

Going back to basics



photos by STEVE FECHT/staff photographer

Bargain hunters, such as this new-car shopper at Bill Brown Ford in Livonia, opt for no-frills cars because they can do without all the little extras — especially the extra bucks in purchase price.

By Philip A. Sherman
staff writer

No frills cars still a hot option

"I want a new car. Stripped. Nothing on it. Stick and a heater. Skip the cloth seats and carpeting. Vinyl is my life. I want to flood the car to clean it. I don't drive lying down so it doesn't matter if the seats recline.

"I want cheap. Equity shamefully. I'm not embarrassed to say it. It's transportation, not a home. Paint? Why? In metro Detroit, home of metal-eating salt, it will hiss and bubble like Efferdent after one season anyway.

"Can such a car, sleek to some, 'economy-minded, entry-level transportation' to others, still be purchased without much ado?

"Absolutely. Despite the auto industry's preoccupation with cars that talk, tires that rival the grip of Velcro and stereo systems that outclass many home units, a sampling of area car dealers indicates they know their market and stockpile to please.

Sullivan said, adding he has between 30 and 40 orders to fill at any given time for the Brazilian-made car.

For \$5 more the Pontiac LeMans becomes available, said John Tournaud, sales manager of Shelton Pontiac Buick in Rochester. Tournaud said the new LeMans replaces Pontiac's T-1000 and also includes now-standard, formerly optional features such as front-wheel drive, carpeting and a cloth interior.



Everything you need — and nothing else — can be found in the spartan interior of this stripped-down Ford Escort.

"We can't keep them, in stock," Tournaud said.

FOR A FEW dollars more, specifically another \$4, you can put a little lacquer in your life and a cigar in the ashtray of an Omni American. Bill Steckel, sales manager of Chrysler Crestwood Dodge in Garden City, said the \$5,999 car "was supposed to be eliminated from the fleet but was brought back because it's a virtual sellout."

A standard package on the Omni includes a rear-window defroster, remote control exterior driver's mirror, time-delay windshield wipers, a rear-window wiper and tinted glass. Steckel said the rear wiper and tinted glass are part of the standards recently introduced, relatively speaking, to the package.

Everything in this class, it should be mentioned, comes with a stick shift. Some are four-speeds; some are five.

And none of these cars comes with air conditioning, a possible blessing in disguise. Booming along on the freeway in a four-cylinder, economy-hungry and flipping on the air, duplicates the situation Capt. Kirk runs into every week when the Killings are closing at warp speed and the Enterprise diethium crystals die.

CRYSTALS ASIDE, Mike Schriber, sales manager at Bill Brown Ford in Livonia, said Ford's new automatic shoulder-belt's part of the standard package on the Escort. Normally base-priced at

Despite the auto industry's preoccupation with cars that talk, tires that rival the grip of Velcro and stereo systems that outclass many home units, the stripped-down model is still a very popular option for many car buyers.

\$6,188, Schriber said a dealer-incentive plan nips \$500 off the sticker, dropping the Escort to \$5,688 until Dec. 2.

The successor to the Pinto, Escort has front-wheel drive, carpeting and cloth seats that used to be considered optional equipment, Schriber said. The Escort also includes semi-styled wheels, a cargo-area cover and a cigarette lighter.

It's also possible to lease a modest machine, unbeknownst to many who think leasing means loading a car. David Kolb, leasing manager of Pines Park Lincoln Mercury Merkur in Plymouth, said no dollars down and 36 monthly payments of \$189.40 will get you Tracer with, as he put it, "a key and a heater."

But it's more than that. The Tracer, Mercury's new entry into subcompacts, comes with a stereo, dual-power exterior mirrors, a five-speed transmission and a fuel door release, Kolb said. Going 46 months on the lease drops the monthly payment to \$166.03, he added.

At Anderson Honda in Bloomfield Hills, "the little things you notice" make the difference on the just-rede-signed Civic, said Dan Haven, sales manager. Haven said one of those little things is the windshield, which is sealed to the frame and cuts road noise.

For \$5,400 the new Civic has no radio but offers disc brakes, double-wishbone suspension (the same as in more expensive models, Haven said) and high-performance driving qualities.

OF COURSE, no-frills is a relative term. Stripped to some people means a stereo with only two speakers. But you'll notice a sun roof isn't standard on any of these cars.

And it's the only piece of equipment not standard on the Spur, the Rolls Royce entry-level car.

What is standard? It starts with air, climate control, stereo, power windows, seats, mirrors and door locks, a leather interior, automatic transmission and it's made by hand, said Joe Stewart, sales manager for Don Massey Cadillac in Plymouth, which also sells Roll Royce.

All for just \$110,000. Too much? Then try the Bentley, which sports the same equipment, is made by Rolls "but is not as prestigious as a Rolls," Stewart said. It's only \$95,000.

Some tips for that first job interview

Dear Joan:
I'm one of many college seniors hoping to have a job lined up by December ready and waiting for me when I graduate in May. Could you give me some basic simple tips I would forget even in the throes of a nervous collapse as I face my first job, important job that is, interview.

T.B., Northville

First of all, all job interviews are important since they give you experience in interviewing. Interview with every recruiter that comes on your campus just for the experience. Plus you will be more relaxed when you know the job is not the ultimate one you are looking for.

You are putting yourself under undue pressure with the feeling you have to have a job ready and waiting when you graduate in May. That will make interviewing difficult for you. Relax, give yourself a break. The right job will turn up. Take the interviewing routine as part of your education not an appearance before a firing squad.

Here are some basic tips. Follow these and your appearance will be relaxed.

Greet the interviewer by name as you enter the office. If necessary, check the pronunciation with the re-

ceptionist. Unless you are looking for a job in sales, shake hands only if the interviewer makes the first move. If you are looking for a sales position, assertiveness is part of the job, so you will be expected to offer your hand immediately.

Wait to sit down until a chair is offered and never sit down before your interviewer has been seated. Don't smoke, regardless of what your interviewer does.

Do your homework and know as much as possible about the company you want to work for so that you can ask an intelligent question or two. Be definite about the job you're after.

Dear Joan:
Am I required to send a thank-you note to the campus interviewers? I've been going through so many interviews lately I haven't been keeping up with the 24-hour rule.

B.W., Royal Oak

Send a thank-you note to an interviewer within 24 hours if you want to work for that company. If you're interviewing only for practice with some companies then don't feel obligated unless you feel you need to practice writing thank-you notes.

Example of simple and proper note: "I found our interview inform-



business etiquette
Joan K. Ditch

ative and encouraging. It was profitable for me to hear your comments on the plans for WS&S Sons. I will be an asset to your company and hope I am seriously considered as a candidate for the position we discussed. Your company's reputation for quality and the pride in association of everyone I met increased my enthusiasm to join the company, I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Dear Joan:
I hear so much about getting ahead in the '80s, how to be aggressive in office politics, how to know your enemies, what's right and what's wrong in office politics, that I'm downright confused. I have an MBA from Harvard, but I don't feel prepared to face some of the conflicts I hear take place in corporations today. Am I being naive about how business operates?

K.M., Birmingham

Don't be frightened by this quote Malcolm Forbes Jr. recently made to the Detroit Economic Club: "There is only one thing that will beat an MBA from Harvard, and that is nepotism."

It is true competition is rough, and the ways of getting ahead are not easy. That is motivation for many young people to start their own businesses, because they don't want to play political games within a large corporation, preferring to spend their energies on promoting their own product if they have a timely one.

You might be a candidate for entrepreneurship. Check over carefully your interests and ideas on what kind of work you want to be doing five years after graduation. The payoff for you might just be your own business.

On the other hand, if you have a relative who owns a business listed in Fortune 500, then go forth with MBA from Harvard in hand and without trepidation in your heart.

Joan K. Ditch of Rochester Hills is a sales and market consultant who lectures on business etiquette and has written a business, dress book. Address questions to her at 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

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