



**CHOICE:** Along with Autobahn's selection (above), Garage R on Tagore Lane also offers exotic rides (left) for those with deep pockets.

Strada Times 17 May 2003

# These women are in the driver's seat

By **HADI SOEDARSONO**

OVER AT Garage R Automotive Trading, three sisters call the shots.

Which may surprise macho drivers given that it sells high-performance Japanese sports cars from Honda, Nissan, Subaru and Mitsubishi that the distributors either do not bring in or import in very small numbers.

Here, you can find such cars as a Japanese domestic model Subaru Impreza WRX Spec C (\$128,800 without

COE) and Mazda RX-8 (\$123,800 without COE).

Manager Wong Siew Lee, 40, has been linked to cars since she started helping out, at age 13, in her father's firm which dealt in car stereos and accessories.

She opened Garage R 10 years ago.

She says it is a breeze dealing with customers of high-performance cars.

"They have a great passion for motoring and are technically well-informed. They know what they want and

what they are getting."

After about a decade in the business, she predicts that demand in this segment will continue to grow, although it will remain a niche one.

She says customers are predominantly between 25 and 45, though she has noticed growing interest outside of this age group.

This probably explains the growing number of companies zooming in solely on high-performance Japanese cars.

"There used to be just one

or two, but now there are three to four, excluding us.

"But we have our own workshop to provide the necessary technical support whereas most of the other guys rely on independent workshops."

Garage R sells about seven to eight new cars a month, besides a couple of used vehicles.

Is there more money to be made from selling performance cars rather than the normal ones?

"It is about the same. After the Government decided to

make car-buying as transparent as possible, the profit from selling a car has become extremely marginal," she says.

Still, things must be going well for her since she is moving to a new showroom in Tagore Lane at the end of this month.

It is larger than her current one, also in Tagore Lane, and will be located next to her workshop, which also deals in parts and accessories.

◆ Garage R is at 50 Tagore Lane, Markono Building (6552-0811).

## MAY COE RESULTS

Open bidding	COE quota	Total bids received	Quota premium
Category A (Cars below 1,600cc, taxis)	1,479	3,284	\$29,299
Category B (Cars above 1,600cc)	914	1,788	\$28,589
Category C (Goods vehicles and buses)	602	781	\$10,889
Category D (Motorcycles)	561	671	\$233
Category E (Open)	891	1,320	\$29,538

NOTE: Prevailing quota premium. This amount is payable for renewing of COEs for cars that have reached 10 years of age for five-year renewal of COEs, half the POP is payable. Source: LTA



**COMING ATTRACTIONS:** In X-Men 2, keep your eyes peeled for Cyclops' X-car (left), which is actually the Mazda Rx-8 sports car. And if you are watching Matrix: Reloaded, look for Trinity driving the new Cadillac CTS. The latter is the American carmaker's rival to the Mercedes-Benz E-class and BMW 5-series. Both models should reach by Singapore next year.

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