

DRIVER'S SEAT



Personal best.

• When I originally thought of doing this month's first annual "Ten Best" issue of *Car and Driver*, I warmed to the notion of me sitting here autocratically doling out the old hyperbole, ignoring any counsel or dissent from my staff, having the time of my life. Alas, democracy still flourishes here at *Car and Driver*, and egalitarian rot immediately began to erode my perfect vision of ten times ten best. Other people were allowed to express themselves. People like Ceppos, Griffin, Csere, Lindamood were given the ballot. I didn't even enjoy *primus inter pares* status anymore, I was just one vote. Damn. Well, making the best of my dashed fantasy, I will now come at it from another direction.

Best Status Car: This magazine has long maintained, and correctly so, that Japanese cars have succeeded by becoming the best little American cars money could buy. However, there is one little Japanese car that is too often overlooked when deliberations of this kind are taking place. That car would be any Subaru with four-wheel drive. Henry Ford I, Boss Kettering, and William Crapo Durant would have seen the wisdom of my words in a flash.

The Subaru is as American as baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, and Chevrolet. It is good old Yankee know-how, expressed in terms that are pure make-a-better-mousetrap free enterprise. It is just, in this case, that these terms are being expressed by the people at Fuji Heavy Industries. It is my good fortune to have in my garage one Mercedes-Benz station wagon and one four-wheel-drive Steyr-Daimler-Puch Haflinger. If I were forced to replace those two with a single vehicle capable of doing both jobs, it would have to be a four-wheel-drive Subaru station wagon.

Happily, if I actually did that, it would leave me with enough money to build myself a house in the Rockies or take my

wife around the world on the QF2, because Subaru don't cost very much money. What the hell, the estimable P.J. O'Rourke feels right at home in his 4wd Subaru wagon; my friend George Alexander, a judge no less, opts for a Subaru when commuting to and from the trout streams and grouse coverts; and I forget the names of countless thousands of straight people who drive them every day. It is the car of choice for all kinds of folks who have to drive up mountains or through snow, and there's an overlapping constituency that sings its praises just because it's inexpensive to operate and it hardly ever breaks. ("Warning, this vehicle breaks for nothing.") It is the ultimate expression of automotive status.

Best Comeback by a Fallen Idol: When it transpired that John Z. De Lorean was unable to manage the affairs of one of the world's smallest automobile companies, and nobody wanted the cars that company was building anyway, the people who concern themselves with such things thought he might be off the front pages for good. But no, in a public-relations coup of unprecedented proportions, Mr. De Lorean propelled himself back into the limelight with yet another of those innovative impulses that had so marked his career with General Motors. Hardly pausing for breath, the silver-haired philosopher-prince turned his back on the ethical-sports-car business and—according to certain departments of the United States government—set out to buy his way into the infinitely more exciting importing field. How like the newspaper and television people to fall into his trap and turn a simple change in career path into the news story of the year. Mr. De Lorean has proved to his detractors that his main goal in life is not just the betterment of the human condition, nor the construction of colossal false-front empires in the style of Mr. Cecil B. De Mille. No, Mr. De Lorean, a simple man from simple beginnings, only wanted to get his name before the public. In this he has succeeded, probably beyond his own wildest dreams. If his ethical-sports-car business and his importing business have gone down the sewer, we can blame the British and American governments for once again meddling with the honest, straightforward workings of the free-enterprise system.

Best Dinner: The best meals I have eaten in the United States have come from my own kitchen. Mrs. Davis spent her time wisely during her eighteen years in France, Switzerland, and Italy,

and came home to the States with a sure hand in the culinary arts. However, *haute cuisine* is plenty *haute* on the continent of Europe, and the best meal—actually, the *two* best meals—I've eaten in the past twelve months have been served at the Alte Post in Stuttgart, home of both Porsche and Daimler-Benz. Mr. and Mrs. Siegfried Riegger are young, charming, and handsome, and their restaurant is a treasure. They could serve me anything from their venturesome menu and I'd be delighted, but I would challenge fire, flood, and the forward wall of the Dallas Cowboys for one order of their goose-liver pâté, the finest I have ever tasted. It is as smooth and creamy as custard, and when it warms on your tongue there's an aromatic explosion that must surely rival the effect of the various controlled substances. The Alte Post's cuisine is probably classical German, not the sausages and potatoes of the German stereotype, but subtle, refined continental dishes like those worked up for the palates of pre-Bismarck Germany's noble families. Game, veal, chicken, lovely fresh fruits and vegetables, and for dessert—second only to the incomparable goose liver—nonrepresentational paintings done in homemade fresh-fruit sherbets, every plate different, every one a pale swirl of favorite flavors. If you intend to take European delivery of a Porsche or a Mercedes, or if you're just planning a business or vacation trip, Alte Post is in downtown Stuttgart with the Rieggers' Porsche parked right out front, closed on Sunday, and there's no goose liver on Monday, because it won't keep over the Sabbath. Trust me on this one.

Best News: Saving the best for last, it is my pleasure to report that Brock Yates rejoins us here at *Car and Driver* next month. He will take his place on the masthead with Patrick Bedard, as an editor at large, and will contribute features, road tests, and columns. Yates and I go back a long way, we've shared all kinds of colorful and irresponsible adventures, and it stood to reason that when we had a falling-out—as we did four years ago—it'd be a big one. We have spent the intervening time exchanging barbed comments, but our hearts weren't in it. I missed him as a comrade, and I missed him as a regular member of the *Car and Driver* family. At this year's Detroit Grand Prix we drank and talked together, agreed to agree again, and started the wheels turning toward the renewal of what was mutually the most productive and pleasurable association of our professional lives. Brock Yates is one of the great artifacts of this business, and I couldn't stand reading his stuff in other magazines. Nothing could have made me happier than sitting down to write these lines for you, for him, and for myself.

—David E. Davis, Jr.