

# That Dream Taxi

Why are all those people crying at the Museum of Modern Art? They are New Yorkers, weeping bitter tears at the taxi show, dreaming the impossible dream of comfortable, clean, safe, attractive cabs.

Impossible, because torture by taxi is a New York way of life, as long as sadists build the cabs in Detroit and masochists ride them in New York, and no one has any choice.

Impossible, because there is no end to the fleet owners' touching faith in the passengers' ability to absorb punishment, from filth to malfunction.

Impossible, because Detroit manufacturers, who prefer to sell their unsuitable stock cars for the purpose, boycotted the museum's attempt to get a better machine. (Two European manufacturers, Volvo and Volkswagen, invested large sums in developing prototypes. The only American participants had to be subsidized by grants from the Department of Transportation.)

The usual Detroit arguments against better taxi design simply do not apply. Volvo is no more unrealistic than General Motors. The problem is that a proper vehicle costs more than a modified car, although its savings in car life, gas mileage and repairs are substantial. While fleet owners cry broke as their rates and abuses rise, many independent owners say they would be willing to invest in a better product if they could obtain the necessary financial help.

The need goes beyond puncturing Detroit's disregard of people and function. The Federal mass-transit program, which invests heavily in roads, air and rail, must begin to deal with the taxi as an essential form of public transportation in both cities and suburbs.

The taxi industry is a privately-run public disgrace. Taxis are transit, not a test of stamina and survival.