

# ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 1

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2002

## Premiere Issue!

### The all-new 2003 Viper

*The massively upgraded bad boy of Arizona's back roads goes toe-to-toe with the US Air Force F-16 "Viper" at Luke AFB.*

### Land Rover Freelander

*We tackle the East Verde River Trail*

### Ford Living Legends Tour

*GT40, Forty-Nine, Mustang Mach 1, Mustang Pony and Thunderbird*

### Bridgestone Winter Driving School

*Tackling the white stuff to hone your everyday skills*

### The All-new Hyundai Tiburon

*A comprehensive rework brings this affordable rocket new respect*

### Audi A4 Cabriolet

*Hats off to a totally rebuilt drop-top*

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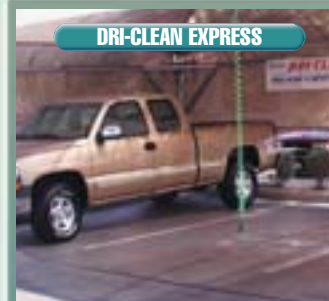
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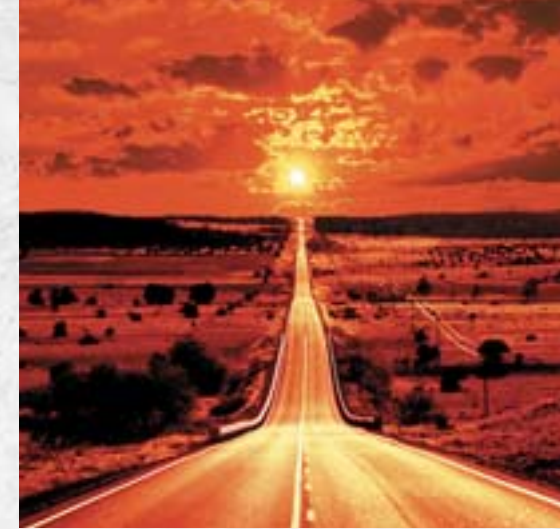
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COVER: The 2003 Dodge Viper SRT-10. Photo: Chrysler.

Cars and Arizona. Both are fascinating. They offer freedom, discovery and adventure. We use the term cars loosely here, to encompass automobiles, trucks, motorcycles, SUVs and the crossovers they are spawning. We broaden our horizons on Arizona, too, as our editorial content will take an Arizona driver wherever the roads may lead.

Arizona is an incredible state to drive in, with roads winding through canyons, burning across exotic deserts, and stretching across high country plateaus. This makes it a great place to own and enjoy a set of wheels, as clearly evidenced by the noteworthy array of steel beasts inhabiting our smooth, dry roads.

Life behind the wheel means two things—having special enthusiasm for your vehicles, and taking them somewhere whenever you can. Our road trips, whether vehicle impressions, rallies, or other special missions, are sure to cover some ground! Once we get the wheels in motion, there are plenty of places to go... all over Arizona, of course, but also on road trips to Santa Fe or Las Cruces, a dash

to track races in Las Vegas, off to the natural wonders of Monument Valley and Utah's red rock canyon country, mountain passes in the high reaches of Colorado, refreshing weekend trips to the salt spray of San Diego or Mexico, and more... all easily accomplished in the comfort of your personal vehicle (or favorite armchair).

If you're in Arizona and on wheels, you'll find that *Arizona Driver* magazine is all about you. We will bring you information on vehicle purchase, maintenance, modification, performance and motor-sports... as well as information on destinations and events.

My first car, a 1960 VW bought for \$192, is long gone, but I guess I still have the bug. We look forward to sharing the fever with you.



Joe Sage  
Publisher/  
Executive Editor

# ARIZONA DRIVER MAGAZINE

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Mailing Services.....AdvantageMail

Subscription & Advertising Information:  
**ARIZONA DRIVER MAGAZINE**  
PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY BY ADZONE ARIZONA LLC  
PO Box 13387 - Scottsdale AZ 85267  
480-948-0200 - 1-800-433-7988  
fax 480-948-4442  
Ad sales: 480-236-4515  
www.azdrivermag.com



## SPECIAL EVENT : BARRETT-JACKSON 2003

# The World's Greatest Classic Car Auction... On Track to Exceed Last Year's Record



The Barrett-Jackson Auction Company of Scottsdale historically attracts the highest quality classic and collector cars to its January auction at WestWorld. Visit January 12-19 to see a broad cross-section of American and European classic and sports cars, as well as custom rods, rare muscle cars, performance cars and exotics.

Collector car enthusiasts are demonstrating their confidence in the market early this year, by registering as consigners and bidders ahead of last year's pace. Many hundreds of potential sellers apply to list their vehicles, and by early October, 330 vehicles had already met Barrett-Jackson's stringent criteria and had been officially accepted for the auction. Total participation is capped at 800 cars for 2003.

Rare automobiles are often auctioned with a reserve price, a minimum below which the vehicle will not sell, and which is kept confidential until the reserve level is met (or sometimes dropped, as sellers too can get caught up in auction frenzy!). The exceptionally high confidence level in the quality of Barrett-Jackson auctioneers and bidders has led this year to fully 83

percent of the vehicles consigned so far being listed with No Reserve. Selling a car at No Reserve is "a huge leap of faith," according to Craig Jackson, president of Barrett-Jackson Auction Company.

In addition to a record pace of consignments, qualified bidder pre-registration is up 65 percent from last year. Put these numbers together, and this year promises to offer an extremely exciting event for participants and spectators alike.

Presented by the Dodge-Chrysler-Jeep brands of DaimlerChrysler, the auction at Barrett-Jackson Scottsdale 2003 will be aired live on the SPEED Channel. Arizonans can go one step better, though, by showing up in person to enjoy the hundreds of cars, the excitement of the crowds (with always a few celebrities), vendor booths offering food, automobilia, art and even some general interest wares such as real estate, watches and high-end home furnishings.

A Golf Classic, Designer Fashion Show (invitation only) and Showcase Pavilion & Lifestyle Expo round out the event.

For more information, see the January/February issue of *Arizona Driver*, or visit the event at [www.barrett-jackson.com](http://www.barrett-jackson.com) ■

■ Barrett-Jackson is famous for classics like the Mercedes above, but also offers a full complement of muscle cars and exotics such as the Saleen S7 below, from the 2002 event.



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**AUTO INDUSTRY UPDATE**



Photo: General Motors

■ The 50th Anniversary 2003 Corvette, spotted recently in the Sonoran Desert, may be the best yet.

**CORVETTE'S 50TH BIRTHDAY IN 2003**

There will be only one official 50th Anniversary celebration for America's favorite sports car, the Chevrolet Corvette, and it will be held in Nashville on June 27 and 28, 2003. Tickets and room reservations for the special event are limited and can be made at [www.Corvette50th.com](http://www.Corvette50th.com), which also includes continuously updated information about the celebration, with schedules, activities and news for events both in Nashville and at the Corvette museum site in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

The 50th Anniversary Corvette gets a technologically advanced damping system. Magnetic Selective Ride Control, developed by Delphi Corporation, starts with shocks filled with a magnetorheological fluid that thickens as more electrical power is applied, thereby stiffening the ride. Power is altered based on readings from sensors monitoring wheel position, lateral acceleration, steering angle, vehicle-speed and brake-pedal angle. This information is fed into a powerful computer that sends appropriate electrical energy to the shocks, which instantly adjust. Standard on 50th Anniversary models, the system will be optional on all other Corvettes (except the Z06) at an anticipated cost of \$1,500.

**ENGINE AND NAME CHANGES AT LEXUS**

To keep Lexus performance more on par with the competition, Lexus is boosting engine displacement of the V-6 engine from 3.0-liters to 3.3-liters. As a result the RX will become the RX 330 and the ES will be the ES 330 and the horsepower should be more in the 240-hp range (a boost of 20- to 30-horsepower from the 3.0 liter models). The ES is likely to get the larger engine later this year, while the RX won't be changed until the new model launches as a 2004 model early in 2003.



Photo: Auto Digest

■ The popular Lexus ES 300 gains power as the ES330 for 2003.

**AUDI ADVANCES FLAGSHIP A8**

As is traditional with many new cars, the second generation Audi A8 gets more power and more gears plus a new one-piece aluminum spaceframe, which replaces the three-piece aluminum welded spaceframe. The A8 debuts in Paris this fall with a similar 4.2-liter V-8

engine, but boosted to 330 horsepower (as compared with 310-hp on the original). There will be a new six-speed Tiptronic automatic transmission to drive the quattro all-wheel drive, plus it will get standard 17-inch wheels with 18- and 19-inch wheels as options. It also has a new air suspension that continuously adjusts to road conditions. Audi is also adding a new control system called Multi-Media Interface that will control audio, climate and navigation systems, comparable to BMW's iDrive.

**VOLVO XC90 TACKLES SUV ROLLOVER POTENTIAL**

Simple physics show that a vehicle with a higher center of gravity has a great potential to rollover. Volvo has tackled that universal SUV potential problem with the industry's first Roll Stability Control (RSC) system. It works off a gyro-positioning sensor that provides input into a master rollover computer. The system also takes into consideration steering position, engine speed and the rate of vehicle pitch and yaw. If the system calculates a potential rollover angle it activates the Dynamic Stability and Traction Control system (DSTC) that reduces engine power and brakes appropriate wheels until the car understeers and stability is regained.

If the vehicle gets too far and actually rolls, the XC90 has a reinforced roof



Photo: Auto Digest

■ The Volvo XC90 is a pioneer in SUV/wagon crossover evolution.

structure plus seat belt pretensioners on all seven seats, to hold passengers in place. It also uses inflatable side curtains designed to stay inflated longer to help occupant's heads from hitting the windows and from being ejected from the vehicle along with Volvo's award-winning side protection system and front and side



Photo: General Motors

■ The new Hummer H2 is a great stablemate to the H1, better sized and equipped for daily use.

impact airbags. One other innovative safety system will be an optional Night Vision that allows the driver to see up to five times further than with conventional low beam headlights. The XC90 goes on sale in late fall of 2002.

**SECOND HUMMER IN SHOWROOMS**

General Motors debuted a smaller and less expensive (\$48,800) version of the famous Hummer this summer, and they're making themselves known on Arizona roads. The new H2 is powered by a 316-hp 6.0-liter V-8 engine, has full-time

4-wheel drive with a single-wheel traction control, and locking rear differential and 5-link variable-rate coil spring rear suspension. 17-inch aluminum wheels have 35-inch all-terrain tires and this Hummer has 4-wheel disc brakes plus ABS. Interior features include

keyless entry, cruise control, OnStar and dual zone climate control. Options include the Lux Series (\$2,575) with 6-disc CD changer, heated leather front seats, tubular assist steps, etc. The Adventure Series (\$2,215) includes air suspension, brush guard, first aid, tool kit, CD changer and roof rack.

**FASTEST PRODUCTION CAR: MERCEDES E55 AMG**

Mercedes-Benz says the new E55 AMG is the world's fastest production car. The all-new AMG E-Class, which debuted at the Paris Auto Show in September, is powered by a supercharged 5.5-liter V-8 engine producing 476 hp at 6100 rpm and 506 lb.ft of torque at 2650 rpm. Acceleration times from 0 to 60 mph are said to be 4.7 seconds. The brakes and suspension have also been upgraded to handle the extra power and the styling changes include a new front bumper with deeper spoiler, a

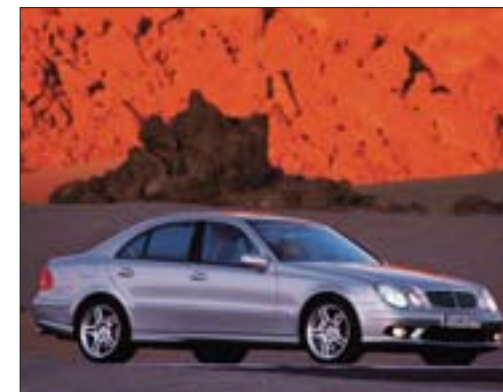


Photo: Mercedes-Benz

■ The E55 might be king of AMG modified Mercedes.

new rear bumper, chunkier side sills and four chrome oval exhaust tips. Wheels are double-spoke 18-inch alloy.

**SHOULD JEEP GET ON THE ROAD?**

Jeep is planning to double its lineup from

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three to six models during the next four years, but in doing so there is a big question the company must face in regard to its off-road ability. It has been company policy for the last 15 years (since Bob Lutz was president) that all Jeep vehicles must be able to negotiate the nearly impassable Rubicon Trail, even though 75 percent of Jeep owners never go off-road. Some proposed designs are not likely to be capable of handling that extreme task possibly compromising long-standing dictum. So the big question is, will this dilute the Jeep brand, or simply allow it to compete with the dozens of new SUV-style vehicles coming to market annually?

### FORD TRUCKS GET UPGRADED DIESEL FOR 2003

Ford will install more efficient diesel engines in its heavy-duty pickups beginning early in 2003. Navistar International Corporation, the same company that builds the current 7.3-liter Power Stroke engine, will build the new 6-liter Power Stroke engines. The new engine will generate 325 hp and 550 lb.ft. of torque making it the most powerful diesel engine in the segment. The new engine gets 10 percent better fuel economy and has 20 percent lower emissions. The engine will be available in the Ford

Excursion SUV and Super Duty F-Series trucks.

### CHRYSLER HEMI ROARING BACK

It has been 30 years since the legendary Chrysler Hemi V-8 engine has powered any new vehicle, but that's about to end later this year. Rated at 345-horsepower

and 365 lb.ft. of torque the Hemi engine is planned to go into 140,000 new heavy-duty Dodge trucks. Sources indicate DaimlerChrysler plans to build 440,000 of the engines, which leaves about 300,000 for some other uses and they believe many or all of those engines will be used in the next generation Chrysler 300. The next 300, which will be badged 300N, is being reconfigured from front- to rear-wheel drive. The magazine also predicts the car will use the impressive Mercedes-Benz five-speed automatic transmission.



■ Ford's Tonka concept truck indicates a future direction for F-Series.



■ The Chrysler Hemi concept car indicates design cues of a new 300N.

### FORD ADDS FIVE-DOOR SVT FOCUS

Ford's special Vehicle Team (SVT) is adding a second SVT version of the popular Focus SVT 3-door. The five-door version will have a specially tuned, 2.0-liter four-cylinder Zetec engine producing 170-hp mated with a six-speed Getrag manual transmission. The suspension

includes the SVT treatment and 17-inch five-spoke alloy wheels.

The same cosmetic additions from the three-door like unique front and rear fascias, spoiler and special cloth sport seats. Ford plans to build about 5000 of the five-door models for 2003 for just over \$18,000 a copy.

### MINI COOPER: IT'S A WAY OF LIFE

As if the MINI Cooper car wasn't exciting enough, the company has created an entire collection of what they refer to as MINI MotoringGear™. The collection includes shirts, jackets, hats pens, watches, umbrellas and a host of other MINI signature items. The latest addition to the collection is a premium, customer designed luggage set that fills every inch of the MINI boot (trunk). The set includes a tote that converts to a backpack, road ready duffel and a hybrid carry-on upright that combines the best of hardside protection with softside expandability. The hybrid bag even has chrome-hubbed inline-skate wheels for easier maneuverability. The set sells for \$467.

Gear is available at [www.miniusa.com](http://www.miniusa.com) or a catalog can be ordered by calling 866-647-MINI.

### CADILLAC ULTRA LUXURY V-16?

Cadillac is rumored to be working on an ultra-luxury V-16 powered sedan to compete with Rolls-Royce, Bentley and Maybach. Evidently it's a project championed by General Motors vice chairman Robert Lutz. The biggest innovation for the big car is the V-16 engine which parallels the V-16 engine built by GM in the 1930's. It's expected to be at least 13.5 liters producing more than 700 horsepower and connected to a six speed automatic. The car is expected to be just a few inches shorter than a Chevrolet Suburban, but much more agile than similar size cars thanks to a four-wheel steering system.

As with other luxury lines, back seat passengers will be pampered with reclining seats and an entertainment system. The edgy styling is "new" Cadillac, with sharp angular muscular designs. ■

Auto Update is a summary of auto news from industry sources, trade journals and consumer magazines compiled for *Arizona Driver* by **BILL & BARBARA SCHAFFER** of *Auto Digest*.

## ATTENTION: VIPER ENTHUSIASTS!

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# BETTER HANDLING, IMPROVED COMFORT, AND SERIOUS POWER!



Photo: Chrysler

by **Tim Sharp**

About five years ago, I was asked by the Skip Barber Racing School to work as a driving instructor on the Dodge Viper Club Invitational program. Held at the legendary Sebring road race circuit in Florida, it was what we in the high performance driving business call a "ride and drive" program.

### The Original Viper R/T Roadster

On a typical ride and drive, the instructor takes the wheel first, drives the track and shows the club drivers the correct racing line, brake points, downshift points, turn-in points, corner apexes and exit lines off each corner. However, this was not your typical ride

and drive program.

Due to time constraints, the Viper owners were subjected to just a one-hour ground school. Then, they were permitted to drive the Vipers with the race driving instructors as their copilots on the Sebring circuit. What we are talking about here is a very long, very fast road race circuit where the Vipers reached a *minimum* of 140 mph on the back straight! We are also talking about NO dual controls and NO safety cutoff switch for the race driving instructors. Or, as the twenty-five Skip Barber Racing School instructors working the program named the first Viper

Invitational, this was "The Ride and Drive Program From Hell!"

Why so harsh? Well, for starters, the early Dodge Viper R/T Roadsters had flexible chassis which allowed them to wind up and unwind at inopportune times. What this meant was that the early Viper R/Ts were unpredictable and often scary to drive at high speeds. They were even scarier from the passenger's seat.

**IN THE CORRECT HANDS, THE NEW 500 HP VIPER ROADSTER IS THE NEW BAD BOY OF THE BACK ROADS**

### The Original Viper GTS Coupe

When the GTS Coupe was released, given a choice, the instructors wanted to co-pilot those over the roadsters. The GTS

Coupe had a much stiffer chassis and handled more predictably. However, the R/T Roadsters outnumbered the GTS Coupes by three-to-one, so an instructor's odds of avoiding riding "second seat" with a Viper R/T driver (who thought he could hang with the GTS Vipers) were quite slim. If he was on top of his game, an instructor could E-brake a driver and take the wheel when the rear end stepped out too far. If not, they ate a wall.

### The New 2003 Viper Roadster

Well, the days of the unpredictable, flex-flier Viper R/T Roadsters are long gone. The 2003 Viper is a world-class sports car, with a much stiffer chassis, advanced ABS racing brakes, a very comfortable interior and the most powerful production engine of any American sports car. Dodge has

upped the Viper's output from 450 to 500 hp. Most importantly, the Viper has been improved to handle the increased power.

The new Viper Roadster has every creature comfort one could want in a convertible sports car. Gone is the dated Viper targa top, and in its place is a nifty disappearing soft top. Gone are the plastic side curtains, and in their place are slick electronic windows. Gone is the older Viper R/T's chassis flex, thanks to the new titanium cowl which makes the Viper's chassis as honest and structurally sound as any roadster on the market.

The 2003 Viper Roadster has very comfortable leather sport seats, an adjustable foot pedal cluster, easy-to-read analog gauges and factory mounting

KEEP RIGHT >>



## VIPER VS. VIPER

In a head-to-head matchup of tire-shredding horsepower against high-flying afterburner thrust, the new 500 hp Dodge Viper SRT-10 challenged the US Air Force's leading multi-role fighter in acceleration trials at Luke Air Force Base in Glendale, Arizona. The event was held over two days as part of the annual Luke Days air show. "Ripley's Believe It Or Not," TBS Superstation's original reality series hosted by Dean Cain, was on hand to tape the race.

"It was an absolutely awesome ride," said Herb Helbig, Senior Manager, Vehicle Synthesis, Performance Vehicle Operations (PVO) at DaimlerChrysler Corp. "Ripley's got us racing the jet both times—with and without afterburners—using the Dodge Viper SRT-10 and the Competition Coupe. There were almost 140,000 people in attendance, and they were all lining the fences cheering their hearts out for their favorite Viper."

The race pitted car against jet in a side-by-side, standing-start, half-mile drag race on parallel runways. Dodge Vipers raced the F-16—nicknamed the "Viper"—to the speed at which the jet became airborne: approximately 150 mph. The Dodge Viper covered the course in around 15 seconds.

Races featured a pre-production 2003 Dodge Viper SRT-10 convertible, driven by Helbig, against the Lockheed Martin F-16 Fighting Falcon, flown at military power by Captain Glen "Nugget" Richards of the 309th Fighter Squadron (the "Wild Ducks") based at Luke AFB.

Each day then pitted a prototype 2003 Dodge Viper Competition Coupe against another F-16 Viper flown by Captain Dan Potas—call sign "Scrappy"—also from the Wild Ducks. For the second showdown, DaimlerChrysler's PVO team would tap more horsepower and make their runs on racing slicks, while the USAF countered with a takeoff run at full afterburner.

In the "tale of the tape," the F-16 boasts approximately 25,000 pounds of thrust in a compact, 19,000-pound package capable of more than 1,500 mph. By comparison, the Dodge Viper's 500-plus pound-feet of torque, 3,357-pound curb weight and 190 mph top speed earn it the honor of being America's Ultimate Sports Car.

"It was a chance for us to have a little fun," added Helbig. "We're proud of the Dodge Viper's performance capabilities, and this was a chance to race for bragging rights against one of the few things capable of matching the Viper's acceleration. We're also very proud to have been invited here to support Luke Air Force Base and our nation's military." ■



Photo: Chrysler

■ The 2003 Dodge Viper Competition Coupe squared off against the US Air Force's F-16 "Viper" at Luke Air Force Base in Glendale, Arizona, for a recent broadcast of "Ripley's Believe It or Not." (Are you wondering which Viper won? See sidebar.)

points for a five-point competition harness, should you choose to install racing belts for track use. The Viper's exterior styling makes the new roadster look much less bulky. In fact, it looks quite trim.

### The 2003 Viper in Motion

In a recent Dodge test program in Auburn Hills, Michigan, this author had a chance to drive the new 500 hp, six-speed manual transmission Viper at speed on an autocross course. Okay, let's forget about the Viper's awesome new styling and greatly improved interior creature comforts for just a minute and get down to the important stuff—performance and handling!

Shod with ultra-wide, low-profile Michelin run-flat tires (on 18x10 front wheels, 19x13 rear), the 2003 Viper Roadster accelerated off the starting line like a missile. The big surprise, however, came when I went to "set the front end" under heavy trail braking and turned into the first corner. The Viper slowed down, turned in and rotated its rear end as if the feat were choreographed by the Barishnikov. No understeer. No steering correction. No oversteer. Just perfect balance. Dodge has managed to synthesize the Viper's power, braking and handling to achieve the promise of performance which we hoped would be possible in the original R/Ts.

Not only does the new 2003 Viper Roadster look more svelte and more

athletic, it *IS* more svelte and more athletic! The 405 hp Corvette Z06 used to be my favorite "back road racer" of choice. However, in the correct hands, the new 500 hp Viper Roadster is the new bad boy of the back roads—and autocross courses. Could it use a little more rear tire? Perhaps so, but that is all. The new 2003 Viper has more power and better handling capabilities than most sports car drivers will ever utilize.

Considering a Ferrari 360 Modena? Forget it. *This* is the car you really need! Buy this machine and you could have a genuine chance to smoke that guy who occasionally shows up in the black Cobra roadster at The Pavilions on Saturday night. When it comes to performance, the 2003 Viper is the real deal, and it is civilized enough for everyday driving. ■

With a Bachelor of Science from USC and a minor in Business Communication, **TIM SHARP** became a professional road racer of 25 years. He has ten SCCA and IMSA racing championships, set 30 lap records, and is a former Bondurant and Skip Barber race driving instructor. He has been a works driver for VW, McKnight, Autodynamics, Porsche, Ralt, Toyota/TRD and TOM's/Toyota. He and his son Spencer currently race a Factory Five NASA Spec Roadster, which posted seven class wins in seven races in 2002.

Sharp's latest project? Restoring a 1956 Chris-Craft speed boat which he and his wife Kristin recently purchased while at the Monterey Historic races. Is it powered by the original 6-cylinder Grey Marine engine? No way... the Sharps have a Chevy 350 ready to drop into the little mahogany woody once the hull restoration is complete!

## POLICE PAGE



**Y**ou're driving down a major road, listening to your radio without a care in the world when all of a sudden you see a flash. Initially, you manage to convince yourself that it was the guy in the car next to you that actually got nabbed, but when the ticket comes in the mail a few weeks later, you have to suck it up and face the consequences. The crystal clear picture seems like undeniable proof that you were guilty of speeding.

If you have not gone through this experience yourself, chances are you know someone who has. Photo enforcement has become more and more common throughout Arizona, and it is saving lives.

We spoke with Lieutenant Ron Warner of the Paradise Valley Police Department, the first department in the United States to use photo enforcement (for speeding) in October 1987.

In the mid-1980's northeast Phoenix and north Scottsdale experienced dramatic population growth. With no freeways and only three surface roads leading from the northeast valley to downtown Phoenix, the rise in traffic resulted in a great increase in traffic accidents. With three officers on patrol in Paradise Valley at any given time, this placed a tremendous drain on available resources and they needed to find a viable way to address this problem. At this time a private company demonstrated

their system of traffic control utilizing photo enforcement; PVPD tried it and it worked. In August 1996 the Department added red light cameras to its photo enforcement program.

Overall since 1987, the Department has had a reduction in collisions of nearly 50%



Photo: Paradise Valley Police Department

and a similar reduction in injuries. This is phenomenal when you consider the fact that the population and traffic have continued to increase.

The laws under which photo enforcement is conducted are the same throughout Arizona. Violations are civil in nature and the processing and service meet all legal requirements.

Don't think that just because your citation arrived in your mailbox without the uneasy conversation of a road stop, that it is any less imposing or important. Photo enforcement citations received in

the mail are identical to those issued by officers. The fines are the same and points are charged to your license.

Does the idea of automated judgment give you pause? We asked whether there is any leeway granted by the photo enforcement systems; is there no room for

subjectivity? Lt. Warner points out that there is a threshold at which photographs are taken, safely above the posted speed limit. No one receives a citation for going one or two miles over the limit. However, there is no threshold for red light violations; if the light is red when you enter the intersection, your deed is done and a citation is issued.

The bottom line on photo enforcement is simple: speed enforcement and red light enforcement save lives, prevent injuries, and help both the driver and the community avoid property damage. ■





# CUTE UTE? FREELANDER'S ALSO A TOUGH LITTLE BRUTE

BY LARRY EDSALL

**T**hey're the "cute utes," the compact sport-utility vehicles that are fine for picnics in the park or even for bringing home the groceries through a couple of inches of snow. But you wouldn't necessarily want to venture very far from pavement with one, would you?

While its size and styling qualify it for "cute ute" recognition, the Land Rover Freelander also is a tough little customer that lets you venture far a field without fret.

We've driven Range Rovers and Discoveries and even a Defender 90, and we've gone up and over mountains and down into – and surprisingly out of – big, deep mud holes. Every time we were astounded by at least two things: the vehicles' amazing capabilities and their sometimes astronomical prices.

Land Rovers are not inexpensive vehicles. They're not necessarily overpriced, it's just that it's one thing to think of a mud bath as the kind of luxury you pay for at the spa, but it's another to think of taking your luxury vehicle into the mud.

## Built for the job

But playing in the mud and surviving the Sahara and outlasting the Outback and returning from the rain forest and are precisely what Land Rovers are designed to do.

Just like its larger siblings, the new Freelander can get you into – and then out of – some remarkably nasty but spectacularly beautiful places. But unlike its larger siblings, it does all that for the price of a compact 4X4X4-door pickup truck or a sports sedan with all-wheel drive.

Our test vehicle is a 2002 Land Rover Freelander SE, and for its \$27,775 base

price you get a V6 powertrain, permanent four-wheel drive, Hill Descent Control (which we'll write more about in a few paragraphs), a stiff unibody chassis with long-travel, independent suspension, 17-inch wheels, keyless entry, power

everything – including the rear window – lots of storage nooks and cup holders and two full glove boxes and privacy glass, plus leather seats, a thick, leather-wrapped and tilting steering wheel and a CD player.

There's also a Freelander S model for \$24,975. It has cloth seats and 16-inch wheels. Or there's the HSE for \$31,575 with a power sunroof, special Alpaca beige leather, special "flat-spoke" wheels, a 240-watt Harmon Kardon audio system, in-dash six-CD changer and a navigation system.

Can we mix and match? We'll take the S version but with the 17-inch wheels and tires from the SE. And as long as we're at it, we also want the SE's fat, leather-wrapped steering wheel that provides such a secure grip and yet such precise and properly weighted feedback whether we were zipping along the

THE EAST VERDE TRAIL IS RATED A "4" IN OUR OFF-ROAD GUIDEBOOK. NOT A PROBLEM.

Photo: Ford Motor Company

Interstate or allowing Hill Descent Control to control our descent on a steep off-road trail above Arizona's East Verde River.

## Hitting the trail

The East Verde River Trail we follow is rated a "4" in our *Backcountry Adventures: Arizona* off-road guidebook, which recommends high-clearance four-wheel-drive vehicles for routes of this difficulty. The trail begins just north of Prescott with a turn off from Arizona 87 onto forest road 209 at mile marker 256. The route is scenic, includes river crossings, some narrow roadway, beautiful scenery and takes you past the entrance to the Crackerjack Mine. It also takes you through several gates designed to keep cattle on one side or the other; if a gate is closed as you approach, be sure to close it after you've driven through.

The East Verde River Trail ends near the old East Verde settlement site, and if you don't want to backtrack, you can return to Prescott on the Mazatzal Wilderness Trail, a much easier off-road trail to drive. However, be cautious, we encountered some oncoming, high-speed ranch-hand traffic the day we drove this route.

The Freelander's front suspension provides only 7.2 inches of clearance to the rocky road, but its independent suspension offers more than seven inches of front-wheel travel, with more than eight inches of travel at the rear.

The Freelander's 175-horsepower, 2.5-liter, double overhead-cam V6 also has the torque (177 pound-feet) to easily get us up the steepest climbs, and then Hill Descent Control simply walks us down the other side.

The Freelander has a five-speed automatic transmission that never has to hunt for the right gear, not even on the winding four-lane mountain road that brought us to the trailhead. The all-wheel-drive setup includes viscous coupling that gets the engine's torque to the wheels that have the best grip. Electronic traction control system then limits dig-in, or what some call "surface polishing," that often happen when a wheel spins without achieving grip.

## It's all about control

But the technology we appreciate most is Hill Descent Control, which works the vehicle's special all-terrain antilock braking system in conjunction with the



Photo: Larry Edsall

■ The East Verde River Trail is narrow and provides some steep inclines as it also provides some stunning views of the valley northwest of Prescott. The Freelander thrives on such a tough trail.

engine management system. The driver steers, you keep your feet off the pedals, and the Freelander descends the hill at a walking pace (actually, at 5.6 mph). If you encounter a sharp turns or really rough surface during the descent, the system's sensors respond and reduce your speed to 4.4 mph.

The system can be engaged – by pushing a button on the center console — in first gear or reverse. Why reverse? Sometimes you find a hill so steep or slippery that even a Land Rover can't climb all the way to the top. Imagine how terrifying backing down is in a vehicle

without Hill Descent Control.

Been there. Don't that. It wasn't pretty. Although designed primarily for off-pavement conditions, HDC also works if you find yourself trying to negotiate a steep, icy street or driveway.

The 17-inch, 225/55 aspect Michelin 4X4 Synchronic XSE tires are wonderfully sure-footed on this trail even though they are primarily on-road tires and thus very quiet even at Interstate speeds. They work through the MacPherson strut suspension, rack-and-pinion steering





Photos: Ford Motor Company



■ The Freelander may be a tough little brute, but there's nothing brutal about its interior, which includes all the features you expect from a luxury brand such as Land Rover.

■ Freelander's 2.5-liter V6 provides 175 horsepower, more than sufficient to meet the demands of the East Verde River Trail, and it more than holds its own on urban freeways and rural Interstates as well.

heavy to pull down hatchback. Another nice feature: the rear door glass is a power window that goes up and down.

The driver's seat has adjustable lumbar support. The driver also has a full glove box, just like on the passenger's side. There are expandable cup holders in both front doors as well as a smaller cup holder that pops up out of the top of the dashboard.

Passengers in the back seat have plenty of legroom and a good view of the town or country thanks to "stadium"

style seat architecture. They also have an armrest, with cup holders, that folds out of the middle seat back and ceiling-mounted cargo nets to stow small items.

For larger objects, the Freelander provides 19.1 cubic feet of cargo room behind the back seats. Or you can fold those seats flat and the area expands to 46.6 cubic feet.

Pretty cute, this ute. But pretty tough, too. Maybe we should call it the "cute brute." ■

After working as a sports editor for daily newspapers in Michigan, **Larry Edsall** was on staff for 12 years at *AutoWeek* magazine, most of it as managing editor. He has driven more than half a million miles testing cars on four continents. He moved to Phoenix to help launch [www.izoom.com](http://www.izoom.com), an automotive website, and also helped to found PAPA, the Phoenix Automotive Press Association. His book on concept cars is scheduled for publication in Italy in the fall of 2003.



■ Land Rover already sells the five-door version of its Freelander (top) here; soon the three-door model (lower) will be available here as well.



system and that nice, thick steering wheel to provide the feedback and balanced, confident control a driver wants — on road, off road and even, and maybe especially, when the "road" is the rocky bed of the East Verde River, which we ford several times this day.

The Freelander is Land Rover's first unibody vehicle, but the company tried to live up to its rugged body-on-frame tradition by incorporating box-section rails and eight integral crossmembers

into the chassis and with special construction techniques to strength the upper body as well. The body is rigid, which lets everything attached to it better do its intended purpose, and its sound structure and very good sealing help provide a very quiet passenger compartment, even at Interstate speeds.

Although the Freelander was introduced in Europe in 1997, some 70 percent of its parts were revised before its recent North American launch.

The exterior styling is "cute ute," but uses non-rusting polymer composite

front fenders and ruggedly protective polypropylene for the front bumper, wheel-arch moldings, lower rocker panels and lower part of the cargo door.

The fuel tank is a molded polymer and is mounted inboard of the rear differential, and is further protected by a skid plate. The bottom of the engine is similarly protected and the exhaust system is tucked up under the floor pan to help keep it from being whacked by a boulder.

The Freelander's rear door hinges on the passenger side, which means it opens and closes like a real door, not like a

Photos: Ford Motor Company

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Forty-Nine...

GT40...

Mustang Mach I...

Mustang Pony...

Thunderbird...

From LA to DC, Dallas to Chicago, the Ford Living Legends Tour made the rounds this summer and fall, including a late September round at ten Arizona Ford dealers in the Phoenix metro area. Excitement was in the air as we attended to get our first in-the-flesh look at the GT40 and Forty-Nine, neither of which had ever been in Arizona before.

Ford's Living Legends Studio is a modern-day reflection of legendary "skunkworks" team which toiled in a small corner of the Ford design studio in Dearborn, Michigan, in the 1950s. This is the group that developed the original Thunderbird. Today's Studio serves as curator of Ford's classic nameplates, developing concepts for new and existing products. There are four elements to the Living Legend line-up, and five vehicles visited us.

**GT40**

The original GT40 was built in the mid-1960s to compete for the trophy at the legendary Le Mans race circuit. This racer is credited with changing performance car history, placing 1-2-3 at the 24 Heures de Le Mans in 1966 and going on to win for the next three consecutive years. From Le Mans to Sebring to Daytona, the GT40 was instrumental in the careers of driving

legends such as Dan Gurney and AJ Foyt.

The concept shares the name, and the look and feel, of the original, but is more than 18" longer and nearly four inches taller. Just 45 days after the GT40 concept car appeared at the North American International Auto Show earlier this year, Ford responded to an incredible popular response by announcing it would build the 500 hp supercar in 2003, reportedly to be called simply the Ford GT.

Stay tuned! We have more photos, specifications, historical information to share with you; watch for a complete writeup on the Ford GT in an upcoming edition of *Arizona Driver* magazine.

**Forty-Nine**

New car design and production came to a halt in the US during World War II and didn't take much of another step forward until the revolutionary 1949 Ford hit the streets. Sleek, low and with integrated fenders, the '49 Ford influenced the entire industry from that point forward.

The Forty-Nine concept car is true to its roots, with simple shapes, classic proportions, clean body panels and modest use of chrome. This 21st century car is still ready for a night of rock'n'roll and drive-ins.



Ford GT40



Ford Forty-Nine



Ford Mustang Mach I

The Forty-Nine coupe that visited Arizona is one of only two in the world; the other is a convertible also created for the auto show circuit.

**Mustang Mach I and Pony**

After its 1964 1/2 introduction at the New York World's Fair, it didn't take that long for the Ford Mustang to become the best-selling car in history, eclipsing the Model T. The car's popularity has continued unabated for almost 40 years, and has been produced in many iterations, from the Boss 302, Boss 429 and Mach I machines of the early '70s to the Bullitt and SVT Cobra available today.

The powerful Mach I and specially-appointed Pony versions for 2003 carry on the heritage of those classics.

**Thunderbird**

Today's Thunderbird also began its new life as an auto show concept car, and returned to regular production in the 2001 model year. That successful adaptation of a priceless Ford icon to today's technologies and tastes was instrumental in developing the Living Legends Studio concept. ■



Ford Mustang Pony



Ford Thunderbird

Photos: Ford Motor Company



# Headed north?

A day or two of advanced winter training will improve your skills year-round.

by Mark Cox

Maybe you're headed to Flagstaff for a few days, or to a ski weekend in the White Mountains, or driving home for the holidays. If it's been awhile since you've tackled the white stuff, you might find your confidence is down. You've long since dispatched your last set of snow tires, and you've seldom actually used your four wheel drive.

Plan your trip to include a couple of days at the Bridgestone Winter Driving School in Colorado, and you'll learn that driving on ice and snow can be safe, reliable and even a lot of fun.

## The challenge

True driving enthusiasts drive for the love of driving and the freedom of new experiences; they are always looking for an opportunity to enjoy driving in as many ways as possible.

One of the most enjoyable ways to learn more about the relationship between you and your car, and to learn more about yourself, is to intentionally use the car in different environments and explore the sensations and possibilities that go along with every combination of terrain and climate. Expand your horizon. Branch out and experience everything the world has to offer from the driver's seat.

Arizona is the perfect location for the driving enthusiast, with the mountains and almost every combination of spring, fall, summer and winter just a short drive away. For true explorers, the winter capital of the US is only a day's drive north, in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

## The sport of driving

Give some thought to the sport of driving. It is a sport, not just a way to get from point A to point B, but a sport that can be mastered at a variety of different skill levels. Upper level participants have learned a very important lesson, whether you are driving down the road minding your own business or charging around a race track surrounded by other competitors: traction is very big part of your driving life.

Most drivers don't give a second thought to loss of traction until they are either involved in an emergency situation or have driven far enough north to experience nature's version of loss of traction: snow and ice. For some it's an annoyance, for others a challenge, and for some just plain frightening. For the enlightened driving enthusiast this becomes an opportunity to see just how refined their car control skills are.

The challenge of driving on ice and perfecting the skills required with minimal traction translate directly to driving on gravel, in mud, on a wet highway and even on pavement at higher speeds. Come discover a facility that provides an opportunity to make these difficult driving situations a thing of the past. Yes, history. Driving on the most slippery surfaces available is actually entertainment for drivers who have experienced the Bridgestone Winter Driving School.



Photo by Kyle W. Cox

■ The School's vehicle fleet features Toyota front-, rear- and four-wheel drive vehicles—including compacts, sedans, trucks and SUVs.

## The School

This winter driving school is the only one of its kind in the United States and is patterned after the great ice driving schools of Europe, where driving on changing surfaces is not only a way of life but a sport actively practiced by a majority of drivers. Coaching is available in a variety of disciplines, from safe driving programs for the new driver to

race training for the professional racer and every skill level in between. The program is operated on a 120-acre purpose-built facility in Steamboat Springs, offering two distinct one-mile-long, ten-turn road courses, covered with several

hundred thousand gallons of water under freezing conditions, to create the most challenging driving situations available. Snow bank guardrails delineate the track and provide good visibility even in winter's worst conditions; however,



Photos by Kyle W. Cox

Steamboat Springs boasts over 300 sunny days a year, while accumulating record levels of snowfall.

This facility doesn't just cater to the northern climes: during the winter of 2001/02, participants came from all 50 states and 11 foreign countries for this exclusive training. Ages range from 15 to 82, and men and women attend in almost equal numbers, proving that the modern driving enthusiast isn't necessarily male.

A fleet of new Toyota vehicles are provided and represent all types of drive and body configurations, including front-, rear- and four-wheel drive in the form of sport compacts, sedans, SUVs and trucks.

Every program starts with participants experiencing the course from the seat of a fully winter-prepared, two-way radio-equipped school vehicle. After successful completion of the basics, the full track is made available to participants for practice, in their own personal vehicles if desired.

Hands-on training is the order of the day, regardless of the program. As with any sport, watching videos and reading books can only go so far in teaching the necessary skills; it's the seat of the pants feel, muscle memory and proper control inputs that make the difference when it counts.

Classroom time is brief and typically limited to the initial briefing and video tape analysis of driver-on-course performance. Beyond that it's on-course driving.

The Bridgestone Winter Driving Coaching Staff are professional drivers with experience in most every form of professional motorsports. They have each spent hundreds of hours at the edge of

## DRIVING TIPS & TRICKS

### Tips for safe driving in winter conditions:

- Scrape all snow and ice off of your vehicle—including the roof!
- Keep your headlights clear of ice, snow, and mud
- Do not wear restrictive clothing, such as bulky jackets or mittens
- Keep a continuous flow of warm air circulating, not hot air—hot air will make you drowsy!
- Adjust the driver's seat for minimum strain
- Anticipate
- Slow down!

### Tricks for safe driving in all conditions:

- When driving during daylight hours, wear a good pair of sunglasses to reduce eye strain and fatigue.
- Any time you drive in less than ideal weather, make it a habit to turn "Wipers on, Lights on."
- When driving at night, avoid looking directly at oncoming headlights. Instead, look down and to the right, and follow the edge of the road.

control, perfecting the nuances that keep them on the proper side of that edge.

The coaches clearly enjoy their role in helping participants improve as much as possible in the shortest amount of time feasible, and to do so in a fun, friendly atmosphere. There are no sad faces at this facility; this all about fun while learning new skills for the sport of driving.

## Everyday application

The skills learned at the Bridgestone Winter Driving School go far beyond winter driving. The same skills apply in every driving condition, in any type of weather, but by improving their skills at this school, participants have practiced in the most difficult situation possible, so everything else follows easily.

After you've spent a few days in a place that averages 27 feet of snow per winter and can hit 58 below zero, wherever else you're driving probably sounds easier already. But the real key is the knowledge and confidence you've gained at the Bridgestone Winter Driving School. By the time you get back to northern Arizona, you'll not only have eliminated any unease, you will actually welcome the chance to try out your new skills. ■

**MARK COX** is a professional race, stunt and precision driver who competes and performs on every type of slippery surface imaginable, as well as on pavement. In addition to piloting an FIA International Group N rally car in the SCCA US Pro Rally Series, Mark is the Director of the Bridgestone Winter Driving School in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

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# THE INSIDE TRACK: BRIEFS & RUMORS

A summary of auto news from industry sources, trade journals and consumer magazines compiled for Arizona Driver by Bill & Barbara Schaffer of Auto Digest.

■ **Audi** will introduce a two-door coupe version of the A4 this fall at the Paris auto show. Built from the new A4 Cabriolet mechanicals, the new coupe should have the standard A4 engine choices, but the



S4, which will come out in late in 2003 or early 2004, will be powered by a snug-fitting 4.2-liter V-8 from the Audi A8. Sources say the V-8 will be rated at 371hp and will have three transmission choices: 6-speed manual, 6-speed automatic or a 7-speed sequential. A year or so later there expect the RS4, which will have a twin turbo version of the V-8 rated at 450hp.

■ **BMW** is reportedly trying to decide whether to build an M version (M7) of the upcoming 760i flagship sedan, but according to *Motor Trend* magazine a problem exists because it could potentially outperform the company's next generation M5. That means the perennial top performing M5 will get a V-10 engine and the M7 would have an even more powerful V-12 engine. Somehow, that doesn't seem like a problem!



■ **Ferrari** is taking its good name into some new markets. The first Ferrari retail outlet filled with pricey Ferrari brand items opened in March in Maranello, Italy, and plans call for other stores in major cities worldwide. According to *Automobile* magazine, there is also a rumor of a possible Ferrari hotel in Las Vegas and Ferrari theme parks. Ferrari has also decided to sell company stock on the open market.

■ **Bentley** will offer a new coupe starting in November 2003 that will be unlike anything produced by the luxury manufacturer. Although it's not the official name, the GT coupe will have turbocharged W-12

engine producing more than 500 hp and will be the first Bentley to have all-wheel drive. The four-passenger coupe will turn from 0 to 60 mph in less than five seconds and should sell.

■ The **Chevrolet Impala SS** name will be revived, with a new performance edition sporting a supercharged 3.8-liter V-6 engine by the middle of the 2003 model year., according to General Motors Vice President John Middlebrook. The first front-wheel drive SS will be rated at 240 hp like the supercharged versions of Buick Regal and Pontiac Bonneville.

■ **Volkswagen** is adding a new six-speed Tiptronic automatic transmission option to the upcoming New Beetle Cabrio when it launches late this fall. The car will also get an optional 1.8-liter (180hp) turbo engine about mid 2003.

■ **Nissan** will offer a 350Z convertible by early spring 2003. It will have a power soft top that fits neatly under a body-colored tonneau behind the seats. The Z car will have the same 3.5-liter 287-hp V-6 engine as the coupe. Official details and photos are not yet available. The price is estimated to be about \$35,000.

■ **Infiniti** officials have hinted that all-wheel drive options are being considered for some of its impressive new rear-wheel drive vehicles. Recent introductions that may be under consideration include the



highly rated G35 sedan, G35 coupe and M45 V-8 powered sedan.

■ **Toyota** will offer a new stepside version of the full-size Tundra pickup starting with the 2003 model year. The powertrain will include only the 4.7-liter V-8 with a choice of two- or four-wheel drive. The front end is also bolder.



■ **Mini Cooper** sales have been so strong that they have sold more of the new style cars in the first five months of production than the 10,000 that were originally sold in the United States during the first eight years (1960 to 1967).

■ The American Automobile Association (AAA) discovered in a recent survey that car rental rates for the same size car on an average varies as much as 77 percent from one major rental company to the next. The moral is to shop around before you reserve your next rental car.

■ The **Volkswagen Microbus**, legendary for decades, is coming back for the 2005 model year. The retro-styled van will open up another new segment as a crossover vehicle between a minivan and limousine. The original had a 25-hp engine, but the new one will have a 230-hp 3.2-liter V-6, which should pull the hills much better. This one will also have 20-inch wheels, 5-speed automatic transmission, rear view camera and a DVD game station with seven-inch foldaway screen. VW showed a running prototype at car shows a couple of years ago. VW expects to build about 80,000 of the



Microbuses annually on the T5 platform, which will also be used for commercial vehicles. It won't be available until late in 2005 at the earliest.

■ Early spy photos of the next generation **XJ Jaguar** sedan show a car very similar to the current model that debuted in 1968... that is unless the company is road testing a dummy car. What is known is that the new car weighs less, thanks to an all-new aluminum alloy chassis and bodywork. The powerplant is expected to remain the 4.0-liter V-8 engine, with a supercharged 4.2-liter V-8 coming later.

■ **Cadillac** won't build the exotic Cien sports car now, but that doesn't mean it won't get built down the road when market conditions warrant building a \$200,000 domestic sports car. Cadillac had planned to build about 300 of the V-12 (750-hp) super sports cars initially.

■ **Volkswagen** has shown some US auto writers a new high performance Golf called the R32, but says it will only be available in Europe. *AutoWeek* magazine said the R32 is powered by a

237-hp 3.2-liter V-6 that accelerates from 0 to 62 mph (the European equivalent of 0 to 100 km/h) in 6.4 seconds, and with a top speed, unofficially of about 152 mph. Obviously, it very likely the R32 will be coming to America, but the question is when.

■ Rumors persist of a new 180-mph **Porsche** front-engined coupe similar to the long-discontinued 928 (built from 1978 through 1995). Mechanical elements from the new Cayenne sport utility style vehicle could be used in such a coupe. *AutoWeek* magazine says plans for the coupe have been underway at Porsche's Stuttgart technical center since January. Don't look for it before late 2007.

■ The **Chevy Avalanche** pickup will be offered in an unclad version starting in the first quarter of 2003. The pickup, which allows the owner to expand the cargo area into the rear seat area by removing and lowering the wall behind the rear seats, has often been criticized for the extensive plastic body cladding. The official name of the undressed truck will be "Avalanche Without Body Hardware."

■ In another effort to boost sales, **Chrysler** is issuing a limited edition of 10,000 (7500 to stay in the US) of the PT Cruiser painted a tangerine color and fitted with the new 215-hp 2.4-liter



turbocharged engine. Prices are \$27,065 for the manual transmission model and \$27,505 for the AutoStick version.

■ **Ford** is expected to discontinue the huge Excursion SUV after the 2004 model year. According to *Autobest Daily*, an auto executive newsletter, the 19-foot long

SUV has not sold enough vehicles to reach its 40,000-unit break-even point. The Excursion, designed originally to compete with the Chevrolet Suburban, has also been the target of criticism for its size and 10 mpg fuel economy.



■ **Acura** is offering a Factory Performance package for the RSX Type S that includes a wing, stiffer springs and shocks, 17-inch alloy wheels with 225/45VR-17 Yokohama tires, slotted brake rotors and high performance pads along with some cosmetic enhancements. The limited edition package is \$4,800, plus the dealer installation charge. It's not available except as a dealer installed package, but the plus is that the kit carries a factory warranty. There are only 1,000 of the packages available.

■ Although it's not official, rumor is that **Saab** will build the 9X concept. Saab officials categorize the 9X as "multi-dynamic" because it can be easily changed to take on attributes of a sports coupe, station wagon, roadster and pickup truck becoming virtually the Swiss Army Knife of vehicles. The 300-hp all-wheel drive car is expected to weigh in at less than 3000 pounds and will accelerate from 0 to 60 mph in less than 6.0 seconds.

■ A cornerstone of **Toyota's** new Scion brand of vehicles, designed for younger buyers, will be an Americanized version of the Japanese bB (Black Box) to be called the Scion bbX here. The cube-ish vehicle is described as a living room on wheels with "phone-booth-like headroom" according to Jim Press, Toyota Motor Sales USA's senior vice president and chief operating officer. The concept comes with an available 1350-watt stereo system that should shake any neighborhood this living room may be driving through. ■

# Pocket-Change Rocket!



by Larry Edsall

"The interior really reminds me of an Audi TT," a friend said as he admired the design features inside the car. As another walked up from behind the vehicle, he expressed his delight with the big exhaust tips that peek prominently from beneath the rear bumper, and with the way the 17-inch wheels and tires so nicely fill the space below the coupe's rear fenders.

A man in a nearby office saw us and decided to come out into the parking lot to take a look for himself.

The vehicle that attracted all this attention is the newest Hyundai Tiburon GT V6.

## The Tiburon's Powertrain

Tiburon is the Spanish word for shark, and this shark-shaped coupe packs a shark-like bite thanks to its 2.7-liter V6 engine. The engine is the Hyundai-developed Delta powerplant that also powers the Santa Fe sport/utility vehicle and the mid-size Sonata sedan. The engine has an aluminum alloy block and heads and uses double overhead cams to generate 181 horsepower and 177 pound-feet of torque.

That horsepower figure is almost

identical to the 180 ponies provided by the 1.8-liter four-cylinder engine in the Toyota Celica GT-S and falls well short of the 200 hp produced by the 2.0-liter four in the Acura RSX Type S. However, what separates the Tiburon from its competitors is torque; its 177 pound-feet figure dwarfs the Celica's 150 and even the Acura's 142.

While a high-output four-cylinder usually needs to be spun well up into its rev range to produce its power, the Tiburon's V6 feels strong even when the needle on the tachometer is far below redline, and the immediate and direct pickup of the car's clutch and the quick and direct shifting of the six-speed gearbox let the enthusiast driver make use of that power.

There's nothing finicky about this clutch and gearbox combination. You don't need fancy footwork to get them to work together. You don't have to hunt for the pickup point, nor do you have to hunt to move the shifter into an adjacent gear. Its throws are sure and certain whether you're going up, down or diagonally through the pattern.

In timed testing, *Motor Trend* magazine clocked the Tiburon GT V6 from zero to 60 mph in 7.01 seconds on its way to a 15.34 second quarter-mile time at 90.80 mph.

The engine is strong enough that you do have to be careful to avoid spinning the front tires off the line, but once they grip, the car pulls steadily as you work your way up the gearbox, even after you've reached sixth gear and gone well beyond the posted legal limit.

But you don't have to exceed the speed limit to enjoy this powertrain, or the package around it.

TIBURON IS SPANISH FOR SHARK, AND THIS SHARK-SHAPED COUPE PACKS A SHARK-LIKE BITE

## Remarkable Value

There's at least one more thing that separates the Tiburon from the Toyota or Acura: price. The Celica GT-S has a base price of \$21,555. The Acura RSX Type S starts at \$23,170. The Tiburon GT V6 we drove lists for \$18,744 and that figure includes destination charges and the optional UltraSports Package 1, which for a mere \$250 includes a six-speed manual transmission, aluminum throttle, brake

and clutch pedals, a rear spoiler and cloth sports seats.

The Tiburon GT V6's \$17,999 base price includes leather seats, but Hyundai understands that enthusiast drivers who want things such as six-speed manual gearboxes and aluminum pedals also want cloth seats that hold them in place much better than slippery leather seats when they're out doing autocrosses or driving on twisting mountain roads, so they're part of the UltraSports option.

## Tiburon in the High Country

We took a day and did a nearly 600-mile drive, heading east from Phoenix on US 60, then turning off at Globe on US 70



Photos: Hyundai

■ The Tiburon boasts changes inside and out.

through Safford. Just beyond Solomon we caught US 191 which takes you from the desert floor on a climb to more than 9,000 feet, where instead of tall saguaro your view is much taller Ponderosa pines.

The road is known as the Coronado Trail, but used to be called Route 666, and certainly lives up to that devilish designation with switchback twists and turns.

Generally speaking, the Tiburon was angelic on the drive. For most of the 100 or so miles up, into and over the mountains, the gearbox got a workout as we toggled back and forth between third and fourth gears.

However, early in the route, in an uphill, right-hand hairpin well dusted by a nearby mining operation, we were reminded how front-wheel-drive cars tend to understeer, even if their front wheels are wrapped by grippy, Z-rated Michelin Pilot Sport tires with their deep V tread pattern. We also learned that anti-lock brakes are an option on the Tiburon, an option not included on our test car. Don't worry; nothing horrible happened; we just used a little more of the pavement than we'd expected, and then took subsequent hairpins a little

slower and wiser.

Unfortunately, ABS is not a stand-alone option, and to get it on your Tiburon GT V6 with a six-speed gearbox you have to order the UltraSports Package 3 that includes a power sunroof and costs \$1,998. Maybe Hyundai doesn't "get it" quite as much as we thought.

The V6 and six-speed provided plenty of power for the sometimes steep climb into the mountains, and the Michelins,



Photo: Larry Edsall

■ The Coronado Trail offers hairpin curves and elevation changes, a great workout for the six-speed.

mounted on unique five-spoke wheels, worked with the 11.0-inch front and 10.2-inch rear disc brakes and with the sport-tuned GT suspension to make the drive an enjoyable experience.

## Totally New and Turning Heads

There was no 2002 model Tiburon; the '03 is all new. The original 1997 Tiburon was built on the Elantra sedan platform. But the 2003 gets its own chassis, which is stiffer, provides a 2.2-inch longer wheelbase and an inch-wider front track. The chassis includes a front subframe and revised hydraulic engine mounts.

The front suspension is MacPherson struts with offset springs and with the antiroll bar mounted directly to the strut. At the rear is a strut-based multi-link setup. The GT gets stiffer springs and shocks, with revised rebound valving, and thicker antiroll bars front and rear.

The car was remarkably quiet and confidently surefooted, even at substantial straight-line speeds. At reasonable speeds, we had time to appreciate such things as the seven-speaker Infinity audio system with its CD player (and cassette, too) with an eight-inch subwoofer

mounted in the cargo hold.

The GT V6 has a thick, leather-wrapped, tilting three-spoke steering wheel, a grippy shifter, black and gray cloth seats, intuitive switchgear and large air conditioning vents. The front seats were supportive yet comfortable, and we didn't suffer even after nearly 600 miles on the road in a single day.

The interior has some nice touches that could go unnoticed on short drives. For

example, there's a notch where the center stack meets the floor console, and that notch provides some room for the driver's right knee, which doesn't have to rest against a hard surface.

Front seat-mounted side airbags are standard in the GT V6. So are remote entry, air conditioning, cruise control, variable intermittent wipers, carpeted floor mats and the Infinity audio system.

The '03 Tiburon is more than two inches longer, more than an inch wider and half-an-inch taller than the '01 model, and beneath that sheetmetal it provides 81.9 cubic feet of passenger space, plus 14.7 cubic feet for cargo. But don't try to sit in the back seats.

We tried—tried being the operative word—because we quickly discovered that even a short adult male cannot sit there. Even Hyundai has installed a warning sticker on the hatchback roof, reminding someone loading the cargo area not to slam the hatch closed while someone is sitting in the back seat.

Hyundai publicity materials say the chrome-ringed gauges are "easy-to-

KEEP RIGHT >>

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Photo: Larry Edsall



Photo: Hyundai

■ The Coronado Trail is a serpentine route that snakes its way from the desert floor to elevations of more than 9000 feet in the mountains near the Arizona-New Mexico border. Hyundai's new Tiburon sports coupe provides a comfortable and stylish way to enjoy the views, and this little road shark packs a nice bite for eating up the miles.

>> cont'd from page 27

read," and they are at night when they provide red-orange numbers against a black background. But in daylight, we found them almost impossible to read through sunglasses.

### Tuned and Ready

Hyundai is racing the Tiburon, modified for competition with all-wheel drive and a 398-horsepower, turbocharged four-cylinder engine, in the SCCA ProRally series

and Hyundai and aftermarket companies have done Tiburon tuning that includes stainless steel exhaust, 19-inch wheels, 13.5-inch Brembo front brakes (with cross-drilled rear rotors) and Eibach springs that lower the car nearly an inch and a half.

But even in its standard skin, this Shark looks menacing and muscular. The body pinches inward between the flared front and rear fenders. There even are gill-like slits behind the front wheels. The car has a high waistline and a short, TT-like greenhouse with broad C-pillars that can

inhibit the driver's peripheral vision.

The headlights are chromed, multi-reflector units, a large and small one on each side of the small grille, set in gray-metallic housings behind covers that bulge out like a shark's eyes. Taillights also are stylish, multi-reflector units.

This Tiburon has no dorsal fin, but there is that high-mounted rear wing that warns of its presence. ■

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# Hats off to Audi!



by Barbara Schaffer



Photos: Audi

**T**he attractive but conservative styling of the A4 Cabriolet features clean and taut surfaces that surround flaring wheel arches. To create a family resemblance, it has a chrome-trimmed grille and chrome exhaust pipes. Brushed aluminum trim around the windshield and waist punctuates the elegant design. The cabriolet is about 20 millimeters (just under an inch) lower than the sedan, giving this droptop a sportier look.

### Mechanical

The A4 cabriolet is powered by an impressive 3.0-liter V-6 aluminum engine that produces 220 horsepower at 6300 rpm and 221 lbs. ft. of torque at 3200. With an electronically limited top speed of 130 mph, the manufacturer claims acceleration from 0-60 mph in a mere 7.5 seconds. The engine is paired with a breakthrough Multitronic™ Continuously

Variable Transmission (CVT) for truly seamless shifts.

A 1.8-liter four-cylinder turbocharged engine will also be available next year.

### Comfort

The A4 offered much comfort for two front seat occupants with the top both up and down (it is amazingly quiet even with the top down). Our vehicle came with the optional windscreen that did a great job in keeping us from getting too windblown and helped eliminate wind noise.

While at a red light, we engaged the top button and put it completely up before the light turned green, an elapsed time of about 24 seconds.

Usually I think convertibles look better with the top down, however, I was quite surprised how good this Audi looks with the top up, and how amazingly tight the top fits... which aids interior quietness and ensures four-season comfort. But

being in Arizona on a beautiful fall day, we did not keep the top up for very long. Another red light and another 24 seconds and we were back to styling.

### Price Range

The A4 3.0 comes standard with leather seating surfaces, a fully automatic dual-zone climate control system, electronic cruise control, power central locking system, power windows and power outside mirrors (with automatic heating when outside temperature is less than 59 degrees). It also has a standard AM/FM stereo with in-dash six-disc CD changer, 12-way sporty power front seats including power lumbar, genuine wood trim, three-spoke leather wrapped sport steering wheel with Tiptronic shift controls, leather covered shift knob and hand brake handle and so much more... for a base price of \$41,500. The 1.8 turbo cabriolet version starts at \$35,000. ■

## UPCOMING FEATURES

### FORD: 100 YEARS 2003 FORD GT



■ Ford's 100th birthday is going to be a major bash all year, but the release of the Ford GT supercar, based on the GT40 show car, may be the icing on the cake.

### CORVETTE: 50 YEARS 50TH ANNIVERSARY CORVETTE



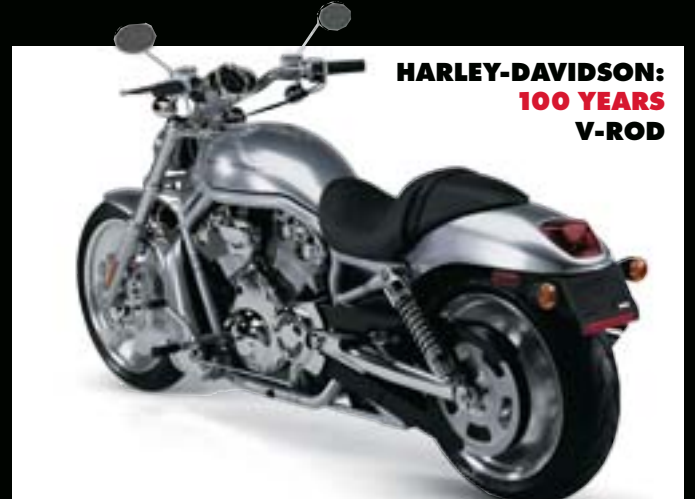
■ For half the time Ford's been on the road, Chevy has had the Corvette in hot pursuit. America's original sports car celebrates its 50th, and we'll dover it.

### SALEEN: 20 YEARS S7 SUPERCAR



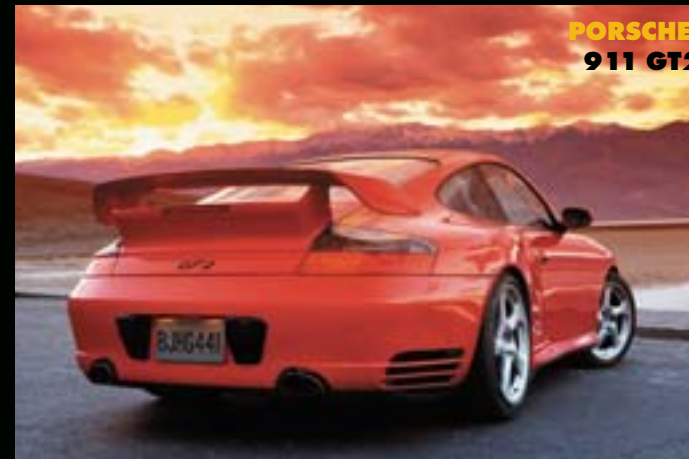
■ Saleen creates high performance vehicles for street and track, including the S7 supercar. Saleen also offers a broad line of performance parts and services.

### HARLEY-DAVIDSON: 100 YEARS V-ROD



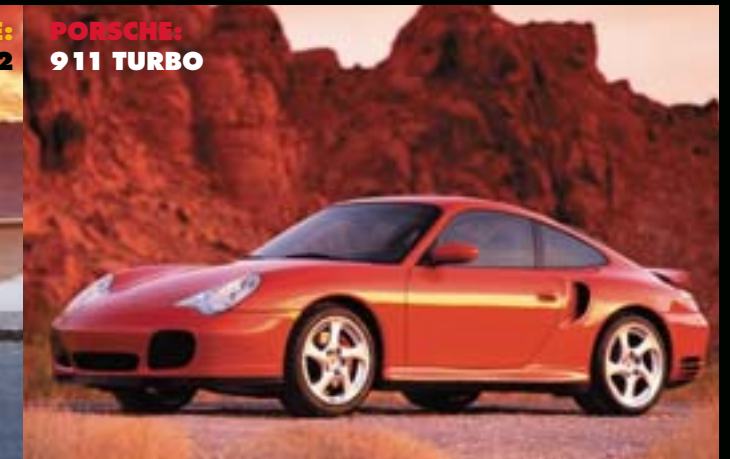
■ Harley-Davidson celebrates its 100th birthday. We take a look at parties planned, and ride the V-Rod.

### PORSCHE: 911 GT2



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