



PONTIAC FIERO GT

the engine bay, isn't very usable. It's hard to imagine where a suitcase could be squashed into this car, and even luggage for a very informal weekend taxes the Fiero's cargo capacity.

On the other hand, cars like this don't pretend to be space efficient. They just wanna have fun. And this is something the latest incarnation of the Fiero knows how to do, better than ever before.

Toyota MR2

If we're going to talk about sheer affordable sports-car fun, though, here's the name that pops to mind first. Compact, balanced and fast enough to get the adrenaline pumping, the MR2 loves to be pitched into hard corners and buzzed on the exits. Though it's a little less forgiving than the RX-7, a touchy balancing act traceable to its short wheelbase, the MR2 was designed for hard driving and delivers the kind of driver/machine unity we usually associate with motorcycles.

The 16-valve dohc 4-cylinder engine is perfectly suited to this sort of activity. Although it tends to sound a trifle busy when it's in the productive

part of the powerband, it revs willingly and delivers plenty of punch from about 3500 rpm on up. Mated to an outstanding 5-speed gearbox with ratios well suited to the 1.6-liter's power characteristics, this rates as the best powertrain in our group (though to be fair, it's almost a coin toss against the Honda).

Rated as a place to be when the scenery starts coming toward you at odd angles, the MR2 measures up quite well—better than the Fiero, though not as roomy as either the RX-7 or the Honda. Still, there's plenty of space for even the busiest driver, which is what counts with this car, and there's also room for a passenger to stretch out quite comfortably.

Like the Fiero, the mid-engine design doesn't leave much room for luggage, though the shape of the MR2's cargo space seems better related to reality. Another similarity—again a function of the mid-engine layout—is noise in the cockpit. The 1.6 makes a substantial amount of it, and the driver becomes a bit too aware of the engine in ordinary cruising.

As you'd expect of a real driver's car, control relationships are excel-

lent, and the analog instrumentation is comprehensive, well located and highly legible. About the only complaint anyone registered concerning the interior appointments had to do with the integrated headrests, which were awkwardly positioned for taller drivers, though the seats themselves were well designed and sufficiently adjustable.

Workmanship is typically Toyota—high quality, inside and out. As for the exterior design, it was initially difficult for us to think of the MR2 as pretty. But after several days of hard driving, we began to feel that the car's looks supplied an accurate portrayal of what lay within—a high-spirited, aggressive little street tiger that's about as much fun to drive as any car on the road today.

Conclusions

As we noted at the outset, our conclusions are multiple. There are no losers here. All these entries are good at being sports cars. It's just a question of picking out the one that best matches your priorities.

For example, if sheer boulevard flash is high on your list, the Fiero is the winner, hands-down. It's arguably as attractive as anything from the entire world arsenal of sports and GT machinery, and has new competence to go with its good looks.

If you want refinement, elegance and high back-road capability rolled up into one package, the RX-7 stands alone.

If you're into sheer back-road exuberance, the MR2 is tough to top.

But if you want sports-car performance with the astounding bonus of practicality, wrapped up in a tastefully outrageous exterior, Honda's CRX rates as something special. **PM**



MAZDA RX-7 GTU



TOYOTA MR2

TEST RESULTS

CURB WEIGHT (lb.)	STEERING TYPE/TURNS LOCK-TO-LOCK	BRAKE SYSTEM FRONT/REAR	FUEL ECONOMY (EPA city/PM test)	ACCELERATION 0-60 MPH (sec.) ¼-MILE (sec @ mph)	BRAKING 60-0 MPH (ft.)	700-FT. ¹ SLALOM (mph)	SKIDPAD ² 200-FT. CIRCLE (G)	CARGO ³ VOLUME (cu. ft.)	INTERIOR ⁴ SPACE INDEX
2017	variable ratio rack-and-pinion/4.1	F: 9.5-in. vented disc/ R: 8.5-in. drums	29/ 24.08	11.39 16.31 @ 85.28	138	59.59	.78	34.13	85.83
2625	power rack-and-pinion/3.6	F: 10.9-in. vented disc/ R: 10.7-in. disc	17/ 12.53	12.41 16.97 @ 82.19	158	55.52	.78	22.92	87.17
2790	rack-and-pinion/3.3	F: 10.2-in. vented disc/ R: 10.2-in. vented disc	17/ 16.15	9.64 16.36 @ 83.56	151	59.84	.81	10.97	87.12
2350	rack-and-pinion/3.2	F: 10.2-in. vented disc/ R: 10.4-in. disc	26/ 23.26	11.78 16.49 @ 83.34	148	56.44	.83	8.73	89.93

3. Indicates maximum cargo volume as determined by EPA calculations with rear seatbacks (when applicable) in normal position.

4. Front-seat width × headroom × legroom + rear-seat width × headroom × legroom ÷ 1000.