

'97 VEHICLES

MAZDA

We would like to say, "Mazda Killed the RX-7, that's it for 1997." But that wouldn't be fair, even if it is speaking from the heart. We can only hope that the demise of this legendary sports car doesn't shelve the company's use of that marvelous rotary engine in the U.S. The MILLENNIA sedan, Mazda's excellent flagship since the demise of the 929, offers little new for '97 except updated headlights and a new console. Standard engine for the base and L models is a 170hp 2.5L V-6; the S gets that leading edge, 210hp 2.3L supercharged "Miller cycle" engine.

ACURA

The one Acura that never ceases to amaze is the 170hp 2.2L VTEC four-powered INTEGRA GS-R. If your pocketbook doesn't permit your driving away with an \$80,000 NSX supercar, check out this gem for about 1/4 the price with half the performance. No changes of substance for '97, but it is one of those things that still make you go hmmmmmm.....The delightful CL series coupe, like the original Legend, is creating its own category. Feel free to acquire the base 145hp 2.2L four, but if you are into "joyful noises," then opt for the 200hp VTEC V-6.

ISUZU

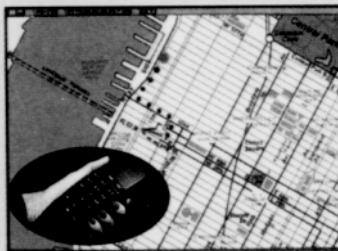
Isuzu welcomes the '97 model year with its OASIS minivan. If it looks familiar, very familiar, it's because it is a specially-produced version of the Honda Odyssey. Like the Honda, it's powered with the same 140hp 2.2L four. Oasis offers a great ride for up to seven people thanks to its race-derived suspension.

KIA

Like Hyundai, Kia is also based in South Korea, and its claim to fame is the nicely appointed and affordable SEPHIA sedan. Base power is a 122hp 1.8L four, except in California, where it gets a 105hp 1.6L four. There's also the SPORTAGE mini-SUV—competition for Toyota's RAV4—that is possessed of "brickhouse" underpinnings. It comes with a 2WD or 4WD drive layout and gets the 122hp 1.8L four.

The automobile has come a long ways.

By Jacqueline Mitchell



Cadillac OnStar System



Eagle Vision Autostick



BMW Side Airbag



Oldsmobile Navigation Map Display

The automobile has come a long way. The first vehicles didn't have windows, heaters, turn signals, radios or seatbelts -- all amenities and safety features taken for granted today. But as the style and performance of the automobile evolved over the past 100 years, so has auto technology. The 1997 model year is no different. Following are highlights of advanced safety and technological features now available on certain models.

Probably one of the most exciting new technologies to hit the market this model year is a computer system using an advanced global positioning satellite and cellular phone network to link drivers to an emergency system with a touch of a button. With Cadillac's OnStar system and Lincoln's Remote Emergency Satellite Cellular Unit (RESCU), drivers can contact an emergency center and receive roadside assistance or medical, police or fire emergency at any location. Even if the driver is unable to verbally communicate with the center, it can still dispatch help to the vehicle after receiving a distress signal.

Porsche and BMW were the first companies to introduce a transmission that allows drivers to switch between an automatic or clutchless manual transmission with a flick of the wrist. Chrysler introduced the Autostick in 1996 on its Eagle Vision TSi, but now is making it optional on certain Dodge and Chrysler models.

Mercedes' Parktronic system, which alerts the driver with an in-dash light and beeper as the vehicle approaches an object, makes parking easier. The closer the vehicle gets to an object, the faster the light will blink and beep.

Cadillac and Mercedes are offering advanced braking systems that sense when the rear or front of a vehicle is not going in the direction being steered. The appropriate brakes are signaled to respond, thus guiding the vehicle back on course.

BMW has loaded its 8-Series vehicles with more airbags than any other vehicle in the U.S., with a total of eight. In addition to having four airbags for front-seating passengers and two airbags for rear-seating passengers, BMW has placed two airbags in the ceiling for front-seating passengers to help prevent whiplash in an accident. Mercedes is also providing a passenger-side airbag that will only deploy if it detects a weight of over 25 pounds.

And drivers who want the feel of a convertible year-round, might want to take a look at Mercedes' new transparent, glass hard top.



"Oldsmobiles because they are affordable luxury cars. I own a Lincoln Town Car because I like a lot of room and rear-wheel drive."

Gene Kimbrow
Long Island, NY



"I would have to say Cadillac, although I drive a Nissan. They are the most affordable luxury cars geared towards the black community. Most of their commercials are directed toward African-American families."

Michele Kimbrow
Long Island, NY



"Mercedes. I think it is a status thing. A Mercedes is a statement of being successful. Many professionals like athletes or doctors drive Mercedes."

Cheryl Jones
Phoenix, AZ



"As far as my family goes, we have been happy with Toyota for over 10 years. We have always gotten superb service and according to my husband they are easy to maintain and all parts are accessible. Our most recent Toyota is a 11-year-old Camry and we have just passed it on to our son."

Annie Gavin
Potomac, MD



"General Motors. Their cars are more economical and durable. They are the best American made cars because they last longer. I like American made products anyway."

Gerry Walker
Memphis, TN

"We would have to say Chrysler because they offer bigger rebates on certain models which stimulate more sales."

Mr. & Mrs. Christopher Smith
Toledo, OH

GM/MINORITY DEALERS LAUNCH YOUTH PROGRAM

General Motors Minority Dealer Development (GMMDD) has joined forces with GM's Youth Educational Systems (GMYES) to help identify and train a new generation of minority technicians.



"Finding qualified minorities to work in the technical service area of GM dealerships has been next to impossible," said Leon McDaniel, general director of GMMDD. "We want to correct this situation by tapping into urban community schools and finding youths interested in more than just a job." The school-to-work program targets 11th and 12th graders whose high school curriculums are coordinated with on-the-job training.

CARS NOW MORE AFFORDABLE

Cars are more affordable today than they were six years ago. Buying an average-priced new vehicle in the first quarter of 1996 required 28.8 weeks of median family income before taxes, the lowest number since 1990, according to the Detroit-based Comerica Bank.

Contributing factors: a one-half percent drop in average financing costs; a \$223 drop in average consumer outlay after rebate; low unemployment; a \$500 rise in median income, and changes in the way the Department of Commerce calculates the average price of new cars. Under the old method, the average cost of a new car in the third quarter of 1994 was at \$20,247. The new method recalculates it at \$18,993.

WINDSHIELD WIPER LAW GAINS MOMENTUM

Drivers using their windshield wipers will also have to turn on their headlights, according to a new Illinois law. Between 1990 and 1993, there was an average of 97,065 crashes in the state during wet weather. Illinois is one of eight states that have a wiper/lights law; the others are New Jersey, Connecticut, Georgia, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, and West Virginia.