

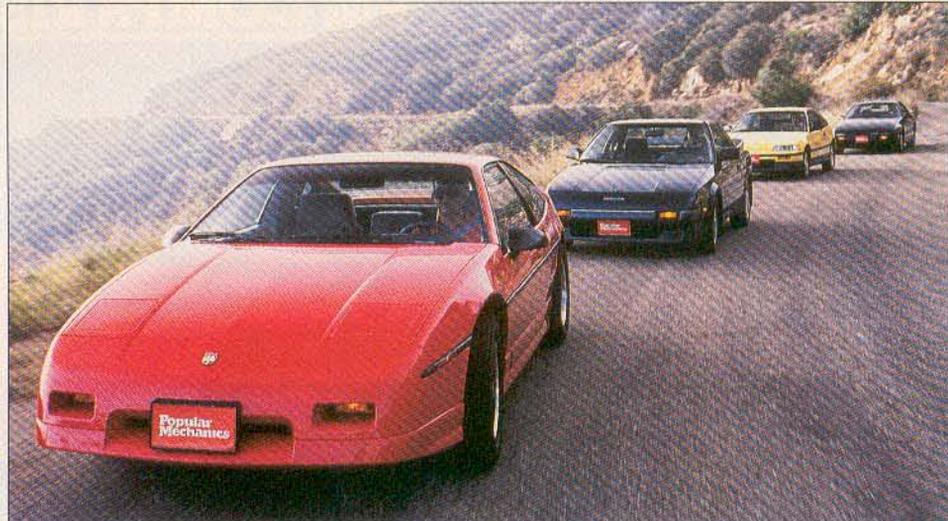
Best of all, each seems quite likely to reward its owner with plenty of driving fun. And after all, that's the main reason cars like these exist in the first place.

The combatants are presented here in alphabetical order.

Honda CRX Si

All-new for 1988, the CRX Si represents an improvement on a near-perfect original. Honda's popular super-scooter has a longer wheelbase, expanded interior volume and a potent new 1.6-liter 16-valve engine.

The remarkable design resources that Honda brings to bear in the area of ergonomics and space utilization



MAZDA RX-7 GTU

show to spectacular advantage here. There seems to be more volume inside the CRX than its tidy exterior dimensions can possibly surround. Legroom is capable of accommodating even the tallest drivers, headroom is at least adequate for most and the little Honda's cargo volume is nothing short of remarkable—not to mention the best in this group.

There's a new privacy panel under the rear hatch, a rather flimsy piece that nevertheless gets the job done, and this was the only CRX installation that drew any negative fit-and-finish response, inside or out. Honda's brash little traffic-sorter exudes care and quality from end to end.

Seating, too, drew plentiful praise,



TOYOTA MR2 SUPERCHARGER



MAZDA RX-7 CONVERTIBLE

Variations On A Theme

ALTHOUGH these two cars fell outside the scope of our test group—the supercharged MR2 because its power-to-weight ratio was well beyond the others, the RX-7 convertible because it nudged beyond \$20,000—we'd be remiss to ignore them. So we included them in our general testing, but will only report on the qualities that make them special.

Toyota MR2 Supercharged

Bump engine output by 30 percent and you expect a quicker car, and that's what the supercharged MR2 is all about. With 145 hp at 6400 rpm, the blown MR2 hits 60 mph in about 7 seconds and covers the quarter-mile in just a little over 15.

That's quick, alright. Quick as a snake. But carrying the snake parallel a little further, this car seems able to

do other things quickly, things you don't want it to do. It's not difficult to find yourself with the tail hung out in full opposite-lock oversteer, suggesting that perhaps 145 hp is more than this chassis can handle comfortably.

Mazda RX-7 Convertible

The weight that goes with convertibilization—in this case, about 375 pounds more than the coupe—keeps the RX-7 softtop from being a thrill ride. Nevertheless, it shares the refinement and competency of the RX-7 family, thanks to the designers' concern with chassis rigidity.

However, where the RX-7 ragtop really breaks new ground is with a development called the "wind blocker," a simple little panel that flips up behind the rear seats to baffle the breezes that commonly make convertible drives cold and uncomfortable. The design of the top, with a hard center panel, is also innovative, and the car's top-down appearance is simply a knockout.—T.S.