

Some of my best friends are mad inventors, although the most productive tend to be the type that work to improve the automobile as we know it, rather than eliminate it.

The energy crisis that now seems in the distant past seemed to change all that, and for a few brief moments some kind of radical new engine or alternative form of transportation seemed to be just around

The merits of the basic premise—inside, the race to produce a viable electric car has touched off a genuine flurry of innovative engineering effort, with much of it concentrated right here in the greater Detroit area. The numerous stumbling blocks—limited range, poor per-

This week, the consortium awarded \$18.5 million to Troy, Ind.-based Energy Conversion Devices, which has a new-technology battery that shows considerable promise.

All in all, the electric car may yet end up as the best thing to happen to the car business around here in years.

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