

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 10 NUMBER 5
SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2011

VEHICLE LAUNCHES, DRIVES AND NEWS

MERCEDES-BENZ M-CLASS LAUNCH
TOYOTA PRIUS V LAUNCH
MINI COUNTRYMAN ALL4
FIAT 500 SPORT
LAND ROVER LR4
RANGE ROVER SPORT HSE
CHRYSLER 300
GALPIN 700-HP MUSTANG FOR BARRETT-JACKSON

SPECIAL EVENTS

MONTEREY - PEBBLE BEACH
BULLRUN ROAD RALLY - VIVID RACING
BARRETT-JACKSON LAS VEGAS INFO
ARIZONA INTERNATIONAL AUTO SHOW INFO

ARIZONA RIDER : MOTORCYCLE NEWS

ROCKFORD FOSGATE RIDE LIKE A PRO

EQUIPMENT AND TECH

SOLAR POWER FOR FORD FOCUS
GOODYEAR HQ, AKRON
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MINI COOPER S COUNTRYMAN ALL4

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news & features

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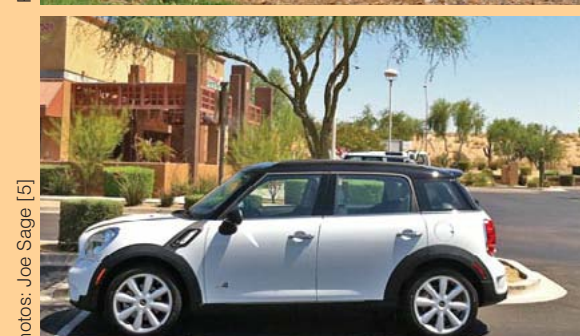
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COVER: The all-new MINI Cooper S Countryman ALL4 will go places a MINI has never taken you before. **Photo:** Joe Sage.

Photo: Greg Jarem

Photos: Joe Sage [5]



We plant our Arizona boots on the ground a number of places this issue, including the new Mercedes-Benz M-Class launch in Montana and the Toyota Prius v launch in Monterey care of **Barbara and Bill Schaffer**. We head to Monterey a second time to bring you highlights of the whole week of auction, concours and show events at Pebble Beach and the Peninsula. **Larry Edsall** takes you to Akron, Ohio, home of Goodyear Tire & Rubber, to see what makes them tick.

Closer to home, we get you behind the wheel of a Land Rover, a Range Rover, the all-new MINI Countryman ALL4, the highly revised Chrysler 300 and the new-to-our-shores Fiat 500 Sport. We also look at a one-off 700-hp Ford Mustang being prepared for the Barrett-Jackson Auction, and we find out how to run an electric Ford Focus off solar power installed in your home.

We already have the bags packed for the next issue, too, in which we travel to Maine for the launch of the new Mercedes-Benz C-Class, to Tacoma for the Hard Hat & High Heels gala fundraiser at LeMay-America's Car Museum, and to northern Michigan for wheel time in the Buick Regal GS, a midsize performance contender with turbo and manual transmission. We'll also be getting behind the wheel of the new Audi A6, the Chevrolet Cruze Eco and more. Correspondent **Tim Sharp** will tell us about Arizona's Jaguar team at the Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion, and we'll bring you **Randall Bohl's** images and insights as PIR finishes its new surface and modified track, with Goodyear tire testing, a celebrity run and NASCAR fan day prior to November's race.



Road trips are an important part of the mix, so we're also traveling to neighboring Utah to explore the Bonneville Salt Flats with their racing and air museums, plus Salt Lake City and northern Utah attractions including Flaming Gorge and Park City. See you again soon.

Enjoy the ride.

Joe Sage - Publisher/ Executive Editor

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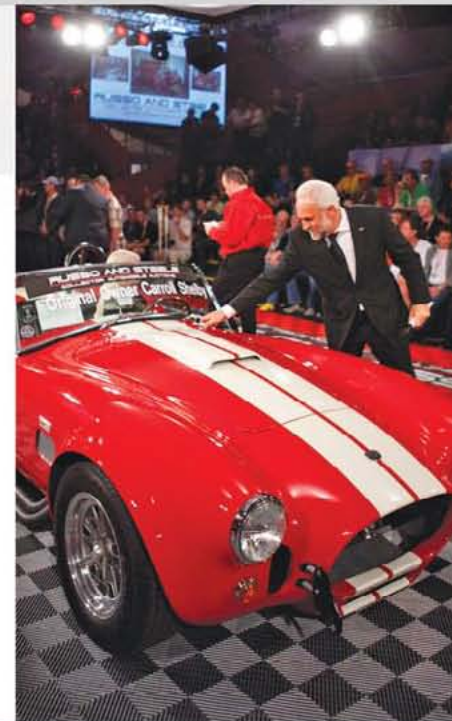


1960 FERRARI 250 GT SERIES II CABRIOLET
SOLD \$797,500

1957 CADILLAC ELDERADO BIARRITZ CONVERTIBLE
SOLD \$194,700

1970 PLYMOUTH HEMI 'CUDA
SOLD \$401,500

1955 MERCEDES BENZ 300 SL GULLWING
SOLD \$704,000



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Photo: Larry Edsall (1)

The 4th Annual Barrett-Jackson Las Vegas Auction

Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino
Thursday-Saturday, September 22-24, 2011

Hundreds of classics, Hot Rods, Resto-Mods and muscle cars are set to take center stage in Las Vegas during the 4th Annual Barrett-Jackson Las Vegas Auction at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino from Thursday to Saturday, September 22-24. Three days of auction action include exhibitor and sponsor activities for visitors of all ages.

Barrett-Jackson Week in Las Vegas officially kicks off with the 4th Annual Cruise-In for Las Vegas-area automotive enthusiasts on Sunday, September 18, from 10am-2pm at Gaudin Ford.

Barrett-Jackson fashion shows are presented from noon to 6pm on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, every hour on the hour.

On Wednesday, the Barrett-Jackson Road Rally gathers at the Convention Center at 1:30pm, then heads down the Strip starting at 3pm. An invitation-only opening night party that night also gets the ball rolling.

On Wednesday, September 22, a Road Rally travels from Fairway Chevrolet down the Las Vegas Strip.

On Thursday, Friday and Saturday, the gates open at 8am, giving enough time to visit the vendors and get a great seat before the automobilia auction starts, followed by the collector car auction, all day and into the night each day.

Ride'N'Drives will be presented all three days by both Ford and Gm, and Meguiar's will have several seminars each day on the finer points of car care.

Tickets are \$15 per day, or \$40 for all three days (plus taxes and fees). For complete details, visit online at: www.barrett-jackson.com



Arizona International Auto Show: Thanksgiving Weekend

Phoenix Convention Center
Thanksgiving Weekend: November 24-27, 2011

Hundreds of the latest vehicles will take over the floors of the Phoenix Convention Center for the 2012 model year Arizona International Auto Show this Thanksgiving weekend, offering an up-close look at the newest cars, crossovers, trucks, hybrid vehicles, electric vehicles and more. Visitors will have a chance to get behind the wheel and test drive several hot new rides. From high-end sports cars to interactive family entertainment, the Arizona International Auto Show offers something for everyone.

Representatives from leading automotive manufacturers will be on site to answer questions and provide information on the latest vehicles. The Arizona International Auto Show is owned and presented by the Valley Auto Dealers Association and produced by Motor Trend Auto Shows, LLC.

DATES AND TIMES

Thursday, November 24 (Thanksgiving Day)....9am-7pm
Friday, November 259am-9pm
Saturday, November 26.....9am-9pm
Sunday, November 279am-7pm

LOCATION

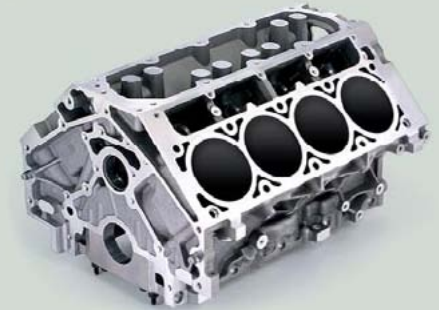
Phoenix Convention Center
100 N 3rd Street, Phoenix AZ 85004

TICKETS

Adults.....\$10
Seniors (62 and older).....\$ 6
Military with ID, students under 21 with ID.....\$ 6
Children (7-12).....\$ 6
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DISCOUNTS AND MORE INFORMATION

Discount coupons and advance E-tickets are available on the official site: www.AutoShowPhoenix.com



New iPhone case for gearheads

id America GASKET brushed aluminum case

We've seen a few tire tread cases for smart phones, but we hadn't seen anything like this before. Id America has taken the essence of a head gasket for a performance engine block and applied it to protection for everybody's favorite smaller gadget: the iPhone.

Precision-crafted out of rigid, lightweight brushed aluminum, the Gasket Brushed Aluminum Case is intended to "bring out the race car driver in you"—while sitting still and talking on your phone, of course.

The case has a suede inner lining, which helps ensure a perfect fit, adds a protective layer between the phone and the metal case itself, and adds buffering protection against shocks and drops.

The case comes with protective film layers for the front and back of the phone. It's available in five colors: aluminum silver, titanium grey, vintage gold, modern bronze and jet black.

For more information: id-case.com

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JAGUAR WILL BUILD THE C-X75 CONCEPT

Jaguar announced plans to move forward with the stunning C-X75 concept car by building 250 examples of the supercar. Everything about the future Jaguar halo car will be extreme and innovative, from the sub-three-second 0-60mph time, to the electric drivetrain, to the price tag—expected to be in the \$1.2 to \$1.5 million range. Jaguar C-X75 will become the British marque's most advanced model to date. It will offer performance on a par with the fastest production cars on the market, while adopting cutting-edge technology that offers remarkably economical running. Jaguar expects this hybrid supercar to deliver super low CO₂ emissions while still being able to achieve a top speed in excess of 200 mph. To bring Project C-X75 to showroom reality within the timetable of a conventional model program, Jaguar plans to use a state-of-the-art small-capacity, highly-boosted internal combustion engine with one powerful electric motor at each axle, instead of the micro-turbine displayed in the concept.

Voted Top Concept. After totaling up the votes of a panel of more than two dozen automotive journalists, the Jaguar C-X75 earned the top award as Most Significant Concept Vehicle of 2011. The awards are designed to recognize vehicles most likely to shape the future of the automobile industry. The 10th annual award winners were picked from 29 vehicles introduced during this season's auto shows in Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, Toronto, and New York. Category winners also included the Lotus Eterne as Production Preview Vehicle of the Year and the Volkswagen Bulli van as Concept Truck of the Year. ▼



Jaguar C-X75 concept

2012 Chevrolet Camaro Bumblebee



CAMARO BUMBLEBEE BUZZES BACK

▲ In celebration of the release of the 3D movie *Transformers: Dark of the Moon*, Chevrolet introduced a Special Edition Camaro Coupe dressed like the movie's Autobot "Bumblebee." The 2012 model Camaro Bumblebee is easy to spot with its bright Rally Yellow paint and optional RS appearance package, with black rally stripes that stretch over the hood, roof, decklid and unique high-wing spoiler. The 2012 Special Edition Camaro Bumblebee will be offered as a \$3,000 package on 2LT and 2SS Camaro Coupes with Rally Yellow paint. The RS package includes 20-inch black-painted wheels wrapped in high-performance tires, and Autobot Shield logos on the wheel center caps and front quarter panels. The Camaro Bumblebee has a black leather interior accented with yellow stitching on the instrument panel, center console, armrests and seats. Customers could begin ordering the special edition Camaro in July, and the vehicles are scheduled to arrive at dealers in the US and Canada in September.

FANS NAME NEW MUSTANG PACKAGE

Ford enlisted the help of Facebook fans in naming a planned Mustang V6 performance package. Nearly 1.4 million people responded, suggesting names and voting until the final name—Mayhem—was

selected. The Mayhem Mustang Package is described as "fun, fast and affordable," and it will be available on 2012 models. Powered by Ford's muscular, high-revving 305-horsepower all-aluminum V6 engine, the Mayhem Mustang Package will be equally at home on a road course or road trip. The package uses suspension, brake and body-stiffening upgrades from the V8-powered Mustang GT to improve handling. The resulting car has a near-equal front/rear weight distribution, which produces a significant handling improvement over the stock model. Prices and availability will be announced closer to the production date.

ELECTRIC LEAF RACES AT PIKES PEAK

Spectators at the 89th Pikes Peak International Hill Climb got a break from the roar of high-powered engines when the Nissan Leaf made its near-silent run up the 12.42-mile course during the June 26 race. The car was so quiet, a warning beeper had to be installed to warn spectators and workers. The 100 percent electric Nissan Leaf was driven by veteran Nissan off-road truck racing champion Chad Horod, who brought the Leaf to a first place finish in the first Electric Production Class competition, with a time of 14 minutes 33 seconds. Other than the removal of some interior parts like seats and carpets—to

make room for safety equipment, such as a roll cage, racing seats and safety harnesses—the Leaf was very close to the way it left the factory. The race started at 9,390 feet and finished at the 14,110-foot summit of Pikes Peak. While other cars' gas and diesel engines fought for oxygen at that altitude, the electric powered Leaf was unaffected. Like every production Nissan Leaf, the Pikes Peak Leaf is powered by a lithium-ion battery composed of 48 compact modules and a high-response 80kW AC synchronous motor that generates 107 horsepower and 207 lb.ft. of torque.

LATEST VW BEETLE PRICING

Volkswagen has announced pricing of the all-new 2012 Beetle will start at \$18,995 for the entry-level 2.5L model when it arrives at dealerships in September or October. Reinvented for the 2012 model year, the third generation Beetle is an agile, driver-oriented coupe that respects the Beetle's past yet looks to the future. Powered by a 170-hp in-line five-cylinder engine, the 2.5L's fuel economy is 10 percent better than the model it replaces, earning an EPA rating of 22 mpg city and 31 mpg highway with the standard five-speed manual transmission. The 2012 Beetle features sportier, more dynamic

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2012 MINI Coupe



and bolder styling than the previous model. It is also 3.3 inches wider, 6.0 inches longer, and 0.5 inches lower, giving the car a more muscular appearance. The sportiest model, the 2.0L TSI, is powered by VW's award-winning 200-hp, 2.0-liter four-cylinder turbocharged engine, with pricing starting at \$23,395. The 2.0L has a standard six-speed manual transmission or the optional DSG® dual clutch automatic transmission. The popular 2.0-liter TDI Clean Diesel engine will be offered during the 2012 calendar year.

MINI COUPE ADDS NEW PERFORMANCE

▲ The brand synonymous with driving fun is expanding its lineup with the addition of its first two-seater, the MINI Coupe. With a unique new shape and interior, the coupe adds a new dimension to the premium small car brand, along with even better performance and handling. Designed as the first "three box" MINI, the coupe has a stepped rear end in the classic style of a Gran Turismo, with a sporty, flat coupe silhouette. A high-opening tailgate and large luggage area provide extra space for transporting sports gear and luggage. The MINI Coupe comes with a standard 121-horsepower four-cylinder engine mated to a six-speed manual or optional six-speed automatic transmission. Two engine options boost the power to 181 hp

for the MINI Cooper S Coupe and 208 hp for the John Cooper Works Coupe, which will become the fastest MINI ever with a 0-to-60 time of 6.1 seconds and a top speed of 149 mph.

EPA: MITSUBISHI i GETS TOP MPGe

Logging 126 MPGe (miles per gallon equivalency) for city driving and 99 MPGe on the highway, the Mitsubishi i gets the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) top ranking for a battery-powered electric vehicle. In a series of real-world tests, including conditions and techniques that tend to drain an electric vehicle battery quickly—e.g. aggressive driving and operating the air conditioning in higher ambient temperatures—the Mitsubishi scored a driving range of 62 miles. The EPA also rates the vehicles on their LA4 driving cycle range, where the Mitsubishi had a range of 98 miles on a 7.5-mile loop that mimics in-town driving. A full battery charge for the Mitsubishi i takes about 22.5 hours from a 120-volt outlet, 6 hours from a 240-volt plug-in and about 30 minutes using a public quick-charge port. The base ES model has a retail price of \$27,990, before a \$7,500 federal tax credit. In addition, several states offer other financial incentives, which can make it the most affordable mass-produced electric vehicle sold in the US. For more informa-

tion about the battery-powered Mitsubishi i, go to i.MitsubishiCars.com.

NEW BMW 528i HAS 4-CYL TURBO

BMW is downsizing the engine in the 2012 model 528i, but increasing performance and fuel economy. The current 3.0-liter in-line six-cylinder engine is being replaced with a new 2.0-liter four-cylinder TwinPower Turbo engine. Like the company's latest 3.0-liter TwinPower Turbo inline-6, used in the 535i, the new 2.0-liter engine will combine high-pressure direct injection and BMW's Valvetronic intake control (hence the name: TwinPower) with a forced induction system consisting of a single twin-scroll turbocharger. The new engine is mated to BMW's newest eight-speed automatic transmission. The new 528i accelerates from 0-60 mph in 6.2 seconds, 0.4 seconds quicker than the 2011 model, and should deliver 15 percent better fuel efficiency (final EPA results are pending). The BMW 528i will also feature Engine Auto Start/Stop. This feature switches off the engine when the car is stationary at traffic lights or in slow-moving traffic, to minimize idling. xDrive all-wheel drive is offered as an option for the first time, too, when the new model arrives this fall.

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Scion FR-S Sports Coupe concept

SCION FR-S SPORTS COUPE CONCEPT

▲ After several years of hints and rumors, Toyota pulled the wraps off a sports car jointly developed with Subaru—and the results are stunning. The FR-S concept—which stands for Front-engine, Rear-wheel drive, Sport—is Scion’s definition of an authentic rear-wheel-drive sports car, with compelling style, balanced performance and handling, flexible utility and surprising MPG. The FR-S is built around a core goal of achieving “pure balance,” which begins with the strategic placement of a flat 2.0-liter boxer engine in a front-engine, rear-wheel drive. The naturally-aspirated engine is the first boxer to incorporate Toyota’s D4-S injection system, which utilizes both direct and port injection, resulting in increased horsepower and torque throughout the entire power band, without sacrificing fuel economy. The FR-S is rumored to be available at Scion dealerships within the next 12 months.

NEXT NEW CORVETTE IN 2013

The eagerly awaited next generation of America’s sports car, the Chevrolet Corvette, will debut in the fall of 2013 as a 2014 model, according to a Chevrolet source. The current model will be offered for the 2012 model year and possibly part of 2013. The new model, the C7, is expected to retain the front-engine lay-

out, even though earlier rumors had indicated a switch to a mid-engine layout. Styling rumors include the return of the split-window coupe design from the 1963 Corvette Sting Ray and a prime feature of the Stingray concept that debuted at the Chicago auto show in 2009 (yes, two words, one word). Rumors persist of a possible turbocharged V6. The change is needed to revive sales, which have slumped to a low of 12,624 in 2010. The current version has been built since 2005.

FORD ADDS 3-CYLINDER AND 8-SPEED

Ford is expanding its fuel-efficient EcoBoost™ engine portfolio with the addition of a 1.0-liter, three-cylinder engine and an all-new eight-speed automatic transmission. Developed at Ford’s Dunton Technical Centre in the UK, the new EcoBoost engine is a technically advanced, super-efficient engine that delivers the same performance as a four-cylinder, but with much higher fuel economy and lower emissions. When the final calibrations are finished, the new engine is expected to deliver horsepower and torque outputs equivalent to or better than most normally aspirated 1.6-liter engines. Ford has never built a regular production car engine with fewer than four cylinders. The new engine will be used globally in the company’s small cars and it will also play an impor-

tant role in North American vehicles. More technical and application details for the new 1.0-liter EcoBoost engine will be released in September at the Frankfurt Motor Show.

PRIUS PLUS PERFORMANCE PACKAGE

Toyota has introduced a new performance package option designed especially for the Prius hybrid. The package was developed to meet growing demands by hybrid drivers to have their Prius look different and handle better. Created by Toyota Racing Development (TRD), the Prius PLUS Performance Package starts with a seven-piece aerodynamic ground effects kit that delivers an aggressive and lower-profile stance. It includes front and rear bumper spoilers, sleek side skirts and a uniquely styled rear diffuser. Complementing the body kit are race-inspired 17-inch forged alloy wheels and low profile 215/45R17 tires. The package lowers the vehicle by 1.1 inches in the front and 1.3 inches in the rear, while a tuned rear sway bar is added to help reduce body lean for flatter cornering and maneuverability. The PLUS Performance Package is priced at \$3,699 for the Prius Two, Three, and Four models and \$2,999 for the Prius Five.

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Keith Martin's Sports Car Market

The Insider's Guide to Collecting, Investing, Values, and Trends

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LUTZ: CAR GUYS VS BEAN COUNTERS

Bob Lutz has had more impact upon and insight into the contemporary American auto industry than perhaps any other individual. The 47-year veteran of the auto industry has a resume that includes stints with BMW, Chrysler, Ford and General Motors. His new book, *Car Guys vs Bean*

Counters—The Battle for the Soul of American Business, is Lutz telling it like it is, just as he has throughout his career and especially during his last nine years at General Motors. The book fills in the blanks about how and why the auto industry could get so messed up, especially when decisions are made by numbers people rather than the product people. *Car Guys vs Bean Counters*, published by Portfolio Penguin, is now available in bookstores in hardcover for \$26.95.

VOLVO'S NEW FLYWHEEL TECHNOLOGY

This fall, Volvo will start real world tests of a new flywheel technology that makes a four-cylinder engine feel like a six-cylinder, while simultaneously cutting fuel consumption by up to 20 percent. The Kinetic Energy Recovery System is fitted to the rear axle and starts to spin up to 60,000 rpms during braking. At the same time, the combustion engine that drives the front wheels is switched off. When the car starts moving again, the flywheel's rotation is transferred to the rear wheels via a specially designed transmission. The energy in the flywheel can be used to accelerate the vehicle when it's time to move again, or to power the vehicle once it reaches cruising speed. Since the flywheel is activated by braking and the duration of the energy storage time is

limited, the technology is most effective during stop and go driving. Other manufacturers have experimented with flywheel applications, but this is the first system fitted to the rear axle.

CHEVY SONIC PRICED AT \$14,495

Chevrolet has announced that the only subcompact car built in the US, its Sonic LS sedan, will have a base price of \$14,495, including destination charge, while the LS hatchback will start at \$15,395. That places the Sonic at \$500 more than the Ford Fiesta S sedan and \$475 less than the Honda Fit hatchback. Standard equipment includes the most safety equipment in the subcompact class, including 10 air bags. Air conditioning, power door locks, remote keyless entry and 15-inch alloy wheels also are standard. The stock engine is a 138-hp, 1.8-liter Ecotec four-cylinder with a five-speed manual transmission, or a six-speed automatic as a \$1,070 option. The optional (\$700) engine is a 138-hp, 1.4-liter turbocharged four-cylinder with a six-speed manual transmission, expected to deliver 40 mpg highway with class-leading acceleration. Production of the Sonic begins this fall. ■

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

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STORY BY BARBARA SCHAFER
PHOTOS BY GREG JAREM



It seems like just last year that I was attending the introduction of the original Mercedes-Benz M-Class in Alabama. We drove through the beautiful countryside, lunched at the NASA Space Camp and wallowed through the slickest mucky mud I've ever seen.

That was 1997. Now, 14 years later, I'm in Greenough, Montana for the introduction of the third generation Mercedes luxury SUV.

The 2012 M-Class is new from the ground up, with styling that maintains the essence of the original M-Class, but with a new sophisticated couture. The complex exterior design says "refined masculinity" to me, with its use of strong rear wheel arches, sculptured sides and a bold front fascia with the large Mercedes star in the center of the grille.

A LOOK INSIDE THE NEW M-CLASS

The interior takes on a tailored look, with extensive use of wood on the dash, door panels and steering wheel. Controls are all easily visible, conveniently and logically placed, and they operate with the precision I expect from the luxury brand. In addition, the standard heated seats are very supportive and comfortable, which I appreciated on a five-hour drive around southwestern Montana, which even took me by my husband's birthplace—Deer Lodge (there, he'll be happy that I mentioned his hometown.)

The cargo area is a large 36.2 cubic feet of space behind the rear seat back. Drop the rear seat backs and the space expands to 71 cubic feet. Access to the cargo area is much easier in the 2012 model, thanks to its standard power liftgate.

ENGINES AND DRIVETRAINS

Initially, the 2012 M-Class is being offered in two models: the ML350 4MATIC and ML350BlueTEC 4MATIC, each defined by its engine. A 302-hp, 3.5-liter V6 gasoline engine is under the hood of the ML350. This aluminum engine is all new for 2012, designed to squeeze out better fuel economy, while producing more power. The engine moves the SUV from 0 to 60 mph in 7.3 seconds and has a top speed limited to 130 mph. Fuel economy is estimated at 17 mpg city and 22 mpg highway.

The second model, the ML350BlueTEC

diesel, is my favorite. The 3.0 diesel V6 is rated at 240 hp, but with 455 lb.-ft. of torque (compared with 273 lb.-ft. for the gas engine), it felt like the strongest of the two. It has the same acceleration times and top speed as the gas engine, but fuel economy is estimated at 20 mpg city and 25 mpg highway. The BlueTEC diesel engine uses the AdBlue injection system, which injects a urea solution into the exhaust to make emission levels as clean as the gas engine. I don't quite understand the science of the process, but I can appreciate the results. The AdBlue is carried in its own small tank and needs to be refilled only during scheduled routine maintenance. The modern Mercedes diesel is amazing: there is no diesel smell or smoke, and from the inside, you can't hear the engine.

Both engines drive a new version of the Mercedes seven-speed automatic transmission. The transmission is smooth, quick and quiet, and the shifter is out of the way, on a small stick on the steering column. When the driver wants to be involved, gear changes can be made by shift paddles mounted on the rear side of the steering wheel.

Mercedes-Benz isn't going to desert its performance enthusiasts: a V8-powered model will be available later, and there will probably be a high-performance AMG model offered, too.

DRIVING AND SAFETY FEATURES

Initially, all 2012 models have the latest version of 4MATIC all-wheel drive, but a two-wheel-drive model may come later. The sophisticated 4MATIC system allows the front wheels to go faster than the rear wheels when the vehicle is turning, for smoother operation, and the system automatically can vary torque both from front to rear and side to side to find the best traction.

The 4MATIC system also has unique four-wheel traction control that helps maintain stability and traction on wet or slippery surfaces. The best part is that there are no buttons, switches or levers; everything is automatic, including shifts to low range. For hills, the ML has Downhill Speed Regulation, which is essentially a low-speed cruise control, and a Hill Start Assist that keeps the vehicle

KEEP RIGHT >>





from rolling back when starting on an uphill incline.

My driving partner and I had a chance to try the ML over a mild off-road trail leading from the Paws Up resort to a ghost town called Garnet. We forded a stream, climbed over a few logs and found it easy to do all the off-road exploring I would ever be doing. Is it ready for the Rubicon Trail, maybe, but don't plan to use my car.

Mercedes has always been a safety innovator, but there seems to be a heavier emphasis on safety with this new model. The intriguing Attention Assist is a good example. It actually detects drowsiness and warns the driver to take a break. There is also Pre-Safe system, which senses you are about to get into an accident and takes protective measures before the crash. I'm a big fan of Blind Spot Assist, and the Mercedes unit goes a step farther with its Active Lane Keeping Assist, which in addition to visual and audio alerts, actually steers you back into your lane if you don't pay attention to the warnings. Sure beats a back seat driver nagging at you. And these are just a few of the new safety features offered on the new ML.

PRICING AND MORE FEATURES

The all-new 2012 model ML is priced the same as the 2011 model, \$49,865 includ-

ing destination charge for the gas version and \$51,365 for the BlueTEC diesel. The difference is the new models have many more standard features than the 2011 models, making it an even better buy.

Highlights of the extras include a Dynamic Handling Package with an adaptive damping system, Airmatic air suspension, 20-inch wheels and the Active Curve System that uses a hydraulic pump and electronically controlled valves to reduce body lean. Less significant but fun extras include heated and cooled beverage holders in the front seat and an iPad® Docking Station in the rear seat. That's perfect! My techy husband would be in the back on the internet, and I would be driving with my hot coffee or cold soft drink.

Like most Mercedes vehicles, the M-Class comes with a long list of luxury and convenience features, and several large option packages plus some stand-alone features. There are about \$25,000 in available options, plus there are other special order options for a really fussy buyer. The new M-Class goes on sale in September.

I've always liked the Mercedes-Benz M-Class for its excellent driving manners, distinctive styling and luxury appointments. The third generation is all that and more, ranking at or near the top of my personal favorites SUVs. ■



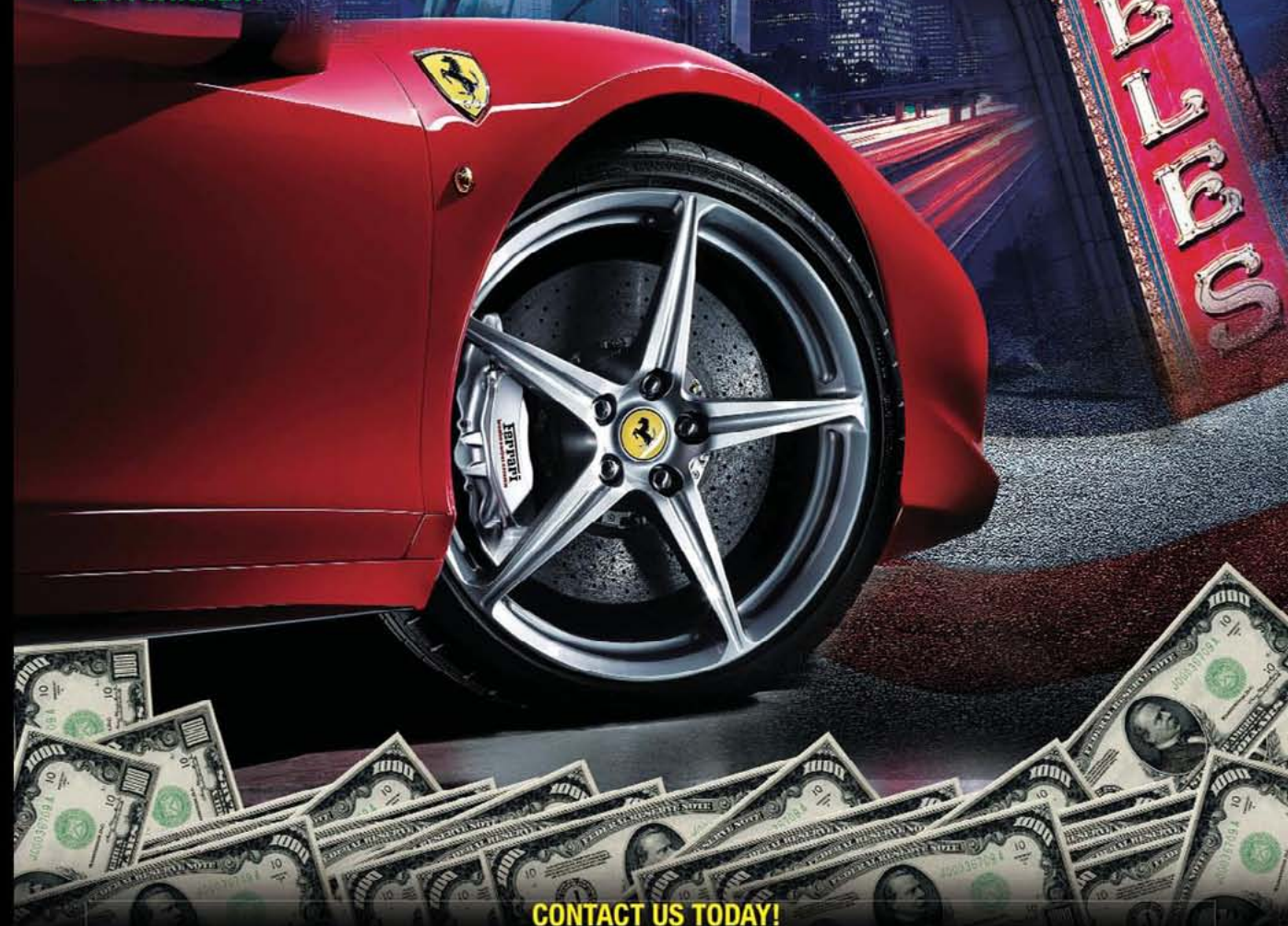
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WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS ITS MAKER

BEHIND THE SCENES AT GOODYEAR'S AKRON HEADQUARTERS

By Larry Edsall

Goodyear did more than launch the second generation of its Assurance TripleTred All-Season tire this summer: it packed a good year's worth of activity into a two-day press junket. We arrived by air or road not at the tire maker's hometown of Akron, Ohio, but at Cleveland, no longer the "mistake on the lake," but a thriving American city that mixes a surprising history—for many years the tallest American skyscraper outside of New York City—with such modern attractions as the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, and Progressive Field, home of the Cleveland Indians, a baseball team doing well enough this season that its success is helping cushion the pain the city still feels from the desertion to Miami of LeBron James.

ON THE TOWN IN CLEVELAND

Our overnight accommodations were at the Hyatt Regency Cleveland at The Arcade, a hotel that has preserved an historic five-story mercantile facility built in 1890 in the Romanesque Revival style and patterned after the famed Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan, Italy. My room happened to be on the top floor and thus was guarded by a couple of the 44 cast-iron griffons arrayed around the base of the building's skylight, comprised of 1800 panes of

glass stretching 300 feet.

From the Hyatt, it was just a short walk to dinner... in a private suite at Progressive Field, where the Indians were playing the visiting Los Angeles Angels.

Upon reading my Facebook post of that fact, one skeptical pundit suggested I could not possibly find a way to incorporate the dinner location into my story about the new tire.

Fortunately, the Indians provided a way. In the first inning, outfielder Michael Brantley hustled home from second on a single to put the Indians into the lead. Then, in the ninth, he again scored from second to tie the game (which the Indians won later that same inning with a storybook finish when Jason Kipnis, just called up from Triple A, singled with the bases loaded).

So how did all of that work into a story about tires? Simple: "The new TripleTred All-Season gripped as well as Michael Brantley rounding third base and heading home with the game-tying run."

TRIPLETRED ON THE TEST TRACK

The next morning after breakfast, we heard brief technical and marketing presentations on the new tire, then boarded a bus for the drive to activities in Akron.

For my group, first up was another short bus ride, over to the Goodyear test track, where Toyota Camrys were waiting. The cars were identical except some wore Goodyear's new Assurance tire and others wore the current generation of another tire maker's all-season product.

As is typical with new tires, the latest generation leapfrogs the competition. While the Camrys may have been identical from the tires up, they drove as if they had very little in common, especially in wet and transitional road surfaces.

It's amazing what you can experience in a short drive and at relatively slow speeds, when it comes to learning about tires. Goodyear had set up a course that included a lane-change maneuver, a braking exercise, a foot-to-the-floor acceleration into the wet section of the track where we were to keep the throttle buried while making a sweeping turn that narrowed into a cone-lined alley, which led back to the dry—though increasingly wet with each lap—portion, where we maneuvered through a slalom and then a couple of tight turns, before stopping so someone else could give the course a try.

We did several runs with both brands of tires. All-season tires are designed to provide traction whether a road is dry, wet or icy. Obviously, all-season tires don't grip on dry roads as well as high-performance "summer" tires, or on winter roads as well as so-called snow tires. But for Americans who are not in the habit of changing tires with the seasons, they provide more than adequate all-weather grip.

Goodyear emphasized enhanced wet-surface grip in developing its second-generation Assurance TripleTred All-Season.

Goodyear introduced its TripleTred tire in 2004 and has sold some five million of them to people who had driven enough to need to replace the tires that came on their new vehicles. TripleTred features three tread zones—each optimized for a specific condition.

A new feature on the second-generation tire is the "evolving traction groove," a technology Goodyear has used in Europe and now introduces to the North American market. Tires lose grip as their tread blocks wear away, but the "evolving" groove reveals a secondary set of grooves midway through the tire's life.

"Think of it as having your cake and eating it, too," said Goodyear technical project leader Tim Richards.

Because of the new groove architecture, Goodyear can warranty the new tire for either 70,000 or 80,000 miles, depending on the tire's specific speed rating.

In addition to improving traction, Goodyear said it worked to reduce the rolling resistance of the second-gen tire to help reduce fuel consumption. It would take much longer drives to be able to gauge fuel usage, but our laps around the wet and dry test track demonstrated the Goodyear tire's enhanced grip on both surfaces, especially in the wet and in transitional areas where tires had carried water onto previously dry pavement.

AIR AND GROUND BLIMP TOUR

From the test track, we got back on the bus for a longer ride, but a ride worth the time. The destination was the Goodyear blimp hangar, and the purpose was to

KEEP RIGHT >>





ride on one of the company's blimps. We also got a guided tour of the company's photographic archive of blimp history, and a preview of the next generation of lighter-than-air Goodyear flying machines that go into production next year.

NASCAR TIRE TECHNOLOGY

Our flight complete, we went back to our original stop in Akron, but this time got off the bus and went into the building where Goodyear builds racing tires, including those that carry NASCAR stock cars.

What does it take to make a tire for a Sprint Cup race car?

Well there are natural and synthetic rubber, fillers such as carbon black, zinc oxide, reactive resins, oil, fatty acids, antioxidants, tack and traction resins, wax and accelerants. In all, 49 chemical components, as well as fabric and wire.

And a liner, toe guard, first and second plies, an apex, flipper and beads, first and second belts, overlay, sidewalls and, of course, the tread—which is only one-tenth of an inch thick.

One-tenth of one inch. That's not very thick. My computer mouse rides on a thicker slab of rubber than a NASCAR race car.

Goodyear is the exclusive tire supplier to NASCAR, which means that for each Sprint Cup event it has to produce between 1,200 and 1,400 tires, each tire optimally designed to wear through its tread while the car burns through a tank of fuel.

Teams are allowed to purchase five sets of tires for practice and qualifying, and may use nine to a dozen more during the race. And if you think replacing the tires on your minivan is expensive, consider that each Sprint Cup tire costs \$459.

Goodyear typically works six weeks ahead of the NASCAR schedule, and it doesn't try to get a jump-start on next year, because even a 1-degree change in the rules governing rear spoiler angle would necessitate engineering a completely new tire for each track.

Speaking of tracks, Goodyear is able to use the similarities among some tracks to divide them into seven categories. While each track gets a unique tire, there are similarities in the creation of the tires used, say, at Indianapolis, Pocono and—believe it or not—Bristol.

As you might expect, Daytona and Talladega comprise a group, as do Charlotte, Chicago, Darlington, Homestead, Las Vegas and Texas.

Only one track is a group unto itself. Know which one? It's Martinsville, that uniquely paperclip-shaped circuit.

NASCAR tires are built by hand, and the tire builder's name goes into each tire.

After a tire is built, it goes into a mold where it is baked under high pressure (vulcanized). The mold also impresses words and codes into the tire's sidewalls. After cooling, each tire is weighed, scanned, undergoes x-ray and laser testing.

GOODYEAR, GRIP AND GREEN

Speaking of codes, the sticker on a new tire includes an eight-digit barcode identifier, a spring rate number, tire diameter, tread width and bead diameter, a product code, tire classification, mold, construction and compound combination and a production sequence number.

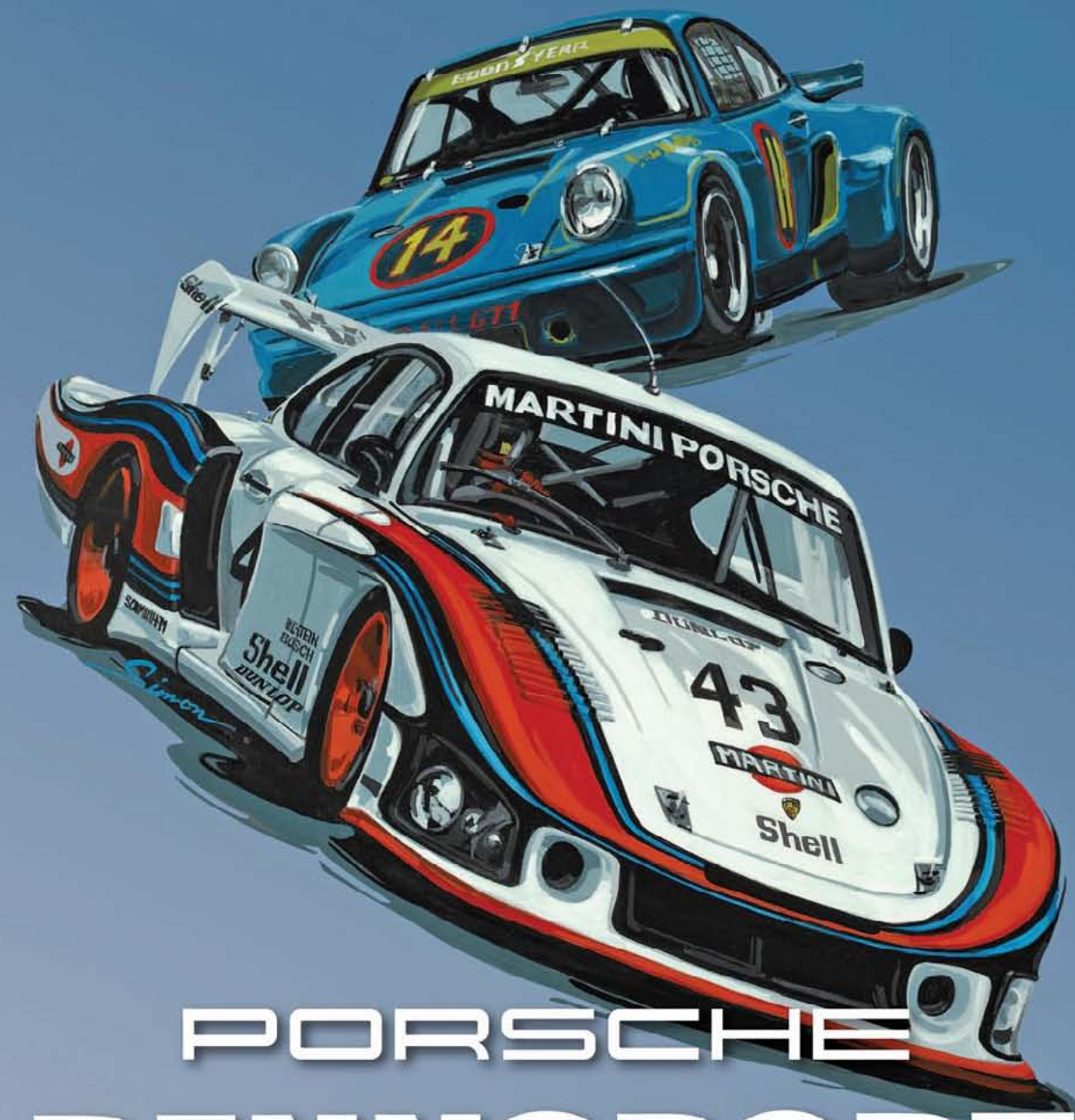
Each tire also gets marked after inspection, and two colored dots are positioned to indicate optimal mounting match position for the tire and its wheel.

By the way, the Goodyear racing tire facility is a zero-landfill factory. Any scrap is sold for use by other companies.

After learning about racing tires—and new all-season tires, and the history and future of the Goodyear Blimps—we returned to Cleveland, where another special dinner was planned. To underscore the wet-weather capabilities of its new all-season tire, Goodyear made arrangements for dinner in the RainForest exhibit at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo.

The zoo itself had closed for the night, so it was just our group along with more than 6,000 plants and 600 animals from the rain forests of Asia, Africa and the Americas. Those animals included orangutan, ocelot, capybara, snakes, giant anteaters, and more, including a Gharial crocodile.

None of those animals was on our menu, and—fortunately—we were not on theirs, either. ■



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MINI CON COJONES

With four doors, all-wheel drive, turbo performance and beefier bodywork, the new MINI Cooper S Countryman ALL4 fully rates the all-caps name treatment the company prefers

Let's have a spelling quiz of sorts, right up front: the manufacturer spells its vehicles' name MINI, all caps. Not everybody plays along, but we're game. The idea is to revert to "Mini" when referring to the tiny classic from decades earlier—when the brand was owned by the Brits, not BMW. But MINI for the new. Fair enough.

Among these, a MINI is a MINI is a MINI, right? No; that would be selling the brand very short. For starters, a visit to the build-your-own website makes it clear you're about to face some 10-million-plus choices—a mixed blessing, perhaps, but it makes a point. But, beyond that, the MINI brand has evolved into a whole lineup, and it's slated to expand further.

MODERN MINI EVOLUTION

It all starts, of course, with the familiar MINI hard-top/hatch, on the road for a decade now, yet still looking fresh—maybe fresher than ever, as there is clearly a small car boom going on. Add a convertible, multiply both of those by Cooper, Cooper S and John Cooper Works (JCW) versions, and the game has long been underway.

MINI has put together one cool and compelling concept car after another at the big shows, some wildly different, others mild variants. Some come to market. The new two-seat MINI Coupe concept was revealed this year, and the production car is starting to hit the streets right now.

The MINI Clubman arrived in 2008, a small station wagon version, almost ten inches longer than the hatch, for cargo and rear legroom, with a small third side door on the passenger side and with little double doors at the rear. The Clubman in original Mini parlance was a restyled Australian hatchback, a sheet metal variant, while wagons had been called either Traveller or Countryman. But BMW hadn't initially acquired those names.

Now they have, and the Countryman is the all-new vehicle we're holding in our hands.

We've wished for an all-wheel-drive MINI since the first new model hit the road ten years ago. The basic hatchback is actually a great front-driver: its suspension engineering and wide stance mitigate the challenge of typical front-drive torque-steer characteristics almost completely, and its light weight and front-rear distribution reduce the effects of any unavoidable transfer of weight away from the drive wheels upon acceleration. Though

actual go-karts are rear-engine, rear-drive, the MINI has been consistently praised for its solid and responsive go-kart feel. Still, it would be great to plant that little car on all four wheels and fire 'em up. The Cooper S Countryman ALL4 does just that.

The Countryman is the first MINI to be offered with permanent all-wheel drive, in top-end ALL4 guise (which is also a turbocharged Cooper S). The ALL4 system uses a "smart" electro-hydraulic differential, mounted alongside the transmission, which switches power distribution from front to rear, depending on which wheels have the best traction. Under normal conditions, up to 50 percent of power goes to the rear wheels. Under extreme conditions, full power can be directed to the front or rear wheels as needed.

Front MacPherson spring struts with forged lower control arm and a rear multi-link suspension work with Servotronic electric power steering to provide the Countryman with a slightly different flavor of trademark MINI go-kart-like handling.

MINI COOPER S COUNTRYMAN ALL4

String together the full name of our test vehicle, including the S, Countryman and ALL4, and you confirm it has pretty much everything (millions of option combinations aside). The S means it has more horsepower; the Countryman body brings four doors, adds ground clearance, ups rear storage and more; and ALL4 announces four-wheel traction. Ours includes an automatic transmission (\$1250), the one thing we might order differently. Manual and automatic transmission options are both economical 6-speeds. In MINI's case, unlike many (who control fuel use partly through the automatic's computer mapping), the manual has the

better fuel mileage of the two: 31 mpg highway, 25 city (compared with 30/23 for the automatic). The base Countryman (no S, no ALL4) gets 35 mpg highway. But it also has just a 121-hp base engine.

The same basic 1.6-liter DOHC 4-cylinder engine is at the heart of every MINI, though S models have a turbocharged, intercooled version that boosts horsepower by a whopping 50 percent, from 121 to 181 hp (and JCW models are tweaked a bit more). The Countryman ALL4 is also a Cooper S, so it has the high-horsepower turbo. Torque in the ALL4 (or the 2-wheel-drive S version) is 177 lb-ft.

Decisions, decisions. You can gain MPG with the manual transmission. Are you blowing it by getting all-wheel drive? The Countryman S without ALL4 all-wheel drive does get 1 mpg better rating from the EPA (or with the automatic, the front-driver gets 2 mpg better). Not enough to take us away from AWD. The ALL4 also has a base price just \$1700 higher than the 2-wheel-drive version: \$27,650 for the 4-wheeler and a huge feature for the price. To us, spending more and losing a little MPG adds up to a win-win: AWD is worth it. And we'd still likely opt to save \$1250 and gain one or two MPG by going with the manual.

These are the fundamental decisions before you ever get to colors, trim and add-ons.

The four-door MINI is available in three trim levels: the front-wheel-drive base MINI Cooper Countryman, turbocharged front-drive Cooper S Countryman, and the all-wheel-drive MINI Cooper S Countryman ALL4. (Prices start at \$23,050 for the naturally-aspirated front-driver.) Put an "X" in enough option boxes and you get a very distinctive Countryman, though the price can easily climb to some \$40,000.

DELIVERING THE GOODS

The MINI has never been all cars to all people, nor has it tried to be. It's a small car without any small car stigma. (This is becoming more common, but was a major distinction five or ten or even about two years ago.) It has operating economy, but its purchase economy is less so, being a well-built BMW at its core. And people were less likely to buy one if its primary purpose was to carry around a family of four, and/or all their stuff, and/or a whole lot of one person's stuff, at least inside.

But the Countryman is different at least on the last score: it significantly increases the ease of carrying four people, with full four-door access and more legroom and headroom; and it provides decent cargo space, all the more so if you don't have those other two backseaters. The Countryman has 12.1 cubic feet of cargo space with the rear seat backs in place, or it can be expanded to 41.0 cubic feet when the seats are folded. Two mountain bikes, with front wheels removed, can fit

KEEP RIGHT >>



By Joe Sage



Where the roads are dry and the cars are slick.



to report back after a thousand-mile highway drive. Headroom was adequate, even with the sunroof. Sunroofs notoriously take away an inch or two of height, depending on mechanisms, and of course a glass roof isn't much better than a black roof, in an Arizona summer. Tough call whether to buy that.

Speaking of Arizona summer, we set the a/c at 72 degrees, auto, and it ran full tilt. No surprise there, but it was noted as very loud, and it stayed very loud. We turned the fan down for relief from that, but of course cooling is reduced—and you're no longer on auto. So we turned it up to 82, auto, but still had noise. A few days later, we noted we liked it after all and noise wasn't a problem. Next day, it was noted as a complaint again. Ultimately, we found happiness, set at 84. We still noted a very loud engine cooling fan, running after shutdown.

The keyless entry, typically enough, requires touching a little button on the door handle. It's pretty quick for entering, but to lock it, you have to keep your finger pressed on it for a couple of seconds, which—in the words of a colleague—feels like two months when it's 115 degrees out. We also wonder how long the little rubber button will last, with fingernails emphatically pressed into it.

Being a four-door, access and egress are naturally tighter than in a two-door. Being a small four-door, they are notably tighter. And the B-pillar is pretty much right at our shoulder, impacting over-the-shoulder visibility. It's all part of the tradeoff for four doors, overall a worthwhile tradeoff.

Simplicity is an appropriate standard for the MINI, and the owner's manual is blessedly thin (172 pages rather than multiple multi-hundred-page books, as with so many). Unfortunately, we noted this because we needed the book more often than average: trying to get the exterior mirrors into our range of vision and not folding up unexpectedly, trying to abandon intuition and learn the rules for radio presets, and so on. As always, these are annoyances for the one-week driver, but sure to get sorted out during ownership.

COUNTRYMAN ALL4 ON THE ROAD

We wanted to repark the Countryman immediately upon delivery, which required a quick U-turn. Whoa. This didn't seem like a particularly tight turning circle for a small car, even a four-wheel-drive small car. And yet, a few days later we noted delight with its turning circle when deciding to do a quick turn-around on a remote two-lane highway. It apparently isn't speed-sensitive steering, so it may be a matter of expectations in both instances (which

KEEP RIGHT >>

in the cargo area (though there's still a rear bike rack option if you want everything else inside).

INSIDE THE COUNTRYMAN ALL4

Our test MINI stickered at \$35,900 or so. We say "or so" because the sticker provided with the test car said it was blue and didn't have the automatic. That paint cost extra, but we'll guess that this pearlescent white may, also; and we've added the \$1250 for automatic. The sticker we had included that special color, leather interior, cold weather package (seats, mirrors, washers), premium package (dual-pane panoramic sunroof, automatic climate, Harman-Kardon sound), sport package (18-inch wheels, turbo fan, stripes, xenon headlights), keyless entry, cargo net, center armrest and rear parking distance alert.

We'd go for most of it just like that. The larger wheels give it that MINI stance. Stripes? Mixed on that, though it's almost not a MINI without them (ditto the contrasting roof). If you want certain options or packages, but maybe don't want stripes or a color-keyed roof, the build-option process fights back online, but it can be achieved. Certainly a dealer can get it right. As for a black roof in Arizona, that speaks for itself, but we became so used to this color combo that nothing else looks quite right. This one's a beauty. Leather interior is definitely a winner, even if you're headed to some mud and dust. And we'd always get the cold weather package, as this car is just begging to head somewhere nasty and give it a try.

We appreciated keyless entry. In fact, that's so common by now, we'd want it in pretty much anything. We wished it had a backup camera, for the same reason, but that's available.

As soon as we got in, we noted the handbrake in the center, a cool offset design with a full-hand grip whose lever is off to one side. Grab, pull up. Slick. Unfortunately, it hits the \$250 optional center armrest. We'd probably still get the armrest. You get used to things like this. But it's still flawed design.

Ergonomics were mixed from the get-go. Any MINI's distinctive big center gauge is in a famously odd location, but the cluster in front of you balances overall information well. Of seven spots for buttons in the center stack, only four were taken, and those by a mixed group of foglights, window lockout, traction control and a sport driving mode. It's an odd grouping.

At over six feet tall, we put the driver's seat all the way back and noted that if it went back further, we'd use that. It was fine for our week; we'd have





country and ran it on a very rough stretch of barely-road. It did extremely well, right out of the box. If you'd like to push the envelope, check out Countryman Connection of southern California, makers of everything from lift kits to light bars to a solid hitch and teardrop trailer: www.countrymanconnection.com. Stock or modified, the MINI Cooper S Countryman ALL4 says, "bring it on."

All in all, we enjoyed the Countryman plenty. It has a decently commanding presence over the road, far beyond what its size might suggest. In fact, it wasn't long before we noted that "it performs so well and is so easy to drive, we'd almost be willing to consider the unthinkable and get the automatic." Ten million option decisions if we bought our own? Maybe not. This one is a keeper, as is.

The Countryman is right-sized. In traffic, you have the inescapable feeling that this is better than other small cars, and you have the equally inescapable feeling that it's better than other big SUVs. We start thinking that MINI may not even be the right name for this one: if it were an iPod, it might be the do-everything Classic. Inside, we compare it to other small cars we've driven: plenty of room for your legs, even knees side-to-side, even if you're six-foot-two. There is a spacious feel and more than adequate room for more people in the back seats. We find ourselves wondering why BMW bothers making a 1 Series, since they have the small car niche so well nailed with the MINI: a car that's stylish enough, has quality build, is economical enough to purchase and operate, powerful enough and always ready to rock.

MAKE IT A DOUBLE

A foot longer and six inches wider than the MINI hardtop, with its four doors and higher ground clearance, the Countryman has a more rugged persona than the MINI hardtop. It offers the beef you might expect from an SUV or truck, more than the keep-me-on-the-pavement styling of crossovers.

Depending on options, you can spend as much on a MINI Countryman ALL4 as you would on any number of larger SUVs or crossovers. You could buy a three-year-old Escalade for less. But you wouldn't have the fuel economy, parking convenience or general fun of the MINI.

The MINI Cooper S Countryman ALL4 is on the short list of vehicles we'd like to own, ourselves. The more time we spent in it, the more we wanted to take one home. You'd be hard-pressed to find all the Countryman offers, rolled into any other one vehicle. MINI has proven its lineup is broadening and maturing. The proof, to us? The more we wanted to take home a Countryman, the more we wanted to take home a MINI hardtop, too. ■

means you'll forget about it most of the time). We did find a number of posts in online forums, wondering about its larger-than-expected turning circle. By the numbers, a regular MINI hatchback has a turning circle of 35.1 feet. A Fiat 500 is 30.6 feet. The Countryman ALL4, with its five-inch-longer wheelbase and all-wheel drive, turns in 38.06 feet. Compare this with a Jeep Grand Cherokee at 37.1 feet. At least we weren't imagining things.

In the first few blocks of driving, we made a note that we had just reaffirmed our preference for a manual transmission, beyond just general principal. We noted that first was very short, and second was very long and loud. For errands, or around the 'hood or office park, this seemed the wrong range. But then we gave that sport button a try. This mitigated what we had noted in first and second, though we noted it now shifted into higher gears sooner—which means lower revs, which to us would be counter to the goals of a sport setting.

All that analysis aside, the MINI Countryman is peppy and fun to drive, no less so than its hatchback brother. Its smart differentials weren't sensing any trouble on local streets, which had us clearly in front-wheel bias. Despite the MINI hatch

having done a great job of engineering away any torque steer, the ALL4 seems to reintroduce a bit. We don't have an engineering study to back up this casual observation, but the logbook had several notations of an overly lively front end.

We noted the brakes didn't feel as strong as expected; upsized discs to go along with the upsized wheels might be a great option. US specifications don't list this, but UK figures show a 60-to-0 stopping distance well over 200 feet.

The suspension is nice and firm, clearance is more than adequate, and we had no problem navigating around the various troughs and speed-bumps in the office park.

On local streets and highways, with the automatic transmission, we continued to favor the sport setting; however it's a feature you can't set and forget. We had to reactivate it repeatedly. What's more, unless that becomes second nature at startup, the control is in an awkward spot, at least with the automatic, tucked in front of the shifter and forcing a distraction while driving.

Within two days, we were loving this car and willing to overlook any flaws it may have.

On the weekend, we took it out into mild canyon

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Supercars, Glamour, Celebs

**LAS VEGAS NV TO MIAMI FL
VIA GILBERT AZ** Photos by Randall Bohl

Since 2004, the Bullrun Rally has been about cars, glamour, girls, guys—petrosexuals—but most of all an attitude and lifestyle shared by competitors and fans alike. Bullrun takes place for a week each year, celebrating the great American road trip. Bullrun's hit TV show—which has aired on MTV Networks' Spike TV for four seasons—is at its core an extension of this coast-to-coast road rally, which has produced a film each year shown in over 40 countries. Prior years' participants have included such celebrities as Kim Kardashian, Paris Hilton, Mario Andretti and more, as nearly 200 people in super-modified cars travel from checkpoint to checkpoint.

With an entrance fee of \$20,000, this event brings out only the most incredible vehicles and personalities. This year's celebrities, including IceT and Coco from the E! reality show, blazed along back roads and highways in cars including Lamborghini, Ferrari, Porsche and other modified vehicles. The Pontiac Trans Am at left—a veteran Hollywood stunt car—was driven by Vanilla Ice. With sexy supercars sporting Bullrun and sponsor logos, the sounds and sights of this rare attraction provided irreplaceable memories.

The Bullrun Rally attracts a huge crowd at every stop. The multi-million dollar automotive, leisure and media event provides an opportunity for the public, A-listers and taste-shapers to enjoy an amazing experience on many levels. The event's stop in Gilbert this summer was no exception.

Vivid Racing teamed up with Bullrun as an official sponsor of the 2011 rally, a privilege that included hosting a VIP breakfast at their 15,000-sq.ft. tuning facility in Gilbert. There's a lot of horsepower at Vivid Racing any day, but on July 10, fans were able to see cars from Team Maserati, including their GranTurismo S sporting 30-foot antennas, the gorgeous Team Texas sisters, Team ER with their super mean Nissan GT-R Godzilla, the sexy Bullrun flag girls and more.

This was the first time since the rally start in Las Vegas that all the competitors got their own further look at each other's vehicles. It was also their first chance to fully fuel up with food before they headed to their next mystery location on their route to Miami, Florida. The blood was pumping at Vivid Racing, as spectators were able to view all the exotic cars, listen to their engines revving and take pictures with their favorite high-profile entrants. Vivid Racing also put a couple of the supercars on its Mustang All Wheel Drive Dyno. The celebrities got behind the wheel displayed their indisputable power, taking the cars up to 130mph, sitting in place.

As one of the largest aftermarket and performance vehicle parts suppliers in the world, Vivid Racing has been featured on automotive-related TV shows, covered in all major tuning vehicle magazines, and included in *Entrepreneur* magazine's "Young Millionaires" issue. Having been involved in several road rallies—including the 2007 Bullrun from Montreal to Key West—Vivid Racing was passionate about staying involved in this epic journey. Driving a 700-horsepower Porsche 996 Turbo in the last rally, Vivid Racing co-owners Rob Rohn and Dan Mermelstein drove a Ferrari 360 Modena this year, wrapped in carbon fiber and equipped with their own performance add-ons to put the heat on other drivers.

Established in 2001, Vivid Racing is celebrating 10 years of performance and racing modifications in the Valley of the Sun. Starting out modifying cars like the Subaru WRX and Mitsubishi EVO, Vivid Racing has built well know vehicles for Pepsi, cars display at the SEMA show, and even recently set a record with their Porsche 997TT doing 206.2mph in a 1 mile stretch. ■



TALL IN THE SADDLE

Unlike some manufacturers, who seem to offer one lineup in very similar form, other than small-medium-large or sedan-coupe-wagon variations, Land Rover as a brand has never confused things much: there are the Land Rovers themselves, smaller and more rugged in demeanor, and the Range Rovers, mostly larger and emoting a high level of luxury. Make no mistake—every Land Rover and every Range Rover is ready for rugged duty, while simultaneously luxurious. Spinning off the prior Discovery and LR3, the Land Rover LR4 has always carried the solid DNA of its high-end Range Rover cousins, yet—as evidenced by its carrying the Land Rover rather than Range Rover name—marches to a somewhat more utilitarian beat. The LR4 shares the Land Rover marque with only the LR2, a monocoque-chassis compact SUV, but its basic engineering, features and capabilities more closely with the midsize Range Rover Sport,

introduced in 2005 (also reviewed in this issue). The Land Rover and Range Rover offerings thus cross over more than they used to: in the mid-size SUV market, the Land Rover LR4 and Range Rover Sport are closely enough related that any purchase decision may come down to personal taste in style and shape, specific needs for backseat headroom, or perhaps budget. If your needs are more carlike, you might look at either of the outer ends of the lineup: the LR2 or even the rugged full-size Range Rover, though elements of luxury and utility have the widest spread here. It's an intriguing set of options.

FIT FOR A KING

The British royal family visibly loves the Land Rover brand. Mostly loyal to brands with British heritage—Bentley, Rolls-Royce, Jaguar, Aston Martin—Land Rovers and Range Rovers are key to their fox hunting forays and such in the royal hinterlands. Even with most

of those brands now in the hands of the Germans, or India's Tata Motors (in the case of Jaguar and Land Rover since Ford spun them off in 2008), these tough yet luxurious machines maintain their stately air. The Land Rover LR4 is still built at Solihull UK (with additional plants in South Africa and Jordan). Following the pattern of the Discovery 3 (LR3 in the US), the vehicle called LR4 in the US is the Discovery 4 in Britain.

LOGBOOK: INTERIOR

The single most obvious distinguishing physical attribute of the LR4 is its high "alpine roof"—overall and even moreso over the third row. This may make the vehicle appear top-heavy, especially in an age of increasingly low and slick fuel-saving aerodynamics. But one of its benefits is extremely good interior visibility and over-the-shoulder rear view.

We found one interior issue that's a paradox. If you have the driver's seat set back, as we did, the track stands up a good four inches or so tall and a few inches forward, so you could easily trip over it on the way out, and we mean flat-on-your-face tripping. It's a paradox because the tall roof is inviting to an over-six-footer, even wearing a 10-gallon hat. Perhaps the ideal driver is a five-footer with a 30-gallon hat. An owner will want to develop a healthy respect for this detail.

Base model inclusions (see sidebar) make it clear this

is a thoroughly appointed vehicle. Luxuries we missed in our test LR4 were a backup camera and satellite radio.

The information display screen in the upper center of the instrument panel is smaller than most, which is fine in our opinion from a distraction standpoint—simplicity can equal safety, here. Presenting primitive lettering, white on black, and primitive tiny icons to the sides, though, we can't shake the idea that we're looking at a 1978 Space Invaders arcade screen in an iPad world.

On a July day after the LR4 had been sitting in the sun, we found that mirror and window controls located on a flat sill next to the glass make for some very hot adjustments indeed. Keyless start requires pressing the button noticeably longer than is typical, which somewhat works against the convenience factor.

A DO-IT-ALL DRIVER

We start out on surface streets, drive over some bolted steel plates covering road excavation and conclude that the LR4's ride is exceptionally smooth, especially given its off-road capabilities. Specifications (right) describe a high-tech array of brake-related features, and its stopping distance is decent, in the 170-foot-or-so range, but we think the discs could benefit from a larger surface.

Does the LR4 look as though it's going to be a little top-heavy? It does. And is it? It feels a bit so. But we have started out with suspension in Standard mode. The LR4's electronically-controlled air suspension also offers an Off-road mode and an Access mode (which lowers the vehicle a few inches for easier entry and egress). On the road, the air system monitors wheel travel and suspension activity and works to reduce body roll. Though the settings don't include a sport mode, per se, we find the high-centered feeling is reduced as we drive more aggressively. The system's Terrain Response takes it all even farther, handling pavement, dirt, mud and even redrock challenges optimally, through a combination of engine, transmission and suspension feedbacks.

As with ride height, we find freeway-speed tracking does better the more you call up the electronic brainpower—at a normal cruise, we feel some wandering within our lane, but apply a little more power and it goes away.

We didn't have the opportunity to take the LR4 into heavy-duty off-road conditions, but we did get it off the pavement and into some loose gravel, mild ruts, washboard and tight turnarounds. Its turning circle is just over 37 feet, but feels smaller—its relatively short wheelbase helps with the tightest of three-point turns.

Back on the pavement, we hit a run of speed bumps, dips and drainage troughs, and—even in the middle of a 90-degree turn at 35-40 mph—the LR4 tracks very well, and the ride remains firm and comfortable.

A SPECIFIC MARKET

We decided the LR4's position in the utility-to-luxury continuum may deduct what we'll call 10 percent from the luxury end, but adds 30 percent at the utility end. One stumbling point may be fuel economy, at an estimated 12 mpg city and 17 highway, 14 mpg combined.

We found the usual handful of nitpicky details, but put it all together, and your joy of ownership is bound to be pretty high in the Land Rover LR4. Its cost is a third-again higher than the LR2, but in capabilities this is the most affordable Land Rover or Range Rover that's truly rough-ready. Its cost is only about 60 percent that of the big Range Rover. From this standpoint, it has long been worth a good look. With the Range Rover Sport in play, though (see in this issue), you may look twice. That's fine. Again, it may come down to style and taste, as well as third-row headroom, if the cost difference isn't your key. If style and budget are your priorities, but off-road or severe weather capabilities are not, nor interior volume, you may want to wait for the new Range Rover Evoque, starting some \$4500 lower than the LR4. If all this sounds as though there are a lot of things we suggest you look at instead, the point is actually that despite a lot of overlap in the lineup, each vehicle's position is ultimately pretty clear. If the LR4 suits your needs best, the others will fall off your list in some way.

We like the package: plenty of power, decent handling, a comfortable and spacious interior even with that 10-gallon hat. Simple controls (albeit with rudimentary style). All in all, as one of our final logbook entries rhetorically asks, who wouldn't like one of these? ■

SPECIFICATIONS

Our test 2011 Land Rover LR4

ENGINE.....	5.0L DFI V8: 375 hp, 375 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	6-spd CommandShift auto
DRIVE	Permanent 4WD with traction control
FUEL MILEAGE	(EPA est) 12 city/17 hwy
TIRES/WHEELS:	19" x 8" aluminum alloy wheels, 255/55R 19 tires, temp spare on steel wheel.
BRAKES:	4-wheel power ventilated disc, 4-channel all-terrain ABS, all-terrain DSC, EBD and cornering control, hill descent, emergency brake assist.
SUSPENSION:	4-corner electronic air suspension, auto load leveling. Access, Standard and Off-road modes. Independent front and rear suspension.
SAFETY/SECURITY:	Six-airbag SRS (dual-threshold plus side thorax for driver and front passenger, side-curtain for outboard two rows). Side door impact beams front and rear; child locks; child seat anchors/tethers; rear window defrost; front/rear fog lamps; halogen headlights w/washers; auto-dim rear mirror; rear park distance. Keyless entry and perimeter security. 24-hour recovery service.
COMFORT/CONVENIENCE:	Asymmetrical split tailgate, dual-zone automatic climate control, walnut and leather interior, Bluetooth®, message center, power front seats, power windows, cruise, tilt/slide sunroof plus fixed alpine roof.
AUDIO:	240 watts, 9 speakers, aux input, CD, wheel-mounted controls, glass-mounted multi-antenna.
BASE PRICE	\$ 47,650
Black lacquer finish trim	350
CLIMATE COMFORT PACKAGE:	Heated seats, steering wheel, windshield, washers ...1,500
REAR SEAT & COMFORT PACKAGE:	Third row seat with curtain airbags, split-folding second row, rear climate control, accessory socket and map lamps
California emissions	1,150
Destination charge	100
TOTAL	\$ 51,600

By Joe Sage



CONCORSO, CONCOURS, CONCOURS



Photos: Joe Sage



Photos: Joe Sage



Photos: © 2011 Kimball Studios / courtesy Pebble Beach Concours

The whole Monterey week is anchored by the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, held the third Sunday in August. With August 1 a Monday, this year's cycle ran as late as it can, pushing right to our press time. Here are a few quick highlights.

Concorso Italiano
FRIDAY: LAGUNA SECA GOLF RANCH

If casual elegance ever had meaning, it does here: you can dress to the nines, or not. You can bring a multi-million-dollar rarity, or a common Fiat. You can dine like royalty or grab a sandwich. Concorso Italiano largely gets the ball rolling on the weekend's biggest events, all day Friday. The format features as many as 1000 vehicles of Italian origin, with emphasis not only on the displayed vehicles, but on conversations between the people who love and appreciate them. Add elements of Italian fashion, food, music and art—all on the beautiful grounds of Laguna Seca Golf Ranch, and you have Concorso. Two areas of special interest this year were an extensive display of Italian bicycles, and an astounding collection of Italian barn finds.

Concours d'LeMons
SATURDAY: LAGUNA GRANDE PARK, SEASIDE CA

We've wanted to catch this event for years. Now that we have (its new location helped), we hope we always can—it is a ton of fun. Largely presented tongue-in-cheek in the face of the other events' elegance, LeMons promises "the oddball, mundane and truly awful of the automotive world." Lest you think the vehicles are truly the POS the trophies mention, you will find rarities and fascinating stories with every entrant, as well as lots of personality, among the cars and the people. Collector car specialist Hagerty Insurance takes it seriously enough to be the presenting sponsor. And that MGB at lower left? It's race-ready and competes at 90 mph.

Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance
SUNDAY: THE 18TH FAIRWAY AT PEBBLE BEACH

There are a lot of elements to the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, but things really get under way early on Thursday. This year, 140 entrants participated in the scenic 69.3-mile Tour d'Elegance, along 17-Mile Drive and the Pacific Coast Highway, with Sir Stirling and Lady Moss leading the way (cars cross Bixby Bridge at lower left).

Gooding & Company (the official auction of the event) is held on premises, uphill from the show field, with previews starting Wednesday and the auction on Saturday and Sunday nights (after the Concours awards wrap up, that's where the excitement continues into the night). Sheryl Crow (at left with Jay Leno) contributed her personal 1959 Mercedes-Benz 190 SL Roadster, for Gooding to auction to raise funds for Joplin MO tornado recovery.

The results of the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance itself? A 1934 Voisin C-25 Aerodyne was named Best of Show. The Voisin, with its aeronautic influence and intricate interior, stood out among 227 entries from 30 states and 14 countries.

The 61st Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance generated \$1,154,778 for local charitable organizations, bringing total donations to more than \$15 million. ■

MONTEREY AND PEBBLE BEACH AUCTIONS

Camera and phone photos this page: Joe Sage



Mecum Auction

THURS-SAT: HYATT REGENCY RESORT AND SPA ON DEL MONTE GOLF COURSE

Mecum Auction expanded from two days this year their third at Monterey. Close to downtown Monterey and en route to Concorso Italiano and Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca, Mecum is very accessible, and the preview area is free to spectators. Variety is the order of the day at this auction, and if you don't find ten things you want to bid on, while roaming the display area, we'd be surprised. Mecum runs during the day, so you can actually buy something here before any of the others even start. Signing up as a bidder also gets you in the tent.

Russo and Steele
THURS-SAT: MONTEREY MARRIOTT HOTEL

Sales at Russo and Steele's 11th Monterey event totaled \$8.5 million, with a record increase in bidders (both domestic and international), live online viewers up by 25% and a 64% sell-through rate (up 22% from 2010). Standing-room-only conditions helped build the excitement. The top ten cars sold ranged from \$156,750 for a 1967 Shelby GT500 to a top sale of \$654,500 for a 1966 Ferrari 275 GTS that many enthusiasts had their eye on. Mopars are still selling strong, with a 1970 Plymouth Hemi Cuda selling at \$198,000, and a 1970 Chevrolet Chevelle SS 454 LS6 was not far behind, at \$181,500.

RM Auctions

FRI-SAT: PORTOLA HOTEL & SPA AND MONTEREY CONFERENCE CENTER

RM Auctions sold a record \$80,142,000 (including private after-sales), with 88% sell-through, up from \$67 million in 2010 and including 14 million-dollar-plus sales. Saturday night was a record single day, at over \$60.5 million. Individual records include a 1937 Mercedes-Benz 540 K Spezial Roadster at \$9,680,000 (a Mercedes-Benz auction record) and a 1970 Porsche 911s owned by Steve McQueen at \$1,375,000 (a 911 record). A 1958 BMW 507 Roadster once owned by "Bond girl" Ursula Andress set a record at \$1,072,500, and a ca.1899 Colum bia Electric Landulet doubled its estimate, at \$550,000—an auction record for an electric. At the Pebble Beach Concours, RM Auto Restoration won numerous Class and Show awards and had also restored Edsel Ford's 1934 Lincoln Model 40 Special Speedster, unveiled at the Concours.

Gooding & Company

SAT-SUN: PEBBLE BEACH EQUESTRIAN CENTER

High-ticket individual sales like \$16.39 million for a 1957 Ferrari 250 Testa Rossa Prototype—a new world-wide record for a car sold at auction—and \$10.34 million for a bespoke 1931 Duesenberg Model J Whittell Coupe led Gooding & Company to a record \$78 million in sales at Pebble Beach. The sale of 106 out of 127 vehicles represents an 84% sales rate. Fifteen cars broke the million-dollar barrier at Gooding. The Sheryl Crow 1959 Mercedes-Benz 190 SL sold for a final \$143,000, against an estimated \$50-80,000, benefitting Joplin tornado victims. Crow rode in the car onto the block and included the last limited-edition Sheryl Crow Signature Artists Gibson guitar, concert tickets and a photo opportunity with her, all for the new owner. Nineteen individual world records by brand or model were set by Gooding & Company during the event. ■

MONTEREY / PEBBLE REVEALS AND DISPLAYS



Aston Martin One-77



Aston Martin V12 Zagato



Cadillac ELR



Cadillac Ciel concept



BMW 328 Hommage concept



McLaren MP4-12C Chrome



MINI Coupe



MINI Inspired by Goodwood



Porsche 918 RSR



Range Rover Evoque

Aston Martin

Aston Martin One-77, V12 Zagato

At a private estate in the hills above Carmel Valley, Aston Martin revealed their new top-end One-77, an estimated \$1.87-million-dollar extravaganza, along with the V12 Zagato, originally a concept show car reflecting classic Zagato design cues, that went on to complete a 24-hour competition at the Nürburgring and will enter strictly limited production at an estimated \$540,000.

Cadillac

Cadillac ELR, Cadillac Ciel concept

As dusk settled over the Tehama Golf Club, above the Salinas Highway, Cadillac surprised us—having anticipated the new midsize ATS—with news that the electric Converj concept—technologically based on the Chevrolet Volt and an absolute knockout at the big auto shows—would enter production as the Cadillac ELR. Also shown to great acclaim was the thoroughly modern, classic-inspired Cadillac Ciel convertible concept.

BMW

BMW M5, BMW 328 Hommage concept

The BMW 328 Hommage concept had its debut at Pebble Beach in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the original 328. Also revealed on the grass at Pebble Beach was the new BMW M5, and on the hill were displays of the BMW 650i Coupe and BMW Z4 sDrive28i.

McLaren

McLaren MP4-12C Chrome

The McLaren MP4-12C is the company's latest production iteration of "Technology Born on the Track and Raised on the Streets." McLaren Managing Director Antony Sheriff and Design Director Frank Stephenson were on hand for Q&A and seminars, as well as to give us a look at the one-of-a-kind MP4-12C Chrome edition.

MINI

MINI Coupe, MINI Inspired by Goodwood

The highly anticipated MINI Coupe, revealed at auto shows earlier this year, gets its production introduction (and is spotted in traffic within a day). Partnership with Rolls-Royce begets an exquisitely appointed \$52,000 MINI—high for a MINI, but quite affordable for a Rolls.

Porsche

Porsche 918 RSR

The Porsche 918 RSR mid-engine concept racer is already one of the cooler cars we've seen, but it's a technological breakthrough—with its rear wheels powered by a 563-hp V8 and its front wheels by dual electric motors, whose power comes from a flywheel accumulator system located next to the driver. Total power is 767 hp for up to eight seconds—useful on the track.

Range Rover

Range Rover Evoque, Evoque Coupe

Range Rover tackles the small SUV market with their entry-lux four-cylinder Evoque, being produced as a five-door and also a three-door Coupe. Still highly off-road and deep-water capable, the Evoque is likely to have solid sales appeal with the soccer mom and country club sets. See more information in this issue. ■

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UNDER 30 GRAND ALMOST 30 MPG CHRYSLER 300

By Joe Sage



Original Chrysler 300 designer Ralph Gilles with his masterpiece in 2003. The 2012 Chrysler 300 SRT8 shown at Pebble Beach carries some of that DNA.

With its \$825 destination charge, the grand total for this highly equipped sedan was \$28,585.

EPA mileage for the 292-hp 3.6-liter 24-valve VVT V6 is 18 mpg city and 27 mpg highway, very healthy for a large car. With aluminum used for the engine and hood, total weight is 3961 pounds. Best-in-class power is healthy, too, up 16 percent from the previous V6 and a full 63 percent from a former 2.7-liter entry-level engine.

As an alternative, the Chrysler 300C has a 363-hp 5.7-liter HEMI® V8, 0-to-60 time under 6 seconds, fuel mileage of 16/25 (RWD), and a base price of \$38,170. The 300C also offers one thing the V6 doesn't: an all-wheel-drive option (at 15/23 mpg). We'd like to see an AWD V6, too. With a cast iron block, the HEMI brings this car to 4270 pounds (4513 with AWD).

Both the V6 and V8 HEMI run on 87-octane regular gas, though 89-octane is recommended for the HEMI.

WHAT LIES BENEATH

Development of the new Chrysler 300 has gone far beyond skin-deep. Unibody material and structural updates, two premium-composite underbody acoustic insulation panels, dual-pane acoustic windshield and front-door glass, body-cavity foam, doors with triple seals, and acoustic wheel-well liners all reduce noise.

Redesigned suspension has multiple arms and links, dual ball joints, coil-over gas-shock and stabilizer bar geometry—plus lower control arms on AWD—and ride height has been lowered. Steering is rack and pinion with hydraulic power assist. All this is intended to compete with premium Europeans—but for under \$30k.

Driver controls present a refreshing combination of technology and simplicity. An 8.4-inch touchscreen interface is straightforward—it's easy to set climate, person-



Many details are outlined in metal: inside and out, shiny and brushed, round and square. The door handle is out of reach probably even for Randy Johnson.

alization options are done in a click or two, audio has an above average set of features, and you can whip through satellite stations quickly via a spinning knob, with no signal delays. We don't think we've seen a better radio display, with full information and even a logo for each station, which may sound minor but speeds up quick reference while eyes are needed on the road—one of the safest setups we've driven.

One reason people buy a large sedan is its trunk, and the 300's is sizable, with a big, flat, level surface, though it's infringed upon by the rear wheel wells. Rear seats split-fold to create additional stowage.

The 300 has a 38.9-foot turning circle, which with its rack and pinion setup gives a nimble feel in parking situations. Speed bumps gave us mixed results: some were perfectly smooth, while others were harsh, especially in the front. Cornering under acceleration was smooth and powerful. We noted that while it may not lay as flat as a costly European, you could actually "feel its heft," a well-controlled and enjoyable classic American sedan feel.

PRESTIGE WELL BEYOND PRICE

The prior Chrysler 300 delivered status and class at a low price point—quite an achievement. The new 300 may look more ordinary at a glance. But if we'd never seen the original, the analysis would be easy. We found ourselves comparing the car with imports that cost twice as much. We enjoyed the interior space, high stance and general feel of the new 300, well suited to American body sizes and tastes. Its straightforward big sedan dynamics are bound to please. Power and comfort are tops. It's easy for reviewers to forget budget and start comparing all sedans, but if you're shopping in the \$20s, this car may blow you away. ■

Some manufacturers' lineups seem to consist of small, medium and large versions of what essentially seems like almost the same car. A longstanding joke is that it is like choosing which of the Brady sisters to date.

Chrysler has replaced the venerable Sebring with a new Chrysler 200, a reasonable move. Town and Country minivans were also refreshed for 2011, sharing a clear family resemblance with the 200. Enter the new 300, still bearing the nameplate with impressive heritage dating back to 1955, and it takes on elements of the same. That may or may not be a good thing—see Brady sisters—but so far we have trouble ignoring the shadow cast by the Chrysler 300 this replaces. That machine, penned by Chrysler über-designer Ralph Gilles, had hit the marketplace square between the eyes. Combining refinement and bling, it delivered an incredible presence while selling—remarkably—in the mid-\$20s.

Gilles was so good he was promoted, now serving as Senior Vice President of Design at Chrysler Group LLC and President and CEO of the SRT Brand.

And the new 300 was penned by others. With a new

family grille, a rising beltline and swept-back windshield, the car has evolved. The question is whether it has lost some of its distinction, a somewhat diluted version of its former self. But it's starting to grow on us.

POWER, ECONOMY AND VALUE

Despite any change in personality, the Chrysler 300 remains a solid car and a great buy. Its base price is \$27,170—this for a full-size, fully appointed sedan. That includes 4-wheel ABS, electronic stability control, traction control, brake assist, hill start assist—features you might find on a \$60,000 car just a few years ago. It includes a full complement of safety features, extensive creature comforts and electronics, such gotta-have-em luxuries as Keyless Enter-N-Go, a decent 6-speaker audio system with device connectivity and one year of satellite radio thrown in, halogen headlamps and LED daytime running lights, 17-inch wheels and 4-wheel independent suspension. The only add-ons our test 300 had were its crystal pearl effect paint (just \$295) and a Bluetooth™ package for voice control and streaming audio (\$295).

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FIAT 500: FRISKY, FRUGAL, FULL OF FUN

BY JOE SAGE



You might think Chrysler is into big round numbers these days, as an updated Chrysler 300 is complemented by a new 200, and—through their marriage to Fiat—they now bring us the Fiat 500. But it's just a coincidence. The Fiat 500 has been around for decades.

First was the Fiat 500 Topolino, from 1936 to 1955—a tiny car with a sweeping hood and grille, coincidentally reminiscent of the Chrysler Airflow from the '30s.

The forebear of the new Fiat 500 came next. 4 million copies of the most familiar Cinquecento (500) were produced in Italy from 1957 to 1975, a bit belatedly helping in a big way with Italy's economic recovery.

A Fiat Cinquecento in the 1990s succeeded the Fiat 126, which had replaced the 500 after 1975. Both were grim little cars with an Iron Curtain flavor. But in the post-Soviet era, Fiat's same factory in Poland geared up to produce a new 500 for the new millennium, launching in Europe in 2007. The Fiat 500 is also built in Toluca, Mexico, birthplace of our test car. (This plant also builds the Dodge Journey and just discontinued the PT Cruiser.)

As Fiat says, "this is where history begins again."

SO, IS THIS CAR SMALL?

The return of Fiat to our shores has met with great anticipation. We had seen the Fiat 500 at several car shows and events but hadn't been behind the wheel, so we, too, awaited our test car with great curiosity.

The first thing we said when we got in the car was, "Man, this is small!" Size, of course, is basically the car's whole *raison d'être*. Er, *ragione per essere*.

How small is it? The new Fiat 500 is about 140 inches long, 64 inches wide and 60 inches tall. It sports a 4-cylinder engine and weighs about 2400 pounds. (This makes the Fiat 500 about 100 pounds lighter and six inches shorter than a MINI Cooper.) The 1957-75 Cinquecento was considerably smaller: powered by a 2-cylinder engine, the car weighed in at just 1100 pounds, measuring about 117 inches in length (under ten feet!) and 52 inches each in width and height. Safety, performance and technological improvements—and of course updated buyer expectations and demands—have brought us a slightly larger tiny car, suitable for faster and busier roads and maybe even for the long haul of the American highway. But the new 500's style, charm and personality—and surely its position as among the smallest of the small—are completely intact. With its wheels set far at the corners, spaciousness and handling are maximized.



If you want something even smaller, there is always the Smart—its footprint is just 98.4 inches long and weighs 1600 pounds. And it gets 36 mpg combined, but wait: the Fiat 500 gets 38 mpg highway and 33 mpg combined (with manual transmission), and this in a four-seater with a much more standard automobile format.

MODELS AND FEATURES

The 500 comes in three trim levels. The Pop is priced at \$15,500 (plus \$500 destination charge), a well-equipped base model. Sport has enhanced suspension, steering, exhaust and aerodynamics, and adds some convenience features, at \$17,500. Both Pop and Sport come with a 5-speed manual, standard, but have a 6-speed automatic available. The Lounge is aimed at the stylish crowd, though most of its inclusions are available on the others (automatic, glass roof, Bose audio). Lounge comes only with automatic, with a base price of \$19,500. Equipped with all available options, Lounge can hit \$23,150.

Sport sounds like the best bet, with improved handling, plus creature comforts still available. And that's what we received as a test car, with 5-speed manual.

Putting some gear in the hatch area, with a couple of letters in hand, we discovered the incredible convenience of a small car that is open all the way through: we were able to just reach forward and put the mail in the front seat, from the back bumper.

The interior benefits from a continuation of the car's exterior paint—on ours a sparkly \$500 Rosso Brillante tri-coat—across the instrument panel. It has a sporty look, and including outside color helps open things up.

The car has mechanical seat adjustment (what do we expect in a \$17.5k car?), and the cabin is tight enough that we have to open the door to slide it back. A hard-ship? Or smart design? Why carry around enough bulk

and width to adjust your seat, all day every day, when you may only do it once? And before we sound too demeaning about what you get for \$17,500, check out the standard inclusions (sidebar): modern suspension, 4-wheel disc brakes with ABS, electronic stability control, keyless entry, power windows and locks, an audio system that might cost \$17.5k in a \$100,000 car, and much more. And, by the way, the seat track goes back farther than we needed, at six-foot-two. The rear seat is reached with easy-access front seats that fold and slide forward; space is bit tight.

Glass sunroofs are becoming common—tough in an Arizona summer. This one has a shade screen, but it allows a lot of sun.

The car is snug door-to-seat (even using the door pocket is tight), but width and legroom in general are surprisingly accommodating: there's no console and the shifter is in the center stack. Primary instruments have an efficient layout, with a concentric tach and speedometer surrounding a digital readout with fuel and engine temp, MPG, MPH, clock, odo and outside temperature, all in one handy readout. The door handle doubles as its lock mechanism, a slick detail.

We release the mechanical handbrake, note the Sport switch, grab the 5-speed shifter, and off we go.

BEHIND THE WHEEL

We already know the 4-cylinder engine will give us just 101 hp and 98 lb-ft of torque. For our first few miles, we were unimpressed with power and handling, though that was before we used the Sport setting. We did get reac-

KEEP RIGHT >>



SPECIFICATIONS

Our test 2012 Fiat 500 Sport Hatchback

ENGINE1.4L inline-4: 101 hp, 98 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION5-speed manual
DRIVEFront-wheel drive
FUEL MILEAGE(EPA est) 30 city/38 hwy
FUEL CAPACITY10.5 gallons
TIRES/WHEELS: 16" x 6.5" aluminum wheels, with 195/45R16XL tires, tire service kit.
BRAKES:4-wheel disc, red brake calipers
SUSPENSION: MacPherson strut and stabilizer bar front, twist-beam axle and twin-tube shocks rear, sport-tuned shocks and springs (Sport model).
SAFETY/SECURITY: Airbags: multistage front, front side, front/rear side curtain, driver knee; head restraints, child anchors. 4-wheel ABS, ESC, TPM system, sentry key immobilizer.
COMFORT/CONVENIENCE: Power windows w/ one-touch up/down front, power locks, keyless entry, rear defroster, variable wipers, rear wiper/washer, cruise, hill start assist, 12-volt outlet, 140 mph speedometer (Sport model). Filtered a/c, driver seat memory, BOSE® premium AM/FM/CD/MP3 audio, Blue&Me® hands-free, aux jack, leather-wrapped tilt steering wheel, wheel-mounted audio controls, vehicle info center, rear 50/50 split fold-down seat, chrome shift knob.
EXTERIOR: Bi-function halogen headlamps, body-color power heated mirrors, fog lamps, chrome exhaust tips, rear spoiler.

BASE PRICE\$ 17,500
 Rosso Brillante tri-coat paint500
PREFERRED PACKAGE 21D: Nero/grigio (black/grey) seats; power sunroof850
TOMTOM NAVIGATION w/Blue&Me400
 Destination charge500
TOTAL.....\$ 19,750



a larger car, much more easily grabbing a lane change. And you don't feel Smart-car vulnerable: your top-of-mind cockpit experience is like that in a much larger car. We swung by the mall and were surprised the car turned not one teen head. Maybe they were too cool for school—the usual walking in front of cars and making them wait—but it should have been novel enough for a glance. Folks older than that did turn their heads.

Enough around town. The next evening, we drove out to Saguaro Lake, giving the car a decent tryout at speed on the Beeline Highway, and on the curves and hills of Bush Highway. The drive was smooth and easy, and 30-45 minutes of seat time each way was no hardship. Turning circle for the Fiat 500 is just 30.6 feet, so unexpected stops for photos, or tight parking lot maneuvers at the lake, were done with impressive ease. The gate attendant showed a lot of interest and asked a lot of questions. We told him the car costs \$17,500 and gets 38 mpg. That struck us as a triumphant combo, but he said "it looks like it should get more."

SPORT AND ECONOMY

We followed the Beeline drive with a variety of city moves, including aggressive laps on roundabouts, plus some speedbumps and troughs. Most notably, we'd wanted to do a good comparison of the Sport mode, on and off, but hitting the switch didn't give us any confirmation it was engaged: no light, no depressed position.

The next night, we discovered the word "sport" illuminated in the center of the speedo. Now we'd be able to compare better, though the funny thing is, we surely were in both the night before, but any differences were clearly subtle. This time, we could verify.

We expected to recognize a different driving experience but were surprised to see a significant difference in fuel economy, at least based on the readout (not necessarily accurate). On the freeway in Sport, it was reading 20-30 mpg, depending upon the heaviness of our foot. Switched out of Sport, 30 was the norm, with climbs to 45 or even 49 mpg. You appear to pay a clear price for Sport, in fuel economy, but being able to confirm the mode made a difference in perception: the performance gain in Sport seemed absolutely noticeable, worth the fuel efficiency loss (20-30 is still pretty good). If gas climbs higher someday, we could always turn that off. The more we played with the Sport mode, the more we concluded this felt like two different cars. We wanted to recreate the Beeline-Saguaro drive but were out of time.

OUR LITTLE RED GREEN CAR

Despite staggering advances being made in hybrid, electric and other technologies, the past couple of years have also brought a number of vehicles that—with technological advances of their own—approach or often surpass the fuel economy numbers of the newcomers, but with a gasoline combustion engine.

The front-wheel-drive Fiat 500 is powered by one of the smallest engines in a US-market car: a 1.4-liter four-cylinder with the first US application of Fiat's MultiAir® technology. MultiAir promises up to 10 percent greater power, a 10 percent improvement in fuel efficiency, and a 10 percent reduction in CO₂ emissions.

The Fiat eco:Drive™ application collects vehicle efficiency data, which you can save to USB stick via the information system's Blue&Me port. Plug it into your computer, and you can study a detailed report on your driving from an environmental standpoint, including CO₂ levels for each trip. The eco:Drive™ program can even recommend ways to modify your driving style to reduce fuel consumption and emissions. Estimated fuel economy for the Fiat 500 is 30 mpg city and 38 mpg highway for the manual transmission, 27/34 for the automatic.

A FIAT IN YOUR FUTURE?

People are in the mood for something small, and they're in the mood for something different. The Fiat brand has never really left the American buyer's consciousness, and we suspect most will largely forget it wasn't even sold here for a couple of decades. As an example of something quirky selling well, we would point to the Nissan Juke, which is not only relatively small but has bent all the rules about conventional styling—and is selling like hotcakes. Fiat's new US dealership network has been busily building all year, and California received one of the first big waves of the new 500. While we were in Monterey for the auctions, concours and other events in August, we saw them absolutely everywhere. We parked in Seaside to run an errand and found ourselves with not one, not two, but three brand-new Fiat 500s parked within 30 feet. And why not? It's almost a mantra to us by now: \$17.5 grand, 38 mpg.

Small cars notoriously don't generate the profits of big ones, but volume helps, conditions dictate, and this car is addressing a very sweet spot in the market at just the right time. We wish Chrysler and Fiat the best. The way the Fiat 500 puts a smile on everyone's face, how could you not? *Acclamazioni!* ■

tions, from the get-go, starting with an Eastern European whose first car had been the old 2-cylinder 500, which he was forbidden to use on the autobahn. That had him enthused about the new Fiat 500. And for us, it was one more lesson in relativity.

Around town, the car feels nimble but not quick, while on the freeway, performance is smooth and even. We ponder how it might be on a long road trip, whether on Interstates or mountain two-lanes. The seats offer a variety of adjustments, good on a long haul. Shifting is firm but very tight.

It's always enlightening to gauge the reactions of other drivers. Some seem deferential to this car, some seem to take it on aggressively. Either reaction speaks well to its presence. Some seem annoyed, maybe either thinking small means slow or irked by the gas they are consuming themselves at the moment. There was no reason for them to be irked. As long as you're in motion, the Fiat 500 is not lacking for power. It's perky, has great maneuverability, and its size is certainly an asset in freeway rush hour traffic. You don't get bottled in, as in



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RIDE LIKE A PRO

Rockford Fosgate contest will put one lucky winner on the track in Phoenix with Motocross racer Ryan Sipes

Rockford Fosgate, known for its high-performance car audio systems, has a new contest offering a motocross enthusiast the chance to spend a day riding with Pro Motocross Racer Ryan Sipes on a dedicated motocross track in Arizona, on October 20, 2011.

The Rockford Fosgate team will outfit the winner in Scott MX racing gear, which they get to keep at the end of the event. Once suited up, they'll get checked out on a custom-built Yamaha Racing bike, and Ryan Sipes will get them moving for an afternoon tearing up the track. The contest is open to anyone, nationwide, and if the winner is from elsewhere, they will be flown, accompanied by a guest of their choice, to Phoenix.

"Imagine actually talking with a rider, doing laps on the track with him, and hearing his perspective on racing," said Theresa Hephner, senior director of product development and marketing for Rockford Corporation. "Now that's a day to remember! This experience is what

we are bringing to our Rockford Fosgate fanatics with RIDE LIKE A PRO." *Racer X* magazine will document race day with photography and videography. But the day doesn't end there. After their track time, the winner and guest will join Ryan for dinner, where they can recap the day's ride, trade racing tips and get to know what it's really like to be a Pro Motocross athlete.

"This is a great opportunity for fans to get the best of both worlds—motocross and audio," says Sipes. "I'm really excited to be a part of this experience, and it'll be a great day spent, Rockford style."

And if you're not the lucky winner? Come to the track on October 20, from 10 am to 2 pm, anyway, as Rockford Fosgate will open the gates to the public so they can watch Sipes mentor the winner. Fans will have a chance to get an autograph or a photo taken with Sipes, as well as the opportunity to check out custom Rockford Fosgate demo vehicles, visit vendor booths and more. ■



Enter by September 30, 2011:
rockfordfosgate.com/promotions/2011_ridelikeapro_register.asp



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By now nearly everyone is familiar with the Toyota Prius. With more than one million of them on American roads, they have become the standard for hybrids, outnumbering all other hybrids combined.

What most people don't know is there are now three Prius models, or will be this fall, with a fourth due soon. In addition to the current Prius hybrid, there is also the Prius Plug-In Hybrid, now being joined by the midsize Prius v, and debuting earlier this year at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit was the Prius c concept.

We spent a few hours recently driving the new "v" version around the Monterey Peninsula and Carmel Valley and found it to be an important addition to the Prius lineup. The "v" stands for versatile, and it fits that description beautifully.

Except for a couple of new features we'll mention later, don't expect the "v" to be mechanically different from the regular Prius, because it's basically the same vehicle. The big difference is size: it's a little larger—3.0 inches in the wheelbase, 6.0 inches in length and 1.1 inches in width. The roofline is a little flatter, extended, and raised 3.3 inches to give it more of a wagon look. We both think it looks better than the original five-door.

The increased size is small on the outside, but it translates to three more cubic feet of interior room—and that also allows for easier access, and an interior that feels more spacious, especially to a

rear seat occupant. The rear seats now slide 7.1 inches fore and aft, and have a 60/40 split back.

The cargo area is where the size change is most noticeable. With all the seat backs up, cargo space is 34.3 cubic feet (59 percent larger than the regular Prius). With the rear seat folded, the cargo space grows to 67.3 cubic feet. To put that in perspective, it's about the same cargo volume as Toyota's largest SUV, the Sequoia, when the third row is folded.

The extra space makes comfortable seating for five passengers, especially if the rear seat has three smaller people or children. We've been in a couple of Prius taxis, and while we applauded the concept, they weren't overly spacious. This new "v" with the extra space would be a perfect taxi and obviously is a nice size family car.

We fell in love with the new optional seat fabric, which reminds us of super soft and supple leather. It's called SofTex, and the material is designed for easy cleaning and spill resistance. Another plus for SofTex is that it weighs about half as much as leather and uses about 99 percent fewer volatile organic compounds in manufacturing than conventional synthetic leathers.

Because people who buy hybrids are often into technology, the Prius v has state-of-the-art electronics and enhanced connectivity features. A Bluetooth wireless connection for compatible hands-free phone calls is standard, and it has an automatic phone book transfer function. There is

also a standard USB port that allows playing of music and video from portable audio devices, using the vehicle sound system and in-dash display screen.

Interestingly, the "v" has two available navigation systems: a value-oriented version with a 6.1-inch display screen and an upscale model with a 7.0-inch screen.

Either screen serves as a portal for Entune, an available HD Radio system that plays CD-quality sound from digital FM broadcasts and has features that maximize analog and AM broadcast sound quality. The system will include HD Radio with iTunes tagging and SiriusXM Satellite Radio™.

Toyota Entune is the first system ever to support mobile apps, such as Bing, OpenTable, and movie-tickets.com, along with accessing useful travel-related services, such as live weather, traffic, fuel information (location and price), stocks and sports. What really caught our attention was the large selection of music options available, including iheartradio's 750+ stations and Pandora's personalized music service.

The top-of-the-line audio system with seven-inch screen is equipped with a new Premium HDD Navigation system, Entune and JBL audio. A new split-screen feature allows for simultaneously displaying navigation, audio information and full iPod video integration. New JBL GreenEdge™ audio combines an eight-channel amplifier and door

mounted "acoustic lens" speakers, to provide even higher quality sound while reducing overall mass and using less power.

Both systems have all the cool graphics of the energy monitor and fuel consumption data information, along with an integrated back-up camera.

The Hybrid Synergy Drive system in the Prius v is essentially the same as the current third-generation Prius. It is built around a specially adapted, efficient 98-horsepower 1.8-liter Atkinson cycle four-cylinder engine that produces 134 horsepower when combined with the electric motors. It uses two high-output motors: one 60kw (80 hp) unit that mainly works to power the compact, lightweight transaxle, and another smaller motor that mainly works as the electric power source. Maximum motor drive voltage is 650 volts DC. The "v" uses the same nickel-metal hydride battery pack as the liftback.

The Prius v accelerates from 0 to 60 mph in 10.4 seconds and has a top track speed of 103 mph. The EPA estimates fuel economy at 44 city and 40 highway, and we actually averaged 44 mpg, according to the trip computer, during our driving around the peninsula.

One other new feature is Pitch and Bounce Control that works with the suspension to improve ride comfort and to avoid a "porpoising" motion over bumps or when the vehicle has a heavier load.

To save power and improve visibility, the "v" is offered with optional LED headlights. These use projector lenses to produce long-range visibility and are designed to be virtually maintenance-free for the expected life of the vehicle.

The Prius v is scheduled to arrive at Toyota dealers during the fall. It will be available in three trim levels: the base model Two, the up-optioned Three, and the best-equipped Five. Prices will be announced during the fall, but are expected to range from the mid-\$20s to almost \$40,000. ■



Prius v Five



Prius v Two and Three



EXTENDED-PLAY PRIUS

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BY BILL AND BARBARA SCHAFER



Prius v Five

TOUGH LUX

PRINCE OF THE ROAD : THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE LAND ROVER LR4 WITH THE SHEETMETAL AND FITMENTS OF THE BIG RANGE ROVER



By Barbara & Bill Schaffer

There are certain vehicles we get to drive that we'd love to just keep in our garage on a more permanent basis. The Range Rover is a perfect example. We do have a little disagreement on which model, however. Barbara's favorite is the top of the line Range Rover because she likes the luxurious appointments, elegant styling and substantial feel, while Bill prefers the Range Rover Sport, which is smaller, sportier and

more agile.

Sadly, we recently had to give back the 2011 Range Rover Sport test vehicle—the week was up and it was time to drive something else. Over the years, we've both had numerous opportunities to drive Range Rovers off-road and found that they inspired near-overconfidence because they are so capable in any kind of terrain. We have experienced climbing giant rocks in the desert, slogging

through foot-deep mud on paths in the jungle and inching over large boulders. Everyday driving challenges like sand, snow, or ice seem mild in comparison, but—extreme or not—Range Rover handles them all with great confidence.

Certainly the driver needs to know how to handle off-road obstacles and conditions, but the neat thing about the Range Rover is how easily it adjusts to best handle each situation. The guts of the



Range Rover command system are conveniently located on the driver-side of the center console just to the rear of the transmission shifter. A large brushed aluminum knob controls the sophisticated Terrain Response™ system that allows the driver to select the appropriate setting for the different conditions. Turning that one knob to one of the five settings tailors the vehicle chassis and powertrain setting to deliver the maximum performance for on or off road.

SPORT: REGULAR OR SUPER

The Range Rover Sport comes in two upscale versions: the anything-but-basic Sport HSE and the Sport Supercharged, priced at \$59,645 and \$74,545 respectively (plus \$850 destination charge). (There is also an HSE LUX, which is basically a pre-optioned HSE, at a base of \$64,345.) Load the Supercharged version up with Autobiography, Climate Comfort, Luxury and Vision Assist packages, throw in adaptive speed control and the rear seat entertainment system, and the price tops out around \$90,000.

Any Sport model has an extensive list of included comfort and convenience features befitting any of the luxury sedans. They also have all the latest technology equipment like navigation, front and rear park distance control, Bluetooth® and a cool interface for off-roading that shows Terrain Response settings including the gear, range and front wheel position.

As great as the Range Rover Sport can be off road, its on-road prowess is equally impressive, but for different reasons. We enjoy driving the Sport around town because of precise steering and a tight 38-foot turning radius. We also like its smooth, responsive power and strong brakes. The Sport is no lightweight, though, tipping the scales at 5,540 pounds, or nearly 300 pounds more than that for the Supercharged model.

An all-aluminum 375-hp, 5.0-liter V8 engine powers the Sport HSE, driving its full-time all-wheel drive through a six-speed automatic transmission. This combination smoothly and silently accelerates from 0 to 60

BRAND POSITIONING AND LOGBOOK NOTES

By Joe Sage

Have you ever been confused by various Land Rover and Range Rover models, all from Land Rover? Use Ford as an example: one lineup carries the corporate name (Ford), then there is a high-end line (Lincoln). The two lineups from corporate Land Rover are similar in that sense (though with a higher expectation of luxury across both).

A growing entry-level luxury market suggested the need for a lower buy-in point to the Range Rover brand. To bridge the gap, the company developed the Range Rover Sport, which looks like the pricey big Range Rover, but has much commonality with the Land Rover LR4—chassis, engine, drivetrain and many other features.

With the Land Rover LR4 at a base price of \$47,650 and the full-size Range Rover HSE at \$78,835, the Range Rover Sport HSE at \$59,645 (add \$850 destination charge to any) brings Range Rover shopping considerably closer to Land Rover turf. Whether Range Rover draws buyers in by style, luxury, prestige or capability, the Range Rover Sport will draw in that many more. (Buyers of the Supercharged versions—the Sport at about \$75k and the big Range Rover at about \$95k—are headed upscale, regardless.)

The Range Rover Sport is an appealing alternative to the big Range Rover on cost savings alone. And it's an appealing alternative to the mechanically similar LR4 on the basis of Range Rover panache. The Range Rover Sport's price is dead center between them by ratio: about 25 percent higher than the LR4 and 25 percent lower



SPECIFICATIONS

Our test 2011 Range Rover Sport HSE

ENGINE5.0L DFI V8: 375 hp, 375 lb-ft

TRANSMISSION6-spd CommandShift auto with normal, sport and manual shift modes

DRIVEPerm 4WD, traction control, 2-spd electronic transfer box, electronic center diff

FUEL MILEAGE(EPA est) 13 city/18 hwy

TIRES/WHEELS: 19" x 8" aluminum alloy wheels, 255/50YR 19 tires, temp spare on steel wheel.

BRAKES: 4-wheel power ventilated disc, 4-channel all-terrain ABS, all-terrain DSC, EBD and cornering control, gradient release, hill descent control, emergency brake assist

SUSPENSION: 4-corner electronic air suspension, auto load leveling. Access, Standard and Off-road modes. Independent front and rear suspension.

SAFETY/SECURITY: Six-airbag SRS (dual-threshold plus side thorax for driver and front passenger, side-curtain for outboard two rows). Side door impact beams front and rear; child locks; child seat anchors/tethers; front/rear fog lamps; rain- and speed-sensing wiper; automatic xenon headlights w/washers; rear park distance. Keyless entry and perimeter security, retractable/removable rear load-space cover. 24-hour recovery service.

COMFORT/CONVENIENCE: Dual-zone automatic climate control with recirc, leather interior, power adjust steering wheel, Bluetooth®, iPod/USB connectivity, message center, power front seats with memory for seats-wheel-mirrors, power windows, heated folding power mirrors, electrochromatic rear view mirror with Homelink, cruise, tilt/slide sunroof plus fixed alpine roof.

AUDIO: Harman/Kardon 240 watts, 9 speakers, aux input, CD, wheel-mounted controls, glass-mounted multi-antenna.

BASE PRICE\$ 59,645

Black lacquer finish trim350

PREMIUM LOGIC7® AUDIO PACKAGE: 480 watts, speakers, digital satellite radio1,650

LUXURY INTERIOR PACKAGE: Premium seats, heated front and rear; heated windshield/washers and steering wheel; 20-inch alloy wheels; cooler box, contrast stitch, adjustable driver's seat side bolsters4,700

Destination charge850

TOTAL\$ 67,195

KEEP RIGHT >>

Logbook (cont'd) >>



BRAND POSITIONING AND LOGBOOK NOTES (CONT'D)

than the full-size Range Rover. In linear dollars, it's a savings of almost \$20k against the big Range Rover, but an add-on of less than \$12k against the LR4. If your basis of lust is the big Range Rover, the clever positioning of the Range Rover Sport will grab the shopper with a budget. If this is the style and feature set you're after, you know you'll find a way to pay the difference.

SEE, TOUCH AND FEEL

We are not always big fans of a lot of mixed surfaces, and piano black surfaces don't always tickle our keyboard, but this interior is gorgeous, with rich brick-brown leather, soft-touch black surfaces, sizable speaker grilles with complementary patterns and shades, then polished aluminum on the door grabs, along with leather and more piano black. It's rich and very well coordinated. Stylewise, the interior gets a strong A; functionwise maybe a B.

The touchscreen panel, with a tidy set of fairly minimal dials and buttons below, is very effective, though polarized sunglasses interfere. The upgraded LOGIC7 audio system is good: the louder the better, and it's good quiet, too, which of course is the true test. Satellite radio tuning was painfully slow, with a significant wait between each station. It wouldn't hurt to have a little illumination on the engine stop button at night. Keyless start does require staying on the button a bit, as with the LR4.

The large greenhouse gives great visibility in all directions, and the backup camera has considerably better than average image quality. Side mirrors are good, and they are big—big enough in fact to add a bubble to both of them, if it were ours. The large interior volume is surely one reason,

though, that it seems to take awhile to cool off on a 110-degree day.

TIGHT, FIRM, PLEASANT

The Range Rover Sport is extremely maneuverable, not top-heavy, and it turns on a dime, with a turning circle of 37.8 feet—a few inches tighter than a MINI Countryman.

We gave it a brief dirt-road session—sandy, with dips and curves and good braking challenges. It handled and cornered well, even with short wheelbase and tall height. The ride was pleasingly firm on bumps, with a solid stance and good grip. It will do well in a more challenging situation.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

A slight slope to the Range Rover Sport's roof and rise in its beltline hint at the style direction of the new Range Rover Evoque (see box). This is expected to be a major game-changer for Land Rover, bringing the share of V8 purchases from 97 percent (three percent are the six-cylinder LR2) down to 50 percent, quite quickly. For all the reasons the Sport can pull your attention away from the big Range Rover, the Evoque may be able to do it moreso.

The LR4, the upcoming Evoque, and both Range Rovers comprise a well-thought-out lineup. The Range Rover Sport delivers the best from the highest and medium-low points on the spectrum. The brand overall has broadened its appeal and is on track to deliver even more. ■

mph in just 7.2 seconds. It won't win many prizes for fuel economy with an EPA rating of 13 mpg city and 18 mpg highway, but we actually averaged 16.9 mpg despite some foot-to-the-floor sprints to merge onto freeways. The Supercharged version ups the horsepower to 510 and drops the 0-to-60 time to 5.9 seconds. The supercharger takes just one mpg from city and highway mileage numbers. The HSE models and the Supercharged have electronically limited top speeds of 130 mph and 140 mph, respectively.

THE SPORTING LIFE

The weight, rock-solid body and luxury appointments combined with one of the quietest interiors in any kind of vehicle we have driven, to give the Sport almost a cocoon-like feel. This safe feeling is further enhanced with all the latest safety and security equipment and driver aids—including everything from Active Roll Mitigation, which stabilizes the ride, to automatic xenon headlights that light up the countryside. The other design feature we really appreciate is excellent visibility through the tall windows with small roof pillars. That can be further improved with the new Vision Assist Package (\$1,200) which includes automatic high beam and adaptive HID headlights, plus a clever Surround View Camera that uses four cameras to display a full 360-degree view around the vehicle.

We've always been surprised by the large number of Range Rovers on the streets and highways but have doubted that all those classy owners we see behind the wheel are off-roaders. But we certainly understand the appeal of driving these great SUVs. Range Rovers may be one of the top status symbols, but they are also one of our favorite SUVs to drive, just for the fun of it. Plus who knows when you might want to ford a stream or climb a large boulder. ■

A NEW, THIRD RANGE ROVER OPTION ARRIVES

The Evoque is the smallest, lightest, most fuel-efficient Range Rover ever produced, yet it still carries the brand's rugged DNA. It has front and rear axle clearances of 8.4 inches and 9.5 inches, respectively. Front and rear overhangs are minimal, providing an approach angle of 25°, ramp angle of 22° and departure angle of 33° (19, 22 and 30° in the Dynamic version), and it can still ford a challenging stream, with a wading depth of 19.7 inches. Yet, it will surely see around-town duty, in a five-door Evoque with a base price of \$43,145 or a three-door Evoque Coupe starting at \$44,145 (plus \$850 destination charge). The EPA estimates fuel economy at 19 mpg city and 28 mpg highway from an all-aluminum four-cylinder 240-hp direct-injection engine—a Range Rover first. The compact SUV is offered with a lavishly appointed cabin in three design themes: the cool and contemporary Pure, the luxurious Prestige and the bold and sporting Dynamic. Family users will find the flexibility and luggage space of a compact station wagon. Evoque will be sold in 160 countries worldwide, with North American deliveries beginning in October 2011. ■



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Powered by sunshine

Ford has teamed up with solar systems manufacturer SunPower® of San Jose for an integrated approach to "Drive Green for Life." A high-efficiency 2.5-kW rooftop system from SunPower can provide enough renewable energy production to offset the energy needed for charging the new Ford Focus Electric—which arrives by the end of this year—producing an estimated 3,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity annually.

A rooftop array of SunPower E18 Series solar panels generates an average of about 50 percent more electricity and occupies a smaller footprint on the roof than earlier systems. The system was sized to accommodate a customer who drives about 1,000 miles per month.

The complete SunPower system has a typical base price of under \$10,000 (after federal tax credits; assuming normal installation conditions; not including modifications to a roof, electrical service panel or excessive wire requirements; and not including sales tax). Local and state rebates and other incentives may drive the cost down even more, depending on a customer's location. SunPower also offers financing. Included is a residential monitoring system, with the ability to track the system's performance online or via an iPhone app.

A thousand miles a month, if consuming gasoline at

30 miles a gallon, would consume 33.33 gallons of fuel. At four bucks a gallon, that'd be \$133.33 a month, or \$1600/year. The ten grand initial payment, then, would offer a break-even against fuel costs at six and a quarter years, based on those assumptions and at current rates. Compared with 20 mpg, just over four years. EPA minimums for fuel-powered vehicles are set to climb dramatically, but if gasoline becomes more expensive, or supplies become disrupted, then the solar-electric advantage is only moreso. Evolving electric car technologies are likely to be with us indefinitely, and the SunPower system is backed by a 25-year warranty.

The SunPower rooftop solar system will be compatible with the C-MAX Energi plug-in hybrid electric vehicle Ford is rolling out over the next year or so. Ford launched the Transit Connect Electric small commercial van in 2010 and will launch the all-new Focus Electric later this year. Ford's strategy includes the launch of five electrified vehicles in North America by 2012. Next in North America will be the new C-MAX Hybrid, a second next-generation lithium-ion battery hybrid and C-MAX Energi plug-in hybrid.

In addition to its solar partnership with SunPower, Ford has an agreement with Best Buy to offer a 240-volt home charging station. ■



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700-hp wide-body SPX-GAS charity Mustang

SEE AT BARRETT-JACKSON LAS VEGAS
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Galpin Auto Sports (GAS) of North Hills CA has been selected by SPX Corporation of Charlotte NC to create a single high-performance Ford Mustang to be auctioned for the benefit of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, at the Barrett-Jackson auction in Scottsdale this January.

This highly collectible Mustang will debut in a public display at the Barrett-Jackson auction in Las Vegas, September 22-24. The car will make a number of appearances at car shows and events across the country, including back in Las Vegas at the SEMA Show the first week of November.

GAS hand fabricated an all-metal wide-body that stretches the vehicle nine inches wider than a stock Mustang. To complement the vehicle's aggressive stance and design—inspired by the classic Mustang BOSS 429—a Ford Racing super-charger boosts engine performance to more than 700 horsepower. Forgiato 22x14 rear and 21x11 front three-piece GTR wheels were mated to 335/25/22 and 295/25/21 Pirelli tires to fit to the new body.

Inside are custom red suede and black leather upholstery and trim, with a suede headliner. The Mustang features a Bassani Performance exhaust system, custom formulated PPG paint, a 1000-watt JL Audio system and many other items that make this Mustang truly one of a kind.

All proceeds from the auction of this Mustang will go to support St. Jude, one of the world's premier centers for the research and treatment of pediatric cancer and other catastrophic childhood diseases—where no child is ever denied treatment based on race, religion or a family's ability to pay.

"We're honored SPX chose us as the shop to build this vehicle," said GAS President Beau Boeckmann. "Once completed, this car has tremendous potential to raise a lot of money for an organization that benefits a great cause."

SPX is a leading manufacturer and provider of specialized engineered products and technologies for a variety of industries, and is dedicated to raising money for St. Jude. For 2011, SPX turned its

attention to creating a special street car unlike anything else on the road, to fulfill its annual fundraising goal for the charity. After a lengthy review process, executives at SPX selected Galpin Auto Sports as their design-build shop of choice.

The 2012 charity auction at Scottsdale will mark the third consecutive year that SPX has donated a car to benefit St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The car will once again sell at no reserve and, as in years past, Barrett-Jackson plans to donate all its customary fees to St. Jude.

"It is our goal to offer as many charitable opportunities as possible at our auctions and recognize those in need," said Steve Davis, President of Barrett-Jackson. "It is truly an honor to be a part of the efforts of St. Jude to help children and their families."

www.galpinautosports.com
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THE INSIDE TRACK: BRIEFS & RUMORS

Through rain and shine, fundraising and construction at **LeMay—America's Car Museum (ACM)** have gone on without missing a beat. Even with the recession, the ambitious project has moved forward on time and on budget. ACM management announced that the Tacoma, Washington project will have its 2012 grand opening on May 19, 2012. The nine-acre campus—with its four-story, 165,000-sq.ft. museum as the hub—will include a massive show field to host everything from vintage car events to rock concerts and drive-in movies. There will also be a gift shop, banquet center and café, an educational center and library, and rotating exhibits using cars, music, film and photos for displays such as “game-changing automotive inventions.” ACM will have 15 galleries housing up to 500 cars, trucks and motorcycles from private owners, corporations and the Harold E. LeMay collection, which amassed a *Guinness Book of World Records* total of more than 3,500 vehicles in the mid-'90s. “Harold never met a car he didn't like,” says Nancy LeMay about her late husband. For more information visit www.lemaymuseum.org.



LeMay—America's Car Museum

Toyota Motor Sales recently opened the first hydrogen fueling station in the US fed directly from an active industrial hydrogen pipeline. Located in Torrance, California, next to the Toyota sales and marketing headquarters campus, the fueling station is a collaborative effort among Toyota, Air Products, Shell, South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) and the US Department of Energy (DOE). It is designed to provide hydrogen for the Toyota fuel cell hybrid demonstration program vehicles as well as other manufacturers' fuel cell vehicle fleets in the Los Angeles area. With this new station, the City of Torrance will become part of the California Hydrogen Highway initiative, which aims to create clean air solutions and develop new technology jobs across the state.



Infiniti JX concept

Infiniti will expand their crossover lineup in the spring of 2012 with an all-new three-row JX luxury crossover. Infiniti was set to unveil the JX concept at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in August and will pull the wraps off the 2013 production model at the 2011 LA Auto Show in November. The concept shows signature styling cues of the brand, such as dynamic and elegant line treatments inspired by nature. The brand styling theme continues with a “crescent cut” greenhouse design influenced by the Infiniti Essence concept car. Ben Poore, vice president of Infiniti Americas said, “The Infiniti JX will have a stunning interior, while offering exceptional seating flexibility, easy access to the roomy third row, plus the latest in-vehicle technology—including next-generation telematics. A fitting addition to our line, it will challenge the status quo in its class.”

Toyota expects to have its North American vehicle manufacturing levels back to 100 percent by September after production cuts caused by part shortages after the Japanese earthquake and tsunami in March. Avalon, Camry, Corolla, Highlander, Matrix, Sequoia, Sienna and Venza, which are all built in North America, returned to previous production levels as of June, and on average, the company expects to be at 80 percent back overall by August.



Toyota plant - Texas

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Auto enthusiasts are focusing on reports about the upcoming high-performance **Ford** Focus ST, which has been testing on California freeways and the challenging Nurburgring racetrack in Germany. If you've seen a Focus with a wild paint job, ground-hugging suspension, big wheels and a telltale central rear double exhaust, chances are you have seen one of the development prototypes. In Europe and North America, Ford's Team RS and SVT engineering teams are putting a fleet of around 60 pre-production prototypes through a punishing regime of testing and development to fine-tune the car's driving dynamics and performance. The new Focus ST will be powered by a high-performance version of Ford's new 2.0-litre EcoBoost engine, targeting 246 hp, while still delivering significantly better fuel economy than the previous generation Focus ST that was sold in Europe. The new global ST is scheduled to arrive in the US next year.

With **Kia** sales in the US up by 45 percent through May 2011, the company is running out of production capacity. The West Point, Georgia plant is currently building 300,000 vehicles a year using



Ford Focus ST

two shifts and working every other Saturday. To meet customer demand, Kia Motors of America officials announced a \$100 million expansion to increase production capacity to 360,000 vehicles per



Kia plant - Georgia

year. The expansion project is expected to be completed in 2012. The company has already hired 1,000 additional workers to staff a third shift. That brings the West Point workforce total to 3,000 workers.

We see dozens of new **automotive books** each year, but the recent release of a new book called *Car* is one of the best. *Car—The Definitive Visual History of the Automobile* is beautiful enough for any

coffee table, and is also a useful source of information for any car enthusiast. In ten chapters, editor-in-chief Giles Chapman tells the story of the automobile from the very beginning through the latest 200-mph supercars. Each chapter documents an era with stunning photos and details, with expanded detail on a key marque of the period. The 360-page hardcover book shows more than a thousand cars from around the world and captures the essence of the automobile. Published by DK Books, *Car* is available at bookstores for \$40. For more information, to see some of the

Watch your review mirror. After extensive study and refinement, the **Chevrolet** Caprice PPV (Police Patrol Vehicle) is being put into service by law enforcement agencies around the country. Equipped with segment-leading interior volume (112 cubic feet) and specially designed front seats sculpted to allow space for gun belts, the rear-wheel-drive Caprice PPV provides officers the comfort they need during long hours in their mobile office. Police agencies across the country told Chevrolet they needed a powerful vehicle that offers performance, safety and comfort. Armed with a powerful 6.0-liter V8 engine, 355 horsepower and 384 lb.ft. torque, Caprice PPV has best-in-class top speed and zero-to-60 acceleration (sub six seconds). The vehicle also offers a segment-exclusive front-seat-only head curtain air bag, which allows for installation of a full-width prisoner partition. Additionally, StabiliTrak, GM's electronic stability control technology, provides a “police performance” mode for enhanced stability during high-speed driving to help ensure the safety of the PPV occupants. Sale of the Caprice, which is built in Australia, is limited to government agencies.



Chevrolet Caprice Police Patrol

The \$1 billion plant started production only 18 months ago producing the Kia Sorento SUV, and then soon after added the Kia Optima midsize sedan and the Hyundai Santa Fe crossover, which shares its platform with the Optima.

magnificent pages or to buy the book, go to www.dk.com. ■

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

Mercedes-Benz C-Class launch - Maine coast



Buick Regal GS turbo 6-speed manual - Michigan



Arizona Jaguar Team at Monterey



Photo: Tim and Kristin Sharp

New track surface and course testing at PIR



Photos (2) : Randall Bohi

Travel and motorsports in northern Utah: Bonneville Salt Flats, Salt Lake City, Flaming Gorge and more



LeMay Museum Hard Hat & High Heels gala

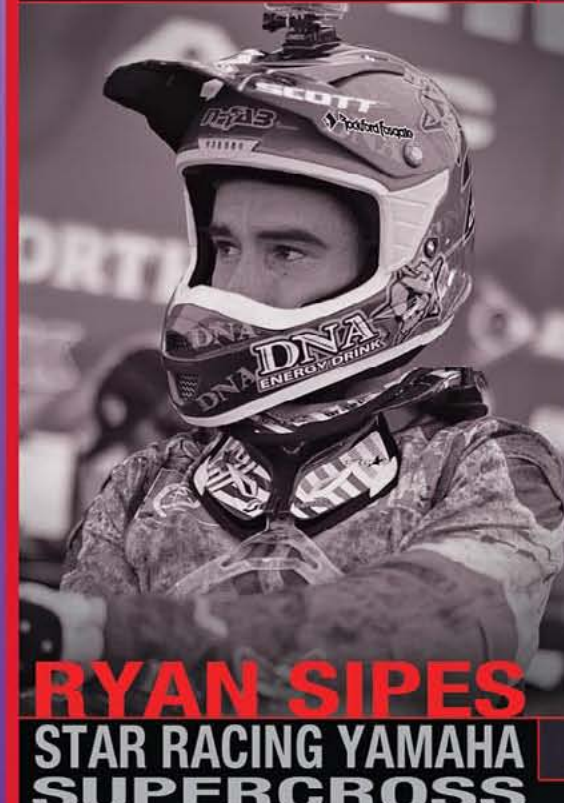


Audi A6



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