

THE PULITZER VERSUS THE PONTIAC

Car writers don't get Pulitzer Prizes. I suspect that's because their writing is either wonky and burdened with specs or basically carpornography. Or rather, car writers *used to* not get Pulitzers, before Dan Neil got one last year, "for his one-of-a-kind reviews of automobiles, blending technical expertise with offbeat humor and astute cultural observations." I guess they liked Neil's honest, irreverent writing in passages like this:

If you ever despair that the U.S. auto industry is whirling, slowly but with gathering momentum, down the tubes of history, these second-generation Toyota Prius will give you no comfort. This is a car Detroit assures us cannot be built. No way. No how. A spacious, safe and well-appointed mid-size four-door with practical performance while returning more than 60 miles per gallon? For \$20,000? Are you, like, high?

Well, there it sits in my driveway, looking like a set piece from a Kubrick film but in other respects a straightforward piece of engineering. And it shames the domestic automakers and the Bush administration.

Well, guess what? Neil's right about the Prius *and* the domestic car makers. But the car makers don't like to see such things in print, certainly not in one of this country's largest newspapers. Which became a problem when the LA Times published this slam on the Pontiac G6 the other day:

The G6 is not an awful car. It's entirely adequate. But plainly, adequate is not nearly enough.

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[snip]

Meanwhile, the detailing of the bodywork makes the skin of the car look eggshell-thin. I wonder how many buyers look at this car and wonder what is behind the billboard?

Interior styling: The GT comes with comfortable leather-lined bucket seats, nicely bolstered with heaters. I like the soft grip on the hand brake. That exhausts my praise for the interior.