

How to get more from all that cash in your gas tank

Buyers pick choices for new cars

A recent national survey of American drivers shows that Americans tend to consider U.S. makes better in terms of styling and passenger safety while imports win the race for the cars with the best fuel economy.

In the survey, conducted by J.D. Powers and Associates of Los Angeles, American consumers were asked to pick the best and the worst autos in three areas — styling, mileage and passenger safety. American-made cars led imports by a 2-to-1 margin in styling and a margin of 3-to-1 in safety. Imports, on the other hand, were voted for by a 10-to-1 margin on fuel economy.

The best-looking U.S. models, in order of preference, were Chevrolet, Ford, Cadillac and Oldsmobile. Among the imports, Mercedes-Benz and then Datsun were judged most attractive.

The cars selected most often as having the worst styling and appearance were American Motors cars, especially the Pacer and Volkswagen.

Volkswagen was mentioned more frequently than all other imports combined, with the majority specifically citing the appearance of the Rabbit.

In passenger safety, imports once again lost out to American autos. U.S. cars led imports by a little over 3-to-1 in having the best passenger safety. Cadillac and Chevrolet were mentioned most often among U.S. cars. Volvo and Mercedes-Benz led the imports.

Ford, on the other hand suffered from the bad publicity of their consumer trials this last year. They were cited by one out of five drivers as having the poorest passenger safety, due primarily to the Pinto.

According to David Price, director of automotive research at J.D. Powers and Associates, "Usually the subcompact import models are cited for having the poorest passenger safety, but the notoriety of the Pinto overshadowed the imports in this case."

The one area where imports edged ahead of U.S. cars was fuel efficiency.

In 1979, American gasoline use fell by 5.4 percent, and for the first half of 1980, Americans burned nearly 8.5 percent less gasoline than during the same period last year.

A recent Gallup Poll on driving habits found that nearly 9 out of 10 car owners have changed their motoring habits in ways that include cutting weekend and social

driving, joining car pools, and buying cars that get better mileage. More than three-fourths of the motorists surveyed felt they could achieve bigger savings yet. The Highway Users Federation, a national non-profit organization promoting highway transportation efficiency and traffic safety, has been digging into ways to do just that.

— First, keep your tires pumped up to the tire manufacturer's highest recommended level.

Radial tires save gas by increasing mileage 3 to 5 percent in the city and up to 10 percent on the road.

— With jackrabbit starts and stops, a "lead-footed" driver wastes at least 7 percent of his gas. A "feather-footed" driver is just about

as bad, driving too long in too low a gear, also wasting gas. Develop a steady foot on the accelerator.

— One prime way to keep down highway gas consumption is to obey the 55 mph speed limit. The first year the national 55 mph speed limit was imposed, it saved 1.5 billion gallons of gasoline and 5,000 lives.

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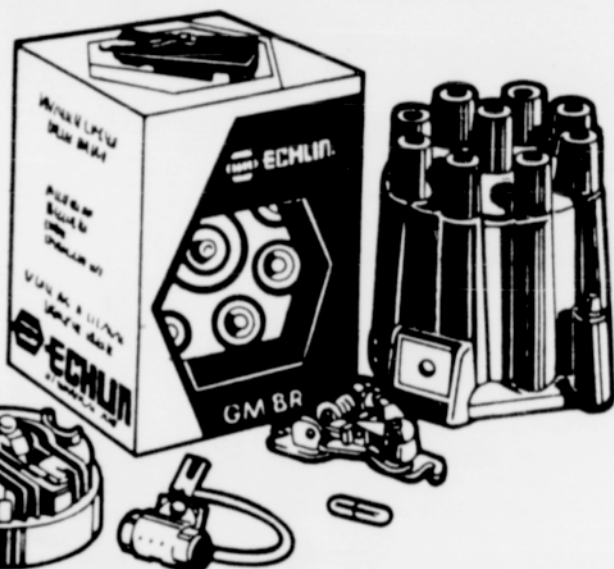
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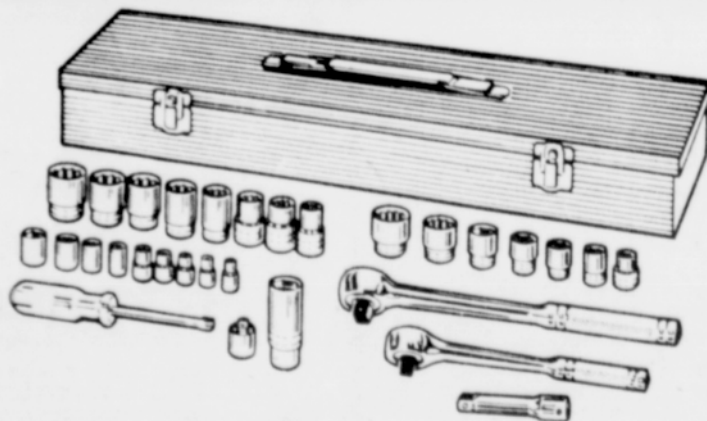
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