

Sticker prices span automotive spectrum

By Gerald Frawley
Staff writer

WHAT HAS four wheels and a glove compartment?

The most expensive and least expensive automobiles at the North American International Auto Show.

Comparisons end there. With more than 750 cars and trucks from 40 of the world's automotive manufacturers, one is going to expect a wide variance in prices.

Domestic car companies like Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Plymouth, Dodge, Ford, Jeep, Eagle, Lincoln Mercury, Oldsmobile, Pontiac and Saturn will all be showing off their wares.

Joining them will be the import and specialty dealers like Acura, Alfa Romeo, Audi, Avanti, Bertone,

BMW, Honda, Hyundai, Isuzu, Jaguar, Lamborghini, Lotus, Mazda, Mercedes-Benz, Mitsubishi, Nissan, Nissan/Infiniti, Pininfarina, Peugeot, Porsche, Range Rover, Rolls Royce, Saab-Scania of America, Sterling, Subaru, Suzuki, Toyota/Lexus, Volkswagen, Volvo and Yugo — not to mention the concept car companies.

So what's the most expensive car at the auto show?

THE ROLLS ROYCE Corniche III convertible, a two-door touring car, holds top honors in the price category at a whopping \$220,100.

The Corniche III, with body panels handcrafted and hand-fitted by the prestigious Mulliner Park Ward coach works in London, is being touted by the manufacturer as the most glamorous motor car Rolls Royce has ever built.

Once completed, the shell is

delivered to the main factory for the fitting of the powertrain and subframes. The unit is then sent back to Mulliner Park Ward for completion.

Each car takes nearly six months of meticulous crafting by leather, metal and cabinet specialists to complete. The fascia (we call them dashboards here) is made of burr walnut with crossbanding and boxwood inlay.

A center console containing a leather storage cabinet holds a cellular phone and an illuminated cassette and compact disc drawer.

Carpenter? Get out of town. Only the finest in lambswool rugs was deemed acceptable to cover the flooring.

According to Rolls Royce, four of the five convertibles completed each week are imported to the United States.

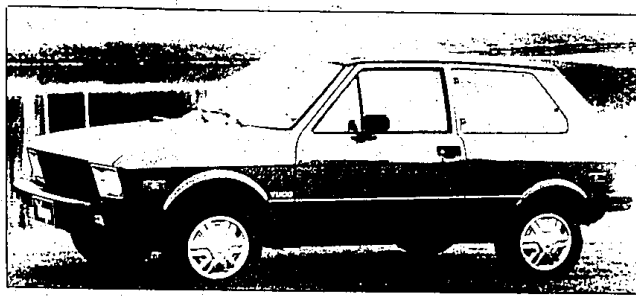
REFINEMENTS INCLUDE driver's-side airbags, a heated door mirror that adjusts angle automatically to the position of the memory seats, a new 10-speaker stereo entertainment system, including a compact disc player, electrically operated, heated dual area lumbar supports, upholstery of the finest English leather, anti-lock brakes, and, of course, powered rack and pinion steering.

Perhaps one of the most unique features on the Corniche III convertible, and other Rolls Royce models as well, is a computerized self-leveling suspension. Sensors in the suspension constantly monitor road conditions for changes. If the road surface becomes rough, the computer automatically adjusts, switching the suspension from soft to firm.

Howard Mosher, president and chief executive officer of Rolls Royce, claims the suspension provides armchair comfort on the highway and a firm ride on the corners.

"And, of course, the top is one touch, power operated. But it's not just power operated. One of the greatest complaints often cited about convertibles is that the tops are poorly fitted, resulting in whistling, drafts and water leaks.

Not so with the Corniche III. Engineers spend two weeks fitting the top to each car so that when the top is closed, it's closed. But even in the best climates, there are going to be days when the top will be closed. Realizing this, Rolls Royce has included a dual-



Shoppers may be able to put the new Yugo GV Plus on their Gold Cards. At less than \$5,000, it's the least expensive car at the North American International Auto Show. But shoppers may be surprised at some of the features they get for their money.

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level, automatic air conditioning system.

THE LEAST expensive cars at the auto show is the Yugo 1991 GV Plus, an import from Yugoslavia with a manufacturer's suggested list price of only \$4,825.

Or as Yugo puts it: "If schmoozing with blue bloods is not your cup of tea, the new Yugo will instantly communicate your more frugal side. However, you could finance the new Yugo GV Plus if you really wanted to. Then again, for around \$5,000, you could just throw it on your credit card."

After a period of company crisis, then gradual recovery, Yugo is looking forward to 1991 with anticipation, according to company president John Spiech.

Yugo is launching an all-out effort to get people to take the car seriously with 357 improvements over the older model, a 40,000-mile, four-year warranty with free maintenance for the first year or 12,000 miles.

Yugo is banking the current economic slowdown and the increasing importance of fuel economy will encourage motorists to take another look at its newly engineered products. The EPA fuel mileage for the Yugo GV Plus is 27 city/34 highway.

Although there is a significant price difference between the Corniche III and the GV Plus (about \$215,000), the lower priced import has more to offer than a glove box

and four wheels.

The front-wheel drive, four-passenger car sports a new 1.3-liter, four-cylinder engine capable of speeds near 100 mph. A new Bosch motronic multi-port fuel injection system, the same injection system found on a Porsche, provides a peppy 67 hp engine that "will allow you to live a little asphalt when the mood strikes."

The Yugo accelerates from zero to

60 mph in 12.4 seconds.

And while the car doesn't have a computerized, hydraulic suspension, it does have a four-wheel independent suspension with MacPherson struts.

The Yugo sports rack and pinion steering (unpowered) and Bendix dual circuit, power-assisted front brakes and rear drums operated by a specially engineered proportioning valve.

Show blooms over time

Continued from Page 2

GM realized this when it took a new Corvette to Europe, and managed to steal the Geneva show. The launch of the then-radical Ford aerodynamic styling started at Frankfurt, as did the unveiling of the startling BMW V-12 engine.

ONLY A few years ago, the Japanese manufacturers began coming to Europe in force, not to sell cars, but to establish a presence in their home markets, but because you had to go to Frankfurt to see and listen.

All of which was not lost on Detroit auto executives, which in a growing spirit of ecumenicalism, began regular attendance at the big international shows.

All this led to the decision to attempt just such a show atmosphere in Detroit, where it all began.

It was a risky effort when first proposed, since even on the U.S. national scene, Detroit was ranked third behind Los Angeles and Chicago. Foreign participation historically has been poor in Detroit, partly because of the assumption that Detroit is a poor place to sell foreign cars.

Today, the momentum is there in Detroit, if not the stature. The press attendance is at least equal to the big shows in Frankfurt and Tokyo, and the legions of executives, the feeling that this, indeed is the heart of the world auto business, lends the Detroit show credibility in the eyes of the world.



Handcrafted, prestigious, imported from England, the Rolls Royce Corniche III convertible, at a manufacturer's suggested retail price of \$220,100, will be the most expensive car at the North American International Auto Show. It's not for the penny pincher.

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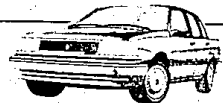
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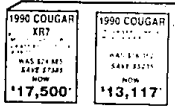
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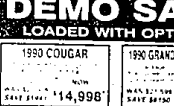
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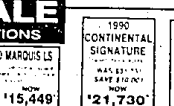
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