ks and derivatives also get roll-down rear windows, another '81 omission.

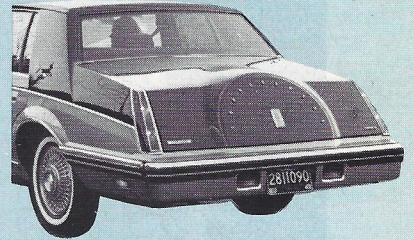
## Goodies

Borg-Warner's 5-speed manual shifter (left) on AMC cars and Jeeps cops a Goody award, as does Jeep CJ-7 Limited — the ultimate in off-road luxury.

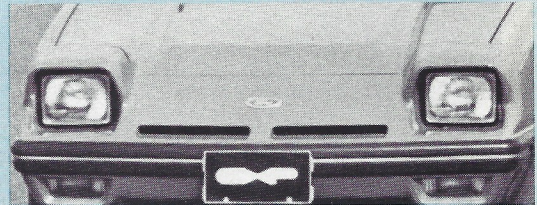


## Ford Goofs

Continental has plenty going for it, but rear styling is Goofy. It not only mimics Seville, it also carries over outdated fake-spare-tire trunk treatment.



Ford EXP coupe comes under fire for lacking guts, but that soon will be corrected. One WAW critic lays into its "frog-eye" front-end.

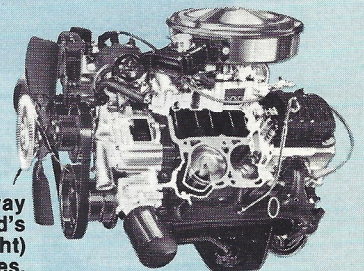


## Goodies

Mustang and companion Capri are praised for reviving lively driving by offering new high-output version of venerable 5-L V-8.



Granada/Monarch two-way tailgate (left) and Ford's new lightweight V-6 (right) are '82 Goodies.



# Goofs and Goodies

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decorated in American luxury tradition; the fake spare-tire bulge in the trunk is insultingly *passee*.

But Continental *can* be bought in more understated trim. Its V-6 engine — brand new from Ford's new plant in Canada — is only so-so as power for this car. That's probably one reason Ford dropped it as standard, replacing it with the 5-L V-8. The latter gives better performance with little, if any, real sacrifice in mileage.

Continental's suspension, using nitrogen-filled front struts and rear shocks, and its variable-ratio rack-and-pinion power steering, show what can be done with a competent-but-ordinary (Fairmont-derived) platform given time and money. Four-wheel power disc brakes are standard — a Goody.

But there are Goofs. Front-end design is indistinctive; it could be a Cougar or most any other Lincoln-Mercury car. Front foot room is hampered seriously by intrusion of front wheelhouses.

**Escort/Lynx:** Many things that should have been done before the first Escort/Lynx sold now appear as a string of Goodies on the '82s. (If you own an '81, sorry about that.) The new 5-door hatchback (Ford calls it a 4-door) also broadens the line and appeal of '82s. Performance improvements from the 1.6-L 4-banger handle this added starter adequately as Ford adopts a larger, low-restriction exhaust system and air-conditioning cutout at full throttle. Another Goody is the new optional high-output engine and close-ratio manual transmission plus a revised shift schedule for automatics, all of which provide better driveability and flexibility.

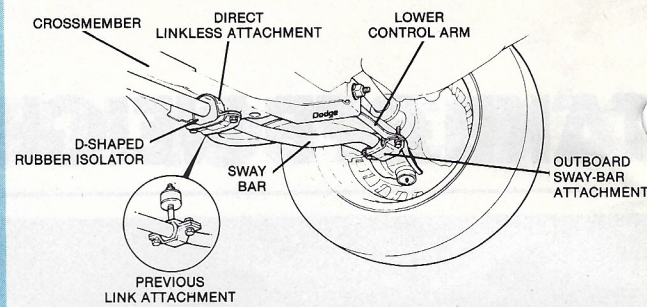
**EXP/LN7:** These 2-seat, fairly affordable sporty offerings are a Goody for the idea alone and share interior improvements — power liftgate release, larger glovebox, extended consoles, for instance — with Escort/Lynx plus some other standard equipment such as engine-compartment and ashtray lights.

**Fairmont:** In this case, Ford earns a Goody for not doing what comes naturally these days — going fwd — even though the reason simply may be expediency. "Proving fwd maybe isn't the whole answer, the Fairmont series is still roomy, inexpensive and with the 4-cyl. engine has a tried-and-true character that also should rate a Goody in repair bills," comments WAW's most cost-conscious reviewer. Some other Goodies in Fairmont/Zephyr/Granada/Cougar are



## Goody

Chrysler's new linkless sway bar improves ride and handling on all of its '82 front-wheel-drive cars and reduces noise and vibration up front by using rubber isolators.



new deep-well trunks and larger fuel tanks, correcting former Goofs.

**Mustang/Capri:** A high-performance 5-L V-8 coupled with a 4-speed transmission stands out in these models, as do fore-and-aft bars on rear suspension, reducing axle hop.

## Chrysler

**LeBaron/Dodge 400:** Add up Goofs and Goodies on these super-Ks and the pluses far outweigh the minuses — and even in the latter's case there are arguments, depending on your handling biases. Start with power. Here's a quick analysis from a reasonably fair assessor of such things: "Chrysler's 2.2-L is probably the best U.S.-built 4-cyl. It powers a broad range of cars, runs like a rabbit in Omni/Horizon, is more reliable than the 2.6-L Mitsubishi Motors Corp. Ltd. engine. In the LeBaron/400, you have to look under the hood to understand you're not using the larger powerplant."

In looks, LeBaron/400 win a top Goody. Front and rear styling is attractive and classy in an Imperial-like mode, producing this comment: "My vote for the best new faces in midsize class."

But when it comes to ride and handling, there's a disparity of opinion among WAW's investigators. LeBaron/400 share new suspension with other K-car platforms. Says one commentator: "Compared with last year, there is better isolation and a softer ride from lower-rate springs, premium rear shocks, softer and more sophisticated bushings and a new linkless front sway bar that decreases compliance and body roll during cornering." A true Goody for '82. But then the same person adds: "The softer suspension gives away the supple, Euro-style handling that was a K-car Goody. Wallows in corners."

Chrysler drops the Goofy fixed rear windows in 4-door K-cars and LeBaron, replacing them with roll-down jobs. That's Good. But the brake pedal in Ks and derivatives, although lifted for '82, still is too close to the floorboard. That's Goofy.

As for styling, Chrysler follows the

American luxury-trim cliché route: padded roofs; weird, peeping-Tom rear-window treatment; fake-wire wheels; stand-up hood ornaments plus, as one critic puts it: "Chrome, chrome, chrome."

**Charger/Turismo:** WAW rates these Goodies for their tasteful sportiness using the upgraded 2.2-L that delivers surprising performance.

**Omni/Horizon:** Introduced midyear '81, Miser models remain a good value with reasonable performance and excellent fuel economy. A definite Goody for potential showroom crowds aching for affordability. New French-looking optional wheelcovers dress up the Horizon 4-door.

**K-cars:** Chrysler provides — and correctly touts — an enticing Goody: serviceability. K-cars get counterbalanced hoods replacing manual prop rods; engine compartments are cleaned up visually and functionally. Only time will verify it, but average maintenance cost for 50,000 miles (80,000 km) is only \$170 for the manual jobs, \$182 for automatics.

## AMC

**Jeep CJ-7:** For 4-wheel-drive (4wd) enthusiasts — the growing class of buyers who aren't looking for comfort and luxury — Jeep CJ-7 Limited looks like a winning Goody, especially compared to the rotten economy of gasoline competitors such as Bronco and Blazer. All Eagles get Select-Drive 4wd as standard, adding to economy and flexibility. Eagle makes a great towing vehicle, on or off-road, with reasonable economy compared with other 4wd jobs that have towing capability. AMC overcomes a paucity of new offerings for '82 with increased mpg, thanks largely to an optional Borg-Warner 5-speed manual transmission on most models. It works well on initial tests, much better than the 5-speed B-W made for a while in the '70s for Monza-based GM cars. AMC's Buyer Protection Plan and five-year no-rust warranty remain the industry's best consumer programs. Still Goofy: New available radio may be high-tech, but it looks old-fashioned. □