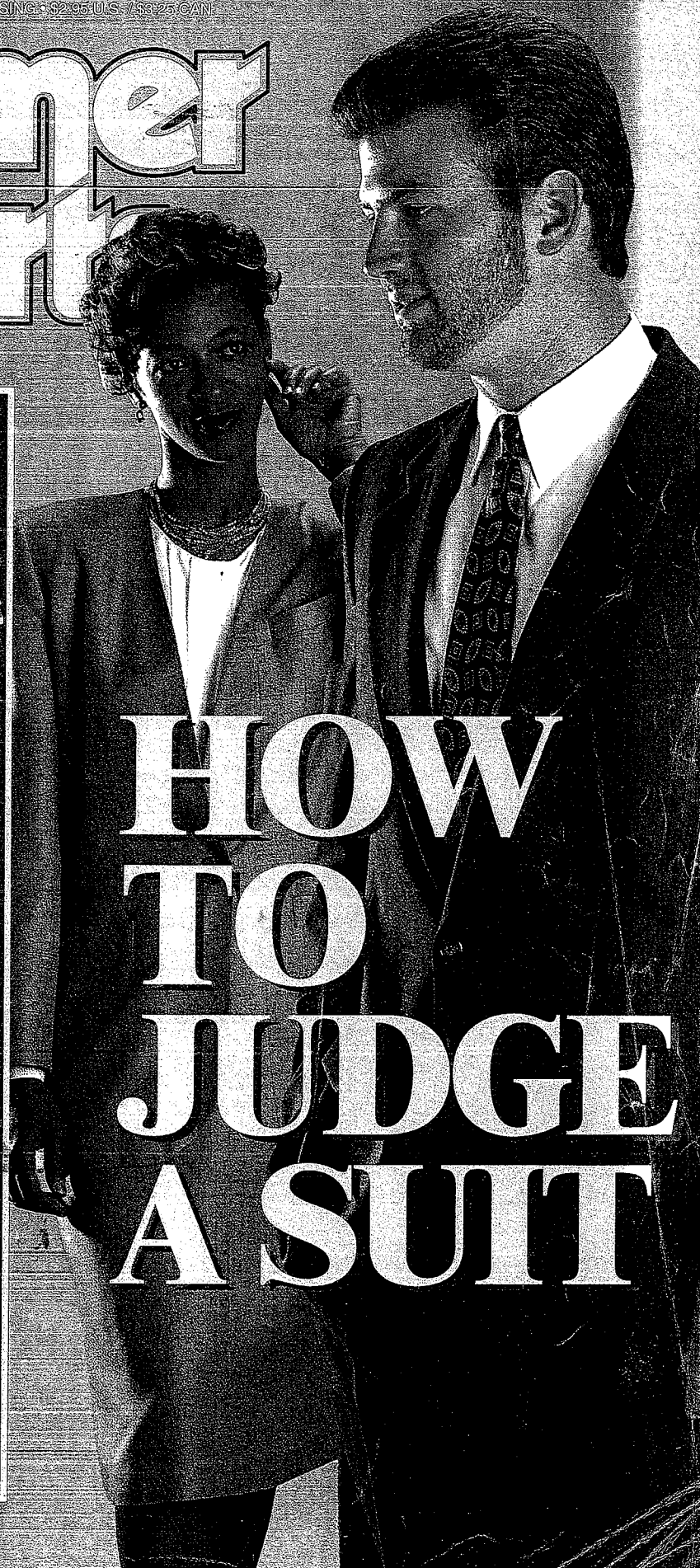
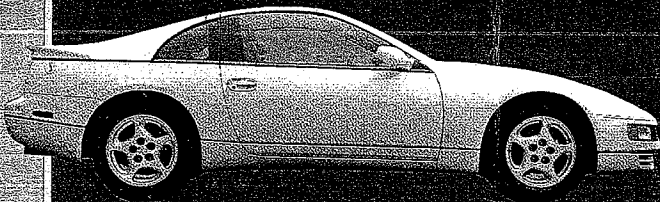


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Consumer Reports



BRAND-NAME RATINGS



ROAD TEST:

- Chevrolet Corvette**
- Mazda RX-7**
- Nissan 300ZX Turbo**
- Subaru SVX**

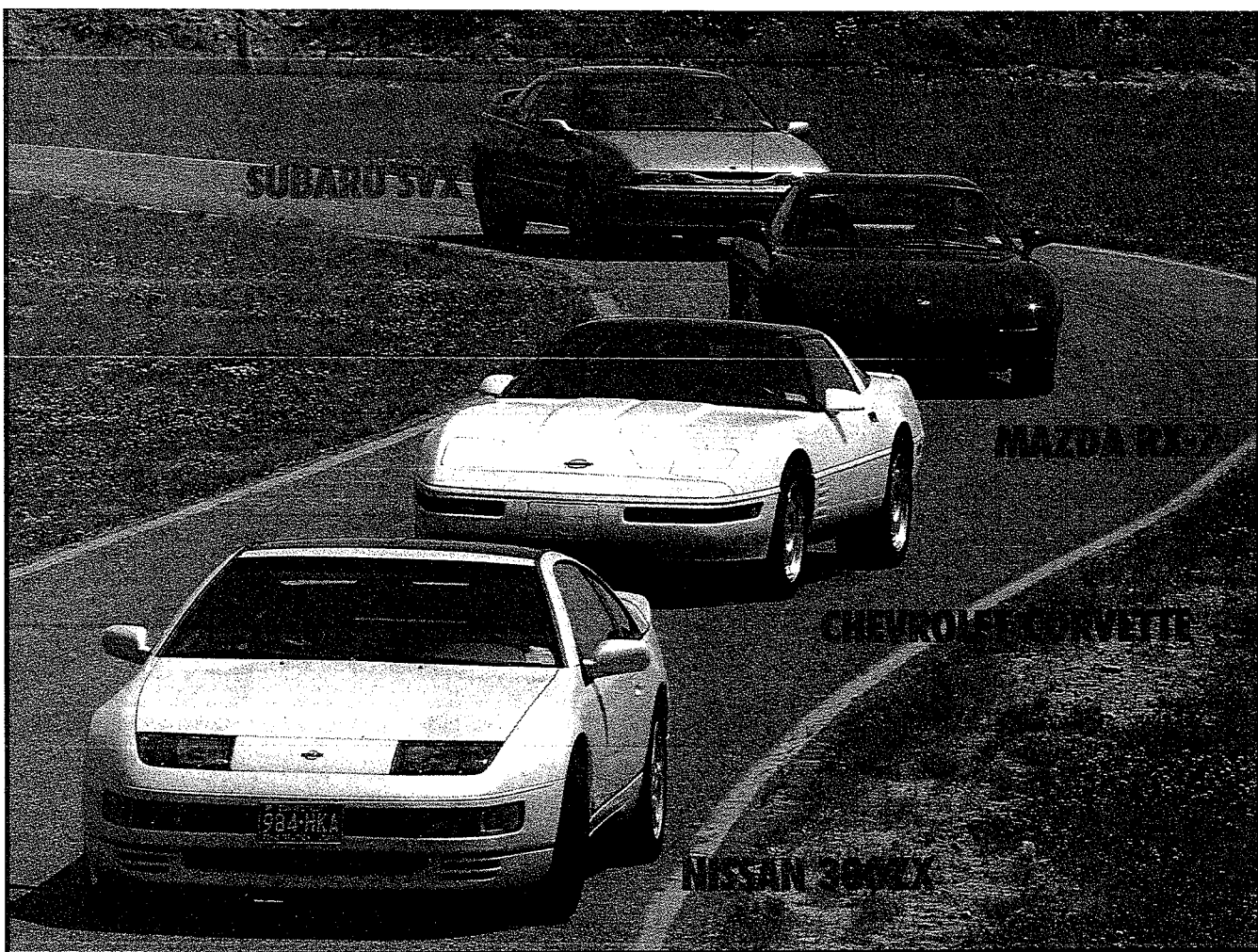
DENTAL SECTION

- Toothpastes**
- Mouthwashes**
- Electric toothbrushes**
- Oral irrigators**

HOW TO JUDGE A SUIT

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF
CONSUMERS UNION OF U.S., INC.,
PAGE 557





ROAD TEST

Type:
Sports cars

Prices:
\$28,000 to \$38,000

Models tested:
Nissan 300ZX Turbo, Chevrolet Corvette,
Mazda RX-7, Subaru SVX

Best alternatives:
Dodge Stealth, Mitsubishi 3000GT

Ask a dozen car buffs to define a sports car and you'll probably get a dozen different answers based on performance, styling, seating, even advertising. But we doubt that we'll get any disagreement when we call the *Nissan 300ZX Turbo*, *Chevrolet Corvette*, and *Mazda RX-7* sports cars.

Classifying the *Subaru SVX* is tougher. It's included here because Subaru advertises it as a sports car, but we think of it as a sporty coupe. With its automatic transmission, quiet interior, and relatively cushioned ride, the driving experience may be a bit too tame for the car to earn a "sports car" designation. We generally concentrate on more practical (and more reasonably priced) transport—sedans, minivans, station wagons. But we have good reason for touching base with less practical cars from time to time. It's those models that generally give us our first glimpse of technological innovations, and they often provide new performance benchmarks against which to measure standard passenger cars.

This month's models, for instance, allowed us a critical look at a

sophisticated computer-controlled traction system in the *Corvette* and sequential turbochargers in the *Mazda RX-7*—features that may eventually filter down to more reasonably priced cars. This group also set new benchmarks in acceleration, braking, and handling—important factors even in a family sedan.

The *Corvette* charged from 0 to 60 mph in 5.5 seconds, handily breaking the 6.3-second record the *Dodge Stealth R/T Turbo* set this year. (A peppy family sedan might take 9 or 10 seconds.)

The *RX-7* gave us a new braking record—60 mph to 0 in 119 feet. That was three feet shorter than the second-place *Dodge Stealth's* best, and a car length less than the 134 feet that the *Toyota Camry V6*, a good sedan, required.

The *RX-7* also sped through our avoidance-maneuver course at 60.5 mph, beating by 1 mph our previous record holder, a 1991 *Toyota MR2*. The *Ford Taurus* and *Toyota Camry*, two very competent sedans, could do no better than about 52 mph in that test.

The *Nissan 300ZX* was redesigned two years ago. We tested the top-line *Turbo* version, which has a removable T-bar roof. With leather upholstery and special paint, it listed for \$38,335. A 2+2 version with tiny rear seats and a convertible model are also available.

Chevrolet introduced the plastic-bodied *Corvette* 39 years ago, and the model has changed extensively over the decades. This past July, the one-millionth *Corvette* rolled off the line. Our *LT1* version, with six-speed manual transmission and other options, listed for \$38,668. An even more powerful *ZR1* version lists for about \$65,000.

The *Mazda RX-7* has a restyled body but retains its unique rotary engine. As equipped, our car listed for \$34,720. (A \$1000 R-1 package, with stiffer suspension, upgraded tires, oil coolers, and cloth upholstery, would make the *RX-7* more a racer than a road car.)

The *Subaru SVX* comes from a company better known for economy cars. The *SVX* seats four and comes only with an automatic transmission. As equipped, ours listed for \$30,204.

The *SVX* has full-time all-wheel drive; the *300ZX*, *Corvette*, and *RX-7* have rear-wheel drive. All these cars come with a driver's-side air bag and antilock brakes. All require Premium fuel.

Photos by Lawrence Frank



SUBARU SVX

As a sporty coupe, the SVX is an able performer. As a sports car, it isn't in the same league with the other three models in this group.

Performance

The SVX's horizontally opposed (flat) 3.3-liter Six starts easily and runs smoothly. The car reaches 60 mph in 8.8 seconds—ample acceleration for normal driving, but well off the pace of the other cars. Expect to average about 19 mpg.

The SVX's four-speed automatic transmission shifts smoothly.

Normal handling feels very stable. While all-wheel drive provides excellent traction, the SVX lacks the precise handling of the 300ZX and RX-7. When negotiating our avoidance-maneuver course, the body rolled noticeably. Steering effort is a bit light. The antilock brakes do an excellent job.

Comfort and convenience

The SVX provides the most comfortable ride in the group—smooth on good roads, just a bit stiff and busy on bumpy ones. Inside, it's as quiet as a good family sedan.

Thanks to the tilting and telescoping steering column and optional eight-way power driver's seat, all but the tallest people should find a comfortable driving position.

We liked the bucket seats but would have welcomed a shade more side support. The optional leather upholstery is nonperforated.

The SVX alone in this group has a rear seat, but it's none too roomy. Even average-sized adults won't want to spend much time back there.

Climbing in and out is relatively easy most of the time, but the motorized shoulder belt can ambush someone carrying packages.

A sophisticated automatic climate-control system quickly furnishes plenty of warmed or cooled air.

Fresh air from the dash vents cannot be warmed, though, and no ducts lead to the rear seats. The defogging and defrosting work well, as do the heated outside mirrors.

The instruments are easy to see and read and, aside from the two tiny horn buttons on the spokes of the steering wheel, the controls are generally well designed.

We consider the automatic-up feature on the driver's power window hazardous. Just a quick jab at the button rapidly closes the window. A carelessly placed finger risks a serious pinch, and a carelessly placed child's or pet's head risks even nastier results.

The SVX has by far the roomiest trunk in the group, and folding down the rear seatback expands it even further. We were able to load four Pullman cases and a weekend bag, or a folded wheelchair, with ease. You can stash small valuables in the well around the limited-service spare.

Subaru provides a three-year or 36,000-mile basic warranty, with five

years or 60,000 miles of coverage on the powertrain. Rust-through protection lasts for five years, without a mileage limit. Subaru also provides a comprehensive roadside-assistance program.

Safety and reliability

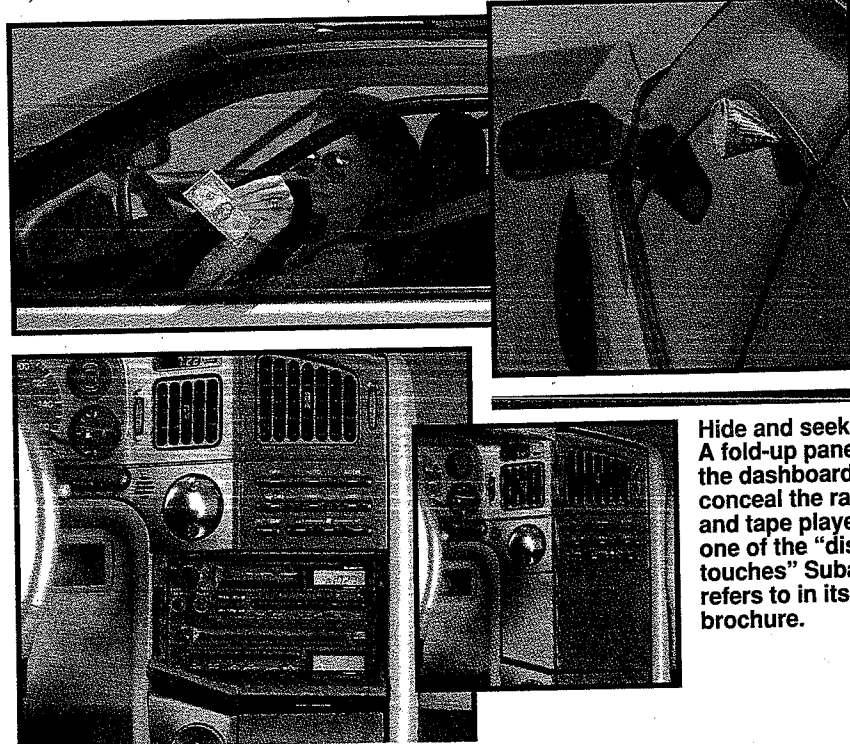
Besides a driver's-side air bag, the SVX has motorized front shoulder belts. Once those belts slide into place, it's all too easy to forget to buckle the manual lap belts. The three-point belts in the rear are difficult to buckle around an adult. You'll need to buy a locking clip to secure a child safety seat.

The SVX survived our bumper basher unscathed.

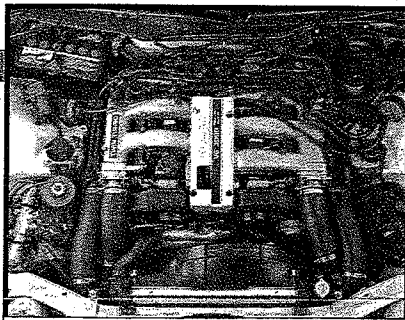
We have insufficient repair data on the SVX to predict its reliability, but other Subaru models have generally fared well.

Our car came down with seven sample defects, including a few flaws in the finish (which we counted as one defect). The engine was overfilled with oil. The tires were overinflated (except for the spare, which was underinflated). The wheels were out of balance, and the front end was misaligned.

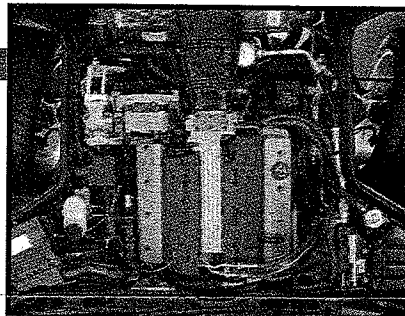
Window of inopportunity
The immovable portion of the futuristic side window makes paying tolls awkward. The Auto-up feature can crush an aluminum can—or a carelessly placed finger.



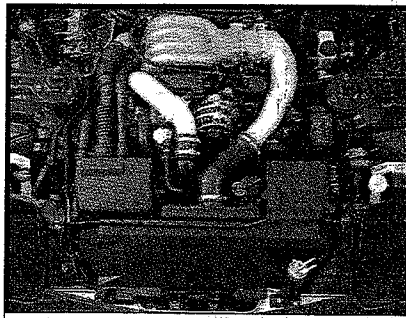
Hide and seek
A fold-up panel on the dashboard can conceal the radio and tape player—one of the "discreet touches" Subaru refers to in its brochure.



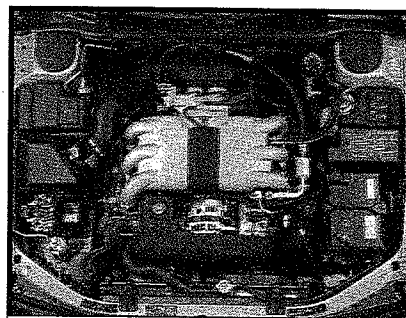
NISSAN 300ZX



CHEVROLET CORVETTE



MAZDA RX-7



SUBARU SVX

Different strokes. Each of these cars has a different engine type. Shown here are the Nissan's 3.0-liter V6, the Corvette's massive, 5.7-liter V8, the Mazda's 1.3-liter Wankel rotary engine, and the Subaru's horizontally opposed 3.3-liter Flat 6. Turbochargers, fuel injectors, and the life-support system of hoses and manifolds make life hard for owners daring enough to service these cars themselves.

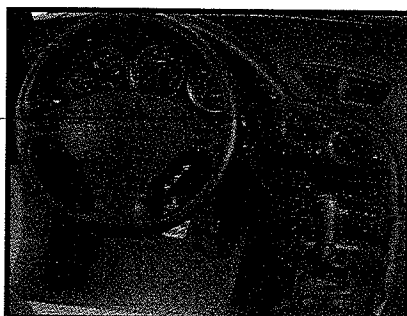
Information, please. The steering wheel frames the major gauges nicely in all four cars. The 300ZX clusters the climate-control, wiper, and headlight switches on two instrument pods that project from the dashboard. The Corvette cocoons its driver with a high armrest that sweeps upward into a large cowl surrounding the instruments. Some drivers may find the RX-7's chrome-rimmed gauges distracting. When you use the SVX's wiper lever, it's obscured by the steering wheel.



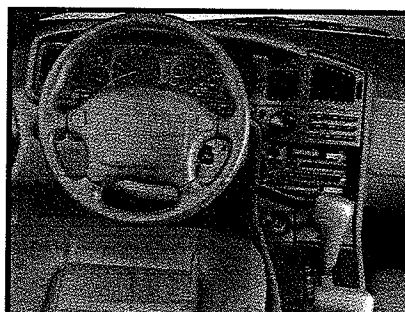
NISSAN 300ZX



CHEVROLET CORVETTE



MAZDA RX-7



SUBARU SVX

RECOMMENDATIONS

They're impractical, they're expensive, and they gulp fuel. But they're a thrill to drive. If you must have a lusty, low-slung two-seater with whiplash acceleration, the *Nissan 300ZX*, the *Chevrolet Corvette*, or the *Mazda RX-7* should satisfy the craving.

We rated the *Nissan 300ZX Turbo* first in this group not because it's the fastest (the *Corvette* is faster) or stops shortest (the *RX-7* does that) or has the quietest interior (the *SVX* has that honor), but because it offers the best balance of performance, handling, and comfort. Add to that the expectation of at least average reliability.

The *Chevrolet Corvette* is a hybrid of 1960s muscle car and state-of-the-art technology. The huge V8 provides brutal acceleration. The bulky body, though prone to old-fashioned flexing on rough roads, nevertheless conceals up-to-the-minute computer-controlled manual gear selection, traction and ride control, and the latest in antilock braking technology. Unfortunately, poor reliability is a *Corvette* hallmark.

If you're looking for a pure, all-out performance package that makes few concessions to comfort, the 1993 *Mazda RX-7* is the model of choice. It's styled to resemble the sports cars of the '50s and '60s—part *Jaguar*, part *Cobra*, part *Ferrari*. Add to that a super-stiff ride and a stark interior and you have a car that captures the mythic sports-car image, warts and all. Whether the *RX-7*'s you-are-there road feel is a vice or a virtue depends on your tolerance for corporal punishment. Our tall drivers said there just wasn't room enough for them. Reliability should be average, if the new *RX-7* is like previous models.

Another sports car to consider in this price class is the *Dodge Stealth/Mitsubishi 3000GT*, which we reported on in April 1992. In our tests, the *Stealth R/T Turbo* scored right up there with the *300ZX* and *Corvette*. It accelerated to 60 mph in 6.3 seconds, and it covered the quarter-mile in 14.9 seconds, reaching 96 mph—practically as fast as the *300ZX*'s and *RX-7*'s times. It also excelled in handling and braking. The *Stealth* and *3000GT* offer all-wheel drive for stability in all kinds of weather, plus a rudimentary rear seat for small children. Their reliability should be average.

But you can get a competent and quick little two-seater for a lot less than the \$30,000-plus these cars cost. Consider the *Mazda MX-5 Miata* or the *Toyota MR2*, two sprightly sports cars that sell in the \$15,000-to-\$20,000 range. The *Miata* has been exceptionally reliable. The *MR2*'s record dropped to average last year.

The *Subaru SVX* is a competent sporty coupe, though it lacks the sports cars' razor edge of performance. It offers the stability of all-wheel drive and the comfort and quietness of a competent sedan, along with a high level of technical sophistication. We expect it to be reliable. A couple of competent and far less expensive alternatives to the *SVX* are the *Honda Prelude* and *Toyota Celica*. Both should be reliable. ■

RATINGS

Nissan

Chevrolet

Mazda

Subaru

Excellent

Very Good

Good

Fair

Poor

	Nissan	Chevrolet	Mazda	Subaru
Starting/running.....	●	●	●	●
Acceleration.....	●	●	●	●
Transmission.....	●	●	●	●
Economy.....	●	●	●	●
Routine handling.....	●	●	●	●
Emergency handling.....	●	●	●	●
Dry braking.....	●	●	●	●
Ride, normal load.....	●	●	●	●
Noise.....	○	○	○	○
Driving position.....	○	○	○	○
Front seating.....	●	●	●	●
Rear seating.....	○	○	○	○
Front access.....	○	○	○	○
Climate system.....	○	○	○	○
Controls.....	○	○	○	○
Displays.....	○	○	○	○
Trunk.....	○	○	○	○
Bumpers.....	○	○	○	○
Predicted reliability.....	○	○	○	New

NISSAN 300ZX

Tested car. Two-door Turbo hatchback, \$36,610 list. Standard equipment includes 3.0-liter DOHC 24-valve twin-turbo V6, five-speed manual transmission, driver's air bag, automatic air-conditioning, antilock brakes, four-wheel steering, electronically adjustable suspension, limited slip differential, power windows, power locks, dual heated power mirrors, power driver's seat, power antenna, T-bar roof, cruise control, rear-window defroster/wiper/washer, fog lights, alloy wheels, and stereo cassette sound system. Major options in our car: leather upholstery, and pearlescent paint. List price, as equipped, \$38,335, including destination charge. **Other styles.** Two-door hatchback, \$29,705; 2+2, \$33,090; 1993 convertible, \$35,995.

CHEVROLET CORVETTE

Tested car. Two-door hatchback, \$33,635 list. Standard equipment includes 5.7-liter OHV LT1 V8, overdrive automatic transmission, driver's air bag, air-conditioning, antilock brakes, Acceleration Slip Regulation, limited slip differential, power windows, power locks, dual heated power mirrors, power antenna, removable roof panel, cruise control, tilt steering column, rear-window defroster, fog lights, security system, alloy wheels, and stereo cassette radio. Major options in our car: six-speed manual transmission, Preferred Equipment Group #1 (includes electronic air-conditioning, power driver's seat, upgraded stereo cassette sound system), electronically adjustable suspension, power passenger's seat, leather upholstery, and transparent roof panel. List price, as equipped, \$38,668, including destination charge. **Other styles.** Two-door convertible, \$40,145; Two-door coupe ZR1, \$65,013.

MAZDA RX-7

Tested car. Two-door hatchback, \$31,300 list. Standard equipment includes 1.3-liter twin-turbo rotary, five-speed manual transmission, driver's air bag, air-conditioning, antilock brakes, limited slip differential, power windows, power locks, dual power mirrors, power antenna, cruise control, rear-window defroster, security system, alloy wheels, and stereo cassette radio. Major option in our car: Touring Package (includes leather upholstery, upgraded stereo cassette, CD player, power sunroof, fog lights, special paint, and rear wiper/washer). List price, as equipped, \$34,720, including destination charge. **Other styles.** None.

SUBARU SVX

Tested car. Two-door LS sedan, \$26,250 list. Standard equipment includes 3.3-liter DOHC 24-valve Flat 6, all-wheel drive, overdrive automatic transmission, driver's air bag, automatic air-conditioning, antilock brakes, limited slip differential, power windows, power locks, dual power mirrors, power antenna, cruise control, tilt/telescoping steering column, rear-window defroster/wiper/washer, fog lights, alloy wheels, remote locking/security system, and stereo cassette sound system. Major options in our car: Touring Package (includes leather upholstery, power driver's seat, power sunroof, electronic power steering, premium sound system, CD player, and dual heated mirrors), and rear spoiler. List price, as equipped, \$30,204, including dealer preparation and destination charges. **Other styles.** None.

Nissan Chevrolet Mazda Subaru

Dimensions [1]

Wheelbase, in.....	97	96	96	103
Overall length, in.....	170	179	169	182
Width, in.....	71	71	69	70
Max. rated load, lb.....	390	399	366	685
Road clearance, in.....	4.0	4.5	3.8	4.5
Front shoulder room, in.....	57.0	53.5	52.0	56.0
Max. front leg room, in.....	42.0	42.5	42.0	43.0
Front head room, in.....	3.0	3.5	1.0	2.5
Rear shoulder room, in.....	—	—	—	54.5
Rear fore-and-aft seating room, in.....	—	—	—	25.0
Rear head room, in.....	—	—	—	0.0
Door top to ground, in.....	44.5	44.0	43.0	46.5
Luggage capacity.....	3+2	1+1	1+0	4+1
Turning circle, ft.....	39	43	37	39
Steering factor.....	0.59(P)	0.65(P)	0.68(P)	0.76(P)

Weight and tires

Curb weight, lb. [2].....	3565	3380	2895	3610
Percent weight, front/rear.....	55/45	52/48	49/51	59/41
Front tire size.....	225/50 R16	275/40 R17	225/50 R16	225/50 R16
Rear tire size.....	245/45 R16	275/40 R17	225/50 R16	225/50 R16

Engine and gearing

Displacement (liters)/configuration.....	3.0/V6	5.7/V8	1.3/2	3.3/6
Net horsepower.....	300	300	255	230
Transmission/speeds.....	Man/5	Man/6	Man/5	Auto/4
Overall ratio, high gear.....	2.77	1.73	2.95	2.46
Engine revs. per mile [3].....	2385	1380	2540	2120

Acceleration [4]

0-30 mph, sec.....	2.5	2.3	2.6	3.3
0-60 mph, sec.....	6.1	5.5	6.0	8.8
0-end of 1/4 mi., sec.....	14.6	14.1	14.5	16.7
Mph, end of 1/4 mi.....	98	103	100	85
Passing: 45-65 mph, sec.....	3.9	3.4	3.9	5.7

Fuel economy [5]

EPA estimates, city/highway, mpg.....	18/24	17/25	17/25	17/25
CU's 150-mile trip, mpg.....	24	20	21	23
City driving, mpg.....	15	11	12	13
Expressway driving, mpg.....	31	32	29	32
Fuel refill capacity, gal.....	19.0	20.0	20.1	18.5
Cruising range, mi.....	435	360	400	390
Fuel used in 15,000 mi., gal.....	700	880	810	775

Braking from 60 mph [6]

No wheels locked, ft.....	135	126	119	134
Pedal effort, initial 1/2-G stop, lb.....	20	25	20	30
Pedal effort, 10th successive stop, lb.....	25	25	20	35

[1] Dimensions are in inches, except as noted. External dimensions are as furnished by manufacturer; others are as measured by CU. Road clearance is distance from level road surface to lowest part of car likely to strike road. Head room is measured between car's headliner and head of a 5-foot-9-inch CU tester. Luggage capacity is for two-suiters + weekend cases. Steering factor is number of turns of steering wheel needed for turn of 30-foot radius. P = power steering.

[2] Curb weight, to nearest five pounds, includes fuel, oil, and coolant.

[3] "Engine revolutions per mile" is same as engine speed at 60 mph. Other factors being equal, a higher number means better acceleration; a lower number, better fuel economy.

[4] Acceleration runs, except for passing test, are from standstill with engine idling at start. All runs are with gears shifted to best advantage.

[5] Except for EPA estimates, all mpg figures are as measured by CU and are rounded to nearest mpg. Cruising range is computed by multiplying fuel mileage on 150-mile trip by fuel-refill capacity, rounding to nearest five miles, and subtracting 30. Fuel used for 15,000 miles is calculated from equal portions of city driving, expressway driving, and the 150-mile trip, and is rounded to nearest five gallons.

[6] Minimum-distance controlled stops are to the nearest foot within a 12-foot lane. Distance applies only to CU test conditions, but relative ranking should remain consistent under most conditions. Fade test includes 10 moderate stops at 1/8-mile intervals. Difference in pedal effort between first and 10th stops indicates amount of fade; maximum acceptable effort, 150 pounds.