

# ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 9 NUMBER 2  
MARCH-APRIL 2010

## EVENTS...

NASCAR AT PHOENIX INTERNATIONAL RACEWAY  
WHEELS OF WELLNESS EVENT  
AUCTION WRAPUP

## ROAD TRIP...

FOREST ROAD 300: 38 MILES IN 3 HOURS

## VEHICLE DRIVES...

LEXUS LS 600h L HYBRID - VOLKSWAGEN GOLF TDI  
LEXUS GS 460 - MERCEDES-BENZ GLK 350  
BMW X5 DIESEL - GMC TERRAIN AWD SLT-2 - LEXUS RX 350





AMERICRAFT EXPO CENTER AT THE SOUTH FLORIDA FAIRGROUNDS  
**PALM BEACH, FLORIDA - APRIL 1-3, 2010**

# ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

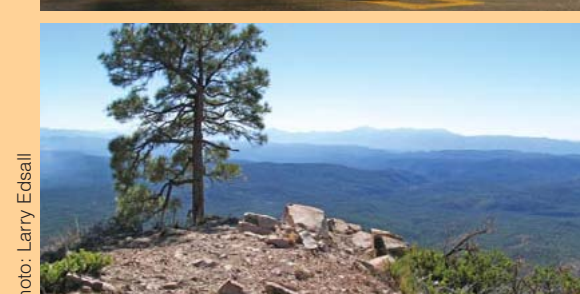
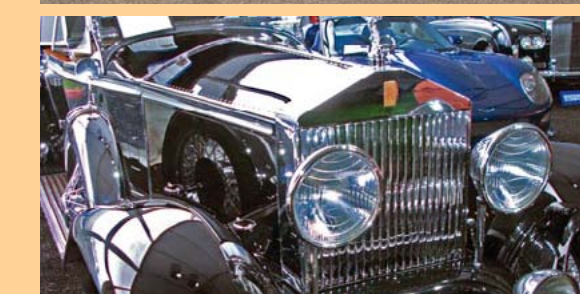


Photo: Larry Edsall

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**COVER:** The stealthy Lexus LS 600h L comes to life in the dark.  
 Photo: Christina Lawrie - [www.shotbychristina.com](http://www.shotbychristina.com)





Spring is in the air here, but we experienced the snow and cold in January at the North American International Auto Show, in Detroit. The atmosphere last year was somber and uncertain, as economic problems mounted and manufacturers pulled out of the show. This year was far more upbeat, although—as in LA the month before—many of the concepts were electric promises applied to familiar vehicles, and many new vehicle announcements were cars, primarily small ones, familiar in the rest of the world for some time. Check our fan page on Facebook for snapshots from both—and chime in.

Big news every January centers around the world-renowned collector car auctions held in Phoenix and Scottsdale. As the week got underway, we attended the annual Wheels of Wellness event, a mind-bending collection of ultra-rare historic race cars and an equally mind-bending collection of champion drivers—covering decades of the sport—including many who call Arizona home. Contributing writer **Larry Edsall** brings us the flavor.

Southern California was experiencing a deluge as auction week approached, and we were warned that we would get the same. The storm hit with a vengeance. Nobody had expected tornadic winds to flip semis over along the Interstates as the front crossed the state line, nor to rip tents out of the ground at one of the auctions and almost another. This story has been well covered by now. We present a brief overview of auction results.

**Edsall** had also headed for the hills while the weather was nice, bringing us a refreshing tale of more time than distance, driving a forest road along the Mogollon Rim. Photographer **Randall Bohl** spent several days covering NASCAR at Phoenix International Raceway, meeting and photographing celebrities, fans and activities; he brings us a photo essay, with an introduction by **Wally Cahill**. Lastly, we bring you a healthy handful of new vehicle driving impressions, including several that very much floated our boat.

Enjoy the ride.



Joe Sage - Publisher/ Executive Editor

# ARIZONA DRIVER

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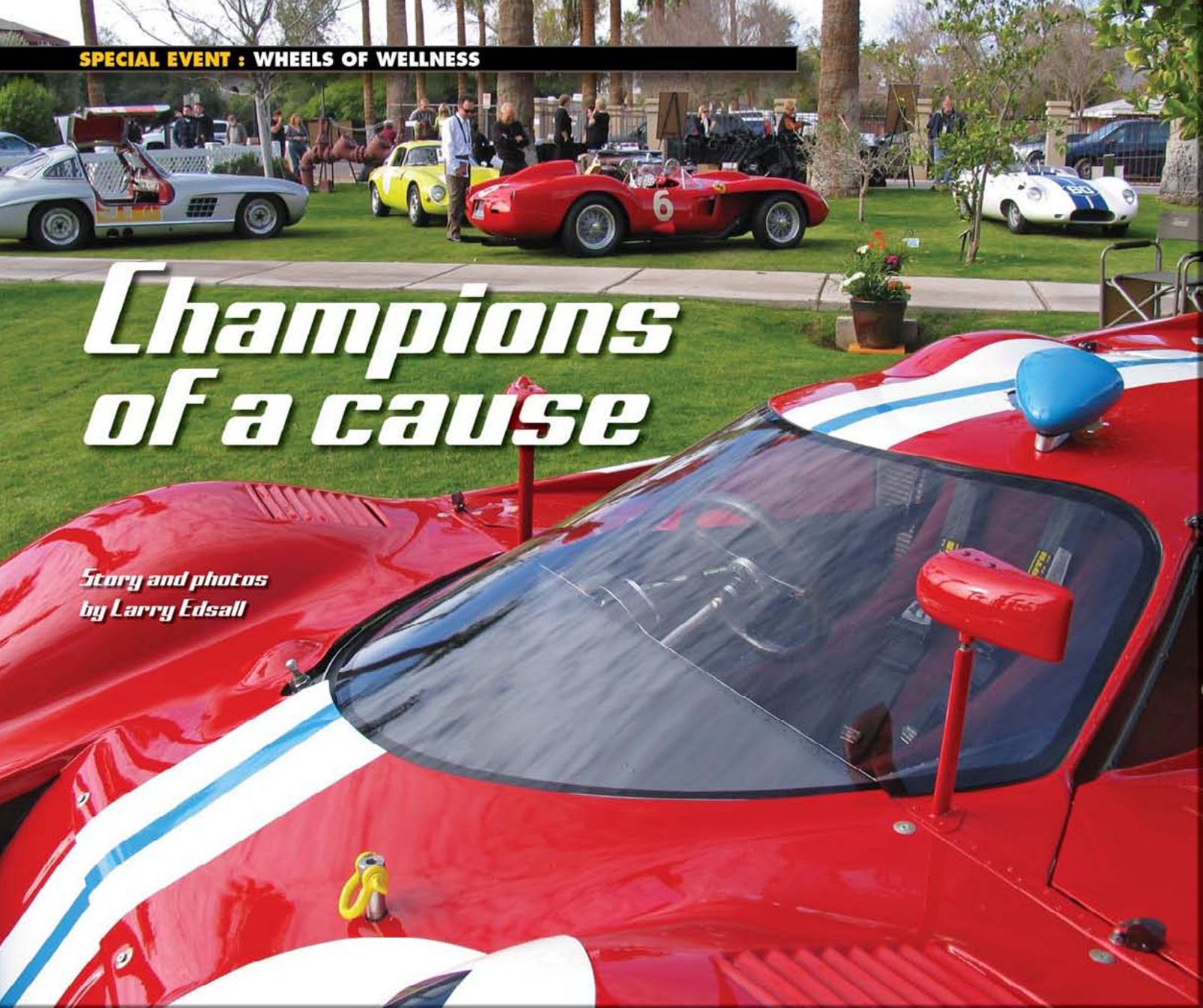


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# Champions of a cause

Story and photos by Larry Edsall

**In 1996, Arie Luyendyk set speed records at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway that have yet to—and may never—be broken. After turning a lap in practice at more than 239 miles per hour, Luyendyk produced a four-lap qualifying average of 236.986 with a fastest lap at an average of 237.498.**

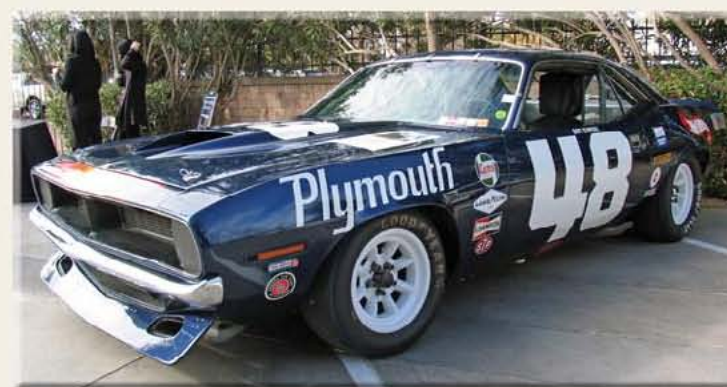
**When asked to recall how fast those fastest laps felt, Luyendyk noted that on his qualifying run, his car didn't slow below 235, even in the turns, and hit a top speed of 242 on the straightaways. He then answered the question at hand, and his answer was astounding: "Every time I came out of Turn Four, my ears would pop, and they didn't do that at slower speeds."**

Now retired from racing and living in the Phoenix area, Luyendyk was part of a panel of racers talking about their careers and their sport during the third annual Wheels of Wellness classic racecar show. Held each January on the grounds of

the historic downtown Phoenix home that serves as the headquarters for the local branch of The Wellness Community, the Wheels of Wellness show annually raises around \$50,000 for The Wellness Community Arizona's free support and educa-

tional services for those diagnosed with cancer and for their caregivers.

This year, the display included 30 historic racecars—from a 1933 Maserati Grand Prix racer to the 2009 Dallara-Honda that Dario Franchitti drove to the



Historic racing cars are parked on the lawn and driveways around the home of The Wellness Community in downtown Phoenix. They include (above from the top), the Blakely Oil Special, originally owned by Phoenix farmer John McDaniel and raced at Indianapolis by the likes of Arizonans Bobby Ball and Jimmy Bryan; the 2009 Dallara-Honda that Dario Franchitti drove to the Indy Racing League championship (that's Franchitti checking out the cockpit); a 1970 Plymouth Barracuda that was raced in the Trans-Am series by Dan Gurney's All American Racers team.

2009 Indy Racing League championship. Franchitti was on hand as the grand marshal for the day-long Wheels of Wellness show.

Midway through the day, the racers gathered on the front porch. In addition to Luyendyk and Franchitti, the panel included Bob Bondurant, Didier Theys and Darren Law, with yet another racer, Lyn St. James, serving as moderator. Among them, Luyendyk, Franchitti, Bondurant, Theys, Law and St. James had achieved a world sports car championship, four Indy 500 victories, four overall victories in the 24 Hours of Daytona and many other national and series championships.

Except for Franchitti, all reside at least part of the year in the Valley

## PERSONALITIES

I knew Dario Franchitti was skilled at driving and dating, but I had no idea he had such a delightfully devilish sense of humor.

Franchitti is the 2007 Indianapolis 500 winner and two-time Indy car racing champion. He came to Phoenix to be the grand marshal for the third annual Wheels of Wellness classic race car show.

Unfortunately, his wife wasn't with him. She'd spent the previous day watching a University of Kentucky basketball game while Dario was in Indianapolis on business. After the game, she flew northeast to New York City while Dario was heading southwest across the country.

By the way, she, Mrs. Franchitti, is Ashley Judd, the actress.

The Wheels of Wellness kicks off Arizona's classic car auction week with a gathering of 30 or so historic racing cars. In addition to racing cars, Wheels of Wellness organizers assemble a group of racing drivers for a panel discussion. This year, the table included Franchitti, Bob Bondurant, Arie Luyendyk, Didier Theys and Darren Law, with another racer, Lyn St. James, serving as moderator.

Almost immediately, Franchitti teased Luyendyk about his hair, which is now nicely cropped but which used to be, well, as Franchitti put it, used to be a mullet.

As Indy 500 winners, Franchitti and Luyendyk both have their images engraved on the Borg Warner trophy. Franchitti chided Luyendyk that on the trophy, Luyendyk's hair is so long that it "looks like a mud flap."

St. James joined in, noting that when they both were racing at Indy, Luyendyk's hair always was longer than hers.

To be fair, Franchitti made himself the target of his own remarks. He said he'd spent Saturday visiting John Force's drag racing shop in Indianapolis, checking out Force's 300-mile-per-hour Funny Cars.

"I'd love to drive one," Franchitti said, but, he admitted, "I don't think I have the beans to pull the trigger."

Franchitti left Indy cars for a while to try stock car racing. Asked what the biggest difference was between the two disciplines, he said it had nothing to do with the racing, but hinted that the dimensions of the cars may have an impact on the drivers. For example, before moving into stock cars, Juan Pablo Montoya also raced Indy cars, which have very snug cockpits. Franchitti indicated that since making the switch, Montoya had put on some weight. In fact, he added, the biggest challenge for the team for which Franchitti and Montoya would be teammates in the upcoming 24 Hours of Daytona sports car race would be wedging Montoya into the driver's seat.

Asked about the differences he's experienced racing for the Andretti-Green and Target Ganassi Indy car teams, Franchitti responded: "I thought Michael [Andretti] likes to win, but Chip [Ganassi] takes it to another level."

As evidence, he said, after winning the Indy car championship this past season, Ganassi didn't have a team celebration but a two-day debriefing during which the team went back through the entire season to analyze a pit stop here or a corner there where it might have cut a fraction of a second off a lap time.

The drivers on the Wheels of Wellness each talked about how they got started in racing and how the sport had changed over the years.

Bondurant noted that his first race car, a British Morgan, had a chassis made in part from wood.

When it came Law's turn, he noted that he might have an advantage since "I didn't have a wooden car." —Larry Edsall

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Race cars and racers (clockwise from the top) include a bright red 1957 Ferrari 250 Testa Rossa; one of the fabled Indy roadsters built by A.J. Watson (this one took the pole position for the 500 in 1958 with Dick Rathmann averaging 145.974 mph); a 1970 Ferrari 512M that raced in the 24 Hours of Le Mans; the driver's helmet, goggles and mascot displayed with a 1948 MG TC; part of the audience and the full racing drivers' panel (from left): Lyn St. James, Dario Franchitti, Bob Bondurant, Arie Luyendyk, Didier Theys and Darren Law.

of the Sun.

Whether they were driving a Maserati in 1933 or a Dallara in 2009, the drivers all have had to deal with challenges that were of the ear-popping—if not bone-breaking—variety.

The technological advances in race car development were evident to those walking around the Wellness headquarters' grounds. A couple of those technological advances became clear during the panel discussion when Law, the 2009 24 Hours of Daytona winner, and Bob Bondurant, who raced in the 1950s and '60s and drove the Ford Shelby Daytona Coupe to a world sports car championship, were asked about their pre-race preparations.

Bondurant talked about how team owner Carroll Shelby didn't want to take the then-young Bondurant to Italy to race in the Targa Florio event because Bondurant was so inexperienced he couldn't possibly know his way around a racing circuit that encompassed more than 40 miles of twists and turns on public roads through the Sicilian mountains.

But Bondurant went to Sicily early, at his own expense, and spent two weeks driving the course day after day to learn his way around.

In contrast, Law noted that to prepare for his first entry last year into the 24 Hours of Le Mans, his education started three months before the race but involved no travel. Instead, he said, he learned his way around the circuit by staying home and playing an Xbox video racing game that offered amazingly realistic detail of the race course. ■

After working as a sports editor for daily newspapers in Michigan, **LARRY EDSALL** was on staff for 12 years at *AutoWeek*, most of it as managing editor. He has driven more than half a million miles testing cars on four continents. He helped launch [www.izoom.com](http://www.izoom.com) and also helped found PAPA, the Phoenix Automotive Press Association. His books include *Masters of Car Design (Genius)*, *Miata 20 Years* and his eleventh, *Camaro: A Legend Reborn*, all available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

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2010 Dodge Viper SRT10

**THE FUTURE OF THE DODGE VIPER**

According to Dodge brand chief Ralph Gilles, the production of the 2010 Viper will end in July after a series of specially painted models are completed. Each car will have a special color picked by its new owner. The iconic Dodge sports car has been produced for nearly two decades and will be dropped for 2011, but plans call for an all-new Viper starting in 2012. The new Viper is expected to be more roadworthy in the tradition of European sports cars, compared with the brute power of the current model. ▼



2011 Audi A8

**AUDI PULLS WRAPS OFF A8 FLAGSHIP**

▲ With the world famous Design Miami art and design fair as a backdrop, Audi pulled the wraps off the elegant A8 luxury sedan in a debut before auto journalists from around the world. Highlighted by cutting-edge design, innovative lighting and abundant new technologies, the A8 promises to be one of the most fuel efficient cars in its class. US versions will be powered by a 372-hp, 4.2-liter V8 with a new eight-speed Tiptronic transmission and quattro all-wheel drive. The new A8 is longer and wider than its Mercedes Benz S-Class and BMW 7 Series competitors. Audi is also working on a gasoline-electric hybrid version of the A8, but no date has been announced. The A8 goes on sale in North America near the end of 2010.

**LEXUS SPORT PACKAGE FOR LS 460**

Hoping to appeal to younger shoppers and to compete better with the BMW 7 Series and Mercedes-Benz S-Class, Lexus is offering a sport package option on its flagship 2010 LS 460. The \$6,200 option adds mechanical enhancements like paddle shifters, 19-inch wheels, front Brembo brakes and sport-tuned air suspension to improve handling. For driver comfort and looks, the package adds a heated leather steering wheel, sport seats, lower body kit and sport grille. The engine is the

same 380-hp, 4.6-liter V8 and eight-speed automatic transmission. However, engine and transmission software has been enhanced to give the car a more muscular sound like the Lexus IS-F sport sedan. Base price of the rear-wheel-drive LS 460 with the sport package is \$71,755.

**MITSUBISHI GASOLINE MINICAR?**

Mitsubishi already has plans to bring a small electric car, the i-MiEV, to the US by mid-2011, and now they are considering a gasoline-powered version of the same car. At 134 inches long, the electric i-MiEV is about two feet longer than a Smart ForTwo, and has a roomy four-seat interior and four doors. A gasoline version would likely be powered by the same 1.0-liter, three-cylinder engine that Mitsubishi currently builds for the Smart. The gasoline version, called the "i", is currently sold in Europe for about \$16,000.

**MERCEDES C-CLASS US PRODUCTION**

Daimler AG CEO Dieter Zetsche said they would move about 20 percent of C-Class sedan production to their Vance, Alabama, plant starting in 2014. The plant currently builds the Mercedes M-Class, R-Class and GL-Class SUVs, but production numbers have declined in the last few years as the popularity of SUVs has declined, leaving unused production capacity. The

move will allow Mercedes to cut costs and be more competitive in the entry luxury segment in the US.

**KIA'S NEW LARGE SEDAN**

Kia's next generation flagship sedan debuted in November in South Korea and is scheduled to arrive in the US early in 2011. The four-door, five-seat Cadenza will be larger than the Amanti that it replaces and will get a new 3.5-liter V6 engine with six-speed automatic transmission. The engine will probably be the company's first application of a new direct-injection system developed with parent company Hyundai. The front-drive Cadenza is being built on the company's new Type N platform and will be lighter and stronger with a new suspension system.

**TELEMATICS FOR MERCEDES OWNERS**

US owners of Mercedes-Benz vehicles can now sign up for a telematic service that allows them to do things like open or lock their vehicle, pinpoint the vehicle on a map or get roadside assistance using their iPhone, BlackBerry and other smart phone. Hughes Telematics Inc. provides the service, called "mbrace," for \$280 per year, with the first six months free. The software platform is expandable so more

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2011 Ford Mustang V6

applications can be added as developed. Currently about 300,000 Mercedes-Benz owners are using the current Mercedes emergency communication service called Tele Aid, but they can switch to this new system. Mercedes is the first automaker to offer this type of service.

#### SERIOUS 2011 MUSTANG UPGRADES

▲ With the old 210-hp, 4.0-liter V6 lagging behind the Camaro V6's 304 horsepower, Ford will be replacing the ageing Mustang V6 with a hot and efficient new 3.7-liter version. Rated at 305 hp, the engine is also scoring a 30 mpg fuel economy rating, besting the Camaro engine by one mpg and one hp. The new engine is a sophisticated 24-valve version, which receives some of the same treatments hot rodders used to give their engines, including ported and polished heads, polished valve tappets and a new high-efficiency intake manifold. Other Mustang upgrades for 2011 including new six-speed automatic and manual transmissions, stronger brakes, firmer suspension (derived from the GT) and a revised interior with a clever roof storage system.

#### FORD'S NEW MUSTANG V8 ENGINE

The push may be on to improve fuel economy, but the horsepower war is still alive and well in the pony car segment.

Ford announced a new 412-hp, 5.0-liter V8 engine for the Mustang GT, replacing its previous 315-hp, 4.6-liter V8. The new engine is modified with features like Independent Variable Camshaft Timing (Ti-VCT), tuned exhaust headers, and counter-weighted crankshaft with high-performance pistons and connecting rods. The Ti-VCT system has a double-overhead-camshaft configuration employing two camshafts per cylinder bank—one camshaft to operate the intake valves and one to operate the exhaust valves. Ti-VCT rotates the camshafts to advance or retard the cam timing, based on several measures including throttle opening. The 30-percent-more-powerful V8 was developed to compete more favorably with the 426-hp Chevrolet Camaro SS and 425-hp Dodge Challenger SRT8. Fuel economy is expected to be about 25 mpg when EPA ratings are done, and it will have reduced emissions over the current V8. The new engine will power 2011 GT models driving the rear wheels through a six-speed manual or automatic transmission.

#### RETURN OF VW GOLF CONVERTIBLE

Watch for Volkswagen to bring back a convertible version of the Golf by 2012, when it gets a complete makeover. The convertible will have a fabric top and pop-up rollover protection. Unlike past models

derived from a two-door hatchback, this one will come from a notchback coupe. Features will include a rear folding seat, lane-departure warning, head-up display, LED headlights, navigation and fatigue sensor. A hybrid version is also possible. The VW retractable hardtop Eos will move up a notch and take a Passat nameplate.

#### THE ESCORT SMARTMIRROR

Escort, the company best known for its highly rated radar detectors, has branched out and is now selling a SmartMirror® that not only shows the road behind, but also includes a state-of-the-art navigation system, backup safety camera, and Bluetooth™. (We're not sure why they don't integrate a radar detector, too.) The system sells for \$799.95, with the backup camera as a \$99 option. Professional installation is available for \$99, for those not adept at electronic installations. For more information go to [www.escortradar.com/smartmirror](http://www.escortradar.com/smartmirror).

#### NEXT GENERATION BMW M5

It appears that the next generation BMW M5 will not debut until the Frankfurt motor show in fall 2011. Details are still sketchy, but power is likely to come from the same basic engine used in the X5/X6

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1933 AUBURN  
 SALON V-12 BOATTAIL

For the 1933 New York Auto Show, Auburn introduced its new top-of-the-line 'Salon' models in eight and twelve cylinder form. The further-prestigious V-12 powered Auburns were made available in five different configurations, the most exclusive of these being the Auburn 12-165 Salon Twelve Speedster. An Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Club Certified example, this 1933 twelve-cylinder Auburn Boattail Speedster is believed to be one of only six known to exist and represents perhaps the finest example of its type anywhere in the world.

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2011 Buick Regal



M versions—the 4.4-liter twin turbo rated at 555 hp in those models. However, it will likely have more horsepower, and torque may go to the 500 lb.ft. range. The transmission should be a beefed-up version of the Getrag seven-speed dual-clutch unit. The M5 will ride on a new aluminum-intensive chassis with new double-wishbone front and rear multilink suspensions, both with active shock absorbers to provide better driver control.

#### BUICK PURSUES PERFORMANCE IMAGE

▲ Buick is bringing back the Regal, and with it a notion of performance unseen in the brand since the days of Buicks wearing Gran Sport designations. Using a turbocharged four-cylinder engine, driver-selectable suspension and a firm, European-tuned chassis, the new Regal is taking aim at cars like the Acura TSX and Volvo S60. Buick is hoping to capitalize on the fact that the Regal was “bred on the Autobahn,” offering a car that was developed in Europe on the same platform and by the same team as the award-winning Open Insignia, 2009 European Car of the Year. First introduced in China in December 2008, the car has been a big success, with 64,000 sold already. Customers cite sculpted, flowing design and responsive performance as two of the top reasons for purchasing the Regal.

#### NEW TOYOTA REAR DRIVE COUPE

Subaru and Toyota pulled the wraps off a joint project sports car Subaru has been developing the last couple of years. The result is a low, sleek and very stylish two-plus-two design powered by Subaru’s normally-aspirated flat four-cylinder engine driving the rear wheels through a six-speed automatic transmission. Shown at the Tokyo auto show, the FT-86 (with Celica as a possible final name) is just a few inches longer than the Mazda Miata. The Toyota version is scheduled for early 2012, but Subaru has not shown its own version or announced a time. Subaru will manufacture both cars.

#### MERCEDES-BENZ REFINES CABRIOLET

The upcoming Mercedes-Benz E-Class Cabriolet features a new AIRCAP® automatic draft-stop system that substantially reduces turbulence for all four occupants, without having to sacrifice rear seat space to a manually installed deflector system. The world’s first AIRCAP system can be activated at speeds up to 100 mph by a button on the center console, which extends a windshield frame on the top of the windshield frame and draft-stop between the rear seats to cut wind buffeting. The thick insulated cloth top can be raised or lowered in just 20 seconds at speeds up to 25 mph. The front seats also

have an available AIRSCARF® system that functions like an invisible scarf, warming occupants’ head and neck areas through heater outlets in the head restraints. The E-Class goes on sale in May.

#### NEXT GENERATION PORSCHE CAYENNE

Spy photographers Brenda Priddy and Company have captured images of the next generation (2011) Porsche Cayenne, and it is a beauty. A sleeker design, smaller front and rear lights and a cleaner look highlight exterior changes. Inside, decor is more upscale with a strong influence coming from the new Panamera sedan. Engines will likely be a 400-hp 4.8-liter V8, 500-hp twin-turbo V8, 240-hp V6 diesel (from Volkswagen), and a hybrid with 333-hp supercharged V6 (from Audi S4) and a three-phase synchronous electric motor powered by a 38 kW battery in the spare tire well. The Cayenne is expected to make some sacrifice in off-road ability for even better on-road prowess.

#### WINNING—PAUL NEWMAN AND RACING

Racing fans and fans of the man will enjoy Matt Stone’s new book about legendary actor, racer and philanthropist, Paul Newman. Stone and co-author Preston Lerner have done an outstanding

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# BRIGHT LIGHTS. BIG PARTY. /// APRIL 10, 2010



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Bentley Mulsanne

job capturing the auto-racing career of one of the world's most popular actors. Starting with his starring role in the movie *Winning*, which cemented his interest in racing, to his successful career as a race driver and team owner, the book covers every highlight in an interesting narrative with accompanying dialogs from people and racers he worked with along the way. The 176-page, hardcover book, contains 200 photos and images depicting the man and the racecars he loved. For more information about, or to buy *Winning*, go to [www.motorbooks.com](http://www.motorbooks.com).

#### NEW BENTLEY FLAGSHIP: MULSANNE

▲ The Bentley Mulsanne, which goes on sale this fall, will be priced at \$285,000 in the US. The Mulsanne will offer a palette of 114 paint colors, 21 carpet colors, nine wood veneers and 24 interior leather hides, all of which will be tanned using a decades-old process to retain its distinctive scent. Through Bentley's bespoke service, unique colors can be developed to match a customer's vision and taste. With more standard leather and wood veneer than any other Bentley in the modern era, each Mulsanne will take nine weeks to build. The hand-assembled V8 engine pays homage to its predecessors yet has been comprehensively re-engineered, lighter and with cylinder de-acti-

vation and variable cam phasing, to reduce both fuel consumption and CO2 emissions.

#### BENTLEY PLANS LINEUP EXPANSION

Bentley appears to be working on a third and smaller model for their exotic lineup. Smaller in Bentley-speak means weighing about 5,000 pounds and being powered by a V8 engine instead of 12-cylinder, while equipped with all-wheel drive. There will likely be two versions, a two-door and a four-door wagon (or in British terminology, "shooting brake"). The new car, which may arrive as soon as 2014, should be priced in the \$110,000 to \$130,000 range. It will share components like all-wheel drive and eight-speed automatic transmission with the parent company's upscale Audi line.

#### GMC ADDS 2011 DENALI CROSSOVER

GMC announced the first Denali crossover model, the Acadia Denali, at the Detroit auto show. On sale in the third quarter of 2010, the Acadia Denali is distinguished by mono-color exterior and a chrome honeycomb grille. Design elements include unique front and rear fascias, high-intensity discharge lamps, unique side moldings and a few other cosmetic exterior enhancements. Luxury additions include extensive sound dead-

ening additions, heated and cooled perforated leather seats and matching door trim. Other notable features include a dual SkyScape sunroof, head-up display, navigation system, rear camera, premium audio, rear seat entertainment and remote vehicle start, along with other luxury features. All front- and rear-wheel drive versions are powered by a 288-hp, 3.6-liter V6 engine with six-speed automatic transmission.

#### INFINITI M GENERATION 3

Infiniti's largest sedan, the M, is designed to pull the Nissan brand ahead of competitors like the Mercedes E-Class and Lexus GS with powerful engines, a super clean hybrid and world-class innovations. Engine options on the 2011 model will include a 327-hp, 3.7-liter V6 and a new 415-hp (est.) 5.6-liter V8 derived from the Nissan Titan truck. Both gasoline engines have standard seven-speed automatic transmission and offer a choice of rear- or all-wheel drive. By spring of 2011, a hybrid version will debut offering the cleanest and best fuel economy in Infiniti history. The hybrid uses a new "laminated" battery pack that takes no more space but doubles the power. ■

Auto News Update is compiled from a variety of industry sources for *Arizona Driver Magazine* by **BILL & BARBARA SCHAFFER** of *Auto Digest*.

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# HIGH SPEED WEEKEND

Photos by Randall Bohl ([www.randallbohl.com](http://www.randallbohl.com))  
Intro and captions by Wally Cahill (Arizona's Motorsports Maniac)

Twice a year Avondale Arizona becomes the largest city in Arizona—due to the fact that the best race drivers on the planet converge at Phoenix International Raceway to compete for the Sprint Cup. The fall 2009 race was special for a lot of people, especially if your name was Jimmie Johnson or any of his fans. You see, Jimmie was in the history-making mode of winning his fourth consecutive Sprint Cup Championship, which had never been done before in the history of NASCAR.

With everyone's eyes trained on the #48 team, we thought it might be fun to take a peek behind the scenes of a typical NASCAR race weekend at PIR. Your correspondent has the privilege of doing video of all the great activities that make the PIR fan experience second to none on the NASCAR circuit. So we figured the best way to follow all the action was through the eyes of a man who eats, breathes and dreams in high gear with his foot to the floor.



Our race weekend starts on Thursday evening in the Octane Lounge, where we met up with Arizona Diamondbacks pitching hero Brandon Webb (far left) and Childress Racing driver Clint Bowyer (near left). The two had teamed up to support "Offspeed," a charity reception benefiting the NASCAR-themed Victory Junction and Webb's K Foundation.



Papa is in the house! John Schnatter (left), founder of Papa John's pizza, is not just a friend of Tony Stewart, he was on hand all weekend with the cool 1971 Z28 he actually used to deliver pizza as a high school student—a long-lost car he located and repurchased for \$250,000 last fall (see the November/December 2009 issue).



## OCTANE AT PIR



Photos courtesy Phoenix International Raceway [4]

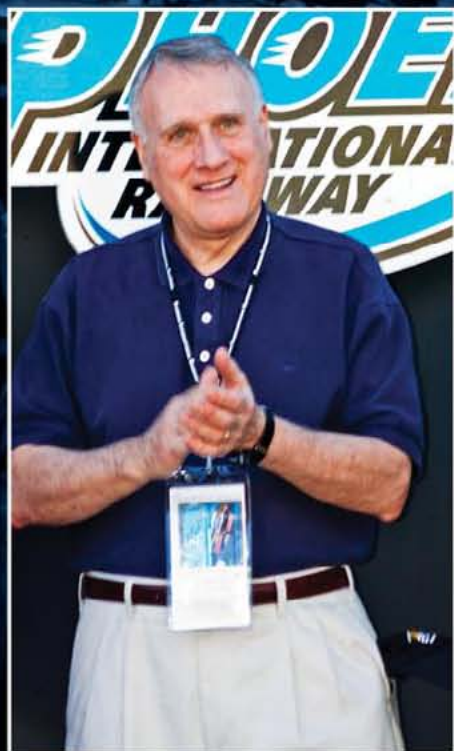
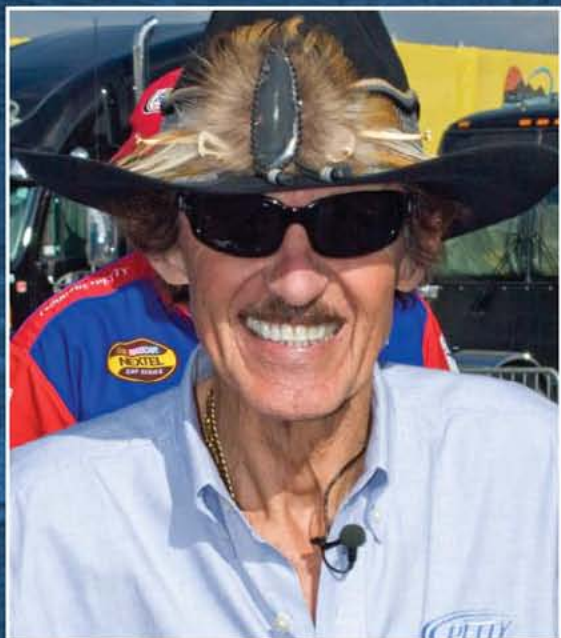
Phoenix International Raceway offers VIP treatment in Octane, their luxury lounge, a venue perhaps unmatched in NASCAR. A full-service concierge, sushi bar and other high-end dining options and enhanced by mountain sunsets from a private veranda. Octane includes the following amenities:

- One ticket per race day
- Unlimited fine foods and beverages
- Octane-exclusive driver appearances
- Live music
- Wine tastings
- Hand-rolled cigars
- Exclusive pit access
- A guided tour of the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series garage

This all-inclusive package is available for \$1900 per guest for the two-day April NASCAR event weekend, and for \$2400 per guest for the three-day November NASCAR event weekend. A season package, which includes access to Octane on all five days throughout the season, is \$4000. All guests of Octane must be at least 18 years of age.

Email the PIR Corporate Sales Team for more information at [corporatesalesteam@phoenixinternationalraceway.com](mailto:corporatesalesteam@phoenixinternationalraceway.com).





The event was graced by royalty on Friday when "The King" Richard Petty (above left and center) showed up to open his own go-cart race track, modeled after the fastest one-mile track on the NASCAR circuit. The King was his normal gracious self and showed the southern hospitality that has made him a fan favorite to this day.

Friday's activities included chasing down Juan Pablo Montoya (above right), one of the hottest drivers in the chase, or at least the most aggressive. Here we catch up with JPM as the Colombian-born driver is interviewed by Spanish-language media.

Arizona's US Senators John McCain and Jon Kyl (a NASCAR regular) were on hand to support the racing and the race fans.

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There was fun for all as PIR's Speed Cantina hosted an '80s concert on Saturday evening (above). If you're too young to remember the '80s, this party could not only show you how people partied back then, it showed the funky styles of the era, too.

The Budweiser Roll-Bar was the place to catch drivers Kasey Kahne and Clint Bowyer (second row) as they did a Q&A session with race fans. One of the highlights of race weekend are all the activities offered in the Budweiser Roll-Bar. The Roll-Bar also offers a great out-door concert venue where Lifehouse rocked the race fans.

On Sunday, Race Day, everything gets very serious as there are a lot of things that happen before the green flag is waved. Miss Sprint Cup Monica Palumbo (second row) greets her fans, as TV Channel 3's Javier Soto, well prepared in his driver's suit, conducts pre-race interviews.

Pre-race activities and driver introductions (Tony Stewart and Mark Martin, third row) signal that the race is about ready to start. Wrestling great Sgt Slaughter, shown at left with Miss Phoenix Ursulline Okonkwo, was on hand—useful if anyone got out of line?

Jimmie Johnson and his wife Chandra—now carrying their first child—(left) celebrate in Victory Lane after the race.

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PORSCHE



# TORQUE

Little Volkswagen diesel punches above its weight

By Joe Sage



**W**e all know good things come in small packages. Here's proof. Launched in 1974, the Volkswagen Golf (called Rabbit at first, and recently again, briefly, in the US) is now in its sixth generation. The new body was penned by Walter de'Silva, designer of the award-winning Audi A5/S5, among others. Nice basis for an econocar.

But is that what this is? It's certainly affordable. The base 2.5-liter gasoline-powered VW Golf starts at just \$17,490. The 2.0-liter diesel-powered TDI 6-speed manual starts at \$21,990. What do you get for your money?

Here's where econocar starts seeming like the wrong term. All Golf models include (hold your breath): adjustable intermittent front wipers, Climatic A/C, cruise control, highline instrument cluster w/compass, outside temp and trip computer, metal-look interior trim, pollen filter, power locks, outlets, steering, and windows, easy entry 8-way manual sport front seats, 8-speaker sound system w/CD (MP3 readable), split-folding rear seat, daytime running lights, dual exhaust tips, power heated exterior mirrors, 4-link fully independent rear suspension, 15" steel wheels w/wheel covers and all-season tires, rear window wiper, dual front airbags, front side thorax airbags, front/read head curtain airbags, and an alphabet soup including ESP, ASR, EDL, EBD, ABS, LATCH and TPMS. With some vehicles, the price of all this, as options, could approach the total price of the Golf.

But wait. With the TDI, you get all that *and* (hang onto your hat) add all this: 3-spoke leather-wrapped, multi-function steering wheel, leather shift knob and brake handle, Premium 8 touch-screen sound system w/in-dash CD changer, 6-month Sirius® subscription, MDI w/iPod cable, fog lights, sport suspension (with vehicle lowering), 17" Porto alloy wheels w/performance all-season tires, armrest and floor mats.

So they must nail you with options? Will you need to buy a bunch of packages just to get a few key things? Well, first off, key things aren't missing in the base package. And no, there are a few great options, they're

à la carte, and the prices are right: power tilt and sliding sunroof \$1000, cold weather package (heated seats and washer nozzles) \$225, Bluetooth® \$199, rear side airbags (4-door) \$350, xenon headlamps \$700, 300-watt audio \$476 and full navigation package \$1750. Our test TDI came with nav, sunroof, cold weather package and Bluetooth, and still stickered at \$26,514 including destination. Very complete, and still a bargain.

The 2.0L clean diesel TDI engine emits 25 percent less greenhouse gas and achieves over 30 percent better fuel economy compared to a similar gasoline engine, using an advanced electronically-controlled turbocharger and electronically-controlled direct injection. The 2-liter produces 140 hp at 4,000 rpm, but the real magic is in the diesel grunt: an impressive 236 lb.ft. of torque kicking in between 1,750 and 2,500 rpm. And that's where the fun really begins. Pop it into first, hit the pedal, and off you go with a startling burst of power. But that's just the beginning. Shift into second, and it happens all over again. Third, same. Fourth, same. And beyond. This amount of torque, especially coupled with the 6-speed manual, never quits. On tap in prodigious quantities and at low RPMs, it gives you a new kick in the pants every few seconds. Top notch fun performance. The TDI is rated 30 mpg city and 41 mpg highway, with a 0-to-60 mph time of 8.6 seconds. It feels *much* quicker than that.

This VW is all fun yet strictly business. Black window trim and the absence of side moldings keep things clean. A hatch spoiler with integrated third brake light is painted to match the body. Updated taillights mimic the headlights and feature integrated clear turn signal and reverse indicators along the bottom edge. Running lights are blended into the lower rear bumper which adds a blacked out insert and a cutout for a pair of exhaust tips. Available in both two-door and four-door models, the interior is a very attractive Titan Black cloth. Paints include the usual black, white, silver, grey and red, as well as two blues, one of which is the distinctive Shark Blue Metallic of our test car. Fire one up. ■



## GOLF TDI LOGBOOK NOTES

- One small stick of diesel dynamite.
- This fuel-sipping pocket rocket is a brute in gnat's clothing.
- Manual seat adjustment and a long reach to the clutch pedal, even if you're tall.
- Console storage is big enough for a roll of Lifesavers and an iPod (for which it's wired).
- Heavy torque makes it easy to stall.
- Accelerator response is *very* impressive.
- This car shifts very well and has power in every gear, thanks to diesel torque.
- Audio is way above average. We adjust tone and fader to the Smashing Pumpkins and find *tons* of margin: it already sounds great with just slight nudges to treble and bass and one little nudge of fade to the rear.
- Amazingly no presence of torque steer characteristics. Tried a little mini-slalom to put it to the test. Extremely impressive.
- Performed lateral acceleration moves, around a roundabout at high speed, then into a slight "S" series. All very solid and sure.
- Test cars bring competitors out of the woodwork, giving us an idea on market perceptions and pecking orders. Despite a relatively low-key color on the VW, it promptly brought on a Lexus SC, who definitely wanted to race, or compete for space. He loses.
- We've been exposed to diesel SUVs, addressing fuel economy in incremental ways, but now we see why Denise McCluggage is so bullish on diesel: the pulling power of diesel torque is unbelievable.
- "Unbelievable" is the word that escapes our lips repeatedly, whether it's handling, absence of torque steer (different kind of torque) or acceleration in all gears and situations. Checked the sticker price and voiced the same word, unbelievable: 26 grand.
- Has cornering lights, even without a signal, e.g. at a bend or into the driveway. Nice.
- Diesel delight.
- Pop it into first gear, you get decent acceleration, but when you pop it into 2nd, and 3rd, that's when the fun has begun...!
- Incredible turning circle. Did a U-turn on a simple divided boulevard and was able to do it from inside lane to inside lane.
- Tight suspension and firm steering.
- Felt a little stupid trying to open the rear hatch. Used the key fob at first, but had warning lights that it was open when we didn't think so. Finally realized there is a solid release hidden under the VW emblem.
- Test car came with no manual, but the HVAC controls seem *ultra*-simple and a little bit different. Turn on the a/c separately, choose your fan spots separately, no "auto" button. Temperature is set with a simple blue-to-red knob, which works fine.
- This very fun and well-equipped car costs little, uses little fuel... what's not to like?



# Wet & wild

Story by Joe Sage - Photos by Randall Bohl and Joe Sage

A midwinter week in Arizona promises blue skies and temperatures in the 70s or 80s. Or at least that's what people expect. Whereas it is indeed likely, it's not guaranteed. Just three years ago, in 2007, we had not only chilly temperatures and a lot of rain, but snow on the McDowell Mountains, with 3.7" of über-rare accumulation, the third snowfall in Phoenix in 111 years. But as noted in our coverage at that time, muddy parking lots, rain and snow dampened neither spirits nor auction sales. Baby it was cold outside, but inside the tents, the action was hot. As auction week approached this year, the forecast included rain and plenty of it. Southern California had given us fair warning, with a news-making torrent that was headed our way. What nobody expected was the tornadic wind.

## Panel discussion: trends

Arizona automotive press convened at the start of the week for a panel discussion of what to expect during this year's auctions, as well as the current state and future direction of the hobby. Moderated by renowned scribe Larry Edsall, the panel included Don Williams, president of the Blackhawk Collection (through whose hands they say any significant car passes at some time); Donald Osborne, contributing editor of *Sports Car Market* magazine; and McKeel Hagerty, CEO of collector car specialist Hagerty Insurance.

Collectibility has long been associated with particular time blocks, but time and demography move on. What do younger buyers find interesting? What today that may be collectible tomorrow? Osborne points out that we can discuss and analyze things all we want, but the hobby will decide its direction. It's often considered that the Arizona auctions—high profile and at the start of the year—will determine values moving forward. It's true that auction transactions are a vital part of the formula for estimated values. Or are they? Williams states that whatever happens in Arizona has "nothing" to do with the coming year. Are Mopars hitting \$2 million at these highly enthused auctions representative? Williams reminds us that auctions overall are just 15% of the world's transactions. A lot of other buyers don't want the world to know what they paid.

Collector car buyers have always been strongest in the 40-60 age range, but as they age and are replaced, the idea that nothing cool came after 1974 is a mistaken concept. The troubled economy has been a factor, but Osborne noted that a 30-40% drop in sales did not include the low range, mentioning that \$20-30,000 cars are stable, their fans are passionate, and that market will always be there.

Hagerty says most collectors' first car remains their high school favorite, and they mature from there.

A major trend has been the acceptance of mods and retro rods, though he has found this surprising and considers them hard to value. Though the panel agreed it's hard to predict future direction, they noted a big trend in unrestored "survivor" cars, a category that has grown rapidly at Pebble Beach, and that the sky is the limit on values for these. Osborne points out that Europeans have been applying patina for years, to achieve a faux version of that look, even leaving cars outside for years to look like a barn find. The Europeans are "horrified" by Americans and their shiny restorations, though the Chinese like them as shiny as possible. Auctions are expanding across multinational markets, but trying to move the same vehicles between auctions can be problematic, as tastes vary so much.

There are many limited edition cars that one might collect today, with an eye on the future. But there will always be an element of surprise: Williams talked of cars he bought for \$50 for casual use in movies, that have gone on to very high prices. He emphasizes that you never know what will come around later.

Hagerty thinks the golden age is upon or behind us. One factor will be whether we can operate any of these vehicles in the future. He compared fueling and driving today's cars, tomorrow, with horses, now mostly a niche that needs a special place for use. Williams shares a tip: if you find a crowd around a car and half are women, it's a winner. Eyeball quality is valuable. Gender issues



Larry Edsall



Don Williams



Donald Osborne



McKeel Hagerty

Photos: Randall Bohl [4]

aside, he suggests you take along somebody who doesn't know cars at all. Osborne jokes that this approach may be shallow, but agrees that the best cars are great on sight, without needing further explanation.

So go with your gut and your own tastes. Williams says, "I've never made a mistake with my stomach. I've made a whole lot of mistakes with my brain."

Asked whether Arizona should reinforce its auction season with more events—a concours d'élegance or a race, as with the jam-packed August week in Monterey—the members of the panel are unanimous: they would be "begging you not to do it." They say there is too much on the plate already, and everyone has event hangover by the Sunday. Williams reminds us that Pebble Beach started as a get-together to fill the lodge, and the auctions spun off later. Working the pattern in reverse may not have at all the same synergy. Hagerty opines that the Arizona auction situation is perfected as it is.

## Barrett-Jackson

### 39th Annual Collector Car Auction Event

Barrett-Jackson recorded more than \$68 million in total sales during this year's 39th annual event, running a full week, Monday-Sunday January 18-24 at WestWorld in north Scottsdale. The total is an 11 percent increase from Scottsdale 2009. Top sellers included a 1929 Hamilton Metalplane H-47 for \$671,000 and a 1964 Shelby Cobra that brought \$478,500. The event featured nearly 1,200 collector vehicles, all for sale at No Reserve, with nearly 40 hours of live, HDTV coverage on *SPEED*.

With this the 45th anniversary of the original Shelby 427 Cobra and GT350 Mustang, Monday night's opening gala featured the exclusive reveal of Shelby Automobiles' brand-new GT350 Mustang, with Carroll Shelby in attendance.

More than 180,000 people braved the elements to attend this "automotive lifestyle" event. "Even with the worst weather the Phoenix area has seen in decades, buyers, sellers and visitors from across the country enjoyed another incredible Scottsdale event," said Craig Jackson, Chairman/CEO of Barrett-Jackson. "With an 11 percent increase in sales, we showed that buyers have confidence in the market. What a great way to start the 2010 auction season."

New enthusiasts continue to be significant at Barrett-Jackson, with 40 percent of registered bidders first timers. The consignor pool also brings fresh faces, as 35 percent were selling at Barrett-Jackson for the first time.

The week's weather had less impact on Barrett-Jackson than Russo and Steele (see below). High winds caused the auction to move everyone from the outer tents into the main permanent auction tent, and staging tents were surrounded by semi trucks to block wind. No cars were damaged and all vehicles crossed the block as scheduled.

**CHARITIES:** Barrett-Jackson helped raise nearly \$4.5 million for various charities. Funds were gathered from the sale of 17 vehicles consigned by event sponsors, charities and generous Barrett-Jackson customers. Fees and commissions—worth nearly \$400,000—were waived on charity sales.

**UPCOMING:** Barrett-Jackson's 8th annual Palm Beach auction will be held at the Americraft Expo Center at the South Florida Fairgrounds April 1-3. They will have a new event in Orange County June 25-27, and their 3rd annual Las Vegas auction in October. For tickets or info, visit [www.barrett-jackson.com](http://www.barrett-jackson.com).

## Gooding & Company

### 3rd Annual Scottsdale Auction

Gooding & Company recorded \$33.9 million in sales during its first two-day Scottsdale auction on Friday and Saturday, January 22-23, held in tent structures at the west end of Scottsdale Fashion Square, just off Camelback. A total of 114 out of 125 lots were sold. Gooding's top seller was a 1956 Jaguar D-Type Sports Racer at \$3.74 million, a star for its noteworthy provenance and stunning restoration. The sale of the D-Type marks the third consecutive year that Gooding & Company has sold the top-selling car among the Scottsdale auctions. In just their third year of a local event, they have made major strides against the longer-established auctions. Seven lots sold for over \$1 million each, and two new world records were hit. This success follows a strong \$50+ million sale at



The hammer went down on a tri-power 4-speed 1961 Pontiac Bonneville Convertible at \$82,500. Below: Ford booth girls; Shelby reveals the GT350 at the gala; Darrell Gwynn's 1990 Coors Extra Gold top fuel dragster replica crosses the block for charity; good eats.



A 1956 Jaguar D-Type Sports Racer sold for \$3.75 million, the week's record for all auctions. A 1938 Bugatti Type 56C Roadster commanded \$429,000. A 1948 Chrysler Town and Country Convertible brought \$159,500. And a black-over-red 1955 MG TF 1500 sold for \$42,900.



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Photo: Randall Bohl

Photos: Randall Bohl [3], Joe Sage (Shelby)

Photo courtesy Gooding & Company

Photos: Randall Bohl [3]





A 1953 Jaguar Mark VII sedan crosses the block at Thursday's British event, selling at \$39,600. Below, a 1935 Lincoln Mark K Convertible Roadster brought \$209,000; a 1951 Allard K2 stages for the event; and the 1954 Mercury XM-800 Dream Car sold at \$429,000.



The show goes on, Sunday and into Monday; some cars were sold with varying damage but repairs promised, including the 2002 Ford GT40 concept above and the 1967 Pontiac GTO below. The 1948 Tucker convertible came painfully close to sale with \$1.3 million bid.



Pebble Beach last August.

"This year was our most successful Scottsdale auction to date with a total of 91% sold," said David Gooding, president and founder of Gooding & Company. "We were thrilled to bring such an outstanding collection of automobiles to Arizona and to have so many cars break the \$1 million range."

Gooding & Company broke two world records with the sale of a 1959 Costin Lister Jaguar Sports Racer for \$1.1 million on Friday and a 1932 Alfa Romeo 6C 1750 Series V Gran Sport for \$1.54 million on Saturday.

**CHARITIES:** Gooding & Company Donated a Significant Portion of its Proceeds to the American Red Cross and Hosted a Donation Center to Raise Funds for the International Response Fund Relief Efforts in Haiti

**UPCOMING:** Gooding & Company will conduct its first-ever Amelia Island Auction on Friday, March 12, at the Amelia Island Plantation, where more than 50 collector cars will be showcased. For details, visit [www.goodingco.com](http://www.goodingco.com). You can also follow Gooding & Company on Facebook, Twitter or via their iPhone app.

## RM Auctions

### 11th Annual Automobiles of Arizona

RM Auctions, the world's largest collector car auction house, kicked off its 2010 season once again at the Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa in Phoenix, this year posting over \$19.6 million in total sales with 89% of lots sold. The auction was extended to two days this year (as had been RM's Monterey auction last August) with the addition of an exclusive British-themed evening auction on Thursday, January 21, ahead of their traditional Friday sale. Despite treacherous weather, it was standing-room-only in the auction room for the duration, with bidders from across the continent plus Europe and the Middle East. "The impressive sell-through rate is a great reflection of the continuing strength of the market and provides a positive outlook for the year ahead," said Ian Kelleher, RM president and COO.

The headliner was a rare 1963 Aston Martin DB4 GT, offered at Thursday's British event. One of only six GTs known to have full factory lightweight construction details—and the last GT to be built and sold by Aston Martin's Newport Pagnell Factory—the car just broke the million-dollar mark, at \$1,001,000. Other Thursday highlights included a superbly restored 1965 Aston Martin DB5 for \$429,000 and a matched pair of Aston Martin DB Mark IIIs, one Drop Head Coupe and one Saloon, which fetched \$330,000 and \$275,000 respectively.

Top sellers Friday included a beautifully restored 1967 Shelby 427 Cobra from the Otis Chandler Collection at \$632,500; a 1932 Duesenberg Model J Tourster at \$550,000, and a 1933 Rolls-Royce PII Continental Three-Position Drop Head Coupe at \$528,000. The Friday sale also presented a historic lineup of concept cars by Detroit automakers, headlined by a dramatic, one-off 1954 Mercury XM-800 Dream Car which achieved \$429,000, while a unique 1956 Cadillac "Maharani Special" Motorama Show Car exceeded its pre-sale auction estimate of \$150,000, selling for \$225,500.

**CHARITIES:** RM supports many community causes. To cultivate the next generation of the hobby, last year RM donated six vintage pickups to high schools for automotive students to restore; RM will auction the trucks, with proceeds going to the schools' shop programs. RM teamed up with Canadian Crossroads International in January to provide medical supplies to Haitian earthquake victims. At Amelia Island in March, RM will sell a 1961 Austin-Healey "Sebring Sprite" Vintage Racing Car to benefit the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance Foundation. **UPCOMING:** RM Auctions continues its 2010 season in Florida in March with the return of its highly anticipated Automobiles of Amelia Island event on March 13, held in partnership with the world-famous Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance, closely followed by the annual Collector Cars of Fort Lauderdale event, March 26-28. Details can be found at [www.rmauctions.com](http://www.rmauctions.com)

## Russo and Steele

### 10th Annual Sports and Muscle in Scottsdale

The 800-pound elephant lurking in a review of this year's auctions would be the weather, especially the extreme event that destroyed two of the large tents at Russo and Steele. We were headed there—in an Alaska-grade anorak and Wolverine boots as the storm increased—and turned on satellite traffic and weather, where we quickly learned of a closure on Loop 101 due to an auction tent blowing up on the freeway. Whoa. That was our first word that something unusu-

al and very big was happening. We headed straight to Russo and Steele but were allowed nowhere near, due to emergency closures. About the same time, a tornado warning was issued for that general area, with a touch-down reported near Hayden and the 101, adjacent to Russo and Steele. (As of press time, we had yet to hear solid confirmation of a tornado.)

The loss of the tents, and vehicle damage within, caused the Russo and Steele's 10th-year "Decade of Distinction Celebration" to be shut down for Friday. Authorities deemed the site safe for owners to assess things on Saturday. After rumors (and hopes) of a Saturday resumption, Russo and Steele did open its doors and resume its auction on Sunday and into Monday.

Despite a major commitment to All Reserve All The Time, there was much discussion as to whether reserves would be in place, or adjusted, or dropped as even some of the damaged vehicles crossed the block. Most if not all remaining sellers with damaged vehicles heartily agreed to full repair and restoration of those that sold, and many reserves were dropped in enthusiastic bidding. But seeing the damage was painful in many cases, and the atmosphere was undeniably affected by events.

Owners filled the main auction block Saturday morning, where Drew Alcazar, co-owner, president and CEO of Russo and Steele, addressed them. "I'm a car guy. I know what you're going through," said Alcazar. "But, today, I am the luckiest guy because I not am visiting any of my close friends, family or clients in the hospital or morgue. None of these great cars are worth someone's life. Everything can get fixed and most importantly, everyone is safe." Of the many times he has walked onto the block, he said this by far was the most difficult.

Alcazar described the reopening of the auction as symbolic, not profit-driven. "It was important to us to show our clients and the community that we were still standing, that Russo and Steele was not going to bury its head in the sand and leave our clients to fend for themselves. We've built our reputation on service and being the true enthusiast's auction, and we needed to show everyone who has supported Russo and Steele that we will continue that level of professionalism over the next ten years and beyond."

The high sale for the event was a rare 1960 Ferrari 250 GT Pininfarina Series II cabriolet, the fourteenth built in the first run of 100 cars, out of 200 ultimately produced. It had undergone a complete restoration by well-known authorities, including Bob Wallace, Squadra Novolari, Bill Pound and others, and sold Sunday night for \$797,500. The famous and somewhat controversial (never known of till this season) 1948 Tucker one-of-a-kind convertible was a very close no-sale at \$1.3 million.

**CHARITIES:** Russo and Steele raises money for charity at its opening night gala. After the storm, several consignors donated proceeds to local charities including the Scottsdale Fire Fighters Charities, the Boys and Girls Club, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Arizona.

**UPCOMING:** Russo and Steele will have a promotional presence at the Amelia Island Concours from March 12-14, SCCA Vintage Races at PIR March 20-21 and the California Mille April 25-29. Their next auction is their 10th Annual Monterey event August 10-14. Watch for information on their new endeavor in China. Info: [www.russoandsteele.com](http://www.russoandsteele.com). ■

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The Lexus LS is the manufacturer's flagship sedan, available both gasoline- and hybrid-powered. For perspective on the LS 600h L hybrid, we start with a look at the LS 460 AWD.

**Lexus LS 460 AWD** — When we volunteered to drive part of the route to check mileages for an upcoming event, we knew we would be traversing some fun roads. Sharp corners, elevation changes and lots of open space in the high desert. It seemed like a perfect place to be running a Mustang GT or Nissan 370Z, but our test car that week was the big, luxurious 2009 gasoline-powered Lexus LS 460.

How could we complain about making the 300-mile drive in one of the most quiet, comfortable and smooth-riding cars on the road? As we got down to business, we were enjoying the

pure luxury of the big Lexus, but were a little disconcerted by body lean as we ran through some of the corners. Then we remembered the button on the console that changes the Adaptive Variable Air Suspension to a sportier mode. We pushed it to sport mode, and it was as if we'd changed cars. The ride became firm, totally controlled, and felt more agile and responsive.

As the afternoon and evening progressed, we were eating up the road in this classic luxury car—powered by a sophisticated 357-hp 4.6-liter V8 engine driving all four wheels through a slick eight-speed automatic. All-wheel drive is an option on the LS 460 (standard on the LS 600h L).

The LS turned out to be an amazing road car. The gasoline version accelerates from 0 to 60 mph in a mere 5.4 seconds, with a top speed

limited to 130 mph. The EPA rates it at 16 mpg city and 23 mpg highway, and we actually averaged 21.3 mpg.

On the return trip, we tried out some of the other goodies on the Lexus flagship. The Navigation/Mark Levinson option added a state-of-the-art 19-speaker sound system, and nav even showed traffic patterns as we got closer to town. For cruising, Dynamic Radar Cruise Control kept the big Lexus an equal distance behind a lead vehicle. The system also sets the car up to stop more effectively in the event a vehicle in front does a panic stop.

This car had nearly ever fun and comfort feature known to modern cars, with heated and cooled seats front and rear, backup camera, adaptive lighting that turned with the car, plush leather, real wood and a page full of all the other cool features.

# Stealth

*This tight and powerful luxury yacht makes an impressive hybrid, rigged for silent running.*

By Barbara and Bill Schaffer  
Lead photo by Christina Lawrie



*Lexus LS 600h L AWD  
Emissions from the luxurious  
Lexus LS 600h L hybrid are  
cleaner than the ambient air  
in some major cities.*

Elegance, luxury and performance don't come cheap, however. The base price of the Lexus LS 460 AWD is \$67,200. Three major option packages include the Navigation/Mark Levinson package (\$5,645), Pre-collision and dynamic radar cruise control (\$2,850) and Luxury value edition package of seat upgrades and automatic door closers (\$2,895) brought the total to \$79,415 including the destination charge.

The LS 460 is not a car for everyone, but for someone shopping for a large, comfortable luxury sedan with good performance, it should be on their shopping list.

**Lexus LS 600h L** — Lexus has made a big effort to promote sustainable and environmentally sound practices. We joined them for the Lexus Hybrid Living Tour, featuring the GS 450h, RX 400h and LS 600h L.

The big Lexus LS 600h L is not only the ultimate hybrid, but one of the most impressive luxury sedans on the market, period. It is also the kind of car that would work well sitting in the back seat and having a driver, but why give someone else the fun of driving this car?

The Lexus LS has to rank at or near the top of luxury cars for its quiet and comfort, but the hybrid takes it another step. Like most hybrids, this car shuts off the gas engine when you come to a stop, but press lightly on the accelerator and it starts off in a total electric mode and goes, sometimes for blocks, on electric power before the 5.0-liter 389-hp V8 smoothly joins in. (Combined with the two electric motors, the LS 600h L has 438 horsepower.) We also discovered the engine shutting down on slow corners and staying in the electric mode until we accelerated to about 35 mph.

The LS 600h L is driven through the industry's only eight-speed automatic transmission, which produces the silkiest shifts we've ever felt (or never felt). It's also equipped with a state-of-the-art full-time all-wheel-drive system for even better stability and handling capabilities. We had just spent a week in the LS 460 AWD a couple of weeks earlier, and we're still in awe of this amazing car. During our driving time, we actually averaged 23.1 mpg, which was actually better than the EPA rating of 20 mpg city and 22 mpg highway.

There is no performance penalty for this fuel sipper, either. Zero-to-60 mph acceleration takes only 5.5 seconds, and it has a top speed limited to 130 mph. The hybrid power is like having the economy of a V6 engine with the performance of a V8.

And yes: elegance, luxury, performance and a highly refined hybrid powertrain don't come cheap. Air suspension, plush leathers, heated and cooled seats, audiophile sound system and nearly everything you could possibly imagine are included in the LS 600h L's \$108,800 base price (2010). Our test car also had a Premium Package (\$12,000 in 2009) adding such things as a pre-collision system, parking guidance, power rear seats, Dynamic Radar Cruise Control, Pedestrian Detection System and Driver Attention Monitor.

Lexus has a special Hybrid Living section on their website that can guide you to luxury destinations (like restaurants, hotels, spas and boutiques) dedicated to the Eco Design Lifestyle. Luxury Eco Tours are available for locations around the country with self-guided podcasts or with printed guides online. For more information go to [www.lexus.com/hybridliving](http://www.lexus.com/hybridliving). ■



## LS 600h L LOGBOOK NOTES

- Barbara and Bill had the LS 460 AWD for a week, and the LS 600h L at its launch event. We had the LS 600h L for a week.
- We first pulled it out into the street to swap parking slots. The gas engine never started: it ran in total silence, and in a big sedan like this, that's very cool.
- Playing the gauges is a challenge in some hybrids, but it's not hard to keep this gauge in the ECO range, or even toward the charging range. When you goose it into the power range, you get so much power, so fast, you don't even feel like you're blowing your reserve (though you surely are).
- Comfort and sport settings: like B&B, we realized it was a tiny bit soft, though a pretty nice ride even on comfort. Changed over to sport, same as it turns out they had.
- There's enough power on tap that you can accelerate strongly and solidly and stay in the ECO range, easily.
- It's so cool cruising around in silence in this kind of size and comfort, that you actually enjoy doing it, unlike the sort of self-challenge with small hybrids.
- Nice suspension. Long wheelbase probably helps, but even one by one on speed-bumps, it performs extremely well, actually a little better on the front than the back.
- Despite being drivers to the core, we had the same thought Barbara and Bill did, since this is the "L" we wish we could let somebody else drive it, so we could try out that big back seat. One more great trick.
- We try out the back seat... spacious! And yet it handles so well, with AWD.
- It shares an annoyance with other Toyotas: if you don't move the shifter to P, shut off power and open the door in their preferred sequence, it will beep at you until you do it all over again their way.
- Previously in the little HS hybrid we noted you seldom get caught short for power, and in this one you never do. You're cruising along in ECO and freebie modes, and suddenly have to hop on a better lane or breeze through a corner before the light turns, and you don't think twice. Powerful.
- Cruising surface streets, we're at about 1500 rpm in D mode. Knocked over to S and bumped it to above 3000 rpm. We're doing very well with fuel mileage in the D mode, so we change back. You don't feel a big difference other than when you first shift.
- In our week overall, we generally go to Drive, forget about the S setting on the transmission. The suspension stays set on Sport. Considering how high the tach jacks up when you go to the S on the transmission, we'd recommend Sport for suspension, the economical D setting on the transmission, and enjoy yourself. -JS



# Logic and emotion

A brief course in comparative mathematics lights our fire.

Story and photo: Joe Sage



The Lexus GS is billed as a mid-size luxury car, or executive car, against the LS's full-size luxury designation. The GS originally filled the LS spot in the lineup, in 1991, as the LS moved upsize and upmarket. As the former LS slot was a moving target (its price was climbing as the GS was developed to hit its prior, lower price), the GS was basically born a bargain. And a bargain it still is. In mid-luxury size (an odd combination of terms), the GS delivers most of the goods of the LS:

GENERAL	GS	LS	GS-to-LS
Wheelbase (non-L)	112.2	116.9	.96%
Length (non-L)	190.0	198.0	.96%
Width	71.7	73.8	.97%
Height (AWD)	56.5	58.3	.97%
Weight (non-L)	3944	4240	.93%
EPA (hybrid)	22/25	20/22	+10-14%
Base price (gas)	\$45,600	\$65,380	.69.7%
Base price (hybrid)	\$57,450	\$108,800	.52.8%
Sales (US: 2008)	16,000	20,000	.80%

The presence of L-only and AWD-only for the LS, with those optional on the GS, as well as hybrids of both models, could make for quite a chart. There are also 6-

speed and 8-speed automatics on the GS, but just an 8-speed on the LS. And variations in the options for each could have you comparing for awhile. But you get the idea. The Lexus GS delivers almost all the goods of the LS, with most key specs at 96-97% those of the LS, while achieving 10-14% better fuel mileage and bearing 7% less weight (a performance and fuel plus).

Most remarkably, the standard-wheelbase gasoline GS is priced at less than 70% of the LS, while comparing hybrids (though trading off length and RWD-AWD variables) delivers you a GS for just over 50% the cost of the LS. Cry no tears for the LS, however. Its sales are still 25% higher than the GS (based on 2008 figures for the US; 2009 figures were considerably lower for everybody and were not all available yet).

One thing to consider if cross-shopping the Lexus LS and Lexus GS: the LS is now in its fourth generation, launched in 2007; the GS is still in its third, launched in 2005. This could be a compelling reason to grab a current GS, before size and price might climb. Or it could be a good reason to wait for the next edition. (We do look forward to the next GS.) Might resale prices suffer on a

model that's closer to the end of its cycle? The crystal ball is always murky, but in the price range of either of these, we'd say get the one that suits your own needs best, and keep it for awhile.

We are impressed as all getout with both the LS and GS. We drove the GS 460 for a week before driving the LS 600h L. Apples and oranges included the long wheelbase for the LS, standard for the GS; gas engine for the GS and hybrid powertrain for the LS; rear-wheel drive for the GS and all-wheel-drive for the LS. Both had the seamless and strong 8-speed automatic. Both were similarly (very fully) appointed with options overall.

The GS gave us highly favorable impressions starting in the first block and building over the first mile (see log-book sidebar) and only built from there. Ditto the LS, in spades, but the GS impressed against a clean slate.

We can easily imagine taking either one home and keeping it. Pride and pecking order are factors in these segments, and you know if you need an LS. If the logic of the numbers presented above gets your attention, do drive the GS. Do drive it, anyway. You could buy two of these, one of those, or one of each. It's your budget. ■

## LEXUS LS 460 NOTES

- The Lexus GS 460 is incredibly smooth and quiet but not cushy, a great balance. Within the first block, we like it. Within the first mile, we note that it's a keeper. A Lexus, though not too showy, just right.
- Controls are very good. Nice map, easy touchscreen control, has a good backup camera (which only a few makers really do). Even in the dark and while driving, all are straightforward. A breath of fresh air.
- A linear graph for current mpg seems a wiser implementation than specific numbers, often unreliable, on many others.
- We wish the turn signal indicator's audible indicator was a hair more audible.
- Shiny steering wheel reduces grip.
- Mirror, lighting and other controls are in a small drop-down panel to the left of the steering wheel. Set once and put them away. That's 20 buttons we don't need to have on hand all the time, leaving the instrument panel for primary missions.
- The instrument cluster glass is tinted to avoid or reduce glare or reflection, set automatically or manually within 7 settings, normal, auto-lo, auto-hi and 4 manuals. Nice.
- Interior light controls on the overhead console are good: left light on, right light on, three in the middle for door switch-on-or-off. "On" will override the individual switches and "off" will not, so that's all good. Subtle but effective blue beams from the ceiling illuminate the steering wheel when you enter, and also the shifter.
- Auto headlights hard to override: must turn all the way up and back a click, every time.
- According to the chart, we are mostly getting between 40 and off-the-charts 90+ mpg, of which we're a little skeptical.
- We hit four gears in one block. The car has a very smooth 8-speed transmission.
- We set the shocks in Sport, for a firm ride; there are also settings to soften this.
- Audio interface already set for good sound, evidence that the previous driver was thoroughly enjoying this car as well.
- Both mirrors angle down when you're in reverse (or neither). We'd like a right-side-only option.
- This is not a hybrid, yet it runs so quietly, you could seriously forget to turn it off.
- Parked next to a BMW 750L, the GS seems significantly narrower, and it is: the 7 Series is 74.9" wide to the GS's 71.7" (and the LS at 73.8"). But they have similar long cabins (that's just more apparent on the GS, with its short rear deck).
- Overall, we find this car's tech level is straightforward and intuitive. It does everything, and then some, but the interface does not get in the way of your driving (or the tech feature operations, for that matter).



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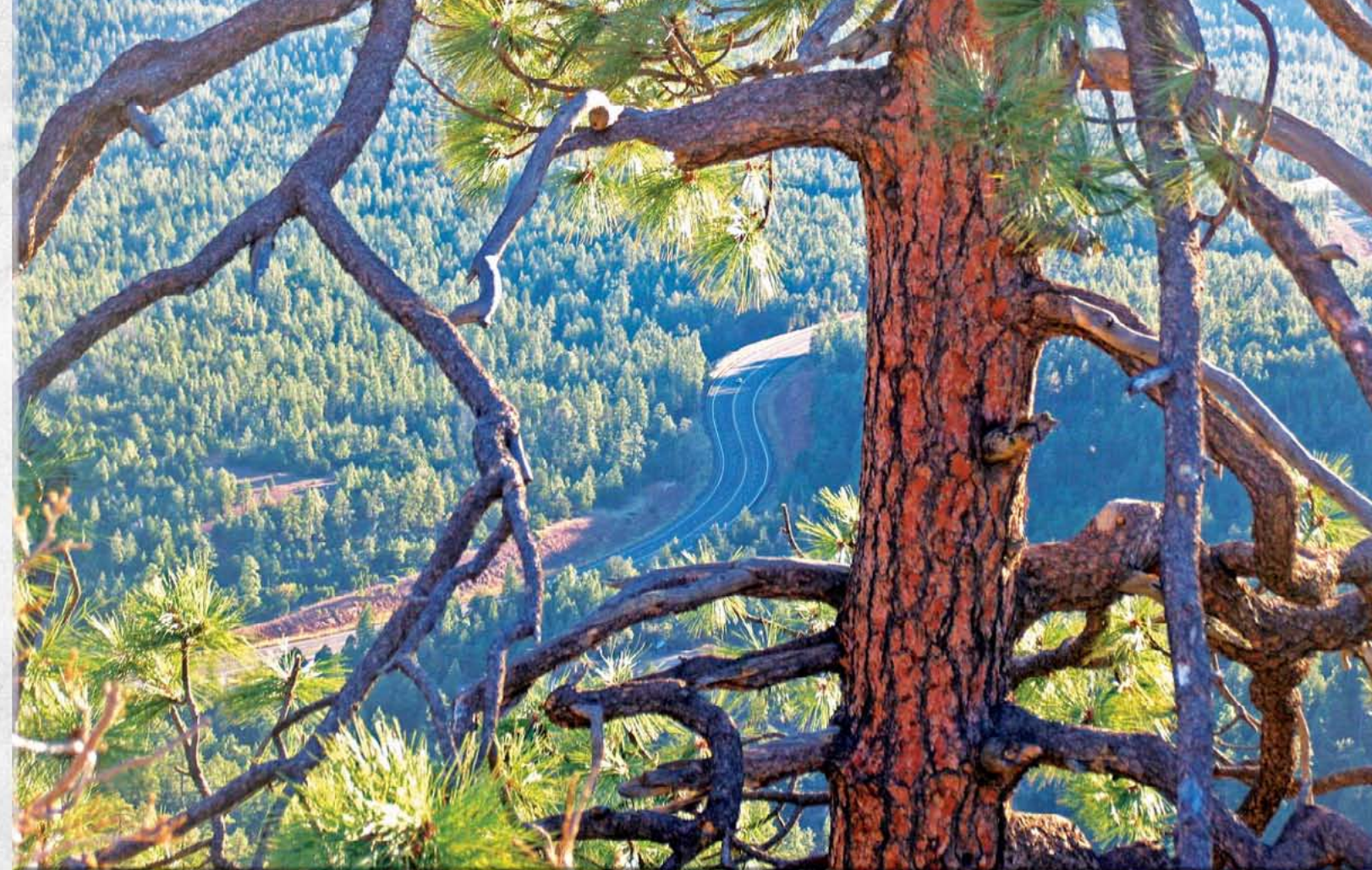
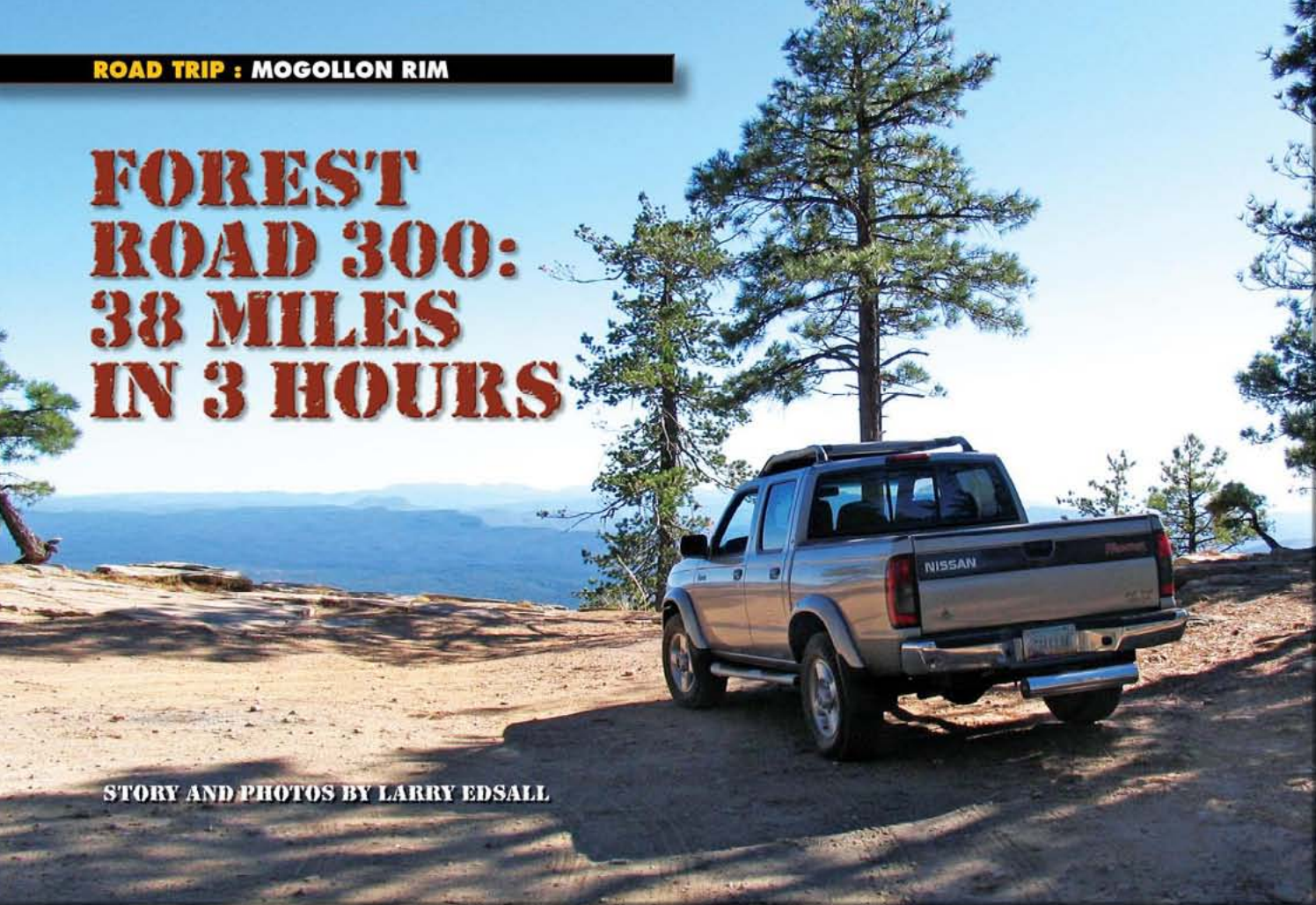
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# FOREST ROAD 300: 38 MILES IN 3 HOURS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LARRY EDSALL



Forest Road 300 runs along the edge of the Mogollon Rim above Payson. From the unpaved road's eastern end, you can look down on those traveling at a much faster pace on the pavement of state highway 260.

**D**o the math: 38.1 miles in 3 hours. But that's like 12-point-something miles per hour! A good marathon runner could cover that distance on foot. So could most people who ride bicycles. And yet the route book says we should plan on three hours to cover a mere 38.1 miles of what it rates as the easiest of all unpaved surfaces?

That's right, because while you could drive Forest Road 300 in a standard, family-style passenger car, we'd really recommend doing so only in a rental because this road, while offering none of the typical off-pavement obstacles of rocks to straddle or boulders to climb, is somewhere between washboard rough and paint can shaker for much of its distance.

And speaking of that 3-hour estimated time for travel, you'll want to take longer because you'll want to stop every so often, get as close to the edge as you dare go, to stare at some stunning vistas.

We who live in Phoenix's Valley of the Sun are spoiled, because we don't have to drive far, or even all that far from pavement, to take in some of the best vistas available. Consider Schnebly Road as it

descends into Sedona. Or the Apache Trail along the Salt River to Roosevelt Dam.

Or Forest Road 300, first blazed by Gen. George Crook's military men as part of their supply route between Fort Whipple in Prescott and Fort Apache in Arizona's White Mountains.

Today, you can drive east out of Prescott on highways 69 and 169, then make a quick hop north on Interstate 17 to Camp Verde, exiting east on 260 and following that road as it works its way up toward the Mogollon Rim before plunging south and east toward Payson and following the base of the rim on toward Show Low and the White Mountains.

Or, like Gen. Crook's supply team, from just east of where 260 now intersects 87, you can follow the dusty, graveled Mogollon Rim Road, cutting the distance, though by only some 20 miles, but greatly enhancing the views out the windows of your sport or crossover utility vehicle, pickup truck or (rental) car.

Gen. Crook's supply troops drove horse- or mule-drawn wagons. We drove a modern 4x4 crew cab pickup truck, though we never needed to shift the transmission

out of 2-wheel-drive mode, not even when we took the side trail to see the General Springs cabin, a half-mile each-way dirt road that's rough enough that you likely won't be able to travel it in anything but a high-clearance vehicle.

While we didn't reach for the transfer case lever, we did often downshift into second and even first gear to employ engine-braking on some of the steeper downhill grades along the way. There are occasional "25 mph" speed limit signs along the way. Unless you're in a rally car or Baja racer, there are only a few flat and straight stretches where you'll even think about approaching, let alone exceeding, that limit.

So plan on taking your time and taking in the view. And what a view it is.

The rim towers some 3000 feet above Payson, some 4000 higher than Rye, the Tonto Basin and Roosevelt Lake. There are places where the road winds through forests of tall pine trees; other places where those pines were incinerated by major fires.

In some places, the road runs right to the edge of the drop-off. No guard rails.

Just common sense and self-preservation remind you to drive carefully.

Not only do you want to take your time for safety's sake, but you'll want to stop frequently, to park in various designated areas along the road and walk to the most spectacular of overlooks.

Forest Road 300 and the various side roads that run off it are well-marked, though we found it very helpful to keep a copy of Swagman Publishing's *Arizona Backcountry Adventures* handy. Thick as a good-sized city's telephone book, *Backcountry Adventures* is a guide to driving off-pavement, from the basic how-tos to detailed road maps (with turn-by-turn navigation that includes driving distances and periodic GPS coordinates), as well as pages of text and photos about Arizona history, historic people, and the state's flora and fauna.

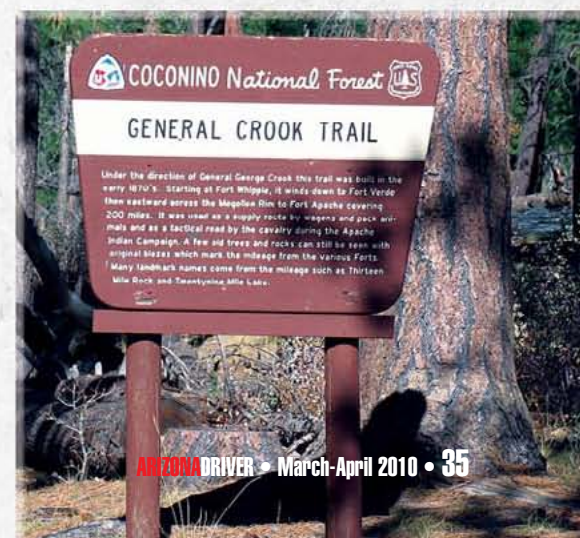
The book tells us the road was constructed in 1872, a year after Gen. Crook became military commander for the Arizona Territory, and that the General himself not only used General Springs as

a source of water, but reportedly had a "very narrow escape" from the Apaches at that spot.

We also learn that the Mogollon Rim was named for Juan Ignacio Flores Mogollon, governor of the Spanish province of Nuevo México from 1712-15, and that the trail is closed, snowed in during winter months.

We made our first stop seven miles along the Rim Road, at what *Adventures* describes as "Track on left is FR308 to Potato Lake. Track on right goes out to a viewpoint along the rim."

From that viewpoint, we could see the smoke rising from a prescribed burn. A little more than four miles further to the east we stopped at Hi-View Point, where we could smell that smoke, and where we discovered a US Geological Survey Bench Mark metal medallion dated 1933 and attached to a boulder right at the edge of the rim. The disc says the point is 7,494 feet above sea level.



KEEP RIGHT >>





At about 15 miles, you can turn north to see the recreation of General Springs Cabin, or park and follow the Tunnel Hiking Trail, which *Adventures* says takes you to the site of the tunnel for the proposed Mineral Belt Railroad, a spur running from the cross-country tracks at Flagstaff down to the copper mines at Globe. The plan, formulated in 1881, was to create a 3100-foot railway tunnel. However, only 70 feet of the tunnel was excavated before the project ran out of money.

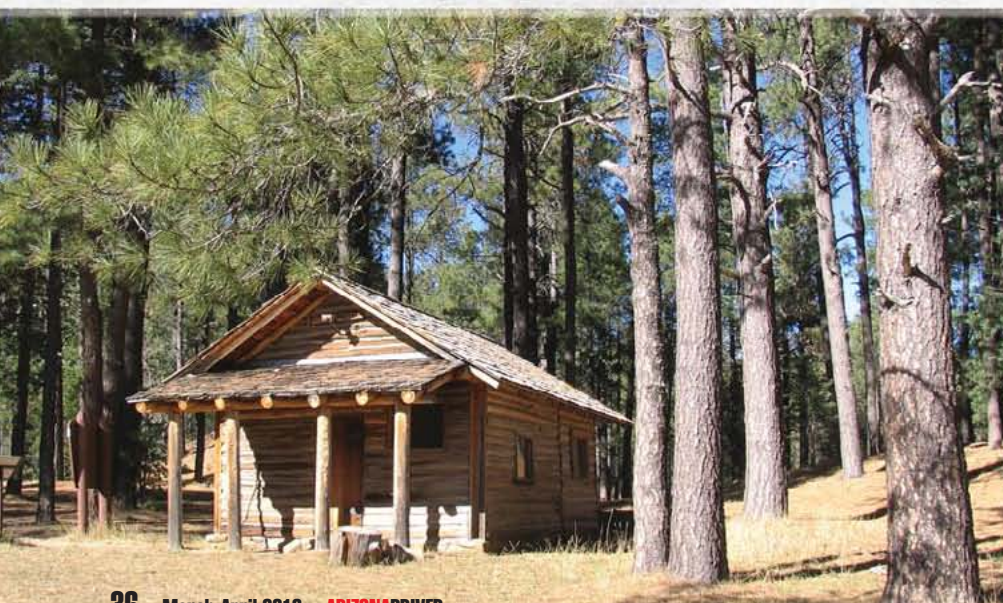
Back on the Rim Road, we come to a low-lying, wetlands sort of area and a sign that identifies the Lost Lake-Karl Steffes Aspen Regeneration Project. The sign explains that in cooperation with the Karl Steffes Memorial Fund, the US Department of Agriculture has put up fences so the aspen sprouts can grow to above grazing height, at which point the fences will be removed. We don't know if the grazers are cattle or elk.

About halfway along the Rim Road, we drove north on Forest road 295E and followed it about four miles north to Knoll Lake, a secluded, picturesque, 75-acre, inverted V-shaped body of water tucked into the hills (just above the lake are 33 camp sites).

While exploring part of the shoreline—and wishing we had a canoe to get out on the lake's still surface—we noticed a sign that said anglers need a trout-fishing permit, and we chatted with a grandfather and his grandson who were storing their poles after a day of casting from shore. Grandpa said he and his son had been fishing the lake for 20 years and had yet to catch a single fish. But that really didn't matter, he said, because the lake had provided a succession of father/son outings—and now had blossomed into father/son/grandson events.

Our next stop was the forest ranger lookout tower near Promontory Butte, though all we could do was to look up, not out; the tower is locked except to forest personnel during fire season.

We did another short side trip to Woods Canyon Lake, at 52 acres smaller than Knoll, but very popular because it's located only five miles from the east end of the trail—and even has a paved road that leads to its shores. Just before the Rim Road T-bones into the state highway, we stop for one last overlook before heading back to the Valley. ■





# All American

## New style and much innovation

By Bill Schaffer - photos by Joe Sage



It seems every time we talk to someone, the conversation leads around to the health of the American auto industry. We have always had an optimistic attitude about the situation, maintaining that when the manufacturers build a good product—meaning that it is an attractive design, well built with quality materials and is fairly priced—it will sell. Good fuel economy is probably an important factor now, too. We just had an opportunity to drive a very good example of the kind of car that fits these criteria—the GMC Terrain.

All new for 2010, the GMC Terrain has a distinctive bold design, innovative features, appears to be well built with quality materials, and the base SLE gets an impressive 22 mpg city and 32 mpg highway. The Terrain shares its platform with the Chevrolet Equinox and Cadillac SRX; however the three are very distinctive, not at all like some of the “badge engineering” done by General Motors in the past.

With exaggerated flared fenders, deep trapezoidal chrome grille and squared off edges, the Terrain shape reminds us of a customized Hummer H3—and that is a good thing. The stylish design is accented by attractive textured black plastic trim on the lower levels on the sides and the front and rear fascias. The trim itself is not new, but the texture adds sophistication.

The GMC Terrain is available in two trim levels, SLE and SLT, with two engine choices and with front-wheel drive or all-wheel drive. Pricing starts at \$24,995,

including destination charge, for a well-equipped front-wheel-drive four-cylinder SLE. An SLT with AWD and V6 starts at \$29,945. Take all the available option packages add rear seat entertainment, moonroof, navigation with hard drive and a handful of other goodies, and the price can flirt with \$38,000.

Soft perforated leather seats in the SLT-2 were some of the best-looking we’ve seen. The instrument panel has a distinctive large contrasting colored inset covering most of its surface area, giving the front seats a roomier feel. The high-mounted center stack is logically organized with large, well-marked buttons and knobs.

Terrain is loaded with innovative extras that enhance the driving experience. For example, a backup camera is standard on all models (on the screen of models with navigation and on the rear-view mirrors of all others). An available programmable power liftgate allows the driver to adjust how far the rear gate opens, very handy in a garage with limited clearance.

Many shoppers will choose the 182-hp 2.4-liter four-cylinder engine for its fuel economy, but will be pleased by its performance. However, someone who wants more power or needs to pull a trailer—up to 3500 pounds—needs to select the 264-hp, 3.0-liter V6, rated at 17/24 mpg city/highway, equipped with AWD and standard six-speed automatic transmission. Most of our drive time in the Terrain was on freeways and surface streets. Under those conditions it feels solid, corners flat, has strong acceleration and a smooth quiet ride. ■



### TERRAIN LOGBOOK NOTES

- Audio interface and touchscreen controls are above average. Sound is just adequate.
- We note concern with brake strength.
- AWD, but could be better at holding a lane.
- Giant console and other storage spaces.
- Stylewise, we’re ambivalent, not taken with square flares around round wheels. We too see a nod to the departing Hummer DNA. Our memos are hard on shapes and excess chrome at first, but warm to it after a week.
- Power is good, too good? 10mph over the limit is too easy. Faster than it feels, sort of like the road-dominating Escalade phenomenon, but without the domination.
- We like the suspension. Handles well in general and does *very* well on speed bumps.
- Several demerits noted on the backup camera: put in “R” and there is a delay before the rear camera comes on. Image quality is not very good. Wet pavement or streetlight glare overpower vitals. Very susceptible to weather, fogging in rain and gushing over the lens after rain.
- Note: GM is recalling Chevy Equinox and GMC Terrain to fix faulty computer module for climate controls, radio, center stack illumination and defroster. NHTSA is most interested in the defroster for safety reasons. -JS

# Big bang For the buck

Story and photos: Joe Sage



When BMW first conceived the X5, released amazingly back in 1999, it was anticipated with a large degree of skepticism. A performance brand producing an SUV? One dose heresy and one dose unlikely engineering. BMW of course proved the doubters wrong, building a vehicle that had the high body of an SUV with the ground-hugging athletics of a sports coupe, or close to it. That paved the way for Porsche, Acura, Audi and others to offer similarly successful vehicles. Offered with inline-6 and V8 gasoline engines for years, the X5 was introduced with a 6-cylinder diesel just over a year ago.

As with the two gasoline models, this vehicle is all-wheel-drive, and as with those two, is bears a fairly long and complete name: the BMW X5 xDrive35d Sports Activity Vehicle Advanced Diesel with BluePerformance. We’d be happy with X5d. (The gasoline models’ key identifiers are 30i and 48i, and although the diesel has a 3.0-liter engine, as does the gasoline 30i, its name is based on 35. Just because.)

Our first diesel SUV drives were the Mercedes-Benz BlueTEC trio (see Sept/Oct’08 issue). At that time, fuel costs were skyrocketing, and the emphasis was on economy, as well as clean emissions. The drives did include aggressive Vermont roads and trails, but diesel grunt took a back seat to straight-on comparisons with

the gasoline models. We also recently drove the Volkswagen Golf TDI for a week (see elsewhere, this issue), and that was our epiphany on the wonders of torque from a diesel powerplant.

So how does the BMW X5 diesel stack up? Let’s see:

MODEL	ENGINE	HP	LBFT	EPA	BASE
X5 35d	diesel I-6	265	425	19/26	\$52,175
X5 30i	gas I-6	260	225	15/21	\$48,475
X5 48i	gas V8	350	350	14/19	\$51,175
X5 M	gas V8	555	500	12/17	\$86,375

All are equipped with a 6-speed automatic. Torque, a stepchild to horsepower ratings for years, is finally getting its due, and as you can see, the amount of torque put out by the diesel does deliver a potent balance of quickness and economy. The 35d weighs 5225 pounds—about 300 pounds more than the 30i and just 20 less than the 48i—yet achieves 0-to-60 in 6.9 seconds. Despite how their horsepower ratings fall, the difference in torque compares the 35d’s 0-to-60 favorably against 7.8 for the 30i and 6.4 for the 48i. The 30i and 48i both require premium gasoline, closing any diesel price gap when diesel runs higher. The 35d delivers 85% of the torque the X5 M does, and 52-60% better fuel mileage, at 60% of the M’s price.

The numbers are all there to more than justify the X5 xDrive35d’s position in the lineup. On bang for the buck, it can’t be beat. To maximize the torque impact, we wish it had a manual transmission, but the manual function of the automatic nearly makes up for that. ■



### X5 DIESEL LOGBOOK NOTES

- Electronic control switches, e.g. bright headlights, feel strong and substantial.
- Seat feels slightly off-center and angled.
- The shifter has conventional size and position. Shape and functions are unconventional but fun and very effective. Drive-by-wire disconnects feel from shift action.
- Wild backup camera graphics and beeps are like docking the lunar lander. Distance warnings seem excessive. The relentless chime upon entering is our least favorite.
- You notice little diesel noise driving, but from a start you notice a good growl, and man do you feel the torque performance.
- Climate interface is 100% graphic, with bars, colors, lines, graphs, plus-signs and little stick figures, but few solid clues.
- Sizable dashboard but no apparent glove box. Owner’s manual in the passenger door pocket, hard to reach as the driver.
- It has a surprisingly big turning circle, 42’. It does handle very well for an SUV.
- Electronics may drive you crazy or may be your favorite thing, once you master it all.
- Cornering and resuming speed delivers a downshift of noticeable sound, as well as some lag and lunge. We wish for a stick.



# Appetizer

## The GLK gives us GL envy

Story and photos: Joe Sage



### GLK REVISITED

Covered at its launch in Santa Barbara's wine country (see the January/February 2009 issue), we now spend a week with the Mercedes-Benz GLK 350 in Arizona.

Mercedes-Benz offers no shortage of SUVs, including the big G-Class, the mainstream GL-Class, the stylish midsize M Class and the underappreciated R-Class. When the GLK was introduced at the end of 2008, they were emphatic that it is not just a downsized M Class. Yet it seems as much related to the GL in styling, and certainly in name.

As we said at the time, the GLK fills a lineup gap we hadn't quite realized was there. Gas price panic earlier that year had people thinking smaller, so they were ahead of the curve. We had driven the BlueTEC versions of the ML, R and GL, fine vehicles that had unfortunately launched with 25% better fuel mileage just as diesel climbed to 20% higher cost. The GLK arrives with estimated EPA ratings of 16/22 mpg city/highway, not a game-changer. Its 3.5-liter 24-valve DOHC V6 delivers 268 hp, still delivering decent performance in a small package. It does offer relative purchase price economy, though, with our highly optioned test GLK stickered at \$42,925. This compares well with, for example, the Lexus RX 350 below, and this is exactly where they want to deliver. The GLK, like the ML, is available as either 2-wheel-drive or 4MATIC awd, perhaps a reason for their

M-Class disclaimer. Here's how basics compare:

MODEL	HP	EPA	BASE
GLK 350	268	16/22	\$35,475
GLK 350 4MATIC	268	16/21	\$37,475
ML 350	268	16/21	\$46,575
ML 350 4MATIC	268	15/20	\$49,075
R 350 4MATIC	268	15/19	\$50,175
GL 450 4MATIC	335	13/17	\$61,825
G 550	382	11/15	\$104,875

Apples and oranges galore. The GLK and ML offer 2wd vs 4wd options, with price and fuel economy very close. Power is the same through all but the GL and G-Class. The G-Class is a niche vehicle, but the GL is halfway there on fuel economy and more than halfway there on power. (And then there are the BlueTECs.) Given capacity and price, the R is very compelling. ML and GLK specs are so similar, they really compare on size, style and price. So the GLK? If small size and lower price appeal, might you buy a Ford Escape or Kia Soul for two-thirds the price? It wouldn't have Mercedes panache, that's for certain. If Mercedes style and solid SUV function are for you, well, we keep coming back to the GL as the more compelling vehicle. But at two-thirds higher price and two-third lower EPA, that may be an unfair comparison.

Yes, driving the GLK did give us a case of GL envy, but it also gave us a great appreciation for the niche the GLK fills, and in that niche, it is a very strong contender. It turns out Mercedes was right on the money when they recognized this gap in the lineup. ■



### GLK 350 LOGBOOK NOTES

- Smooth, quiet, solid drive. Small, lightweight, nice size, step right in. You could be given one and never ask another question.
- When an SUV or crossover is 2wd, that may be when it becomes a station wagon.
- Sometimes feels a little too lightweight, e.g. door or parking brake controls.
- It's a rear-driver, but feels torquey at times like a front-, likely from drive-by-wire tech.
- Definitely hits the speed bumps hard.
- Decided it kind of looks like a ski boot.
- Well-equipped. Rain-sensing wipers are a plus. Interior lighting is slick, with a blue light from the bottom of the rearview mirror that shines everywhere you need it but not anywhere else. Facial privacy from outside, but the footwell and seat area are nicely lit.
- Ceiling switches prompt raves, but also a rant: intuitive and handy, mostly, but it's as easy in the dark to call for info or help as to turn on a light, which did happen.
- AM/FM, satellite, CD settings are cumbersome, with screen, two dials, lots of steps.
- C and S settings are comfort and standard, not sport, though standard does have a later upshift point. Unresolved: we can't get it to stay in S. Specs say it will restart in its last setting, but it always comes back as C.

# Queen bee

## Crossover pioneer, updated

By Barbara and Bill Schaffer - photos by Joe Sage



The third time is a charm for the Lexus RX, and that's saying a lot, because the first two generations were impressive. Completely redesigned for 2010, but with a familiar look, the Lexus RX is a little larger, significantly more powerful and one of the most technologically advanced crossover SUVs on the market.

A product of Lexus L-finesse design, the RX combines a sleek coupe-like roofline, broad shoulders and a smooth underside to produce a low 0.33 coefficient of drag with an almost boat-like silhouette. The resulting body is familiar but distinctively new.

No off-the-rack interior for Lexus, the RX is dressed in couture with a stylish dash that breaks from the typical symmetry with a sweeping center stack. Gauges are illuminated with a high contrast Organic Light Emitting Diode technology for a crisp appearance. Elegant leather seats, wood trim and convenient storage compartments are not only pleasing to the eye but provide top level comfortable and function.

Two drivetrain choices are available: a 3.5-liter V6 for the conventional RX 350 and a 3.5-liter Atkinson-cycle V6 with electric motors for the hybrid RX 400h.

Our test RX 350, rated at 275 hp, has a new silky smooth six-speed automatic transmission powering the standard front-wheel drive. An optional AWD system with viscous coupling locking center differential pro-

duces a 50:50 front/rear torque distribution. The EPA rates the gas-only RX at 18 mpg city and 24 mpg highway. Zero to 60 mph acceleration is rated by the manufacturer at 7.5 seconds for the AWD.

(The hybrid 400h produces a net 295 hp and V8-like power, but with four-cylinder-like fuel economy, rating 28/27 mpg city/highway (26 hwy with AWD), in electric-only or gas-only modes as well as a combination.)

The Remote Touch interface allows the driver to control audio, navigation, climate and Bluetooth using the screen and a computer-mouse-like controller on the console. The control has an adjustable force feedback system that simulates notches as the cursor rolls over function buttons. Many functions are duplicated with stand-alone buttons for those who prefer conventional controls. This is one of the most intuitive control systems we have ever used in a car.

A wide-view side-monitoring system with a television camera mounted in the right sideview mirror to display the passenger-side blind spot on the nav screen. Front and side display modes are activated manually, or automatically when you shift from P to R or R to N in forward range, at speeds up to 6 mph.

Lexus has also brought back automatic high beams seen on Cadillacs in the '60s, switching from high to low beams when headlights of oncoming vehicles or taillights of cars being overtaken come into view.

Our heavily optioned test RX had a base price of \$36,800 and stickered at \$49,300. ■




### RX 350 LOGBOOK NOTES

- Visualize lopping off the rear roof spoiler, and you'd pretty much have the "active utility vehicle" shape of BMW X6 or Acura ZDX.
- 644 pages for the main manual, 410 pages for the nav manual, and... 1, 2, 3, 4 other manuals, plus a quick guide on DVD. Power points seem to be under a removable storage tray in the console, or else in the trunk.
- Temp controls for the driver's side are handy, but swooping instrument panel style dictates an unmatched position for the right side, and with the shifter up high, you have to reach around it, blind, to adjust.
- We hoped low expectations for 3/4 rear visibility would leave us pleasantly surprised, but that wasn't the case. It's minimal.
- We'd like to try the AWD. This front-driver has some torque steer and uneven tracking.
- Seat slides back when you get out, back up when you get in, slides forward. Some might love this; we seek a way to turn it off.
- The 644-page manual shows three audio units, none of which match what we have.
- Lots of things light up at night, but not the transmission indicator. For that, you fumble.
- There is no question these are popular. While driving ours, we notice, more than ever, that they are everywhere in droves. -JS



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# THE INSIDE TRACK: BRIEFS & RUMORS



■ **BMW** announced the price of their upcoming ActiveHybrid 7 at the LA auto show, at \$103,125 including destination and handling for the ActiveHybrid 7 and \$107,025 for the long wheelbase version. Powered by a 4.4-liter twin-turbo V8 engine with an eight-speed automatic transmission and hybrid electric motor, the full-size luxury sedan will have a high level of standard equipment and a long list of innovative options, from side view cameras to night vision.

■ **Hyundai** unveiled its first direct-injection gasoline engine in November. The 2.4-liter four-cylinder engine, called Theta II, first finds a home in the Sonata sedan that arrives at US dealerships early this year. The engine is more powerful and gets a 10 percent improvement in fuel economy over the equivalent engine without DI. The technology will ultimately be introduced across Hyundai's range of gasoline engines.

■ Indian automaker Ratan **Tata** told *The Maeil Business Newspaper* of Seoul, Korea, that his company plans to build a hybrid version of the world's cheapest car, the Tata Nano. The Nano went on sale initially in July 2009 in India for a base price of about \$2,200, and plans call for sales to be expanded around the world. The gasoline Nano gets 51.7 mpg fuel economy. A hybrid version of the car would likely get significantly better fuel economy and would probably sell for under \$10,000.

■ Might Volkswagen be trying to buy **Suzuki**? Now that General Motors is no longer part owner of Suzuki, the company is approachable and could offer the VW group three key assets: (1) a synergy in the development and assembly of small and very small cars; (2) instant access to cost-efficient production sites in Japan and emerging Asian markets and (3) access to motorbike, scooter, quad and other basic-urban transportation technology that VW is not currently doing. The idea makes sense; it will be interesting to see if Suzuki will be the 11th brand owned by VW.

■ **Nissan** now offers a stand-alone navigation system option in the Sentra compact for \$400. The system, built by Robert Bosch, can connect to an iPod or MP3 player and is Bluetooth enabled.



■ **Land Rover** is expected to show a production version of a new small SUV wearing the Range Rover LRX badge. The LRX will likely be powered by a choice of 3.2-liter in-line six-cylinder engine, 2.2-liter four-cylinder turbodiesel and possibly a 2.0-liter diesel hybrid. The LRX will be offered in a base three-door version and an upper-level five-door version to compete with Mercedes-Benz GLK, Audi Q5 and BMW X3.

■ According to automotive spy photographer, Brenda Priddy, the **Chevrolet** Camaro convertible will be introduced in February 2011. Seen testing recently in Michigan without camouflage, the Camaro has a traditional cloth top with a large rear window that we hope is glass.



■ The **Mercedes-Benz** R-Class has been far from a big seller, but Mercedes plans to give it one more chance by doing an early refresh next year. The big change will be an updated front end with a three-inch higher hood line, so that it looks more SUV-ish and less mini-van-ish. It will likely get new seats, instrument panel and driver-assistance systems. If sales pick up, Mercedes may do a followup, which insiders describe as a high-roofed S-class wagon. If sales don't improve, the R-Class will die in 2014.

■ **Nissan** is considering leasing the battery pack separately from the upcoming Leaf electric car. Leaf goes on sale in several US markets late this year. Nissan argues that by selling/leasing the battery will help Leaf buyers avoid obsolescence, because battery technology could advance rapidly in the near future and buyers will not be stuck with old battery technology. There is also a financial advantage because buyers will qualify for a \$7,500 federal tax credit, but will have to wait until tax time to take advantage of the credit. Nissan could arrange to apply the tax credit to the cost of the lease. If Nissan moves to sell the battery separately, it could have an impact on how all other manufacturers will handle their electric vehicles.



■ **Mazda** will sell the smaller Mazda2 five-door hatchback in the US starting this fall. Smaller than the current Mazda3, the 2 is developed on the same platform as the upcoming Ford Fiesta, which is due in the US this summer. Mazda2 competes with cars like the Honda Fit, Chevrolet Aveo and Toyota Yaris. Auto journalists voted the Mazda2 the 2008 World Car of the Year. It has been sold in Japan and Europe since 2007. The US version is powered by a 103-hp 1.5-liter four-cylinder engine. Zero-to-60 mph acceleration time should be just over 10 seconds and fuel economy about 41 mpg. Mazda2 will be offered with a five-speed manual transmission or five-speed automatic. Pricing is expected to be under \$16,000.



■ Indian automaker **Tata**, builder of the world's cheapest production car, the Nano, is expanding and making plans to sell Tata in the US in three years. CEO Ratan Tata said, "For the United States we need a car with a larger engine, and we need additional crash test modifications, which we are in the process of doing." Tata Motors acquired Jaguar and Land Rover in 2008.

■ **Kia** unveiled a user interface system that will provide quick, simple access to vehicle multimedia and infotainment. The UVO, which is short for "your voice", uses Microsoft speech recognition technology for quick commands to avoid having to navigate through menu systems. The UVO system will be available in select Kia vehicles starting this summer.



■ **Mercedes-Benz** is leasing a hybrid version of the ML-Class SUV in the US. The ML450 Hybrid is powered by a 275-hp V6 gasoline engine and two electric motors, which produce V8-like acceleration, but with four-cylinder-style fuel economy. The Hybrid is rated at 21 mpg city and 24 mpg highway. As a full hybrid, the ML operates on electric drive only in low speed conditions, like parking, and can go up to 34 mph on electric only.

■ **Mazda** made intelligent changes to the 2010 MazdaSpeed3, keeping the same 263-hp, 2.3-liter direct-injection four-cylinder and front-wheel drive rather than pushing the new model into an all-wheel-drive platform. They also did not jump the horsepower to the 300-hp level to compete directly with the much more expensive Subaru WRX STI and Mitsubishi EVO. By doing this, Mazda was able to keep the price at a low \$23,945, including destination charge, about \$10,000 less than the competitors for a car that is only about a half second slower than the EVO and STI from 0 to 60 mph. MazdaSpeed3 vehicle line manager David Matthew said, "We decided to take what works and improve on it."

The MazdaSpeed3 is only available as a five-door hatchback and with a six-speed manual transmission.

■ Watch for most remaining **Chrysler** Group dealers to start displaying a new sign on their buildings indicating that they are a Ram Truck dealer. During the company reorganization, new CEO Sergio Marchionne has pulled the Dodge Ram Truck out as a separate brand to stand along with Chrysler, Jeep and Dodge. Chrysler wants all their dealers to carry all four vehicle brands under a single roof as part of its Project Genesis consolidation plan. ■

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



## UPCOMING FEATURES

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