

TESTS: BMW 535i & 524td, CHEVROLET NOVA, VW CABRIOLET
Special Section: 1986 cars for the enthusiast

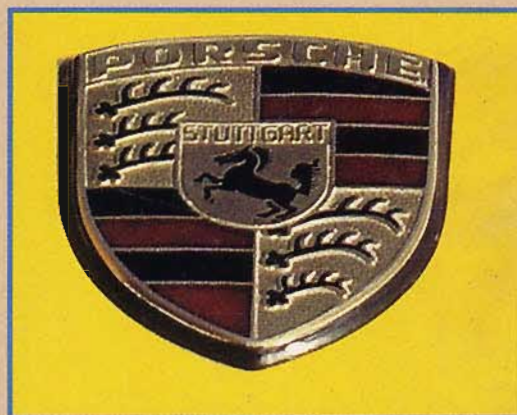
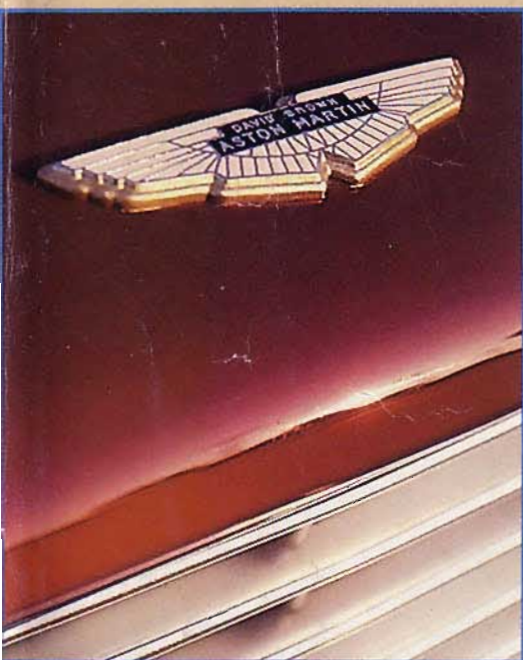
ROAD & TRACK

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Shopper's guide to **USED EXOTICS**
Dreaming for less than \$20,000



*Aston Martin, Corvette, Ferrari, Jaguar,
Maserati, Mercedes-Benz, Porsche*





AFFORDABLE EXOTICS

Seven super cars for under \$20,000

BY PETER BOHR

THIS IS THE third year that we've presented *Road & Track's* choices of the best used cars for enthusiasts. But in a break with the past, this time we're making no pretense about our selections being sensible or practical.

This year we selected used enthusiast cars in the \$10,000 to \$20,000 range. For that kind of money, there are plenty of nice, sensible brand-new cars. So if we're only considering used cars, we reasoned, why not let our hearts rule?

Why not indeed! To hell with practicality; we're talking dream cars. Handcrafted Aston Martins, genuine 12-cylinder Ferraris and stunning Maserati Ghiblis are all available for the prices of new Nissan Z-cars, Toyota Supras, or for that matter, Chrysler K-car convertibles or Volvo station wagons.

Selecting the best

AS IN past years, we began the selection process with a wide-ranging list of candidates. This year the list contained about 30 cars, from the venerable MG TC to the modern Porsche 928.

To make the initial list, each car had to fit several requirements. First, because the subject is used cars, we limited the contenders to those built during the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies. Second, we only wanted cars that had been officially sold by their manufacturers in this country (which ruled out something like the Fiat Dino) and cars that aren't nearly impossible to find (which ruled out something like the Monteverdi). Third, of course, we only wanted cars that appeal to driving enthusiasts. And, fourth, there was the matter of prices; the car had to be available in the used-car market for prices between \$10,000 and \$20,000. True "concours-quality" examples of some of the cars on our list sometimes sell for more than \$20,000. Nevertheless, the cars that became our "seven best" are ones you can reasonably expect to find in good-to-excellent condition within our price range.

Because the list of candidates was con-

siderably smaller this year, we decided to limit our favorites to seven cars instead of the usual ten. From the initial roster, each staff member picked his or her seven favorites by private ballot. After the votes were tallied, there was a surprising consensus on most of our final choices. The Porsche Speedster was among them, but as I explain in the profile of the Porsche 911, it was disqualified because we later discovered that decent examples are too hard to find for less than \$20,000.

Making the grade

AS IS customary, we gave each of our choices a report card. To arrive at the grades, we compared each car to our other choices, not to some mythical, ideal vehicle. The letters denote the following: A = Excellent; B = Pretty Good; C = So-So; D = Lousy; F = Unacceptable.

This year we omitted a grade for fuel economy because our "seven best" are all terrible gas gluttons. But we do give fuel economy figures in the specification and performance-data tables. In the tables you'll also find parts and labor prices for a typical engine rebuild. These will serve as a rough guide to the general maintenance costs of a car.

Finally, you'll note in the tables that

we've published *Used Car Classic* features on several of this year's "seven best." We've recently compiled and updated all the *Used Car Classic* articles ever published in *R&T*. Appropriately, the book is entitled *Road & Track's Used Car Classics* and is available for \$10.95 (add your state's sales tax) plus \$3.00 for postage and handling from *Road & Track*, PO Box 1126, Redlands, Calif. 92373.



1958-1970 Aston Martin DB4, DB5 & DB6

LET'S GET one thing straight about the DB series of Aston Martins right away: Machine guns that pop out of the front turn signal lenses, pivoting taillights that release a stream of slippery oil and passenger ejection seats were not usual factory options.

No, these goodies were specially reserved for James Bond's DB5. Before the movie *Goldfinger*, most Americans had never heard of Aston Martin. Indeed, many still haven't. Not long ago I had the pleasure of driving one of Aston's current models, a \$150,000 Volante. Admiring the car, a New York City parking lot attendant told me that his father used to have an "Austin Martin," only it was smaller and had a 4-cylinder engine.

Oh, well, it's not surprising that an American wouldn't know an Aston Martin from an Austin-Healey. After all, you're just not likely to see one at the local shopping mall, which is part of the charm of owning an Aston Martin. General Motors puts out as many cars in a day as As-



PHOTOS BY JOHN LAMM

ton Martin has built in 72 years. Of the models we're discussing here, less than 4000 were built, including 1119 DB4s, 1150 DB5s and 1575 DB6s.

In Great Britain, however, Aston Martin Lagonda Ltd is a revered institution like Wimbledon, Big Ben and warm beer. In the same spirit that Italians regard Ferrari today, the Brits remember when Aston Martin carried the Union Jack to glory in 1959 by winning the World Sports Car Championship. Peter Sprague, an American who rescued the company from bankruptcy in 1975, tells how people stopped on the sidewalks and actually applauded when a prototype Lagonda made its first appearance on the streets of London in 1976. England may have lost its empire, but it wasn't going to lose Aston Martin.

In fact, England nearly lost Aston Martin several times over the decades, as the company's financial position went up and down. In addition to its problems in the mid-Seventies, the company fell bankrupt in the mid-Twenties and mid-Forties as well, each time to be saved by a new owner. Perhaps the most renowned was Sir David Brown, a wealthy industrialist who owned the company from 1947 to 1972. In R&T's 1964 test of the DB5 (the DB standing for David Brown, of course) it was mentioned that Aston Martin represented a mere 3 percent of Brown's gross

receipts from his business empire and that the company was "nothing much more than a labor of love." One of Sir David's buddies is reputed to have asked to buy a car at cost. Brown readily agreed, because that meant a price substantially over list.

All this background isn't merely corporate trivia. It's essential to understanding the nature of the cars. As with Enzo Ferrari, David Brown's passion for racing was reflected in his road cars. The DB4, DB5 and DB6 are high-velocity vehicles of the first order. A DB4 can zip from 0 to 100 mph and stop to a standstill (thanks to 4-wheel Dunlop disc brakes) all in just 27 seconds, a statistic unmatched by any pro-

duction car until the coming of the Cobra.

And like most race cars, these Astons give the impression of being a man's machine: heavy, powerful, visceral. "A sensitive woman driver should feel rejected," we said in our 1966 test of the DB6. This, despite the fact that the DB6 had such luxury-car amenities as air conditioning and electric window lifts. The late DB4s, all the DB5s and even DB6s had the option of an automatic transmission.

The dohc 6-cylinder engine used in the cars is a direct descendant of the engine that ran in Le Mans in 1957. On the outside it looks like a Jaguar 6 with its SU carburetors and polished-aluminum cam →

1958-1970 ASTON MARTIN DB4, DB5 & DB6

Specifications.....	Aston Martin DB5
Curb weight, lb.....	3450
Engine type.....	dohc inline-6
Displacement, cc.....	3995
Transmission.....	5-sp
Suspension, front/rear.....	ind/live
Steering type.....	rack & pinion
Performance data from contemporary tests:	
0-60 mph, sec.....	8.6
Stopping distance from 80 mph, ft.....	NA
Standing 1/4 mi, sec @ mph.....	16.2 @ 90.0
Fuel economy, mpg.....	16.5
Road test date.....	10-64
Used Car Classic date.....	NA

Typical asking prices:	
1958-1960 DB4, DB5, DB6.....	\$9000-\$18,000
Typical engine-rebuild price:	
Parts.....	\$4500
Labor, @ \$65 an hour.....	\$2500
Total.....	\$7000
Report card:	
Reliability.....	C
Quality.....	A
Performance (engine/gearbox/steering/brakes).....	B
Handling.....	B
Ride and comfort.....	B
Fun to drive.....	B

covers. But as any competent mechanic who's familiar with both engines knows, the Aston's is built to much stricter tolerances, which means it's trickier to rebuild.

The DBs use a steel platform frame and a rather Byzantine network of steel tubes to support the beautiful aluminum bodywork. This construction system, based on Supperleggera patents developed by Carrozzeria Touring of Milan, gives an especially rigid structure.

Moreover, the system lent itself to the hand craftsmanship for which Aston Martin has become famous. Aston made the DB series the old-fashioned way, with tinsnips and mallets. Even present-day Astons are genuine handmade cars, from the chassis and body to the engine.

Of course, such quality doesn't come cheap. David Brown sold the DB6 for about \$15,000 in 1965. Twenty years later, a new V-8 coupe costs about \$100,000 and the parts for all Astons are comparably priced. As a result of expensive parts, a lot of relatively inexpensive DB-series Astons were terribly neglected, and somebody buying one today is often stuck with the bill for that neglect.

The differences between the DB4, DB5 and DB6 models are primarily ones of refinement rather than dramatic change. Early DB4 3670-cc engines tended to overheat and were also loath to hold their oil pressure. The problems were mitigated with various engine modifications in the later DB4s and were resolved when the engine was redesigned as a 3995-cc unit for the DB5. Early DB4s also suffered gearbox and clutch troubles.

While the major differences between the DB4 and DB5 are mechanical, the changes between the DB5 and DB6 are mostly in the body. The DB6's wheelbase was increased, and though the DB4 and DB5 have small rear seats, the DB6 is a real 4-passenger car. The tail end of the DB6 also received a modest spoiler lip that many Aston fans feel detracts from the car's classic lines.

Astons aren't cheap to run. But they are high performance grand touring cars steeped in motoring history, handmade by true craftsmen and oozing with upper-crust British class—and all for the price of a new Mazda RX-7.



1963-1967 Chevrolet Corvette Sting Ray

WHILE THE sporting marques of Europe that we've praised in print and coveted in private have introduced fatter, heavier 2+2 versions, sometimes with regrettable results, America's premier sports car has always remained true to the sports-car ideal—two seats. Unlike Aston Martins, Ferraris, Jaguars and other *voitures de grande luxe et grande tourisme* as the French so elegantly say, the Vette has never pretended to be anything more than a good old American 2-passenger sports car.

Of the seven cars we honor in this article, only the Mercedes and the Corvette are worth significantly more today than they cost when new. A good 230/250/280 SL goes for two or three times its original price, while a good 1963-1967 Sting Ray is generally worth a whopping four or five times more.

How come? Maybe it's because Reaganomics, Rambo and American jingoism seem to be in vogue at the moment, but I doubt it. More likely, it's because these Corvettes were incredibly good values to

begin with. For about \$4000 (Contributing Editor Ron Wakefield bought a new 1964 convertible for \$3825) you had a car that would peel the paint off fancy European GTs that cost three times as much. A 1965 Sting Ray with fuel injection and a trusty 327-cu-in. V-8 could do 0-60 mph in 6.3 seconds, according to one of our tests. And with its independent rear suspension, it handled quite well, too. Most European exotica back then were still getting along on live rear axles.

In addition, the 1963-1967 Corvettes have timeless appeal, unlike their immediate successors. The Sting Ray design was a *tour de force*, to use another French phrase, when it made its debut in 1963, and still looks terrific more than 20 years later. Over its production run, the design became even better. By 1967, its final year, the model was a clean machine; the fake vents, extraneous emblems and simulated-something-or-other wheel covers of earlier years were gone.

There were some important mechanical changes during those five years as well. The 1965 model might be considered the pinnacle year for the Sting Ray. Four-wheel disc brakes became standard. For





in 1966 fuel injection was dropped, the 396 engine was bored out to 427 cu in., and the great horsepower race was in high gear. When GM management was hit with public criticism about excessively big engines, Chevy engineers are said to have given one of the all-time great tongue-in-cheek replies: "More horsepower? Heavens no. Boring out the block achieves a useful weight saving!"

Sting Rays with the so-called "big block" option are in demand today, what with mucho-macho musclecars, crewcuts and pegged pants back in style. Which brings up an important point about these Corvettes. They're American cars, which meant you could have 'em your way, as the hamburger ad says. While the major option of the typical European sports car of the day was radio or no radio, Chevy offered a scroll of options. You always had a choice of engines, so your Corvette could be a mild-mannered runabout complete with Powerglide ("slip 'n slide") automatic transmission, or a stoplight dragster with great gobs of rip-snorting horsepower and torque. You could have it as a convertible with soft top, a convertible with removable hard top or a coupe. You could order electric window lifts and power assisted steering. You had a large selection of interior colors, and even the option of leather upholstery. These Sting Rays were also some of the first sports cars in the world with truly effective heaters and factory air conditioning.

So it's unlikely that you'll find two Sting Rays exactly alike. In general, the more options, the more valuable the car. But the vintage Corvette market is very fickle. Big-engine Vettes are "in" now (even though they overheat worse than old Jaguar XK-120s), but a few years ago they weren't. There was a time when the Sting Ray to have was a 1963 split-window coupe. Now everybody wants a convertible.

Finally, understand that these early Sting Rays with their high-compression engines were designed for a steady diet of very high-octane, heavily leaded gasoline. The stuff is history now, which means you'll have to either modify the car's engine or your driving habits.

the first time, America produced a sports car with all the right stuff—fuel injection, an independent rear suspension and disc brakes all around.

For that year only, you could have a carbureted 396-cu-in. V-8 instead, though it wasn't nearly as pleasant for everyday use as the 327. "There are many sports cars that honestly need more power. But the Corvette isn't one of them," we said with a hint of understatement.

Chevrolet paid no heed to us, because

1963-1967 CHEVROLET CORVETTE STING RAY

Specifications.....	Corvette Sting Ray Coupe
Curb weight, lb.....	3050
Engine type.....	ohv V-8 (fuel-injected)
Displacement, cc.....	5356
Transmission.....	4-sp
Suspension, front/rear.....	ind/ind
Steering type.....	recirculating ball
Performance data from contemporary tests:	
0-60 mph, sec.....	5.2
Stopping distance from 80 mph, ft.....	NA
Standing ¼ mi, sec @ mph.....	14.4 @ 99
Fuel economy, mpg.....	13.0
Road test date.....	12-64
Used Car Classic date.....	2-75

Typical asking prices:	
1963-1967 Sting Ray.....	\$12,000-\$22,000
Typical engine-rebuild price:	
Parts.....	\$1700
Labor @ \$38 an hour.....	\$800
Total.....	\$2500
Report card:	
Reliability.....	A
Quality.....	D
Performance (engine/gearbox/steering/brakes).....	A
Handling.....	C
Ride and comfort.....	C
Fun to drive.....	A



1961-1967 Ferrari 250GTE 2+2 & 330GT 2+2

OF SOME 30 cars on our initial list of choices, only the Ferrari 250GTE 2+2 and 330GT 2+2 came close to receiving a unanimous vote from the staff. Ferrari's magic has certainly infected R&T's staff over the years like that of no other car. We even have a great respect for the contemporary 8-cylinder 308s.

But our true affections lie with 12-cylinder Ferraris. The heart and soul of any Ferrari is its engine, and the classic Ferrari engine is the Colombo-designed V-12. You can't get it in the \$54,000 308, the \$65,000 Mondial or any other Ferrari officially imported into the U.S. today.

However, for around \$20,000, and often less, you can get it in a 250GTE 2+2 or a 330GT 2+2. And because Enzo Ferrari is Italian and has never forgotten the importance of style, you'll also get an attractive Pininfarina-styled body.

Fifteen or 20 thousand dollars is not an inconsiderable sum for most of us, but if you know the background of these 2+2s, you'll understand why they're genuine bargains. Enzo Ferrari's passion has always been racing. Following World War II, his company built race cars, which, with a few modifications as necessary, made them civilized enough to appeal to hairy-chested wealthy folk who could use them either on the road or on the track. Over time, Ferrari's race cars and road cars have come to bear less resemblance to one another, thanks to changes in the rules of international auto racing and to government-imposed automobile safety and emissions regulations.

But between the innocent Fifties and burdensome Seventies, the dual-purpose Ferrari reached its peak with variations of a model called the 250GT. The 250GT berlinetta Tour de France, the 250GT short-wheelbase berlinetta, the 250GT Spyder California and the legendary 250GT0 were cars that could be used on the street. But they were also cars that dominated rallies, hillclimbs and endurance racing of the time as well.

All the 250GTs have much in common. They all use strong ladder-type frames. ➔

They all have similar live rear axles. They all came with gorgeous Borrani wire wheels. Most important, they all have the Colombo V-12 engine. As for their driving characteristics, they all seem rather ponderous and tiresome at low speeds. But once up to 60 mph or so, their well bred manners become apparent. The ride smooths, the steering lightens and the car seems to come alive. In all these respects, our subject here, the 250GTE 2+2, is no different from the other famed members of the 250GT family.

However, the car is different in that it can carry four people in reasonable comfort while the other models are strictly 2-seaters. Today the price variations between the models are astronomical. But when the cars were new there was only about \$1000 difference between a racier 250 short-wheelbase Berlinetta, for instance, and the 250GTE 2+2, the latter car originally selling for just over \$12,000.

The 250GTE made its debut in 1960 and went into production the following year. By the end of 1963, the GTE's 2953-cc, 240-bhp engine was beginning to seem tame. So Ferrari installed a 3967-cc, 300-bhp version of the same Colombo-designed V-12 in the 250GTE. This car was

christened the 330 America. A revised body came along a few months later, and the car changed monikers again, to the 330GT 2+2 (not to be confused with the 330GTC, a later 2-passenger car). The body didn't have the 250GTE's tail fins, which was an improvement, but it did have a baroque cluster of twin headlamps on each side in place of the earlier cars' single lamps. In the middle of 1965, the 330GT returned to single headlamps, thank goodness, and at the same time alloy wheels replaced the Borrani wires.

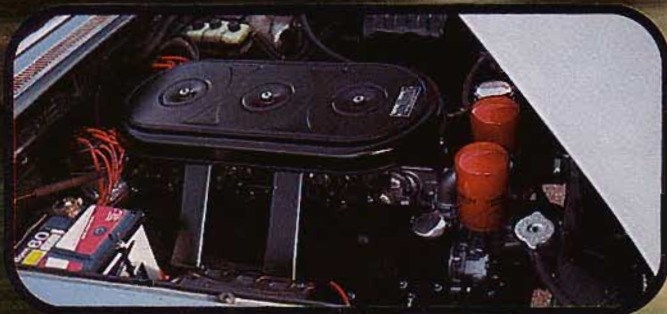
These so-called Series II cars were also the first of the 2+2s with the options of power assisted steering and air conditioning. Altogether, 950 250GTEs, 50 Americas and 1080 330GTs left the factory before production of the models ended in 1967.

There's a theory about the 2+2 Ferraris that says when Enzo dies everybody will want one of these wonderful cars and that prices will suddenly rise. I don't know about that. All I know is that there are better reasons than investment potential to buy any Ferrari.

1961-1967 FERRARI 250GTE 2+2 & 330GT 2+2

Specifications.....	Ferrari 250GTE 2+2
Curb weight, lb	3100
Engine type	sohc V-12
Displacement, cc	2953
Transmission.....	4-sp + OD
Suspension, front/rear	ind/live
Steering type	worm & peg
Performance data from contemporary tests:	
0-60 mph, sec	8.0
Stopping distance from 80 mph, ft	NA
Standing 1/4 mi, sec @ mph	16.3 @ 88
Fuel economy, mpg	14.5
Road test date.....	8-62
Used Car Classic date	11-84

Typical asking prices:	
1961-1967 250 GTE/330GT 2+2	\$11,000-\$25,000
Typical engine-rebuild price:	
Parts	\$3500
Labor, @ \$50 an hour	\$4000
Total.....	\$7500
Report card:	
Reliability	B
Quality	B
Performance (engine/gearbox/steering/brakes)	A
Handling	B
Ride and comfort.....	B
Fun to drive	A

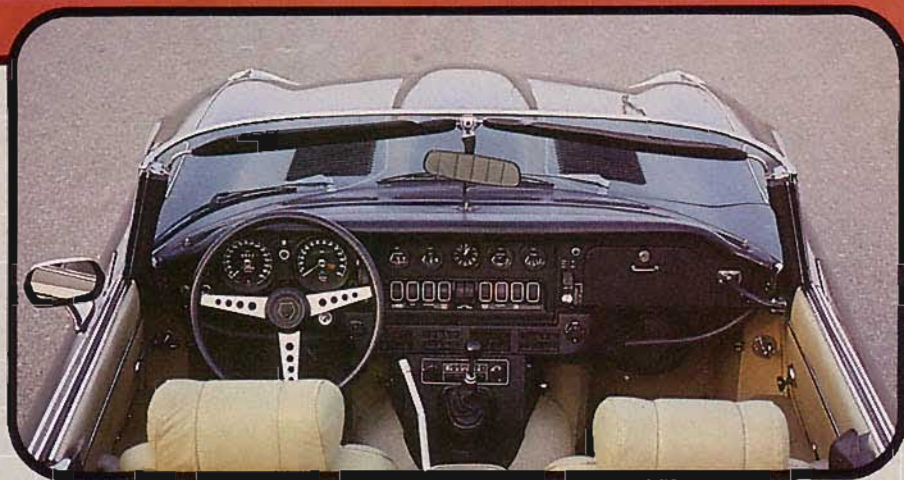




1971-1975 Jaguar V-12 E-Type

EVERYONE ON R&T's staff professes to love old Jaguars. We agreed that we had to have a Jaguar in this year's bargain bests; it was just a matter of which one. Because we weren't trying to be practical this time, some staff members lobbied hard for the XK-120. We all know the tremendous impact that model had on the sports-car world when it was introduced at Earl's Court in 1948. But there were other staff members who thought that early XJ-S models were good deals at \$10,000 or \$11,000, their current selling price, even if they do have questionable styling.

In the end, we compromised and selected the V-12 E-Type, as it's a vintage Jaguar body with the modern 12-cylinder engine used in the XJ-S. But you have to wonder about our judgment if you review some of our original tests of the car. In our final evaluation of the V-12 E-Type, which came in a comparison test of five, high-price convertibles (February 1974),



1971-1975 JAGUAR V-12 E-TYPE

Specifications	Jaguar V-12 E-Type convertible
Curb weight, lb	3450
Engine type	sohc V-12
Displacement, cc	5343
Transmission	4-sp
Suspension, front/rear	ind/ind
Steering type	rack & pinion
Performance data from contemporary tests:	
0-60 mph, sec	8.0
Stopping distance from 80 mph, ft	263
Standing 1/4 mi, sec @ mph	16.2 @ 89.0
Fuel economy, mpg	12.0
Road test date	2-74
Used Car Classic date	NA

Typical asking prices:

1971-1973 V-12 E-Type Coupe	\$7000-\$12,000
1971-1975 V-12 E-Type Convertible	\$12,000-\$20,000
Typical engine-rebuild price:	
Parts	\$3500
Labor, @ \$40 an hour	\$4000
Total	\$7500

Report card:

Reliability	C
Quality	C
Performance (engine/gearbox/steering/brakes)	B
Handling	C
Ride and comfort	C
Fun to drive	B

we were unkind: "understeers more than . . . it should," "the power steering is slow . . . too light and without feel," "there's a torque-steer problem," "ventilation inadequate," "controls maddening," etc.

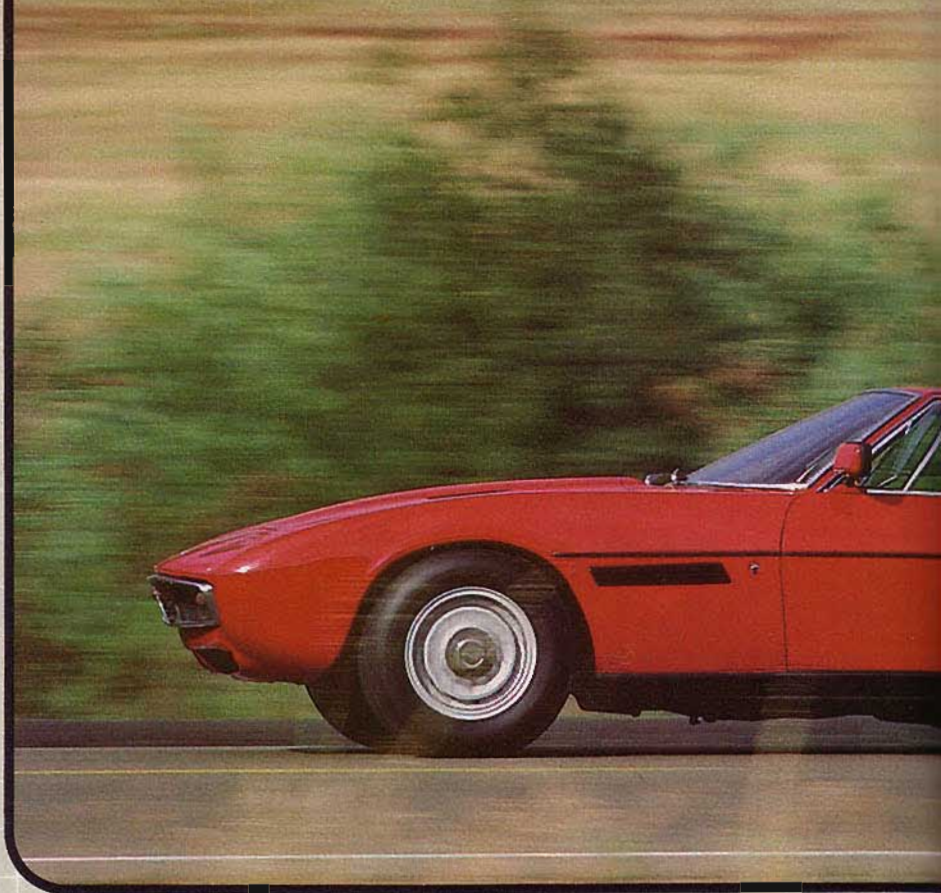
The V-12 E-Type came in two versions, a coupe with two rear seats for legless adults and a convertible with a much more useful parcel space instead of the rear seats. Both were based on the long-wheel-base 6-cylinder E-Type.

By the end of the Sixties, the redoubtable 6-cylinder engine used in the E-Type and sedans had lost its spunk, primarily because of ever-tougher U.S. emissions regulations. But it was still the age before expensive fuel and queuing at gas stations, so Jaguar developed a sophisticated all-aluminum V-12 unit. Unlike Jag's classic dohc-6, the 12 has a single camshaft on each bank. It uses four Zenith-Stromberg carburetors and was among the first production cars to come with a transistorized ignition system. For 1971 and 1972, the V-12 had a modest 9.0:1 compression ratio, which was changed to an extremely low (for a sports car) 7.8:1 ratio in 1973. In all, it's a very understressed engine.

Of course, there is a price to pay for all those cylinders. Fuel consumption is horrendous. And when you lift the bonnet of a V-12, you might reel back, staggered by the unveiled complexity. With pipes and hoses and wires and things enshrining the basic engine, it looks like an insane mechanic was turned loose on the poor thing. True, the engine is complicated and any major repair is going to be a big-bucks affair as it is on any exotic engine. But it's also true that the engine is not particularly problem prone, with two exceptions. Naturally, Jaguar's perennial problem, overheating, is one of them. Keeping the cooling system in top shape is important, which means flushing the coolant and replacing the hoses on a regular basis. And installing a manual override switch for the electric fans isn't a bad idea either.

The other problem is with the electronic ignition. The amplifier for the system is mounted in the cylinder bank valley. The amplifiers break down from the heat, and when they start to go bad, the driver notices a hesitation that feels like fuel starvation. They're easy to replace, however.

The V-12 E-Type first went on sale in 1971, and the last was made in 1975. Because the coupe version was discontinued after 1973, there are more convertibles around. In fact, more V-12 E-Types were made in 1974 than in any other year (you can tell a 1974 model because they grew a pitiful pair of ugly rubber bumper overrides in front). But the law of supply and demand aside, the more plentiful and romantic convertibles seem to be preferred by everyone, including R&T staffers. So prices for them are about double the prices for the coupes. In fact, V-12 coupes are real bargains right now.



1967-1972 Maserati Ghibli

FERRARI AND Maserati have always been fierce competitors. Both are located in or around Modena, which is the Detroit of exotic cars. In addition to Ferrari and Maserati, Lamborghini and DeTomaso (as in DeTomaso Pantera) are resident carmakers there. But while Detroit's automakers cry recession when sales dip to six million cars a year, these tiny Italian companies have altogether averaged over the past 30 years or so less than 2000 sales annually.

Maserati is by far the oldest of the group, preceding Ferrari by some two decades. The company was founded in 1926 when four Maserati brothers decided to build race cars. Over the years the company's efforts were successful and included a couple of Indianapolis winners. Maserati didn't actually build road cars until 1946, and even then the 2-seaters did double-duty as road cars and race machines.

However, in 1958, after several costly accidents, Maserati withdrew from factory-sponsored racing and left Ferrari to carry the banner for Italy. From that point on, their rivalry was limited to new-car showrooms. During the Seventies, Ferrari's prancing horse nearly trampled to death Maserati's trident in the exotic-car

market place: Maserati has now embarked on a different tack by concentrating on building small sports sedans.

Considering Ferrari's many triumphs in recent years on the sales charts, on race tracks and on television, it's hard to believe that around 1968 Maserati was selling more GTs than Ferrari. A prime reason was the fabulous Ghibli, named after a hot desert wind. The car blew 'em away at the 1966 Turin show and Maserati eagerly offered it for sale in 1967. The design was the inspiration of none other than Giorgetto Giugiaro, then a 26-year-old working for the styling house of Ghia.

Ferrari matched Maserati's move in late 1968 with the Pininfarina-designed Daytona. Despite the many similarities between the two cars, there are several important differences. For one, the Daytona has an independent rear suspension while the Ghibli makes do with a very mundane live-axle, leaf-spring arrangement. On smooth surfaces, the Ghibli rides well enough. But hit some bumps or travel at high speed over undulating highways, and the car has an unforgiving, stiff ride. "Most uncivilized and unnecessary in a high-budget car," we said in a 1971 road test. Nevertheless, the Ghibli more than matches the Daytona when it comes to cornering power. In tests during the early Seventies, we obtained a lateral acceleration figure of 0.823g for the Ghibli, compared to 0.817g for the Daytona.

Then there's the engine. The Daytona has the incomparable Ferrari V-12, of course, but the Maserati's V-8 isn't exactly pedestrian. After all, twincam, dry sump,



1963-1971 Mercedes-Benz 230SL, 250SL & 280SL

THE IMAGE and reputation of Mercedes-Benz in the United States is the envy of all other automakers. Certainly Ferrari and Porsche are held in high esteem by the general public, but more as playthings for the wealthy than as serious transportation. Perhaps that other Teutonic *Wunderwagen*, BMW, comes closest to matching the Mercedes image, though to many in the general populace the BMW is second best to the car with the 3-pointed star. Mercedes-Benz automobiles are believable. They're solid. They're dependable. They're good investments.

Among our "seven best," the 230/250/280SL is a bit of an oddball. The Mercedes is the reciprocal of the Corvette, for instance. The Sting Ray is a flexible flyer while the SL feels like it was sculpted from a block of stone. The fuel-injected Sting Ray can travel from a standstill to 60 mph in 6.3 seconds and run the quarter mile in 14.4 sec. while a 230SL achieves the same tasks in about 11 sec (yawn) and around 18 sec (z-z-z-z-z). And the Sting Ray has jazzy styling cues like hood scoops and retractable headlights while the SL is upright, square and functional.

Unlike the Corvette or the rest of the cars on this year's list, the Mercedes is sensible. But unlike the average Mercedes, it's not too sensible. The SL has just enough pizzazz, just enough quirkiness to make it lovable. The SL came as a convertible, after all, and that isn't very sensible in this age of noisy traffic jams and smog. It's a 2-passenger car, not even a 2+2.

Today, one of the most endearing aspects of the car is its simple but unique styling. Twenty years ago, just after the 230SL was introduced, R&T called it "understated and ultra-contemporary." Well it's hardly ultra-contemporary any longer, but it's still understated and still handsome. It's not striking like a Ghibli or voluptuous like an Aston DB5, but it is well proportioned in a chunky sort of way with its flared fenders and wide stance. Styling is also one reason we selected the 230/250/280SLs instead of their successors, the 350/450SLs. Early 350/450SLs are available for under \$20,000 now, but they're heavier and more ponderous looking; Mercedes-Benz engineers even dubbed the cars *die Panzerwagen* (armored cars) during their development.

Mercedes mechanics tell us, and our owner survey supports them, that with proper maintenance the 230/250/280SL's engine is good for more than 150,000 miles before overhaul time. This sort of longevity is truly remarkable among

all-aluminum (the block, too) engines with four Weber carburetors are pretty special. The V-8 idles menacingly with lots of burbling from the two big tailpipes.

But like the Ferrari, once the revs start to climb everything seems to smooth out and you get the characteristic sounds and feel of an engine with a racing heritage. (The Ghibli's V-8 is a variation of the engine from the 450S, one of Maserati's last race cars.) We found the Ferrari quicker from 0-to-60 mph, and though we never ran a Ghibli flat out, you can be certain it wouldn't match the Daytona's 173-mph top speed. But then, isn't our estimated top speed for the Ghibli of 154 mph adequate for you? I should mention that our Ghibli test car had a 4.7-liter engine. For 1971, Maserati stroked the engine to 5.0.

If you should buy a Ghibli, you'll get a full complement of luxury-car features, from air conditioning to electric window

lifts. As the late Pete Coltrin, the first journalist to ride in the Ghibli, wrote in R&T, "It differs from many cars of the same performance in that it is as equally suited to going to the opera as blasting down to Palermo on the *autostrada*."

Though the Ghibli, and the Daytona for that matter, were essentially handmade, neither automobile's workmanship matched that of an Aston Martin's. Ghiblis are also rusters, so search carefully all the usual places for that malady. Otherwise, the cars present no particular maintenance problems. The big V-8s aren't fussy to keep running, and many of the car's parts are available at auto-parts stores because they're common to other marques. Most of the major engine components are available from any Maserati dealer because the Ghibli engine is basically the same one that is being used in the current Quattroporte.

1967-1972 MASERATI GIBLI

Specifications.....Maserati Ghibli	Typical asking prices:
Curb weight, lb.....3745	1967-1972 Ghibli.....\$15,000-\$21,000
Engine type.....dohc V-8	Typical engine-rebuild price:
Displacement, cc.....4719	Parts.....\$3500
Transmission.....5-sp	Labor, @ \$40 an hour.....\$3500
Suspension, front/rear.....ind/live	Total.....\$7000
Steering type.....recirculating ball	Report card:
Performance data from contemporary tests:	Reliability.....B
0-60 mph, sec.....7.5	Quality.....B
Stopping distance from 80 mph, ft.....264	Performance (engine/gearbox/steering/brakes).....B
Standing 1/4 mi, sec @ mph.....15.1 @ 89	Handling.....B
Fuel economy, mpg.....11.8	Ride and comfort.....B
Road test date.....6-71	Fun to drive.....A
Used Car Classic date.....NA	

sports cars. Owners also report that even after thousands of miles and many years of use, the cars remain tight and rattle-free, another remarkable finding, especially for convertibles.

The 230/250/280SL series, which began in 1963 with the 230SL, uses a sohc 6-cylinder engine with a rather complex, though apparently reliable, Bosch mechanical fuel-injection system. The cars' single-pivot swing-axle independent rear suspension provides a marvelously supple ride, but it doesn't give the adhesion of a more modern or sophisticated IRS when cornering. For 1967, engine displacement was increased from 2.3 to 2.5 liters, and this model was called the 250SL. The 250SL also received front disc brakes in place of the 230's drums. A year later, there was another displacement increase, to 2.8 liters, and, of course, this model was called the 280SL.

Aside from these displacement increases and the disc brakes, there were no

changes of great consequence during the 8-year model run. Leather upholstery and an excellent power assisted steering were options. A curious 4-speed automatic transmission was also an option; from a standstill, it normally starts in 2nd gear and gives a decidedly lethargic send-off, though it can be manually overridden for a 1st-gear start. This tranny combined with the 2.5-liter engine or the 2.8 is okay, but with the torqueless 2.3-liter engine, it's not a happy combination. So SLs with a 4-speed or the very rare 5-speed manual transmission are more in demand in the used-car market.

From the beginning, the SL was available as a convertible, as a fixed hardtop coupe, or as a convertible with both hard and soft tops. However, the removable hardtop is heavy. It's so heavy, in fact, that in our search for a suitable photo subject for this article, we located three nice SLs, but all the owners refused to remove the hardtops for us!

1974-1979 Porsche 911

I CALL them "Porsche Muslims" because each day they face east and pray toward Zuffenhausen. This year a whole congregation of them descended upon our quiet hamlet for a week of intensive praise. They came to Newport Beach for the 30th Porsche Parade and Concours d'Elegance, 1100 officially registered worshippers from 32 states and 16 countries.

Just what car is it that inspires such religious fervor? Primarily the Porsche 911, a car that takes to the curves like a Bavarian takes to beer. Most Porsche owners know that a 911 is closer than almost any other production car to a racing machine.

I should mention, however, that the 911's predecessors, the 356-series cars, are objects of cult worship too. In fact, we nearly selected one of the most endearing examples of that series, the Speedster of the late Fifties, as one of this year's bargain bests. But we discovered an interesting phenomenon in the market that eliminated it from consideration. There are plenty of Speedsters around for considerably less than \$20,000, but they tend to be doggy. The nice ones all seem to sell for \$25,000 or more, usually because they've been restored. There's just not much in between.

Now back to the 911. The car is one of the most remarkable designs in automotive history, if for no other reason than its staying power. Making its debut at the Frankfurt auto show in 1963, the 911 is the oldest design of any sports car currently sold new in the U.S. Yet buyers still eagerly snap up every one the factory builds. The car's attraction isn't merely based on some nostalgia factor either. Porsche has always managed to keep the 911 a few paces ahead of its modern competitors.

What's all the more remarkable is that the basic layout of the 911, with its air-cooled and rear-mounted engine, stacks the deck against the car's success.

The layout presents all sorts of inherent quirks, including tricky handling characteristics and a high level of noise. But with constant and often clever development, the 911 has managed gracefully to meet all the U.S. emissions and safety regulations that were nothing but a gleam in the eyes of bureaucrats when the car was designed. And just as important to driving enthusiasts, Porsche has managed to meet the regulations and alleviate the car's inherent deficiencies at the same time. The transient oversteer remains, but few drivers will ever exceed the handling limits of a more recent 911 because those limits seem to get higher as the years pass. The raspy staccato wraaaaaa of the engine,

1963-1971 MERCEDES-BENZ 230SL, 250SL & 280SL

Specifications.....	Mercedes-Benz 280SL
Curb weight, lb.....	3120
Engine type.....	sohc inline-6
Displacement, cc.....	2778
Transmission.....	4-sp auto
Suspension, front/rear.....	ind/ind
Steering type.....	recirculating ball
Performance data from contemporary tests:	
0-60 mph, sec.....	10.3
Stopping distance from 80 mph, ft.....	NA
Standing 1/4 mi, sec @ mph.....	17.3 @ 79
Fuel economy, mpg.....	17.5
Road test date.....	8-68
Used Car Classic date.....	NA

Typical asking prices:	
1963-1971 230SL, 250SL, 280SL....	\$14,000-\$24,000
Typical engine-rebuild price:	
Parts.....	\$3200
Labor, @ \$38 an hour.....	\$1300
Total.....	\$4500
Report card.	
Reliability.....	A
Quality.....	A
Performance (engine/gearbox/steering/brakes).....	C
Handling.....	C
Ride and comfort.....	A
Fun to drive.....	C




guaranteed to annoy the neighbors, has even been quieted. Though all 911s are basically alike, later examples are, if anything, more exciting to drive and more practical for everyday use.

All this goodness doesn't come cheap, of course, with 1985 911s in the \$35,000 range. But here's the best news: For about half that, you can have a 1978 or 1979 911SC, and only one of the most devout Porsche worshippers could easily distinguish a 911SC from a brand-new model. Or, for little more than \$10,000 you can buy a 1974 911 which, with its beefy bumpers, also looks similar to a new 911.

So within the \$10,000 to \$20,000 price range, 1974 through 1979 911s comfortably fit. But Porsche experts tell us the 1975, 1976 and 1977 models had a few problems with excessive engine wear and oil leaks, making them a little less desirable than earlier cars, and much less desirable than the 1978 or 1979 cars, the first years of the SC model.

The difficulties came from heat, a by-product of air pumps and thermal reactors added to meet emissions standards. The SC's engine was bumped to 3.0 liters from the previous years' 2.7. At the same time, catalytic converters replaced the thermal reactors, the engine cases were made of a different alloy, and the majority of 911SCs received front-mounted oil cool-

ers. The changes corrected the problems and the 911SC continued to be an outstanding performer with 0-60-mph times in the 6.0-sec range. Moreover, the 3.0-liter engine gives plenty of low-end torque, making it much more tractable when slogging through traffic.

Of course, 911s are known far and wide for their tendency to turn into heaps of iron oxide. But because we're discussing here Porsches of a fairly recent vintage, rust won't usually be a great concern, though you shouldn't ignore it when you're shopping for any used 911. 

1974-1979 PORSCHE 911

Specifications.....	Porsche 911SC
Curb weight, lb	2740
Engine type	sohc flat-6
Displacement, cc	2994
Transmission	5-sp
Suspension, front/rear	ind/ind
Steering type	rack & pinion
Performance data from contemporary tests:	
0-60 mph, sec	6.3
Stopping distance from 80 mph, ft	248
Standing ¼ mi, sec @ mph	15.3 @ 94.0
Fuel economy, mpg	18.0
Road test date	4-78
Used Car Classic date	12-75

Typical asking prices:

1974-1979 911, 911S, 911SC \$10,000-\$20,000

Typical engine-rebuild price:

Parts \$3700

Labor, @ \$36 an hour \$1800

Total \$5500

Report card:

Reliability B

Quality A

Performance (engine/gearbox/steering/brakes) A

Handling A

Ride and comfort B

Fun to drive A

Road & Track thanks the following people for making their cars available for photography: Ray Sanchez, Aston Martin DB5; Sonja Keith, Chevrolet Corvette; Matt Kunster, Ferrari 330 GT 2+2; Richard Bartkus, Jaguar V-12 E-Type; Brent Taylor, Maserati Ghibli; Mel Grau, Mercedes-Benz 280 SL; Pete Wachob, Porsche 911.

