

# ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 12 NUMBER 1  
JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2013

## EVENTS

Auctions preview

Cadillac V Lab

Wienermobile

LA Auto Show

Goodguys

SEMA

Orphan Show

ALV Awards

## MOTORSPORTS

Edsel Ford II

PIR NASCAR

## VEHICLES

BMW

Lexus

Mitsubishi

Toyota

Volkswagen

Volvo

Pontiac



SCAN FOR ADDITIONAL CONTENT

# Barrett-Jackson

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COLLECTOR CAR AUCTIONS™

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**1971 Plymouth HEMI 'Cuda Convertible**  
An exceptional example of the most desirable Mopar Muscle car. One of the 11 original examples. One of two Canadian export cars. One of one in Violet (Plum Crazy) HEMI 'Cuda Convertibles in 1971. Has the last factory assembled 426cid HEMI built in it. Never offered at auction before.

**1968 Shelby EXP 500 "The Green Hornet"**  
Arguably the rarest and most desirable Shelby Mustang of all time. This incredibly significant piece of Ford, Shelby and muscle car history is widely publicized and documented. Being a double-prototype and an experimental platform for innovation and design, puts this Shelby into a class of its own. Fully authenticated...it is, as Carroll Shelby said "the one and only Green Hornet."



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# ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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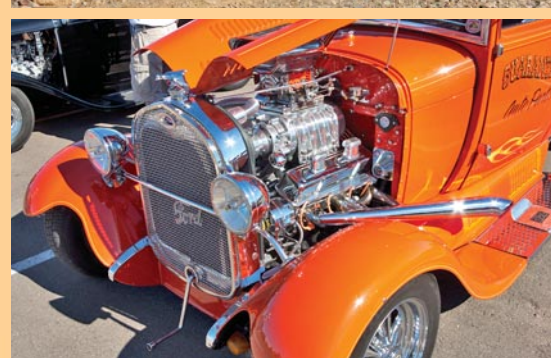
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**COVER:** A 1935 Pontiac sedan belonging to Kefton and Beverly Brower, displayed at the 15th Goodguys Southwest Nationals, at WestWorld in Scottsdale, in November. Photo: Joe Sage.



This issue includes stops at a number of premier venues. We spend a day at Firebird International Raceway with the Cadillac V Series Performance Lab ... Los Olivos Park in Phoenix with **Larry Edsall** for the Orphan Car Show ... WestWorld in north Scottsdale with Edsall and photographer **Randall Bohl** for the 15th Annual Goodguys Southwest Nationals ... Phoenix International Raceway for November's NASCAR events, preceded by a session at the Phoenix Art Museum with Edsel B Ford II, regarding Ford's new NASCAR Fusion ... a north central Phoenix shopping mall parking lot for a rendezvous with the Oscar Mayer Wiernermobile ... Local Motors' factory and off-road track in Chandler for the Carspondent.com 9th Annual Active Lifestyle Vehicle Awards. And we provide a quick preview of highlights for the six annual collector car auctions that will be running in the Valley of the Sun during January—by about the time you see this issue.

We head out of town to Las Vegas with Larry Edsall for the huge SEMA show. We head to the coast for the LA Auto Show, first with a sweep of big announcements that will continue through Detroit and Chicago in January and February. The launch of an all-new Toyota Avalon takes us to Texas (for the fifth time in 2012, this time to San Antonio).

On the roads of Arizona, we take the wheel of a significant range of vehicles, from the tiny-though-not-as-tiny-as-it-used-to-seem Mitsubishi "i" (or i-MiEV) electric car, to the all-out performance, style and comfort of the BMW 6 Series two-door-turned-four-door 640i Gran Coupé. We also drop the retractable hardtop on the new Lexus IS 350 C, the soft top on the new Volkswagen Beetle Convertible, and hit some rough terrain (and smooth pavement) with the Volvo XC60 crossover.

Enjoy the ride.

**Joe Sage**  
Publisher/ Executive Editor

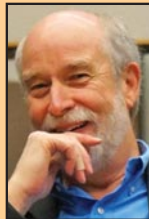


Photo: Brenda Priddy

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From left: Alysa Brimacombe; Colleen Crowninshield of Tucson Regional Clean Cities Coalition; Bill Sheaffer of Valley of the Sun Clean Cities Coalition; Paul Bessent of GoE3; GoE3 founder Bruce Brimacombe and Arizona Secretary of State Ken Bennett with scissors, cutting the ribbon; Colin Tetreault, Senior Policy Advisor, Sustainability, to Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton; Sean Hegna of Eaton Company; and Cyndi Brimacombe.

## Arizona's Electric Highway

### Phoenix-Tucson route gains halfway station

A brand new, key electric vehicle charging station at Picacho Peak completes a series of stations on Interstate 10 between Phoenix and Tucson. The Electric Highway creates the opportunity for all-electric vehicles to make the trip between Arizona's two largest cities without any concern of charging availability.

A ribbon-cutting event on December 8, 2012, turned out a crowd of electric car enthusiasts from all over the state, who arrived in a variety of electric vehicles: two Chevrolet Volts, two Mitsubishi i-MiEVs, one all-electric VW conversion, a Nissan Leaf, two Tesla roadsters and two Tesla sedans.

Arizona Secretary of State Ken Bennett arrived as a passenger in one of the new 2013 Tesla Model S sedans (see our feature on Tesla's new Design Studios and the



Model S in the September/October 2012 issue).

"This is just the beginning of the emergence of the electric vehicle as an element in breaking our addiction to oil," stated Secretary of State Bennett.

Presentations during the ceremony touted advantages of the all-electric car: quicker acceleration and braking, longer brake life, reduced maintenance (with no transmission to service)—and of course no oil changes, no issues with fuel injectors or fuel pumps—

and no exhaust equipment, along with zero tailpipe emissions.

In fact, there are typically only five moving parts in the entire drivetrain to be serviced, compared to the many hundreds of serviceable parts in an internal combustion vehicle.

The completed Electric Highway now has charging stations in Phoenix, Casa Grande, Picacho Peak, Marana and Tucson. ■

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### HARVICK WINS NOVEMBER RACE IN WILD FINISH

What might have been a dominating victory by Kyle Busch in the AdvoCare 500 NASCAR Sprint Cup race turned into a wild finish, as Kevin Harvick raced his No. 29 Budweiser Chevrolet to the win in the closing 15 laps. Harvick sealed the deal on the strength of a fierce restart with eight laps to go, and another on a green-white-checkered finish.

The race was thrown into overtime with a caution period, just a split second before the white flag was to wave. Instead of freezing the field and ending the race in the regulation 312 laps—with Harvick as the winner—a red flag was displayed for 14 minutes and 58 seconds, to clean a four-car wreck. It also extended the event to 319 laps.

Slow-running Jeff Gordon, black-flagged for running lower than the required minimum speed, was in the race groove in turn four and at the focal point of the controversial crash. Seventh-running Clint Bowyer (third place runner, still clinging to faint title hopes), Joey Logano and Aric Almirola crashed with Gordon just before new leader Harvick reached the finish line. (Bowyer's angry crew next took after Gordon's team in a heated skirmish in the garage.)

All this threw the sellout PIR crowd into a frenzy—which only grew wilder when multiple cars wrecked as they took the checkered flag after the extra seven laps.

With the 2012 NASCAR Sprint Cup Championship in its closing stages, all eyes had been on upstart Brad Keselowski, who started seven points behind five-time champion Jimmie Johnson in the season's penultimate race. But Johnson cut his right front tire on lap 235 and suffered suspension damage when he hit the turn 1 wall. He finished 32nd, 38 laps down, and fell 20 points behind Keselowski in the hunt.

Busch led for by far the most laps, 237. Keselowski barely made it past the Gordon-Bowyer wreck on his way to a sixth place finish. While the new points leader was bitterly angry over what he considered late-race retaliation by some drivers, he joked about the good luck he received when Johnson hit the wall. Race winner Harvick, who claimed his first checkered flag this season and third in 20 races at PIR, also offered a light touch when commenting on the fisticuffs between the Bowyer and Gordon teams: "Fights? This sport was made on fights. We ought to have more fights." ■

# 2012 WRAP 2013 SCHEDULE



### 2013 SCHEDULE

**PIR** will host a total of eight races in 2013: two NASCAR Sprint Cup Series races, two NASCAR Nationwide Series races, one NASCAR Camping World Truck Series race, two NASCAR K&N Pro Series West races and the inaugural NASCAR Mexico Toyota Series race.

As the only facility in the West with two Sprint Cup Series events, PIR will host the first and last appearances on the West Coast for NASCAR's top series.

#### MARCH 1-3, 2013

The SUBWAY Fresh Fit 500™ will kick off PIR's 2013 event season, featuring races in NASCAR's three top series.

- The NASCAR Mexico Toyota Series 75 takes place for the first time in the United States, on Friday, March 1.
- The event weekend will also feature the Bashas' Supermarkets 200 NASCAR Nationwide Series and Talking Stick 60 K&N Pro Series-West races on Saturday, March 2.
- The SUBWAY Fresh Fit 500™ NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race will take place on Sunday, March 3.

#### NOVEMBER 8-11, 2013

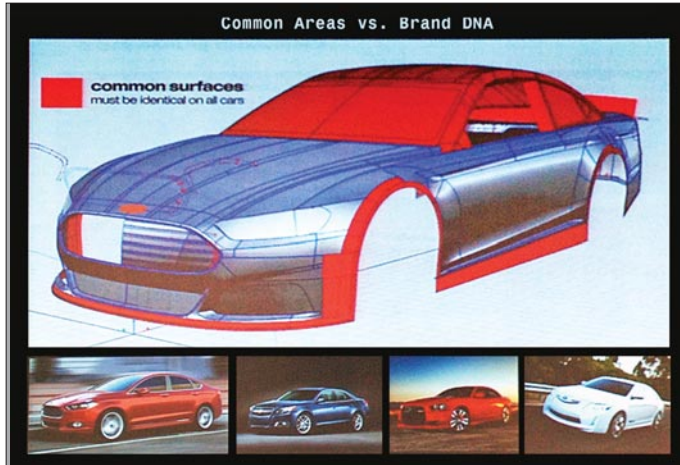
NASCAR returns to PIR for its traditional fall weekend in November, with the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series semifinals in the Chase for the Sprint Cup—the AdvoCare 500—on Sunday, November 10.

The AdvoCare 500 event weekend will also feature the Great Clips 200 Nationwide Series race, the Lucas Oil 150 Camping World Truck race and the K&N Pro Series-West Championship race.

#### TICKETS

- **INDIVIDUAL TICKET OPTIONS** are available for both 2013 race weekends, with Sprint Cup tickets starting at \$25, Nationwide Series at \$15, Camping World Truck Series at \$7 and the NASCAR Mexico Toyota Series at \$20. Free daily on-site parking, regular tram service, live music entertainment and interactive fun on PIR's Midway deliver fans the "best value in NASCAR."
- **SEASON TICKET PACKAGES** start at \$99, with significant savings, plus fan appreciation events, the option to purchase additional seats at season prices, first opportunity to upgrade seats and a dedicated phone line to a PIR Customer Relationship Manager.

PhoenixRaceway.com/Tickets  
1-866-408-RACE (7223) ■



Careful negotiations have produced new rules that still define some required common areas on all NASCAR cars, but also areas that can be modified to better define each manufacturer's look and feel. Result: the next-generation NASCAR Ford Fusion looks like a Ford Fusion. Expect similar moves from Chevrolet, Dodge and Toyota.

## Edsel Ford II on the origins and the return of brand personality in racing

By Larry Edsall

Henry Ford was devastated. In January, 1901, Ford's Detroit Automobile Company had dissolved. Ford was 38 years old, broke and would have been homeless had he not been able to move his wife and 7-year-old son into his own parents' house.

But, said Ford's great-grandson Edsel B. Ford II, Henry Ford was convinced he would become an automaker if he could find a new source of capital.

In the fall of 1901, the country's leading auto racers would assemble at the Grosse Pointe Blue Ribbon horse racing track on Detroit's east side. Not only would there be a \$1,000 cash prize to the winning car, but race day became an unofficial holiday with even the courthouse closing. Everyone, even the monied elite, would be watching.

Come race day, 8,000 people packed the grandstand and watched as Henry Ford, driving his own car because

he couldn't afford to pay an experienced racing driver, overcame Alexander Winton, the country's leading automaker, and acclaimed as the best driver as well, to win the feature race.

Driving in that race "scared the daylights out of him," Edsel Ford II said of his great-grandfather. But it also brought him attention and won him financial backers.

While Henry Ford never again ventured out behind the steering wheel of a racing car, his Ford Motor Company has remained active in auto racing "to showcase our products and technology against the best competition," Edsel Ford II explained.

And, he added, "racing fans are clearly our best customers."

Edsel Ford II was in Phoenix for the NASCAR stock car races taking place at Phoenix International Raceway.

He has played an important role in Ford racing seemingly since he was a teenager who accompanied his father,

Henry Ford II, to Le Mans in the 1960s to see Ford GT40s beat Ferrari in the 24-hour race.

If Henry Ford's "Sweepstakes" was the company's first racing car, its newest is the 2013 Fusion that will make its competitive debut at the Daytona 500 in February. Unlike other recent NASCAR Sprint Cup cars, the Fusion will much more closely resemble the non-racing version sold by Ford dealers.

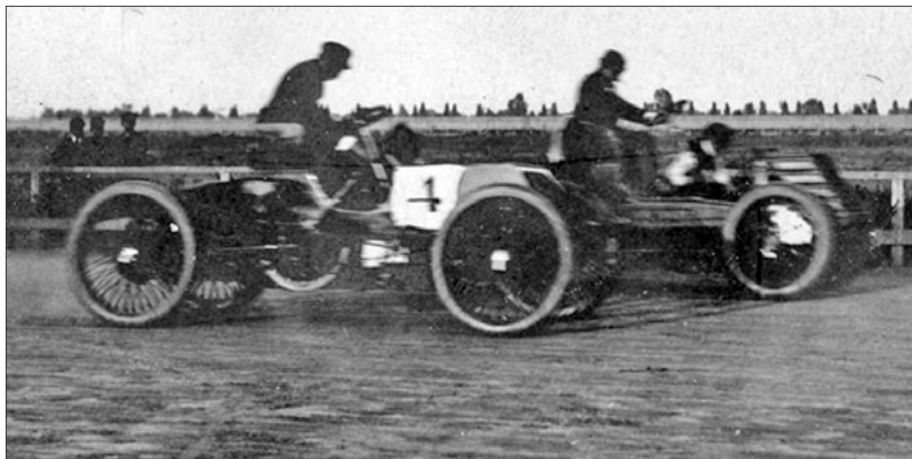
"This is really historic, bringing back brand identities to NASCAR," said Andy Slankard, Ford's NASCAR operations manager, who shared the new Fusion's evolution with the Phoenix automotive media group.

First, however, Slankard said how happy he was to be back in Phoenix, where he worked for a decade as a jet engine test engineer.

For much of its history, NASCAR racing involved true stock cars, modified for speed and safety. But to maintain parity among competing brands, the rules eventually led to the cars being virtually identical except for decals that mimicked the actual designs of vehicles such as the Ford Fusion, Toyota Camry and others.

After the 2011 Daytona 500, automakers and NASCAR met to see if more brand identity might be achieved without upsetting competitive balance.

Henry Ford and Spider Huff driving the "Sweepstakes" Racer, against Alexander Winton's car, at Grosse Pointe, Michigan in 1901. Photo: The Henry Ford Museum.



Edsel B. Ford II, a board member of International Speedway Corporation, is very influential in racing.

Parameters were established, and for 2013 the cars that race will look much more like those on the street.

Slankard revealed that Ford's early efforts focused on racing the Mustang in the Sprint Cup, but that NASCAR insisted on basing that series on four-door sedans and keeping sporty two-door vehicles such as the Mustang, Ford Challenger and Chevrolet Camaro in the NASCAR Nationwide series.

Ford turned its attention to the Fusion and, as Slankard put it, "got our design center engaged, and for the first time since the 1970s."

The result, he said, was dramatic. While all 2013 Sprint Cup cars must fit over NASCAR's safety-oriented chassis, and while all will share greenhouse, rear and front spoilers, rocker panels and front wheel arch shapes, the Fusion will look like a Fusion, not like a Camry or Chevrolet.

Ford also thinks it has strengthened its bid for the 2013 Sprint Cup Championship by adding the Penske and Petty teams to its racing stable.

But the Sprint Cup isn't the only trophy Ford would like to possess.

Edsel Ford II said that to make sure Alexander Winton would race his car in the big Grosse Pointe event, race organizers allowed Winton to select the trophy that would go to the winner. Winton selected a large cut-glass punch bowl and cups, in part because he and his wife already had chosen a place to display such a set in their home in Cleveland.

But it was Henry Ford who won the race, and took the punch bowl home to his wife, Clara.

Edsel Ford II said the bowl was displayed in the Fords' home for the ensuing 46 years, but apparently then was moved and misplaced.

In recent years, in addition to raising money for charities and serving on the Ford board of directors, Edsel Ford II has been on a mission to find the artifact he calls "a cornerstone of Ford racing history, of our family history." He's even become a regular viewer of public television's Antiques Roadshow in hopes someone might find the bowl and wonder about its history and its worth. ■

Where the roads are dry and the cars are slick.



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## BARRETT-JACKSON 42ND ANNUAL COLLECTOR CAR AUCTION EVENT

SUNDAY-SUNDAY, JANUARY 13-20, 2013  
WestWorld - Frank Lloyd Wright Blvd at AZ Loop 101 - Scottsdale

Barrett-Jackson—the original January Arizona auction—comes to this year's event hot off record sales at its Las Vegas auction. Hundreds of cars will cross the block during their weeklong anchor event, and don't miss the automobilia sales (which were up 45 percent in Las Vegas). ▼ Advance purchase All-Week Pass is \$80 for an adult, \$60 for senior, military or student (gate prices are \$160 and \$130 respectively). Daily and daily twilight tickets are available, with special rates for seniors, military, students and kids, and also with advance purchase discounts. ▼ Barrett-Jackson hosts annual auctions in Scottsdale, Palm Beach, Orange County and Las Vegas. ▼ [www.barrett-jackson.com](http://www.barrett-jackson.com)

### SOMETHING TO KEEP AN EYE ON:

Lot 5025, this 1971 Plymouth HEMI 'Cuda Convertible is exceedingly rarely. This particular car's features include a 426 HEMI V8 engine with two four-barrel carburetors, 727 automatic transmission, Super Track Pak package with DANA 60 rear end and 4.11 gears, power convertible top, center console and more. Its factory correct In Violet (Plum Crazy) paint makes it the only 1971 HEMI 'Cuda Convertible in this color. Inspected and appraised by Mopar guru Galen Govier.



Photo: courtesy Barrett-Jackson Auction Company

## RM AUCTIONS 14TH ANNUAL AUTOMOBILES OF ARIZONA

FRIDAY, JANUARY 18, 2013 (PREVIEW JAN 17)  
Arizona Biltmore - 2400 E Missouri Ave near 24th and Camelback - Phoenix

The well-established RM Auctions Arizona sale features a handpicked selection from sports and racing to American muscle and elegant coachbuilt automobiles, led this year by an exceptional series of Shelys and Ferraris. ▼ Purchase of the official auction catalog for \$120 admits two to the preview only. The auction is limited to registered bidders and consignors only. Bidder registration is \$200 and includes the official auction catalogue and admission for two to the preview and auction. ▼ RM's Arizona sale kicks off their 2013 global auction calendar, which includes the highly anticipated Bruce Weiner Collection in Madison GA, Amelia Island FL, and Cernobbio, Italy. ▼ [www.rmauctions.com](http://www.rmauctions.com)

### SOMETHING TO KEEP AN EYE ON:

This genuine, fully documented 1967 Shelby 427 "Semi-Competition" Cobra, CSX 3045 is one of just 29 S/C Cobras built. CSX 3045 boasts an exceptional provenance from new, including an extensive vintage racing career, and was formerly part of the famous John Mozart Collection, where it was subjected to a full, professional restoration. "With only 29 examples of its kind ever built, cars such as this 427 S/C Cobra are seldom offered for public sale," says Gord Duff, car specialist for RM Auctions. A short video can be seen at [youtu.be/dLLnSJGBQA](http://youtu.be/dLLnSJGBQA). Est. \$1,400,000-\$1,700,000.



Photo: Darrin Schmabel ©2012 courtesy RM Auctions

## BONHAMS 2ND ANNUAL SCOTTSDALE AUCTION

THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 2013  
Westin Kierland Resort & Spa - 6902 East Greenway Parkway - Scottsdale

Bonhams is one of the world's oldest and largest auctioneers, founded in London in 1793, recognized worldwide, and for 16 years the auction house for the prestigious Collectors' Motorcars auction in Carmel during August. In 2001, Bonhams acquired the Brooks auction house, founded in 1989 by the former Head of Cars at Christie's, who specialized in the sale of classic and vintage motorcars. The second annual Bonhams Scottsdale Auction returns to the luxurious Westin-Kierland Resort & Spa after a smashing success at their 2012 debut event. ▼ Bonhams—since 1793—hosts a wide variety of fine art, antiques and collectors' auctions worldwide, throughout the year. ▼ [www.bonhams.com](http://www.bonhams.com)

### SOMETHING TO KEEP AN EYE ON:

We'll be watching this 1925 Stutz 695 Torpedo Tail Speedster, an incredible example of the Stutz racecars that broke records and established engineering benchmarks from the teens through the '20s. Other early Bonhams consignments include a 1930 Bugatti Type 46 Faux Cabriolet with rarely-seen coachwork by Veth & Zoon, as well as a 1928 Stearns-Knight Model F-6-85 6-Passenger Roadster and a 1955 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwing.



Photo: courtesy Bonhams

## RUSSO AND STEELE 13TH ANNUAL SPORTS & MUSCLE IN SCOTTSDALE

WEDNESDAY-SUNDAY, JANUARY 16-20, 2013  
N Scottsdale Rd and E Mayo Blvd at AZ Loop 101 - Scottsdale

Arizona-based Russo and Steele promotes a For Enthusiasts By Enthusiasts™ philosophy and an intimate boxing-ring, theater-in-the-round setting. The principals actively participate in concours d'élégance shows, road rallies, vintage racing and other collector car events all year long, in addition to attending auctions nationwide to keep a close eye on market movements. ▼ General admission is \$20 for one day, \$55 for three, or \$80 for five days with tickets available online. Bidder registration is \$150, with guests \$50 and an opening gala for \$100. ▼ Russo and Steele hosts annual auctions in Scottsdale in January and Monterey in August. ▼ [www.russoandsteele.com](http://www.russoandsteele.com)

### SOMETHING TO KEEP AN EYE ON:

This highly documented NASCAR "S" 1969 Boss 429 Mustang is one of the 279 original "S-Code" cars and bears Kar Kraft (KK) number 1431. In Candy Apple Red, it was built on February 28, 1969, and shipped to Ed Schmid Ford in Ferndale, Michigan. It spent most of its life in Kentucky. Today, KK 1431 is a highly correct rotisserie-restored, matching numbers car retaining the all-important factory-original "S" engine, all rare "Boss 9" components, and original body tag on the radiator support. Everything works correctly and it has only 51,140 actual miles.



Photo: courtesy Russo and Steele

## GOODING & COMPANY 6TH ANNUAL SCOTTSDALE AUCTION

FRIDAY-SATURDAY, JANUARY 18-19, 2013 (VIEWING 16-19)  
Scottsdale Fashion Square - E Camelback Rd and N 68th St - Scottsdale

Gooding & Company reports 2012 year-end sales of over \$189.6 million, 44% higher than 2011 for the same number of cars sold, averaging \$640,635 per car. Gooding set 45 world auction records in 2012, many for post-war Ferrari and Porsche, ten for pre-war Mercedes-Benz, Bentley, Packard and Duesenberg. ▼ General admission (viewing and auction) is \$30 per person. An auction catalog for \$80 admits two to the viewing and auction. Children under 12, free. For bidders, \$200 includes a catalog, admission for two to the viewing and auction with reserved seats. ▼ Gooding & Company is the official auction of Pebble Beach Concours and has an auction during Amelia Island. ▼ [www.goodingco.com](http://www.goodingco.com)

### SOMETHING TO KEEP AN EYE ON:

This 1957 Maserati 150 GT Spider is a one-of-a-kind, factory-built prototype from Maserati's celebrated racing department, built as an A6GCS sports racing car and run in the 1954 season. The A6GCS was later modified, becoming the prototype for the celebrated 300 S model. With 195 hp and a weight of only 1,900 pounds, the car can outperform many 12-cylinder sports cars.



Photo: courtesy Gooding & Company

## SILVER AUCTIONS 16TH ANNUAL FORT MCDOWELL AZ AUCTION

FRIDAY-SATURDAY, JANUARY 18-19, 2013  
Fort McDowell Resort & Casino - AZ 87 Beeline Hwy (near Fountain Hills)

Silver Auctions started in 1992 and has evolved into an annual event, now in its 16th year and growing each year as an alternative among the January extravaganzas, a place where thousands of buyers and sellers can find "real cars and real deals" in a personal, comfortable arena. ▼ Silver Auctions runs Friday noon to 9pm, and Saturday 10am-11pm. Admission is \$18, and children under 12 are admitted free. The Silver Auctions event is held along the beautiful Beeline Highway (which runs from Fountain Hills to Payson), at Fort McDowell Resort & Casino, which is just a few miles up the highway. ▼ Silver Auctions has annual events in Spokane WA and Arizona. ▼ [www.silverauctions.com](http://www.silverauctions.com)

### SOMETHING TO KEEP AN EYE ON:

Lot 253 is a 1967 Chevrolet El Camino, which has just finished a 15-month body-off restoration. The build includes a complete new suspension kit with sway bars and the rear lowered 2"; 10-bolt posi rear end; all new brakes with power discs in front; powder-coated rally wheels and new tires. A fresh 327 V8 features many upgrades from radiator to exhaust. Over 300 hours were spent on body and paint work, and the interior is completely redone, with a dash painted to match the outside and full custom digital instruments. ■



Photo: courtesy Silver Auctions

## Jaguar XF and XJ with V6 and all wheel drive: roar responsibly

Jaguar is expanding its US lineup with the addition of Instinctive all wheel drive™ (AWD) technology and fuel-efficient V6 engines on 2013 Jaguar XF and XJ luxury sedans, so drivers can experience Jaguar luxury performance in challenging weather, which in turn should boost the brand's volume and presence throughout the US—ultimately good for all of us. The technologies are being introduced via a new ad campaign, building on the Jaguar "ALIVE" series, which reintroduced the legendary British brand in a modern context. That campaign has worked, as Jaguar brand managers claim a measurable shift in brand perception, in which people view the brand as dynamic, seductive and performance-based. The new AWD ads play on the prior series and the brand's name, with headlines including "More Alive," "Roar Responsibly," "Let it Snow. Let it Rain. Let it Roar," "Rain Just Makes It More Instinctive," "Same Cat, Bigger Feet" and "Ready to Pounce in Rain or Snow." In the northern US, over 80 percent of luxury sedans are AWD-equipped, and over 90 percent have either AWD or V6 engines. Jaguar AWD uses an active torque-management system to deliver a rear-drive bias for power performance, shifting power to the front wheels to either preempt or counter wheel slip. Active power transfer control technology enhances all-season traction while retaining the steering feel of rear-wheel drive cars. The AWD XF and XJ models are paired with a new 3-liter supercharged 340-hp V6. ▼



2013 Jaguar XJ with Instinctive all wheel drive

2014 Mercedes-AMG SLS AMG Black Series



## AMG DELIVERS MORE EXTREME SLS

▲ Mercedes-AMG presents the most extreme version of the celebrated SLS, the 2014 SLS AMG Black Series. Inspired by the SLS AMG GT3 racecar, this fifth Black Series model from Mercedes-AMG boasts a mix of design, driving dynamics and lightweight construction in line with the AMG Lightweight Performance strategy. The AMG 6.3-liter V8 generates 622 hp at 7,400 rpm and accelerates the most dynamic SLS of all time from zero to 60 mph in just 3.5 seconds. The SLS AMG Black Series rides on coil-over AMG Adaptive Performance Suspension, with an AMG high-performance ceramic two-piece brake system and forged AMG light-alloy wheels. An electronically-controlled AMG rear-axle differential lock and AMG SPEEDSHIFT DCT 7-speed sports transmission deliver blistering shift and response times. The 2014 SLS AMG Black Series goes on sale this summer.

## PEBBLE BEACH CONCOURS CHARITIES

Behind the scenes of last summer's congenially competitive Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, a healthy and cooperative \$1,254,000 was raised for local charities—the seventh year in a row that charitable donations topped \$1 million. Through its primary charitable partner, Pebble Beach Company Foundation, pro-

ceeds from the Concours benefit more than 60 charities, providing grants to support and enhance educational programs for the youth of the Monterey Peninsula that span the arts, sciences, sports and technology. This year, the Foundation also provided \$100,000 in college scholarships—\$5,000 each to 20 local students—and is helping to oversee a scholarship program in honor of racing great Phil Hill. The 63rd Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance will take place on Sunday, August 18. Visit [www.pebblebeachconcours.net](http://www.pebblebeachconcours.net).

## GOODGUYS 30TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

The Goodguys Rod & Custom Association celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, staging nineteen events with a wide range of hot rods, customs, muscle cars, trucks and classic cars at venues all over the US. Goodguys' home turf—the Pleasanton Fairgrounds, in the Bay Area—will host four events, while our own home turf—WestWorld in north Scottsdale—will again host two: the season opening 4th Spring Nationals, March 8-10, and the 16th Southwest Nationals, November 15-17). Del Mar Fairground in San Diego and Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth will each also host two events, while the biggest event of the year, the Goodguys 16th PPG Nationals, returns to Columbus, Ohio in July. Two Friday nights in July

bring vintage drag programs to Ohio and to Pacific Raceways in Kent, WA (a track we drove with Goodyear in our Sept/Oct 2012 issue). For the full schedule and information on 30th anniversary promotions, visit [www.good-guys.com](http://www.good-guys.com)

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Patrol and head of the Encana Driving Safety Program. Cartasite introduced its systems at the OSHA Oil and Gas Safety Conference in Dallas—addressing a high-mileage fleet industry—in December.

**VOLT OWNERS ARE TOPS IN LOYALTY**

▲ The Chevrolet Volt has scored first place in *Consumer Reports'* owner-satisfaction rankings for the second straight year. The Volt, launched in late 2010, uses an electric motor powered by a lithium-ion battery to travel up to 38 miles before a gasoline-powered generator kicks on, to continue to power that electric motor. Ninety-two percent of responding Volt owners said they definitely would buy their Volt again, tops among 240 models in the study. Several other fuel-efficient models also scored highly, including the Prius, Prius C and Camry Hybrids from Toyota, and the electric Nissan Leaf. This is welcome affirmation for General Motors executives who have stood firm on the car's significance. The Volt has developed an almost cultish following, with dozens of online posts by Volt owners boasting of traveling thousands of miles between fillups or getting over 40 miles on one electric charge. The Volt has a sticker price of \$39,995. Buyers qualify for a \$7,500 federal tax credit and other credits depending upon locale. Scores are based

on the percentage of respondents who answered "definitely yes" to the following question: "Considering all factors—price, reliability, comfort, enjoyment, etc.—would you get this car if you had it to do all over again?" Tops in the sports car category were Chevy Corvette, Porsche 911, V8 Dodge Challenger and Ford Mustang. Among luxury vehicles, the poll showed that owners of the Audi A7 and A6 and the Lexus GS were the most satisfied.

**BEWARE OF HURRICANE-FLOODED CARS**

In the wake of Superstorm Sandy, flood-damaged cars may "flood" the used car market. Prospective car buyers should be wary. Whether it's a Bentley, Chevy or Harley, Sandy didn't exclude anything. Cars, trucks and motorcycles alike have been damaged by one of the biggest superstorms to hit the US. And a lot of them may end up for sale in the used car market. Auto industry experts are forecasting that this storm will have a larger impact on the auto industry than Hurricane Katrina did in 2005. Katrina damaged approximately 640,000 vehicles in the Gulf Coast region, and many cars damaged by Katrina are still on the market today. And Superstorm Sandy hit a larger region by population. Flood-damaged cars are not easily identified. Many states—including New York and New

Jersey—have laws for branding vehicles damaged by flooding, but slippery dealers or individual owners can move cars to other states where a clean title can be issued—a practice known as "title washing." After Katrina, truckloads of flooded vehicles were taken to other states, dried out, superficially cleaned up and readied for sale to unsuspecting customers. Prospective buyers may not realize vehicles have been subjected to a saltwater flood, making engine controllers, airbag systems and other electronic systems prone to failure, as well as bearing the basis for mold and mildew. How can you know? Good news: a national database—the National Motor Vehicle Title Information System (NMVTIS)—aggregates data from state DMVs, salvage yards and insurance carriers into records that cannot be "washed." Used by law enforcement to trace vehicles across state lines, the NMVTIS database can be accessed by consumers at [www.vinaudit.com](http://www.vinaudit.com), hosted by VinAudit.com, a NMVTIS-approved vehicle history reporting service. Private vehicle history reporting companies like Carfax maintain an independent database and serve as an alternate source. Checking the car itself is as important as checking records. VinAudit.com recommends you

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2013 Volkswagen Jetta Hybrid



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#### RECORD SEVEN VWs GET 40+ MPG

▲ With EPA estimated fuel economy ratings of 48 MPG highway, 42 MPG city and 45 MPG combined, the 2013 Jetta Hybrid becomes the most fuel-efficient vehicle in the Volkswagen lineup and the seventh VW model rated over 40 MPG highway. The introduction of the Jetta Hybrid means Volkswagen offers more products that beat this fuel economy benchmark than any other automotive manufacturer in the US. The other VW models achieving more than 40 MPG are all TDI Clean Diesels: the Beetle TDI (manual), Beetle Convertible TDI (manual), Golf TDI (manual or automatic), Jetta TDI (manual or automatic), Jetta SportWagen TDI (manual) and Passat TDI (manual or automatic). The Jetta Hybrid is Volkswagen's second hybrid in the US and its first in the compact sedan segment. It uses a 1.4-liter four-cylinder TSI turbo mated to an electric motor and a DSG dual-clutch seven-speed automatic transmission, a unique powertrain in the class. The combined rating of the powertrain is 170 horsepower and 184 pound-feet of torque. The Jetta Hybrid went on sale at the end of 2012, with a base price of \$24,995 for the

Hybrid S model. Jetta Hybrid SE and SEL models start at \$26,990 and \$29,325, and a Hybrid SEL Premium starts at \$31,180, with 17-inch aluminum-alloy wheels, bi-xenon headlights with LED DRLs, adaptive front lighting, front foglights with cornering lights, Fender® Premium Audio System and rearview camera.

#### SOME BMW 3 SERIES BECOME 4 SERIES

With the unveiling of a BMW Concept 4 Series Coupe, BMW has announced that the fourth generation of its midrange 3 Series coupe—and convertible—will be renamed the 4 Series. BMW calls this “a sign of greater exclusivity and presence,” indicating likely price hikes on these vehicles. As with Audi, there is no question each BMW Series has been growing in size, so bumping the number up may make sense, although the 3 Series sedans have of course also been growing. For the 4 Series Coupe and Convertible, expect some updated body styling details, while still bearing the brand's trademark kidney grille and other recognizable standards. The coupe and convertible each account for 15 percent of 3 Series sales in the US. BMW says the 4 Series Coupe is expected to go on sale in mid-2013, and the 4 Series Convertible in the fall. (In early 2014, expect a 2015 X4 crossover, too.)

#### TOYOTA YARIS UPGRADES

The subcompact Toyota Yaris, which was all-new for the 2012 model year, has both three-door and five-door liftback models for 2013, and all Yaris models come with a Tech Audio Package as standard. Liftbacks dominate this segment, preferred by 70 percent of new buyers. The Yaris Liftback has a 98.8-inch wheelbase for a balance of smooth ride and roomy interior, yet its overall length of 153.5 inches keeps it highly maneuverable in tight spots. The new Yaris offers up to 68 percent more cargo room plus additional headroom and passenger volume and is offered in three grades: an entry-level L and a value-packaged LE edition, both as three-door or five-door liftbacks, and a sport-tuned SE exclusively as a five-door.

#### TUCSON CLEAN CITIES RECOGNITION

Tucson Regional Clean Cities Coalition members recorded their use of more than 17.5 million gallons of E85 ethanol fuel in 2011, which is calculated to have reduced greenhouse gas emissions in Pima County by 25,014.8 tons. For this, the Coalition earned top recognition at the 2012 Clean Cities Peer Exchange and Vehicle Technology Deployment Workshop, held last fall in Estes Park, Colorado

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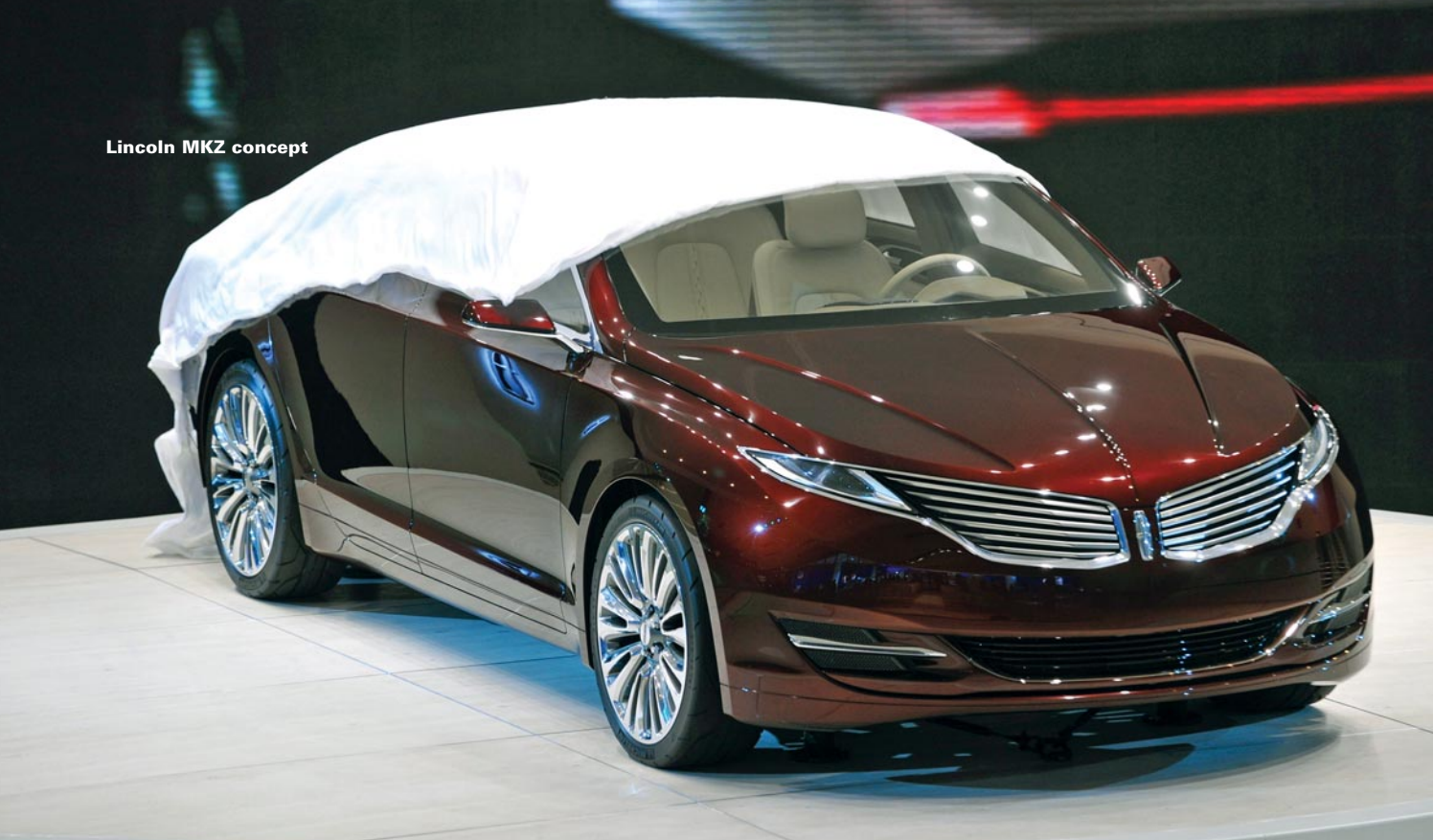
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for the greatest petroleum displacement among an extensive group of Clean Cities programs. The role of Clean Cities is to advance the economic, environmental and energy security of the US by adopting practices that contribute to the reduction of petroleum use in the transportation sector. Robert White, director of market development for the Renewable Fuels Association, congratulated Tucson Clean Cities Coordinator Colleen Crowninshield for her dedication and hard work in leading the Coalition. The Tucson Clean Cities program was designated by the US Department of Energy in 1998 and has over 80 coalition members. The DOE recently redesignated the Tucson Clean Cities program for another three years.

#### THE NEW LINCOLN MOTOR COMPANY

▲ The 90-year-old Lincoln brand—deep into an ongoing effort to redefine itself and catch up with Cadillac’s success—has a new creative strategy: as well as its own brand, it will now have its own operation, the Lincoln Motor Company, separate from the Ford Motor Company. Along with its name change in early December, Lincoln unveiled its all-new MKZ midsize luxury sedan in New York City. Ford Motor Company CEO Alan Mulally said the seeds of this move were planted several years ago when the company divest-

ed itself of other luxury brands—Aston Martin, Land Rover and Jaguar—as well as Volvo and even Mercury, and made the decision to focus on Ford and Lincoln. The Ford lineup has been heavily reworked since then, but Lincoln hasn’t achieved the same traction. Setting it up as a separate brand is intended to accelerate the effort.

#### ROUSH CLEANTECH F-250/F-350

With recent approval from the California Air Resources Board, Roush CleanTech customers can retrofit existing 2010 Ford E-Series vans to run on the Roush propane autogas fuel system. The company says it is pursuing CARB certifications for 2009, 2011 and 2012 model years to provide even more options. Roush CleanTech is also accepting orders for a 2012 EPA- and CARB-certified Ford F-250/F-350 in-bed tank configuration. Roush talked to customers during the design phase and used their feedback to determine what tank capacities are most wanted. They settled on a propane fuel tank with 38 usable gallons that works with standard service body applications. The company made sure the tank, which sits against the front of the bed, doesn’t exceed the truck’s bed height. The ROUSH CleanTech liquid propane autogas fuel system is available for 2012 and newer Ford F-250

and F-350 pickups. The maximum-capacity in-bed tank fuel system gives an extended range between fill-ups, offers identical performance to gasoline and factory warranty coverage, while delivering lower fuel costs and fewer harmful emissions. Retrofit fuel systems are also available for 2009-2010 Ford F-250 and F-350 pickups with the 5.4L V8.

#### JEEP WRANGLER MOAB EDITION WINS

Petersen’s 4-Wheel & Off-Road magazine has named the 2013 Jeep Wrangler Moab Edition as winner of its 4x4 of the Year award. This is the 31st year of the magazine’s in-depth competition among new 4x4 vehicles, and the fourth time the Jeep Wrangler has taken home the award. In fact, Jeep products have won the award more than any other marque, a total of 13 times for different Jeep vehicles. The Jeep Wrangler Moab Edition ultimately squared off against two other Chrysler products: the Ram 1500 Outdoorsman Crew Cab 4x4 and the Jeep Grand Cherokee Trailhawk. The grueling 1,000-mile trial evaluates suspension, engine, transmission, and transfer case, along with creature comforts and style. Most importantly, the 4x4s are judged heavily on how well they perform off-road in dirt, mud, rocks, sand, and gravel, as well as on the highway. ■

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# Vigorous

Story and photos by Joe Sage

## "The world's fastest family of vehicles" hits the ground running at Firebird

The Cadillac V-Series Performance Lab is an invitation-only consumer event held several times a year at track locations around the country. Last year's schedule wrapped up with sessions at Firebird International Raceway in Phoenix, in early November, and at the brand new Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas, in early December. We put on our civilian clothing and headed to Firebird for the November event.

As confirmation that Cadillac has long since moved lightyears beyond your grandfather's soft sedan, the crowd on hand was dressed for the track and ready to rock.

Participants were broken into subgroups by wrist-

band color, and we then cycled through a series of in-depth presentations on everything from drivetrain to tires to seats. These prepared the group for time both on the Firebird racetracks and, yes, dragstrip.

What Cadillac bills as the World's Fastest Family of Vehicles comprises three Cadillac V-Series models—the CTS-V Coupe, CTS-V Sedan and CTS-V Wagon, all with the same CTS-V chassis and 556-hp powertrain.

The Performance Lab experience was rounded out by inclusion of the new Cadillac ATS—widely known as their new 3 Series fighter—which is part of neither the CTS nor V-Series, but highly compelling, nonetheless.

Festivities led off with Team Cadillac World Challenge racecar driver Johnny O'Connell (top left). Various Cadillac and supplier reps were on hand to explain the engineering, drive and handling features of the V-Series Cadillacs and the new ATS. Participants were then able to check out the hardware and get a feel for the cockpit, before donning their helmets and hitting the track in earnest.



### Prior drives and expectations

We drove the Cadillac CTS-V Sedan for a week, a couple of years back (see our May/June 2010 issue) and liked it a great deal, with Bill Schaffer noting as follows:

"Last year, we drove more than 150 different cars in the course of our weekly evaluations and manufacturer introductions. We are often asked which of the cars is our favorite. Not only is the Cadillac CTS one of the best-looking cars we've driven, but with a new opulence and more attention to detail, (it) shows that American-made cars can match the best European models when they keep their eye on the target. And then there's the CTS-V. When the accelerator slams to the floor, the CTS-V explodes from a complete stop to 60 mph in just 3.9 seconds. On a track, or a salt flat, it has a top speed of 176 mph (191 mph with the six-speed manual transmission). It broke the record for production sedans at the famous German Nürburgring. This is the Cadillac CTS-V, and it is one of the fastest production sedans in the world, if not the fastest. We didn't expect the test car we were driving to be such a head turner, but with the chrome chain-link grilles with imbedded Cadillac crest, headlights that shined like a trophy wife's ring and sharp character lines, it turned a lot of heads. The deep muscular exhaust note

coming through large dual exhaust outlets seemed to make men smile with desire. The Cadillac CTS-V rides like a luxury sedan, handles like a sports car, goes like a bat out of hell and is priced like none of the above."

Surprisingly enough, we hadn't driven the CTS-V Coupe before this track event (though we somehow felt as though we must have), nor had we driven the CTS-V Wagon (though many of our colleagues had absolutely raved about it). At the V-Series Performance Lab consumer event—ironically not a more likely media introduction—we would finally drive them all. There are subtle differences in feel, among the three under track conditions, but all were strong and solid drivers, even under duress. Your own model decision will of course be made by routine considerations of style and function.

We also had not yet driven the brand new Cadillac ATS, and we had very much been looking forward to time with this one. Given our clear enthusiasm for the CTS-V Sedan (as well as for the all-new Cadillac XTS, launched

earlier in 2012—see our July/August 2012 issue), coupled with the general specs, style and market niche of the ATS, we have expected a lot out of it. Sometimes a track is a great place for a first drive; other times, you might really prefer road time. But starting out with a first drive on the dragstrip at Firebird? Well, why not?

### V-Series (and ATS) fundamentals

Every one of the CTS-V threesome—and in some cases also the new ATS—comes with a 6-speed manual transmission (with a 6-speed automatic also available). This surprising and very welcome feature sets the tone.

Whether two-door coupe, four-door sedan or four-door wagon, each CTS-V sits on the same 113.4-inch wheelbase, although overall length varies by 3.5 inches from Coupe to Wagon. Wheels are 19x9 front and 19x10 rear for the Coupe and Wagon, but 19x9.5 in the rear for the





(Above): Participants admire a specifically race-prepared Cadillac CTS-V Coupe—one of two that compete in the SCCA World Challenge, North America's top production-based race series. Some components are modified for racing or to meet SCCA technical rules, but every effort is made to maintain as much production content as possible. ■ Cadillac CTS-V Sedans lined up for our track session at Firebird International Raceway. ■ (At right): The group completing dragstrip runs and track time in the ATS.



**TONY FISHER**, of Phoenix AZ, has an after-market parts business with his son on the side—ANT Racing ([antracingaz.com](http://antracingaz.com)). Tony learned a few things on the track. "I'm not braking hard enough initially, and I'm letting off the brake too much. But a few more laps in these cars, and I think I'd be doing pretty good," he says. "I love the acceleration. On some newer cars, with drive-by-wire throttle, there's hesitation, but with this, it's right there." Tony drives a 2001 Nissan Frontier pickup he's had since new, but "if I were buying one, I'd buy the CTS-V Coupe, so it'd be quite a step up!" ■ He has "had or had the chance to drive" his son's '72 Datsun 510 and an '88 Mazda 323 GTS all-wheel-drive turbo they shared—two "really great cars."



Sedan. Brembo four-wheel disc brakes are the same on all three—15-inch in front and 14.7-inch in rear—and these demonstrated highly fade-resistant, top-tier stopping power in our track driving. All three CTS-V iterations have rear-wheel drive, and all three are powered by the same 556-hp 6.2L supercharged V8, generating 551 lb-ft of torque. (If that's not enough for you, see Bob Judge's modifications in the sidebar.) Fuel mileage is what you would expect for a modern V8 in this power range: 14/19 MPG city/highway with manual (or 12/18 with automatic), again the same for all three bodies. The Coupe and Sedan weigh about the same: 4217 or 4219 pounds, respectively, with manual, 4255 or 4252 automatic. The Wagon, no surprise, weighs more: 4396/4424 pounds manual/automatic. Third-party sources have tested the Coupe and Sedan at just under 4 seconds for zero to 60 acceleration, with just over 4 seconds for the Wagon.

As for acceleration in the ATS, it depends greatly upon which of three engines you opt for—a 2.5L

standard four, hotter 2.0L turbo four or 3.6L V6. The V6 puts out 321 hp (and 275 lb-ft), while the 2.0L turbo pumps 272 hp (and 260 lb-ft of torque, higher pro-rata against the V6 than horsepower). The 2.5L trails at 202 hp (191 lb-ft). The ATS is also available with all-wheel drive, though not with the 2.5L, and it has an automatic transmission on all, but a manual only on the RWD 2.0L turbo. We ran full-blown timed runs on the Firebird dragstrip in the 2.0L turbo ATS, and it did startlingly well. We also ran it on the track and found a solid, hot performance sedan that is sure to make huge inroads against its competition. We are only left wishing for a 2.0L turbo ATS with manual transmission and AWD, all in one package.

The ATS has base prices ranging from \$33-55,000 or so. The CTS-V cars are in the \$65,000 range. (CTS non-V models start at about \$38-39,000.) Any one of these could trump or equal almost anything else you may consider buying in its category, in terms of sheer performance-to-value ratio. ■



**BOB JUDGE**, of Gilbert AZ, already drives a 2009 CTS-V Sedan, modified with a 3-inch header, high-flow cat, X-pipe, cat back exhaust system; ported TVS 1900 supercharger; Lingenfelter power package, with KDI Track Sweeper cams, new heads, cold air intake, hardened chrome moly push rods; "and about 615 horsepower at the wheels" (and 750 at the crank, up from 556 hp stock). Bob bought the car at one year and 12,000 miles, sight unseen, from a doctor in New York City. He flew east, gave the doc a check and drove the V home to Arizona. ■ Bob had both a 2006 Corvette Z06 and a 2007 Chevrolet Tahoe prior to his Cadillac. He still has Corvette in his blood, as next he is "kind of targeting a ZR1 right now, but I want to see what they do with the new (C7) Corvette."



**KEN ZINSER**, of Scottsdale AZ, currently drives a Chevy pickup, but would love to grab a Cadillac V-Series, if budget allowed. If so, he preferred the CTS-V Coupe. "I know the drivetrain is pretty much the same," he says—which is true among the three V models, along with the wheelbase—"but it felt better to me. And it's gorgeous. Maybe it's just because I drove the Coupe second, but it felt a lot better," he adds. ■ Ken says he has never had a hot car, but even his prior Acura Legend was a sleek black 6-speed coupe, "not a typical cruiser car," he points out. Prior to that, he had a first-year 2003 Nissan 350Z, also with 6-speed manual. But Ken says the Cadillac V-Series is "the fastest car I've ever driven in my life."



## LA Auto Show sampler: 24 world premieres and 25 North American premieres

The Los Angeles Auto Show, in early December 2012, featured world debuts ranging from electric vehicles to performance and luxury designs from a global array of the world's top automakers. Debuts included world-firsts from Chrysler, Ford and General Motors; European automakers Audi, BMW, Fiat, Jaguar, Mercedes-Benz, Porsche and Volkswagen; Asian brands Acura, Honda, Hyundai, Kia, Nissan, Subaru and Toyota; and more.

We like the LA show because it's right next door to our own market. It's also valuable because greater Los Angeles is the largest luxury and performance market in the U.S. Debuts in these categories included Acura RLX, BMW i8 Spyder, Jaguar F-TYPE convertible, four from Mercedes-Benz, and more from Bentley and Porsche.

The volume and range of debuts was taken by many as a sign of rebounding strength overall in the automotive industry. We attended the show's press preview days at the end of November. Here are just a few highlights.

- The **Mercedes-Benz Ener-G-Force** concept spins off requirements of Los Angeles Design Challenge 2012 to develop a Highway Patrol Vehicle for 2025. This civilian version shows how the G-Class could appear by then, or sooner. Small glass areas signal a safe and secure cockpit. Headlamps (with LEDs forming the letter "G") are integrated into a powerful grille. The image of tall suspension underpinning huge tires on 20-inch wheels (each individually powered) suggests the vehicle can "guarantee the right-of-way even where no way exists." On the greener side, however, the Ener-G-Force stores recycled water in tanks on the roof, to strip into hydro-

gen for operating its fuel cells—with an operating range of about 500 miles, and emitting nothing but water.

- Mercedes-AMG also introduced their fifth Black Series model, the **2014 SLS AMG Black Series** (see also page 13). Inspired by the SLS AMG GT3 race car, and weighing 3,417 pounds, the car bears a 622-hp 6.3L V8 and accelerates from 0-to-60 mph in 3.5 seconds, making it the most dynamic SLS yet. Features include special suspension, brakes, wheels and tires; an available aerodynamics package; an engine that revs up to 8000 rpm, with a modified high-speed valve train, race cam, air intake and engine mapping.

- First shown at the last big domestic auto show—New York, last spring—the **2014 Chevrolet Impala** is a significant step forward from the prior model. The Impala grows in size, sharing its platform with the Cadillac XTS, to distance itself better from the Malibu. And its new styling assures that it will stake a place in the hearts and minds of those who remember the nameplate from legendary cruisers of decades ago, moving away from its rental car image of the past few years.

- California is also tops in all things green and all things tech. LA is a showcase for the latest in-car technologies, as well as rapidly developing fuel-efficient drivetrains—with two dozen electric models, at least a dozen clean-diesel vehicles and nearly 20 vehicles achieving 40-plus MPG with advanced four-cylinder gasoline engines. Debuts included Fiat's first electric vehicle, the **Fiat 500e**, and GM's first all-electric vehicle, the **Chevrolet Spark EV**. Ford releases included the



• Mercedes-Benz Ener-G-Force concept



• Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series



• 2014 Chevrolet Impala



• Chevrolet Spark EV



• Mazda CX-5 Dempsey



2013 Ford C-MAX Energi plug-in hybrid, the Fusion Energi plug-in and the Focus Electric. Honda debuted its new Accord plug-in hybrid.

- A trio of Mazda CX-5 crossovers originally shown at the recent SEMA show appeared again in LA, appealing to urban and active lifestyles: the Mazda CX-5 Urban with a combination of fashion and architectural cues, highlighted by its finish in a variety of flat and matte charcoal black and grey paints; the Mazda CX-5 180 with a snowboard- and surf-themed active lifestyle outfitting (one side finished in artwork suitable for each); and the **Mazda CX-5 Dempsey** (shown), named after actor and race car driver Patrick Dempsey, also featuring all it takes to bring along his favorite cycling gear (or your favorite equipment) to any remote location.

- **Lincoln** took an unusual approach with their show space. As they work hard to establish a new brand image and message in the marketplace—in the absence of the Mercury brand, and in the presence of Cadillac, who has a good decade's head start in rebranding themselves—Lincoln brought beautiful examples of some of their most prominent machines from the past century. Shown at upper right is the Continental Mark II from 1956-57 (which actually did not bear the Lincoln name, though the combined Lincoln Continental name has appeared plenty over the years).

- One of the first things you would see upon entering the LA Convention Center was a banner promoting the same company: the **2014 Kia Sorento** and **2014 Kia Forte sedan**. The new Sorento, built in West Point, Georgia, has an all-new chassis, a new GDI V6 engine, a redesigned interior and a next-generation infotainment system. The redesigned Sorento also adds a top SX Limited trim level to its lineup. The Forte sedan is also all new, with European-inspired design, a longer, wider and lower chassis, and more performance and premium amenities, all with a choice of 1.8L or 2.0L engines. Both new Kia models have their press launch

in Arizona in late January, and we'll be covering that.

- The Ford Transit Connect commercial van has been a huge success, rightly so, and it was no surprise that families consistently inquired about a window version. Enter the **Ford Transit Connect Wagon**—expected to deliver at least 5 MPG better fuel economy on the highway and 2 MPG better in the city than competing seven-seat minivans, more cargo space and passenger seating than competing crossovers, yet having a heavier payload than a midsize double-cab pickup. Anticipating 30-plus highway MPG with EcoBoost, the Transit Connect Wagon offers a choice of two fuel-efficient four-cylinder engines, two wheelbase lengths and three series models: XL, XLT and Titanium. Adaptability includes sliding side doors, fold-flat second- and third-row seating, a 1200-pound-plus payload, and choice of rear liftgate or side-hinged cargo doors.

- Model year 2013 brings two new **Dodge SRT Viper** models—the SRT Viper and **SRT Viper GTS**. With a top speed of 206 mph, a 0-to-60 time in the low threes, quarter-mile in the mid-elevens and braking from 60-to-0 in just 106 feet, this supercar also boasts a Cd of just .369, to slither through the wind at speed. Hand-built at the Conner Avenue Assembly Plant in Detroit—home to the Viper since 1995—both models have new interior and exterior designs, with premium materials and a new aerodynamically functional carbon fiber and aluminum skin. The SRT Viper GTS adds driver-selectable two-mode suspension, all the better for track time.

- Fiat delivered two largely-expected surprises. First is the **Fiat 500e**, a 100 percent electric version of the still relatively-new-to-market retro-classic Cinquecento, this time equipped with a 100-hp-equivalent electric motor. This seems like a very good fit for the brand. Next is the all-new **Fiat 500L**. Many had anticipated a four-door Fiat 500—somehow—but the degree to which this is

KEEP RIGHT >>



• Lincoln's Continental Mark II, among its classics



• 2014 Kia Sorento and Kia Forte sedan



• Ford Transit Connect Wagon



• Dodge SRT Viper GTS



• Fiat 500L four-door



an entirely new car, with a significantly different look, surprised some. It should draw more people to the brand, which has been primarily perceived as simply very small. Fiat describes the 500L's spacious interior and panoramic views as having an "urban loft" feel.

- Another surprise entry was the **Honda EV-STER concept** electric roadster, fresh from the Tokyo show. This car is surrounded by rumors—seemingly a big and somewhat risky departure for small and conservative Honda, but popularly received in Japan, it had not seemed destined for production. But as they test the waters in the US, they just might be gauging the market, to see whether the math could add up for this machine. We would love to see it come to fruition.

- The Volkswagen Beetle has started to propagate on America's highways once again, in its newest form, generally considered to have a more masculine profile, still in a front-wheel-drive layout, but more reminiscent of the shape and spirit of the original Bug from decades prior. (See our writeup of the Volkswagen Beetle Convertible in this issue, along with some of its evolutionary heritage.) Given its new cajones, the **Volkswagen Beetle Turbo** iteration is a natural, and it has arrived, with horsepower boosted to 200 from the 170 hp of the regular Beetle.

- The **Nissan GT-R** has blown away everyone who has driven it, including us (see *Exceeding Even Its Reputation*, in our July/August 2012 issue). Not only is it dangerous to mess with success, but the GT-R's success is rooted in some of the most thorough engineering imaginable—so what would you change? They are rounding off a few spots on the exterior in ways almost too subtle to notice, and they are adjusting the engine's power curve for a wider power band, while also improving engine oil stability under track-caliber g-forces. Bring it on.

- Jaguar Land Rover had a variety of new product on their stands, including the popular new downsized Range Rover Evoque and a new aluminum-bodied full-

size Range Rover. The hottest item in the group, though, was surely the all-new **Jaguar F-TYPE** two-seat convertible sports car. On sale this summer, the F-TYPE brings Jaguar closer to some of its best-loved roots—a front-engine, rear-wheel-drive roadster—now built with Jaguar's mastery of lightweight aluminum architecture and engineered to be a true performer, at a price point below the XK convertible and coupe. Engines will include Jaguar's new 340-hp 3.0L supercharged V6 and a new 380-hp version of its 5.0L supercharged V8. Three F-TYPE models are expected to start at \$69,000.

- Under the appropriate heading of "The Future is Closer Than You Think," BMW showed the latest iteration of its sexy electric **Concept i8 Spyder** hybrid roadster. Added to it this year was the world premiere of the **BMW i3 Concept Coupe**, a study in a sustainable premium-class production car with zero tailpipe emissions. After showing both a year earlier in very loose sketch form, BMW is reportedly hard at work getting the first model within their new i brand ready for mass production, using these two concepts to demonstrate potential breadth and depth to a model range.

There were enough other reveals at the Los Angeles Auto Show to of course fill an entire issue—the 2013 Acura RLX luxury sedan, more Mercedes-Benz launches, the Bentley Continental GT3 race car, the North American debut of the Porsche 911 Carrera 4, the MINI Paceman and Clubvan, special editions of the new Volkswagen Beetle Convertible, the new Hyundai Santa Fe 7-passenger crossover, which now joins the 5-passenger Santa Fe Sport and replaces the Veracruz, a new Mazda6 sport sedan, the new Subaru Forester and much more. And a new Advanced Technology Showcase presented by the Auto Alliance, an industry trade group, focused on the expanding list of applications and tech solutions now being designed into vehicles in pursuit of making drivers safer while more connected.

Stay tuned. Detroit and Chicago are coming up. ■



• Honda EV-STER concept



• Volkswagen Beetle Turbo



• 2014 Nissan GT-R



• Jaguar F-TYPE



• BMW i3 Concept Coupe

## Russian Roulette.



**When is a cell phone a weapon?** Whenever you drive a car and use one. It's that simple. And that deadly. Last year, nearly 6,000 fatalities and over half a million injuries were caused by distracted drivers. In fact, texting behind the wheel is so dangerous that it can impair a driver's response time by 18% - or the seconds it takes to miss a stop sign, run an intersection and broadside a family.

**Whatever you have to say can wait. Unless it's goodbye.™**



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**Fasten your meatbelts!**

By Joe Sage

**F**rankly, it's perfectly normal to think you've seen the Oscar Mayer Wienermobile before—it just has that kind of presence. A college football game? Somewhere on the Interstate? We had seen the oldest one still in existence (not the first one ever), built on a Ford chassis in 1952 and now housed at The Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan (a must-see destination). And we have now seen the current one, as it made a few stops in the Valley recently, with **Hotdoggers** "Cookout Kelly" and "Abe-the-Ham" at the wheel. Join Cookout Kelly as she takes us on a tour.....

"Our Oscar—that's our Wienermobile—is a 2009 model, and it's built on a Chevy one-ton truck, with duallys in the back and a V8 engine. We like to say it's powered on **ketchup** and **mustard**, but it takes regular gas!"

This one was built next after a prior 2004 model, with a newer chassis and such features as a flat-screen TV. In the last couple of decades, the Wienermobile hasn't changed too much, outwardly—just "mirror color, that type of thing. But the very latest 2012 models actually have solar panels on the top, so that's pretty cool," she explains.

Time to check out the interior. "So we have... it's not a sunroof, it's a **bunroof!**" Cookout Kelly points out, and "we don't have gloveboxes, we have **bunboxes!**"

"There are two rules for the Wienermobile. If you want to ride up front, you shout



'**shotbun!**' instead of 'shotgun!'... and then you fasten your **meatbelt.**" Etiquette is important.

In fact, the Wienermobile is engineered for etiquette. Cookout Kelly explains you can't get road rage when you're in the Wienermobile (how could you, really...?), so they have a special little horn. You can't really hear it on the Interstate, she says, but we can hear it in town, a lighthearted duet of their famous jingle: "**Oh I wish I were an Oscar Mayer Wiener....**"

"So when we're trying to get parking," she says, "that's what we play, and usually it works pretty well." She can also tap the rhythm out effectively on a real horn, if need be, one of the many skills learned at Hot Dog High—driver's ed for the Wienermobile, "where you learn to **drive and wave** at the same time."

Aspiring Hotdoggers go through two weeks of training with the Madison Police Department, near the company's Wisconsin headquarters. They also learn "a little bit of hot dog history, if you will."

And then they turn you loose. "Which is **crazy,**" she continues, "because it's a 27-foot-long hot dog! We show up one day, and two weeks later, we're driving a hot dog!"

Security hasn't been a problem, for instance when parked at a hotel overnight. "People are just in awe of it and don't really mess with it," says Cookout Kelly. "They're too busy taking pictures. So we haven't come out to any **bites** taken out of it yet! (Fingers crossed.)"

A common question is whether it has a bathroom, and the answer is no. "It's a **Wienie-Bago.** But there's no bed in the back and no bathroom, either."

There is ample seating that looks as much fun as any playroom, and behind that is storage—enough for their displays, luggage and up to 14,000 Wienerwhistles.

They live out of two suitcases each, for a full year, so they must pack carefully and "not buy a lot of shoes," she says while wistfully eyeing the Payless next door.

The Wienermobile gets monthly maintenance—they get "the **ketchup** and **mustard** flushed out and the tires filled." For this they use the Penske Automotive Group, some of whom they "just adore." Penske is also on their SOS, in the unlikely event of an on-the-road situation. (Another common question is whether the Wienermobile drives, or whether they just tow it places, like a trailer. The answer is that yes, it drives, and they try to avoid towing at all costs, like anybody else.)

Of course you're wondering how fast the Wienermobile can go. "Well, it **hauls buns,**" says Cookout Kelly. The speedo reads up to 100 mph, but "obviously, we're never going to go 100, because everybody would be tweeting about that. We pretty much stick to 65." It's as big as an RV, but has a slipperier shape, making it "pretty **aeroDOGnamic,**" we are told.

We are **eating up** the puns. "I can keep them coming," says Cookout Kelly. "I **relish** them! Call me **Corndog** Kelly. Love to **ham** it up!"

They like **bunny** people, and puns are part of the curriculum at Hot Dog High. They also "spend so much time on the road, we just **cook 'em up** as we drive. "I'm sorry... I'll stop!" she says.

No, we reply. We'll stay here until you run out.

"I don't! I can always cut the **mustard** when it comes to puns. We take the scenic **kraut,** so that gives me plenty of time to think them up." ■



**WIENERMOBILE FUN FACTS**

**WIENERMOBILE**  
Oscar Mayer's nephew Carl Mayer designed the first Wienermobile in 1936.

**WIENERWHISTLE**  
The highly collectible Wienerwhistle was developed in 1952 and included in packs of Oscar Mayer Wieners starting in 1958.

**HOTDOG GERS**  
Over 350 college graduates have held the prestigious position of Hotdogger since 1988.

**DOGMEASUREMENTS**  
HEIGHT.....24 Hot Dogs high (11 feet)  
LENGTH.....60 Hot Dogs long (27 feet)  
WIDTH.....18 Hot Dogs wide (8 feet)

**THE MEAT**  
• Grilled fiberglass hot dog on a lightly toasted fiberglass bun • Converted Chevrolet 4-speed W4 Series chassis • 6.0L 300 Vortec 5700 V8 • Runs on high-octane mustard.

**THE CONDIMENTS**  
• Gull wing door with automatic retractable step • Hot-dog-shaped dashboard • Hotdogger voice-activated GPS nav • Ketchup walkway • Condiment splattered carpet • Computerized sound system • Removable Bunroof • Rear nav camera • Blue Sky ceiling art • Six mustard-and-ketchup-colored seats • Smiling front grille • Official Wiener Jingle horn.



# Thoroughbred

By Joe Sage

**M**ercedes-Benz started the “four-door coupe” craze with their CLS. It has spread through everything from the Volkswagen CC to the Audi A7. By now, it’s almost hard to remember that the term—for decades, until just recently—was oxymoron-

ic. And “two-door coupe” would be redundant. A sedan was a four-door and a coupe was a two-door. Punto.

The relatively recent four-door coupes have arguably seemed like sedans with a more streamlined roofline. The new BMW 6 Series Gran Coupé, on the other hand,

still feels like a coupe at core, just elongated and with doors added. Its origins as a two-door 6 Series Coupe are apparent, unlike the Benz, VW or somewhat the Audi.

By the way, before we continue, we are generally willing to play along with manufacturers’ own standards on their product names: MINI in all caps, smart all lowercase and so on. BMW is consistently inconsistent with Coupe and Gran Coupé, including or not including the accent mark (and therefore the different pronunciation) on the same page, in both consumer and press materials. We are opting to leave it off for the traditional Coupe—we suspect people will routinely say Coupe and Convertible—but include it on Gran Coupé—a new beast people are more likely to call by its fluffed-up name.



## models, mass and math

The 6 Series Gran Coupé—like the 6 Series Coupe and the 6 Series Convertible—is available in three basic iterations: 640i, 650i and 650i xDrive. The 640i has a 3.0L six-cylinder engine, and either 650i a 4.4L V8. Both engines are BMW TwinPower twin-scroll turbos, pumping out 320 and 450 hp, respectively. The 650i xDrive adds full-time all-wheel drive behind that V8.

Of the three, our Gran Coupé is the least grand, by the numbers—the 640i—though not lacking in style, finish, fitment or refinement. And it is still 4.6 inches grander in length than the two-door Coupe (which itself had recently grown by 2.9 inches for the 2012 model year).

The Gran Coupé weighs a bit more than the Coupe, too, of course, although the car has so many weight-minimizing technologies in play, this has been mitigated even before lengthening. Notably, the doors and hood are all aluminum, while the front fenders, roof lid and trunklid are reinforced composite. Front spring mounts, brakes and even seats have received weight reductions, as well. Comparing 640i-to-640i, the Gran Coupé weighs about 143 pounds more than the Coupe—not insignificant, but perhaps ironic when you consider that the real difference is an increased likelihood of bringing along one, two or even three rear-seat passengers in the Gran Coupé—less likely in the lighter Coupe, which does have a rear seat, but lacks convenient four-door access.

Though we’ve now talked about as much as 600 pounds of combined bigger vehicle weight and additional passengers, our test vehicle nonetheless has the smaller six-cylinder turbo. An output of 320 hp may not sound like a lot for what is clearly a car of significant presence—this car weighs in at about 3858 pounds unladen (and unoptioned). The V8 weighs in at 4112 (and even more with xDrive). Pretty much two tons, for any, before quibbling about passengers and groceries. Would the six be sufficient? With a base price of \$76,500 for the 640i versus \$87,200 for the 650i, it was worth a try. Not only were we saving \$10,700 on the sticker, but the six rates 30 MPG highway, versus 25 for the V8.

## an engaging drive

We address the performance-per-cylinder equation straight away, satisfying ourselves in the logbook that “as far as power, we can say within the first few miles that it has not really crossed our mind to wonder or wish we had the 650i. At least in terrain like this, ‘adequate’ is an understatement.” We had driven out of the office area, across some surface streets, up the ramp and onto the freeway. The car was spirited and ready to romp, like a thoroughbred horse that knows where the track is and is itching to start.

The car is strong, the interior is couched in luxury and the suspension is purpose-built. As we breezed along at a healthy clip—off-hours in the HOV lane—the feeling in the cabin was of simultaneous isolation and engagement. Isolation would not usually be a goal for the driver-oriented among us, but although the Gran Coupé is just so quiet and smooth—with nothing as background but your audio system and/or the wind—the car nonetheless provides a fully engaging drive experience.

We say that despite some level of disconnect with the steering. The electric implementation of steering



The most distinctive feature of the Gran Coupé among 6 Series models is its four doors. Any 6 Series has a back seat, but this one is accessible.

had felt squirrely to us at times, starting with our first corner. In play are a combination of the car’s long wheelbase, significant nose overhang and weight, but even on a straightaway we could feel it. “We would rather feel like we were grabbing the wheels than flying a drone 12,000 miles away,” our logbook noted.

Tires are 225/55 R17 in front, 245/45 R18 rear, therefore run-flats, and noisy on slightly rougher pavement.

The Auto Start Stop feature—whereby the engine shuts down at a red light and restarts when you step on the gas again—is, as on other BMWs, a little disquieting. We had largely resigned ourselves to this as a transitional issue, related to the times and fairly universal, though we have now found it much less noticeable in some brands. So there is room for improvement.

Auto Start Stop is part of BMW’s Efficient Dynamics implementation, as is the weight-saving electric steering. Also included are an ECO PRO engine management mode, detachable A/C compressor, on-demand operation of ancillary units, reduced-rolling-resistance tires

KEEP RIGHT >>

## BMW 640i GRAN COUPÉ

ENGINE .....3.0L TwinPower 24v twin scroll turbo inline-6.....320 hp, 332 lb-ft torque

TRANSMISSION.....8-speed automatic

SUSPENSION.....Twin tube gas shocks, double-track front control arms, aluminum, small steering roll radius, selective suspension settings, anti-squat, anti-dive, double acoustic separation.

FUEL MILEAGE.....20/30/24 MPG city/hwy/comb

BASE PRICE .....\$76,500

WITH: Our test 640i GC was delivered with no Monroney, but was well outfitted with packages, options and accessories. Noted features included xenon adaptive self-leveling headlights, washers, cornering lights, aluminum hood and doors, 20-way power front seats, 9-speaker 205-watt audio system, HD radio and navigation, automatic climate, power tilt glass roof, side and rear cameras, advanced airbags, emergency battery disconnect in crash, ABS, ESC, traction control.


AS TESTED, EST. ....\$104,163

WITH UPGRADED WHEELS .....\$110,396



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and regenerative braking, as on a hybrid. On balance, we can't argue with a program that brings this big luxury cruiser's highway fuel mileage rating up to 30 MPG.

The car is definitely big, for something so sporty, but you can put it right where you want it, on the freeway. Even in aggressive traffic around town, you can give it a little gas and pop into a new spot very easily.

We always favor a good turning circle, using a divided four-lane boulevard U-turn as a good benchmark. The Gran Coupé has a turning circle of 39.2 feet. Compare this to the regular Coupe at 38.4 or a Jeep Grand Cherokee at 37.1, and it seems big. Against an Audi A7 at 39.04, it holds its own. Real world? On our actual boulevard test, it did just fine, turning within the lanes.

Overall, the car feels very solid. The steering wheel is hefty, smooth and comfortable in our hands, and the ride itself follows suit.

### *master of your domain*

Our BMW 640i Gran Coupé featured a heads-up display for speed, always welcome. It also had a heads-up for navigation, with turn-by-turn instructions, which could prove extremely handy. (Unfortunately, this had been preset by someone else, so we had to endure a lot of persistent demands to turn around and head for LA or Germany or somewhere, until we had time to pull over, study up and disable the thing.)

There is a full-featured ceiling-mounted console, but we would be happy to trade at least some of that away for the ability to move the rearview mirror up a couple of inches, as it blocks a large amount of the windshield.

Primary instruments are slick, including an Efficient Dynamics recuperation display, with a blue battery at one end and a red line that fills the range circularly, as brake energy is captured. Hypermilers, rejoice: you can now play your games in a luxury performance car.

Audio operations comprise a range from too simple to too complex. We received the car with poor sound—someone had the fader cranked to the rear, a bad call in any vehicle. Fixing that quickly gave us great sound—it was easily accessible, as were bass and treble (but not midrange). The system also has full equalizer settings, though that process is cumbersome, as are radio presets.

The center stack has an interesting combination of pushbutton and touch controls. Buttons often brought up functions we weren't expecting, for example a map when we were seeking a radio station. But if you touch, instead of push—what feels like a hover, but is actually a light touch—vital info displayed across the top gives fair warning of what you're about to get.

Logbook nitpicks on this car were often not unique to it, but universal to the current BMW lineup—the electric steering, oddities of the shift lever, oddities of the screen interface, the mixed blessing of cornering lamps when the neighbors may be trying to sleep—not per se reflecting specifically on this 6 Series.

### *calling your name*

As for the gas savings in the six, after just 48 hours of stewardship, we were running on fumes. We did drive one 90-mile roundtrip, but otherwise just ran a few normal errands. Surely the car has inspired us to have a heavy foot. If the six uses that much gas, anyway, the V8 may be worth a look. After all, the V8 has a 0-to-60 time



of 4.6 seconds, versus 5.3 for the six, and for some drivers, in some situations, a lighter foot on a bigger engine can deliver better economy. An optioned-up 640i can easily cost way more than a base 650i, anyway, as you can see in our sidebar. Considering just how high options and packages could take that V8, though, on balance the nimble weight and relative nominal fuel economy of the six would likely win our heart, or at least satisfy it.

And you *will* buy fuel for this car, as this is definitely one of those vehicles that sits in the garage calling your name: come take another drive. Pile on the miles.

We did find ourselves contemplating this four-door Gran Coupé's raison d'être. Isn't the BMW lineup perfectly fine with just a 6 Series Coupe and a 7 Series Sedan? As we think about the competition, the Mercedes-Benz CLS is really nothing like an S Class nor nothing like an E-Class Coupe. Look at Porsche, and certainly Panamera is like nothing else in their lineup. It's the same with the Aston Martin Rapide. With Audi, you could make a case that the A7 is somewhat a bigger A5, but it really isn't—it's quite a different vehicle, with its own character.

But with the 6 Series Gran Coupé, we don't see such a separate character. We continue to wonder, why couldn't you just buy a 6 Series Coupe? Or a 7 Series Sedan? Much as we like the car, we keep coming back to that. We suspect we know the answer: it's market-driven. People undoubtedly have come into BMW dealerships and asked, why don't you have something like that? Now they do. The above is basically a rhetorical drill; we have no doubts it will be popular. One of our colleagues said that he liked it better than the 2-door, for no particular reason and even though he doesn't use four seats. The addition of the 640i and 650i Gran Coupé makes for a lot of models and a lot of overlap, but it adds an attractive option. If BMW's manufacturing budget can bear one more model, surely the buying public can.

Those of us who drive so many new cars in the course of our work know that we can tend to be a jaded bunch. Nonetheless, the BMW Gran Coupé has proven itself memorable. When it came time for the car to be picked up, we mentioned it would be fine if we could just keep this one. The driver laughed and said that's what everybody says on this car. ■





# LEADING BY EXAMPLE

**THE AFTERMARKET AND THE AUTO MANUFACTURERS EACH HAVE SOMETHING TO TEACH THE OTHER.**

BY LARRY EDSALL

Racers don't have time to waste, so they tend to get right to the point.

When asked why Ford Motor Company and other automakers spend time and money on an event that isn't even open to the car-buying public, Ford's director of racing Jamie Allison hit the bull's-eye.

The event in question was the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) Show of aftermarket automotive products in Las Vegas. The SEMA Show, Allison said, represents "the intersection of cars and car culture."

Unlike the North American International Auto Show at Detroit or any of the other major or local new car shows, SEMA is a trade show for parts and accessories designed to make cars go faster or look... I want to write the word "better" but some of the stuff is just so gaudy that, well, let's say look different than they did when they rolled off the assembly line.

Once upon a time, automakers didn't like it when their vehicles were modified, and they still don't if those modifications affect safety or ruin rather than enhance a car's visual appeal. But for the last decade or so, the automakers have had a large presence at the annual SEMA Show, and with SEMA's help have worked to upgrade the quality of the parts that customize and personalize a vehicle. In some cases, the automakers even provide aftermarket companies an early look at future products so accessories not only will be ready but will fit and function properly when a new vehicle becomes available to the car-buying public.

Now, said Ralph Gilles, head of Chrysler's SRT brand and former corporate design director, "we're happy to see our vehicles are being used as canvases"

The 2012 SEMA Show featured more than 2,000 exhibitors manufacturing thousands of products to enhance or customize the performance, safety, convenience, appearance and comfort of individual owners' vehicles. One overall SEMA Award is given for the biggest presence of one brand of vehicle in each of four categories (see next page), but products are available for every make and model imaginable. Exhibitors take their torches and paint guns to vehicles that cost \$20,000 or \$200,000—past, present or future—transforming them completely or simply outfitting them with a new gadget. Some of these projects will find their way to your garage, comprehensively or in part, some will find their way back to the manufacturers themselves, directly or as inspiration, and some will never make it beyond the SEMA Show floor.

Three manufacturers' entries: a 2012 Fiat 500 by MOPAR; Honda's IndyCar; and a Hyundai Accent; joined by a 2010 Aston Martin Vantage by Advan Carbon/Charge Speed USA/Premier4509/VeilSide.

Acura's future NSX arrives; a toyotafishing.com Tundra; a race-ready Mercedes-Benz coupe modified by Pirelli; and Bushwacker's Mazda CX-5.

A custom Ford Tudor; MacNeil's Weathertech Porsche 911; one of many hot Hyundai Veloster Turbos; and a Dodge Charger-Bentley cross-breed.

Toyota Prius; the brand new Ford Escape; a Cadillac CTS Coupe; and the well-represented Chevrolet Camaro, all in various degrees of modification.

for personalization.

Well, to an extent, he added, as he reached into his pocket to pull out his iPhone and share a photo he took of what he considers a customization gone wrong: someone had grafted the nose of a new Chevrolet Camaro to the four-door body of a Chrysler 300.

Chrysler, Ford and General Motors all had big displays at the show, and other automakers such as Toyota, Lexus, Scion, Honda, Hyundai, Kia and Mazda also showcased their cars. The OEMs use their own design departments and various partners—independent hot-rod shops and sometimes celebrities—to show how the automaker would modify the appearance or performance of its production vehicles.

Often, the OEMs even introduce concept cars at SEMA, just as if it were the Detroit or Frankfurt auto show.

"We try to lead by example," Gilles said, "to show how professional designers would approach this space, where a hot-rodder might put every idea he has into one car."

"The SEMA Show isn't about consumers, but enthusiasts, designers and

Photos courtesy of Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA)



KEEP RIGHT >>



■ The SEMA Awards determine winners in each of four categories, based on which vehicles are represented most strongly at the show.

"The SEMA Award helps guide consumers toward the hottest-trending and most accessory-friendly vehicles on the market," said Chris Kersting, SEMA president and CEO. "Our SEMA Show exhibitors are industry visionaries who determine the winners of the SEMA Award based on the vehicles they showcase in their booths. Each booth vehicle represents a 'vote,' and the most prominent models in each category are the winners."

Shown at left are one example each of the vehicles that were SEMA Award winners for 2012: the Scion FR-S as the Hottest Sport Compact, the Ford F-Series as Hottest Truck, the Jeep® Wrangler as Hottest 4x4-SUV, and the Ford Mustang as Hottest Car. There were many other examples of each.

While products are available for every make and model, exhibitors are investing more in these four—as platforms for the customization, adaptation and accessorization that are SEMA's hallmarks—than in any other vehicles, a sign that consumers can expect to find a wide variety of products for accessorizing them.

"The SEMA Award amplifies the industry's special ability to identify and set trends that consumers follow," added Kersting.

the media," said Ken Czubay, Ford's vice president for marketing, sales and service. "It's the influencers, and it provides a tremendous opportunity to get feedback from people who use our products."

And, he might have added, people who influence others to buy those products.

And it's not just new car sales that the influencers influence, said Gilles. "It helps stimulate even used car sales."

"A lot of hand-me-downs have become someone else's dream car."

Gilles said the automakers also come to SEMA to identify trends in customization and personalization—for example wheel finishes, of which he said there are seven available for the new SRT Viper. After seeing them growing in appeal at SEMA, Ford now offers black wheels as an option on its Mustang.

Gilles said that after his official duties were finished at the show, he was staying an extra day just to wander around, to see what's new and what's hot and to keep his pulse on car culture beyond Woodward Avenue.

Ford's Jamie Allison noted that as soon as cars were invented and went into mass production more than 100 years ago, "two things happened immediately," he said, "people took them to the limit in terms of performance and people personalized them." ■

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# ORPHANS FOR ORPHANS

FANS OF BRANDS FROM THE PAST RAISE FUNDS FOR CHARITY

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LARRY EDSALL



■ The archetypal late '50s/early '60s fin on left is on a 1960 Studebaker Hawk belonging to Neil and Ruth Bell. Emblems (and a fun license plate) on the facing page are from a 1940 Packard, 1979 AMX, 1948 Nash and 1956 Fiat 600, which are also shown on this page and the next. Others on this page are:

1937 Pontiac Super Chief : Larry and Linda Owen

1965 Plymouth Belvedere II : Paul Lejman

1964 Pontiac Bonneville : Howard Ives, Tom Bodmer

1940 Packard Model 160 Super 8 : Marvin Price

1963 Studebaker Wagonaire : Peggy Stinson

1963 Studebaker Avanti : Chuck and Chris Collins

Google "orphan car show" and the first five links that pop up on your screen are for the big event staged annually for the last 16 years in conjunction with the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum just west of Detroit in Michigan.

Scroll a little further down the page and you'll find other shows for classic cars whose manufacturers no longer are in business being held in places such as Golden, Colorado; Yellow Springs, Ohio; Forest Park and Branson, Missouri, and in Bothell, Washington.

But we scanned half-a-dozen pages of Google report and didn't find what may be the oldest of those orphan car shows, the one staged for the last 22 years by the Valley Roadrunners chapter of the Veteran Motor Car Club of America.

Not only is the show—held in late October in Los Olivos Park in Phoenix—the oldest of the orphan car shows, but its focus is not only cars. It also raises money for the Sunshine Acres Children's Home, the so-called Miracle in the Desert which since 1954 has provided a home to some 1,600 children in the Phoenix suburb of Mesa.

The idea for the Phoenix Orphan Car Show came from Valley Roadrunners member Dave Albani, said club president Andre Lange.

"Dave had a Hudson. I had Nashes, and other club members had different kinds," Lange said. "We looked around for a place to have the show and got a permit from the city. It's been the same day and the same location every year ever since."

At first, the Orphan Car Show was the Orphan Car Picnic, held on the grass under the park's olive trees. Later, howev-



KEEP RIGHT >>



■ Whole volumes have been written tracing the intertwined and evolving Nash, Rambler and AMC brands (as well as Willys, Kaiser, Henry J and Frazer, plus some brushes with Packard and Studebaker along the way). Four of the six cars on this page are of Nash-Rambler-AMC lineage.

1964 Rambler Marlin : Paul Ward

1956 Oldsmobile Ninety-Eight : John A. Clark

1979 AMX by AMC (with the DONTLAF license plate on prior page) : Manny and Becky Athans

1956 Fiat Canta 600 Elabogata : Eric Lynn

1948 Nash : Joe Livingston

1966 AMC Ambassador station wagon (which carried the Rambler name through 1965) : Paul Ward

er, the city parks department restricted the cars to the park's paved parking lot.

Sunshine Acres always has been the financial beneficiary of the show—money coming from entry fees paid by the participating car owners—and for several years the show would end with a parade, with the cars driven from Phoenix to Mesa to present the money and to show the cars to the children. However, that ended when privacy laws were enacted to protect orphans' identities, Lange said.

As many as 125 cars have participated in the Phoenix show. This year there were 99 on display, though not all of them were true orphans.

Exceptions are made, Lange said. Corvairs, for example, because while Chevrolet remains in business, its sporty rear-engine car—supposedly unsafe at any speed—has a cult-like following.

And because the money goes to a good cause, some club members are so eager to participate, they want to bring a classic car even if its maker is still in business. However, such cars are few and far between, in a lot filled with the likes of Hudsons, Frazers, Kaisers, Plymouths, Pontiacs, Studebakers, AMCs, Oldsmobiles and Edsels.

Another thing that makes the Phoenix Orphan Car Show special is its homemade trophies—whimsical works of art made by club members, often from components recycled from trophies they've won in previous years.

"We want people to pre-register their cars so we can make a trophy that fits," Lange said.

"Everybody," he added, "likes to get trophies." ■

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By Joe Sage



Toyota, a company with seven SUVs and crossovers in the US alone, has no shortage of domestic passenger car models—nine. Not even counting the four Prius models, there are four sedans plus one hatchback. The non-Prius (though sometimes hybrid) cars—Yaris, Corolla, Matrix, Camry, Avalon—range in base price from \$14,370 to \$30,990.

That last jump to Avalon is the biggest: from \$22,055 base for the Camry. Yet even in the rarified atmosphere of the Avalon, these vehicles offer value. And they sell like hotcakes, especially the Camry and Corolla. What the value-packed top-tier Avalon may have been lacking is a bit more flash, a bit more soul, more than anything perhaps a more youthful feel. For 2013, the Avalon has been completely reworked. We flew to San Antonio to learn all about it and get behind the wheel.

#### THE AVALON AURA

Whether you connect it with the Avalon Ballroom in San Francisco, the tonier-than-average town of Avalon at the Jersey Shore or the island of Avalon in the legend of King Arthur, the name has panache. And history. Maybe a little too much history, as Toyota has realized they needed to make an active effort to attract younger buyers and move the Avalon nameplate in a new direction.

There is a bridge between Camry and Avalon, via the Lexus lineup: the front-wheel-drive Lexus ES sedan has grown this last year to adapt the same platform as the new Avalon. There is a lot of overlap among the cars in each brand's lineup and between the two brands, but this move makes sense, as they are all front-drivers, unlike the rear-drive Lexus GS, which has otherwise overlapped the Avalon platform in some years, too. The new Avalon is being built in Kentucky, and was also conceived in the US (Toyota employs over 20,000 design and engineering professionals in Arizona, California and Michigan).

Last spring, when this new Avalon was first introduced at the New York International Auto Show, Toyota found it was attracting more interest from a younger demographic than ever before. In this case, that would mean a median age in the low fifties.

#### REDIRECTED FROM THE VERY TOP

Avalon is the first vehicle in Toyota's lineup that has been redeveloped to align with Toyota president Akio Toyoda's call for more exciting products. Out with the feeling that this is your grandparents' car. Out with cost-cutting philosophies. In with a new aura of kinetic energy. The team was inspired—as are most such teams, at least to start—by an aggressively new style seen in one designer's sketch. They thought it demonstrated elegance, and at the same time a newly bold and athletic stance. Reportedly, when Mr. Toyoda saw the resulting model, his response was, "It looks cool. Don't change a thing."

"The car you see now," Toyota corporate manager of car marketing Rick Lofaso tells us, "is that sketch."

The Avalon seems as though it's been around forever, perhaps because our grandparents have been, but it was first launched in 1995, the short end of just one generation ago. At the time, Toyota was known for small cars with bucket seats and floor-mounted shifts. Along came the Avalon, with a bench seat and column shifter. The reason was simple enough: baby boomer customers were growing older, and so were their parents. Toyota



#### AVALON DRIVE #1

**2013 Toyota Avalon XLE Touring  
3.5L DOHC 24-valve dual VVT-i V6  
FWD / 6-speed ECT-I automatic**

From the live oak countryside to beautiful, wide open, curvy and hilly two-lane highways, the hill country around San Antonio, reminiscent of Austin's hill country not that far to the north, is a great place to get a first taste of the new Toyota Avalon, under the blue skies of a Texas early winter's day.

wanted to keep its customer base as they grew up and grew older. The idea worked, as Toyota sold 70,000 Avalons the first year.

But the more that segment filled up with younger-thinking boomers—a generation of rockin' elders—the more they needed to adjust, just as Cadillac has been doing for over a decade and Lincoln is now striving toward.

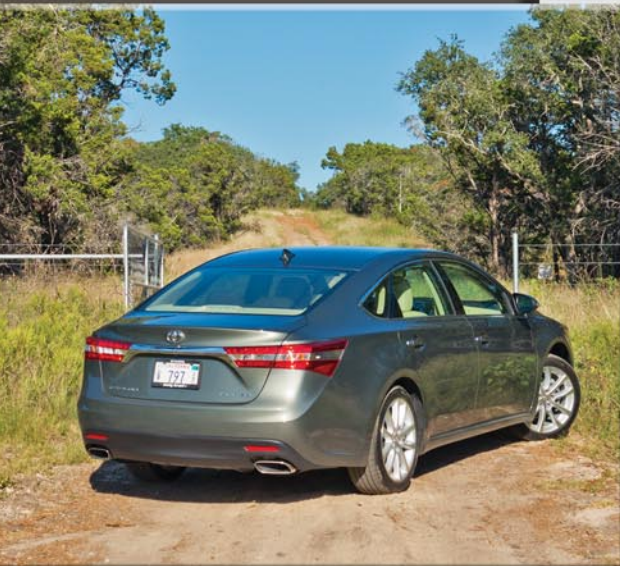
#### NEW MARKETS AND NEW MARVELS

Toyota expanded its focus group research for the new Avalon, still showing it to older buyers—the same folks who were buying it when they were five, ten, fifteen years younger—but also to younger boomers and Gen Xers. They've been happy with the reaction. Anecdotally, one younger shopper commented on the styling's sense of "exuberance," which fits the company's goals.

These buyers showed even more enthusiasm over the interior—remarking on its spaciousness, comfort and clean layout of instruments. They particularly focused on dashboard stitching, heated/ventilated seats, and the "futuristic" look and feel of the center stack's IntelliTouch capacitive switches. They welcomed more front and rear headroom, as well as rear legroom. Another potential buyer said the car "made me feel like

KEEP RIGHT >>





**AVALON DRIVE #2**  
**2013 Toyota Avalon Limited Hybrid**  
**2.5L DOHC 16-valve dual VVT-i 4-cylinder**  
**ECCVT continuously variable automatic**

Lower left: Mexican tile art welcomes us to town and sends us back on our way, at the San Antonio airport (SAT). The air route from San Antonio back to Phoenix takes us above El Paso, Texas, here looking south into much larger Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico, with the US-Mexico border brightly lit across the lower part of the photo.

a VIP." So the company says to them, welcome to the next level—entry luxury, Toyota style.

Tech systems abound, of course, including a segment-leading ten airbags, Blind Spot Monitor with Cross-Traffic alert—the first Toyota sedan to receive this—and other electronic handling technologies. New sound dampening includes acoustic glass, aerodynamic door handles and wipers that rest below the hood line. These wipers also perform a very neat trick—they twist while in motion, keeping them pressed against the glass better than any we've seen. Breakthrough. We want an Avalon, just to have those, and it doesn't even rain here very often.

An unsurprising addition to the Avalon this year is a hybrid model, while a surprise is their expansion into the livery and chauffeured limo market. With the demise of the Lincoln Town Car, a number of manufacturers have their eye on this, but it's a testament to Toyota's confidence in both the luxury and spaciousness of the new Avalon, to expand here. The Avalon Livery package is built off the base XLE trim level, with black paint, black leather, rear heated seats and rear climate controls. Lincoln hopes to move their Town Car customers to the MKT, but livery complains about the lack of a trunk. With 16 cubic feet of cargo capacity, the Avalon delivers here.

The Toyota Avalon occupies the Premium Midsize

segment, which is expected to grow seven percent to nearly 400,000 units in 2013. Avalon's annual sales goal of 70,000 would account for 17.5 percent of the segment.

**MODELS AND MILEAGE**

On sale by the time you read this, the new Avalon also improves handling and fuel economy. Suspension and drivetrain have been updated for improved stability during cornering, a more responsive steering feel, paddle shifters and a sport mode. Or leave the sport mode off, savor the spacious and quiet interior, and those proverbial grandparents will still love their new Avalon.

Toyota is claiming best-in-class combined fuel economy for a V6 in the new Avalon, as well as best-in-class 40 MPG for the new Avalon Hybrid—the first full hybrid in the premium midsize segment—meeting or beating most of the best MPG in any segment.

There are four V6 models (base XLE, XLE Premium, XLE Touring and Limited) and three Hybrid models (the same as those from Premium on up). All XLE models are configured monospec, which reduces obstacles en route to signing the dotted line, picking up a cue from Scion. Only the Avalon Limited offers an option package.

As mentioned at the start, the base XLE starts at \$30,990, which is \$2,205 less than the prior entry level model. An XLE Premium, at \$33,195, matches the prior base model's price but includes more features. The XLE Touring (more premium than the Premium) adds 18-inch alloy wheels, paddle shifters, and Toyota's Entune system with nav, at \$35,500. The richly-appointed Limited trim level starts at \$39,650, and with every possible option (plus delivery) totals just under \$44,000.

Prices for the Avalon Hybrid represent the smallest dollar differential ever for a hybrid versus its gasoline sibling—the same thing its Lexus ES cousin had achieved earlier last year. An Avalon Hybrid XLE Premium (the lowest hybrid trim) starts at \$35,555, Touring at \$37,250 and Limited at \$41,400.

Toyota expects the V6 Avalon to account for 80 percent of sales, and the Avalon Hybrid 20 percent. With the Lexus ES, the projected numbers had been 75 gas and 25 hybrid. At that car's launch drive in Dallas, we had called the ES "a comfortable and straightforward car, offering power that—between the various modes and with the extra grunt from the electric portion—is almost indistinguishable from the gasoline model ... For a couple of grand more, you can top 40 MPG in the hybrid. Lexus expects 25 percent (hybrid) sales, but unless that couple of grand makes all the difference, we could easily see the hybrid accounting for 75 percent of the mix." Customers may well prove otherwise, but from our perspective, we find the same with the Avalon—the Hybrid offers an awful lot—including torque, fuel economy and even arguably a stronger spot in the resale market five years hence—for just a little more cash at purchase time, and really takes away nothing.

The Toyota Avalon is getting a lot closer to Lexus ES is quality, fitment and style, while still costing thousands less. Compare it to the GS, and the differential is much more dramatic. It's one thing to see how far up the scale an Avalon is from a Yaris. But it's quite another to realize how close the Premium segment is to Luxury.

Take that knowledge for a drive, and don't forget to include the nicely priced Hybrid in your comparison. ■

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# ACTIVE DUTY

By Larry Edsall  
Photos by Joe Sage



The Local Motors factory in Chandler (new cars in progress at upper right) was the site of the Carpendent.com 9th Annual Active Lifestyle Vehicle Awards for 2013, for the second year in a row.

The Ram 4x4 Laramie pickup, shown (left) traversing Local Motors' torture track, was winner of the broad \$35,000-and-up Luxury Off-Road category.

Vehicle finalists also included such gems as the Infiniti JX35 and Mazda CX-5 shown at right.

Actual active lifestylers were able to evaluate the full range of finalists fully informed by top-flight representatives on hand from each manufacturer.

A few years ago, a major automaker refused to call its sports utility vehicle by that name. Instead, it insisted its SUV was actually an SAV, a sports activity vehicle.

That its SAV was really no different from everyone else's SUV was beside the point. So was the fact that most SUVs had nothing to do with sports or activity. They simply were big, gas-guzzling trucks with back seats instead of pickup beds and were disguised to look like something ideal for pulling a popup trailer or for campground or for trekking to a hiking trailhead or for hauling a bunch of bicycles to some shady lane well away from the horrors of city traffic and air pollution.

Because of their truck-based architecture, SUVs also generated a lot of profits for their producers.

But shouldn't they also live up to the promise of their mission?

A trio of athletes who also worked for newspapers, magazines and websites thought they should, and nine years ago they launched the Active Lifestyle Vehicle of the Year awards. Their idea was to encourage automakers to produce vehicles which befit the truly active lifestyles of people who regularly ran, biked, paddled and pursued other such active hobbies.

Sure, there were various car-of-the-year awards programs, but theirs would be different because they would involve bonafide athletes in the selection process.

One of those three founders is Arizona resident Nina Russin, who not only runs marathons but was a licensed auto mechanic and is a leading automotive journalist formerly for the Chicago Sun-Times newspaper and now for the [carspondent.com](http://carspondent.com) website.

Influenced by her involvement, for the last two years the finals of the ALV awards have been staged in Phoenix, at the Local Motors assembly center—and the parking lot next to the building—just across I-10 from Firebird International Raceway.

Early each year, automakers are invited to enter their newest vehicles for ALV consideration, in one of seven categories. A panel of automotive journalists evaluate those vehicles, and their votes determine the vehicles eligible for the ALV finals.

At the finals, held in October, active Phoenix area athletes are invited to spend a Saturday learning about the cars, driving the cars, and voting to determine which cars best meet their lifestyles.



KEEP RIGHT >>





Kia Soul was top pick in the Urban category.

Winner of the Best Value On-Road category was the all-new Hyundai Santa Fe Sport (which does well off-pavement, too—see our launch report in the November/December 2012 issue).

Jeep® maintains its impeccable creds, with its Wrangler taking top honors in the Best Value Off-Road category (see our March/April 2012 issue).

Since no one vehicle can fit everyone's specific needs, awards are given in seven categories, and a team of athletes were assigned to each category. Manufacturers' representatives or product specialists—not sales personnel—are invited to share details on their vehicles. Then the cars, trucks, SUVs and crossovers are available for the athletes to drive on paved roads and, for those in the off-road categories, on the Local Motors off-road course.

For the auto manufacturers, they are exposed to what amounts to a focus group of athletes, who provide feedback not only on an automaker's product but on those of its top competitors in each category.

At the end of the day, votes are tabulated and trophies awarded.

"This is different from running," said Susan Lichtsinn, who said that what she and others on the Native Beast Running Club would have been doing this Saturday morning would be running. Instead, they were driving and riding and evaluating.

"We get to drive a lot of different cars that we wouldn't drive otherwise," she added as she rode in the back seat of a Chevrolet Sonic, one of the vehicles being considered in the Urban category.

"And," she continued, "there's no one trying to make you buy the car."

By the way, Susan owns a Toyota Prius. As she rode, another Native Beast runner, Wenjing He, drove the Sonic, and their club's coach, Dave Allison, sat in the front passenger's seat.

Their conversation was focused on the various features of the Sonic, its dynamic capabilities, and how it compared to the other vehicles in the category.

Over the course of the day, a dozen or more athletes would evaluate each vehicle. Each person could award a vehicle as many as four points in a variety of categories. The athletes' points were totaled, averaged and compared to the points from the journalist jury, to determine the overall winners—the vehicles that best fit with an active lifestyle.

After several years' absence, while the company concentrated on SUVs, the Audi allroad (see our November/December 2012 issue) returns and wins the crown in the Luxury On-Road category.

"Green" means different things to different people, and in this case Volkswagen's extremely popular TDI diesel walks away with the Green trophy.

The new-for-2013 Mercedes-Benz GL (see our September/October 2012 issue), has been winning one accolade after another. In this case, its GL 350 BlueTEC diesel grabbed the ALV Family award.

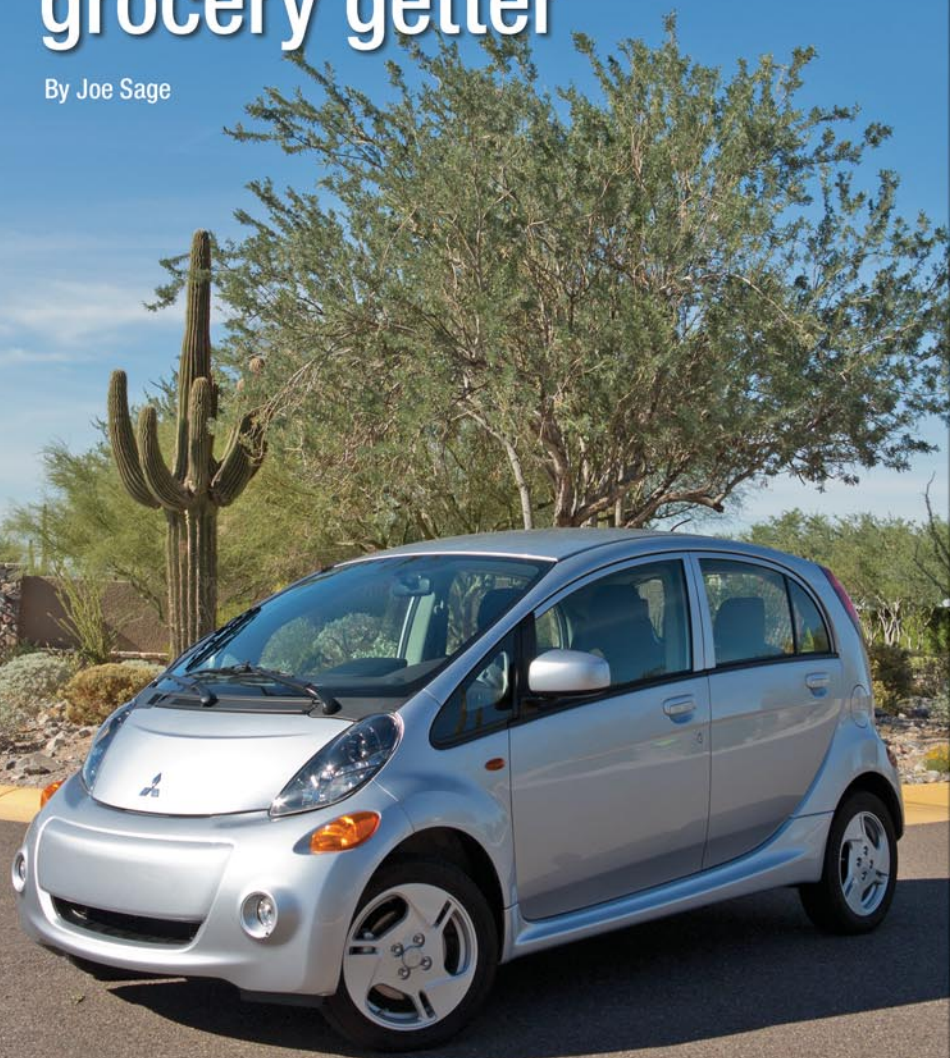
The 2013 Active Lifestyle Vehicles of the Year categories and winners are:

- URBAN:** small vehicles at \$20,000 or less:  
**Winner.....Kia Soul**  
 Other finalists: Chevrolet Sonic Hatchback, Mitsubishi Outlander Sport, Toyota Prius c
- BEST VALUE ON-ROAD:** vehicles at \$34,999 or less, designed primarily for driving on pavement:  
**Winner.....Hyundai Santa Fe Sport**  
 Other finalists: Toyota Prius v, Kia Sportage, Scion FR-S, Subaru XV Crosstrek
- BEST VALUE OFF-ROAD:** vehicles at \$34,999 or less, designed for use on or off pavement:  
**Winner.....Jeep Wrangler**  
 Other finalists: Honda CR-V, Nissan Xterra, Nissan Pathfinder
- LUXURY ON-ROAD:** vehicles at \$35,000 or more, designed primarily for driving on pavement:  
**Winner.....Audi allroad**  
 Other finalists: Dodge Durango, Infiniti JX, Volvo XC60, Volkswagen Touareg, Mercedes-Benz GLK
- LUXURY OFF-ROAD:** vehicles at \$35,000 or more, designed for use on or off pavement:  
**Winner.....Ram 4x4 Laramie**  
 Other finalist: Jeep Grand Cherokee
- GREEN:** vehicles with electric, hybrid, clean diesel or other alternative powertrains:  
**Winner.....Volkswagen Jetta SportWagen TDI**  
 Other finalists: Mazda CX-5, Toyota Prius Plug-In, Toyota Camry Hybrid
- FAMILY:** vehicles that offer three rows of seating:  
**Winner.....Mercedes-Benz GL 350 BlueTEC**  
 Other finalists: Chrysler Town & Country, Mazda5, Kia Sorento, GMC Acadia



# Pikes Peak hillclimb contender and potent grocery getter

By Joe Sage



**W**e first drove the Mitsubishi i, or i-MiEV, in the basement of Cobo Hall, at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, in January 2009. That level had been given over to alternative fuel vehicles, including an indoor track replete with greenery, waterfalls and fresh flowers (as winter raged outdoors, upstairs). The whole setup reinforced the feeling that these vehicles represented a fringe element at that time.

Flash forward to the present, and we discovered just how much more mainstream such a car has become.

MiEV originally stood for "Mitsubishi in-wheel-motor Electric Vehicle," as that is exactly how the company developed its earlier electrics. The new i-MiEV (a carry-over 2012 model) does not have in-wheel motors, though. Rather, it has an electric motor mounted on the rear axle. This placement does not quite turn it into a Boxster or Ferrari, but it does provide great balance and handling.

Despite that configuration change, the MiEV name has stuck for all Mitsubishi's electrics, so the "i" in this MiEV is said to stand for "innovative." As they all are.

As for the freestanding "i" model name (or the first "i" in "i-MiEV"), that is either just a name, or brought to us by the Department of Redundancy Department.

## i-MiEV powertrain and price

The Mitsubishi i-MiEV is a 100 percent zero-emissions electric vehicle. (Yes, that means zero tailpipe emissions, and yes, there is a power plant involved somewhere.) The car has a 49-watt asynchronous AC motor, powered by a 16kWh lithium-ion battery pack, which in turn is chargeable via a 120v/240v onboard system.

Power is transmitted to the wheels via a single fixed-reduction-gear transmission. The drive selector has three positions: D, Eco and B. An energy meter keeps track of whether you are draining or charging power, and recharging is augmented through regenerative braking, as on familiar gasoline-electric hybrids.

Besides seeming unusual four years ago, and not so unusual now, the Mitsubishi i seemed very small four years ago, but less so now. It comes with a full complement of airbags—advanced dual fronts, front side-mounted and side curtain—as well as adjustable headrests, child seat latches and tire pressure monitoring. Add advanced electronics, such as active stability control (ASC) and traction control, plus an anti-theft alarm and immobilizer system. Specific to its electric status, the i includes a high voltage cut-off system and an acoustic vehicle alert system (AVAS) so pedestrians can hear it coming. The car weighs just 2595 pounds, with stopping power coming from front discs, ABS, electronic brakeforce distribution and brake assist.

Our i-MiEV with SE package stickered for \$31,125 (the non-SE base is \$29,125). Our test car had one Premium Package for \$2790, including a 40GB nav, music and real-time traffic server, Fuse hands-free link system, steering-wheel-mounted audio controls, rear camera, heated side mirrors, plus a quick-charge port and battery warming system you might think would be standard. With \$850 destination, it's out the door at \$34,765. However, that is before a federal tax credit of \$7,500 and any applicable incentives at the state level.

So think low-to-mid-20s (Mitsubishi states a "starting net value of \$21,625" or \$23,625 for the SE, after the \$7500 credit, but before options).

The SE is very well equipped, from leather-wrapped wheel and shifter, to 15-inch alloy wheels, to a 360W 8-speaker deluxe audio system. With plenty of electricity on board, not only are power windows and doors, auto headlights, heated seats, rear window defroster and such amenities included, but it has remote keyless entry (although not keyless start, which we wish it did). Rear seats have a 50-50 split fold-down feature, creating significant cargo volume.

## First impressions of the Mitsubishi i

Our test i-MiEV was delivered by trailer, so we would not need to worry about any charge being already used up, and it would be returned by trailer, so we would not necessarily have to worry about running it down and needing time to recharge it. Recharging takes an estimated 22.5 hours using 120-volt household or office current, and we would only have the car for 48 hours or so. This made trailering a big plus for our drill, but it doesn't have much bearing on actual ownership.

Engineers work hard on the acoustic presence of internal combustion engines and exhaust, and they've been working hard on electrics. Our i-MiEV made a peculiarly different sound when being driven, noticeable as soon as it rolled off the delivery truck.

As we entered and sat down, we noted the interior is huge, much larger than its generally cute presence might suggest. We have become used to some smaller cars over the past few years—way smaller. This little electric is certainly bigger than a smart car, a Scion iQ, even a Chevrolet Spark. It's a four-door, which is very convenient, with a back hatch adding even more space. Knee room is a little tight, front and rear, though we still have a couple of inches between our legs and the wheel. It does not feel like a long distance driver.

The car has some cute and clever design details, such as the inside of the doors—a circular design, non-linear compared to the path of travel, but appropriate to the car's spirit. The instrument panel and center screen are well implemented, and we like its three easy knobs for climate control and simple arrangement of vents. Everything is well positioned, and controls are clear: you can get in this vehicle in the dark, and lights, turn signals and basic readouts are all just as you would expect. We easily tuned a few radio stations, and audio had solid bass, especially for this small space. Speakers are stylish. The A-pillars are an inverted Y-shape, with tiny windows in them. One windshield wiper lies flat, and one stands up vertically against the right A-pillar—a look that reminds us of the front of a high-speed train.

## Firing up the i-MiEV

The car arrived reading 55 miles of range, although rated at 62 or so—due to cooler weather? Off we go.

The wheels look small, but 15-inchers were common in the not-horribly-distant past. We back off a curb at an angle, but we do that in big cars, too.

In our first couple of blocks, we pass a couple of roofers standing by their pickup truck, the first time we notice that this odd little car doesn't even raise a ruffle.

Is this little electric car fun to drive? When we had

driven it less than a quarter-mile, we hit our first roundabout—and just had to go around it another time. It was like a carnival ride. The i-MiEV handled well and turned well, staying nice and level. And its steering feels more connected and secure than a great many other electric implementations lately. This was simultaneously seeming like a real kick, and like much more of a normal car than we may have expected.

The i-MiEV has all the torque of any electric car, from the moment you step on it. So we turned onto the boulevard and gunned it. Visibility is huge. The windshield is huge. We mentioned the peek-through A-pillars, and mirrors are larger than average, inside and out. The cabin is tall, with plenty of glass all around.

We shared our first traffic light with an Infiniti QX56, a Toyota Tundra and a Maserati. Still, it does not turn heads—amazingly, to us. We were in an area that was crawling with Hummers five years ago, yet while some glance, nobody marvels and most don't even look.

The i-MiEV is great fun to drive. Before it arrived, we might have thought we'd put up with this thing for a couple of days and drive when we had to. But it turns out to be something we wish would never run out of charge, because it would be fun to drive all day and all night.

The car is tall enough and quick enough that we had no problem facing off a Tahoe and an F-Series pickup that might otherwise have gladly cut us off in most any vehicle. We passed a Prius and an old Porsche 944 Turbo at another point and got a kick out of the newness (and performance) of our i's technology versus either of those. In fact, with the torque of our electric, as a red light turned green, we dusted that 944 Turbo. We know he could dust us in the long haul, but that was a kick.

The relatively smaller size of the wheels revealed itself during a lane change on a surface street, and during a quick slalom we performed to doublecheck that. Most drivers wouldn't feel it. The car still tracks very well, but what we do feel is there on the straights, more than in a turn. We ultimately rate this as a directness, not wandering. We note that the brakes are very strong.

An electric car of course has no hot engine water to heat the cabin. We were getting some heat but not a lot while standing at a red light, so we pushed max, and the heat started blowing. But when the light turned green and we stepped on the pedal, the heat stopped. The summer equivalent of that might be a big downside, in our extreme climate, but for now we can only wonder.

Around town, the suspension is smooth, strong and firm, and the system is controlling things very well: they've definitely put some work into mitigating any front-drive characteristics.

We decide at one point that we have put our finger on the AVAS hum when in motion—"reminiscent of what you might hear at the dentist's office right before something uncomfortable happens," reads the logbook.

Besides the AVAS, we note sound effects when in reverse, and—loudest of all—a robotized BZZZZZZZ! as we dip down the righthand mirror while parking.

But mostly the car is near-silent. The trickiest thing is

KEEP RIGHT >>



## Mitsubishi i-MiEV gets 2nd place finish at Pikes Peak Hill Climb

**M**itsubishi's electric vehicle racing team had a strong debut on the challenging 12.42-mile, 156-turn course of the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb, grabbing a second-place finish in the EV class with its racing prototype Mitsubishi i-MiEV Evolution. Its lap time of 10 min 30.850 sec earned 8th place overall, out of 170 vehicles entered (with 132 crossing the finish line).

Driven by Mitsubishi factory test driver and two-time Dakar Rally winner Hiroshi Masuoka, the i-MiEV Evolution was designed specifically for Pikes Peak. With radical carbon-fiber bodywork, tube-frame chassis, advanced AWC all-wheel drive and a unique tri-motor configuration, the i-MiEV Evolution uses key components from the production i-MiEV, including motor, lithium-ion batteries and MCU.

The team also entered a production 2012 i-MiEV driven by SCORE International pro off-road racer Becca Gordon, who finished 6th in the EV class at 15:10.557. Fitted with safety gear and modified front and rear bumpers, this was the only street-legal, 100 percent electric-powered production car entered in the EV class this year.

"The Mitsubishi i-MiEV was awesome. It produced a lot more power—especially torque—than I had expected. The handling was also very good because so much of the car's weight—the electric motor and lithium-ion batteries—sits so low in the chassis. This allowed me to carry much more speed into the corners than I expected, and the torque from the electric motor helps to propel the car out of the corners. The car is really peppy," said Gordon. "Considering my car was 100 percent stock, I can definitely see all-electric cars succeeding in motorsports."

Visit [YouTube.com/MitsubishiCars](http://YouTube.com/MitsubishiCars) to see the Mitsubishi team at the 2012 Pikes Peak International Hill Climb, and [Facebook.com/Mitsubishi](http://Facebook.com/Mitsubishi) for full event coverage. ■



to remember to turn it off, put it in park and take out the key. It's so quiet, the temptation is there to step up and walk away as you might from your desk.

### The electric range game

We loaded the Blink app into our smartphone, to check for charging stations in the area. And they are everywhere—restaurants, AAA offices, a Maricopa County air quality office, some at a nearby airport, basically all over the place. For anyone who doubts there is an EV infrastructure, this should be a big wakeup call. Thank Phoenix-based ECOtality for the progress and this app.

After our first simple supper run, the estimated range readout had dropped from 55 to 45. We checked distance and had driven 8.5 miles, so with simple rounding, that is very close to linear and accurate.

Back at the office, we backed in to park, probably a good habit because it puts the plug closer to an outlet.

(It is at this point that we discovered the shifter takes some getting used to, in search of reverse and park. And there seems to be no way to verify what gear you're in at night, without turning on the ceiling light. You will of course learn the pattern by heart, when you own one.)

In the morning, we found that our range had dropped from 45 to 38 miles just while parked overnight—then to 37 while we sat recording those few words.

After our second run, our projected range was down to 16 miles. We had driven 15 miles, so on top of our earlier 8.5, and starting at an officially estimated 62, we should have been at 38.5. But that original 62 had never existed for us (the car arrived with 55 indicated). And from parking with a balance of 45 the first evening, we awoke and restarted with a balance of 37. Take 15 off that, and we should have been at 22 but were at 16. And so on. Bottom line is that we had 16/55ths of our

original charge left, or used 71 percent of what we had at the start. For 23.5 miles of travel. This extrapolates to only 33 miles total, on a charge. Clearly there are a lot of variables in play here, but based on that formula, you could still use this car to get to work about 15 miles away and still stop at the cleaners on the way home. Knock on wood. A little less distance, and/or a little recharging while at work, and things get better—and with 240v available, all the moreso—to the point that you could forget about range entirely, most of the time. But these are the general terms of the game.

We ran one more errand, about three miles away, and arrived with 13 miles of range left—a linear result. Most of our power losses seem to be while we are parked (therefore a doubly good time to plug in, if you can). At this point, we put the drive selector into Eco. You can feel a minor drag as soon as you shift from D to Eco, but we never thought about it again—no apparent downside, so if there's an upside, we would suggest operating this way if you can. We drove a quarter block and noted our range had already dropped to 10 miles, however, so we headed for a plug-in.

Or you can try the B mode. This biases the system toward more regenerative braking—at the expense of what, they do not say—intended to increase battery replenishment while not sapping any power output.

Either the Eco or the B mode is a useful tool to have, basically giving you the inverse of your own lead foot.

Despite this being our only full day with the car, we parked it to recharge, from 10:20am until 6pm, bringing it from a low of about 5, back up to a projected range of 26 miles (pro-rata, exactly the promised charging time). We then drove 7.5 miles, after which that balance had only dropped to 24. Hmm. Clearly, there can be surprises both ways. It wouldn't be that significant, if it weren't for the fully-charged total being in double digits.

### You owe yourself a test drive

The Mitsubishi i-MiEV is both a technological tour de force and a comfortable, familiar driving experience, all rolled into one. If they put this same technology into a more conventionally styled package, sales might go through the roof. But nobody should be shy about something less conventional, in this case.

The i-MiEV has a style that's equal parts geeky and cool. Geeky of course seems appropriate to this vehicle, in a way, so that's mostly cool as well. Put it all together, and the car is completely cool.

To whatever degree this is a \$35,000 vehicle (pre-tax-credit), there are a great many other machines you could look at. But as a \$21k vehicle (with tax credits and no options), it's very compelling. And with so many novel attributes to be considered, it really shouldn't just come down to the money, anyway.

As we drove the i-MiEV, over three calendar days that felt like more (and we wished were more), we definitely got in the groove. On our smooth, modern highways, rolling through the night sky, driving this car—instead of old cast iron and boiling oil—feels absolutely perfect. Its confident stance completes the feeling.

We've established that charging the vehicle need not be an obstacle to ownership. The only obstacle is that everybody needs to test drive one. With a little wheel time, sales would increase exponentially. ■

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# It's like it never really left.

By Joe Sage

After some 75 years on the face of the planet, the Volkswagen Beetle requires no introduction and no explanation. Well, almost.

Forget that capital-N, capital-B "New Beetle" of the past decade or so. This small-n, capital-B, brand new "Beetle" connects more directly to the original Volkswagen Type 1, commonly known as the small-b beetle or bug, which spread out to populate the world's roads in record numbers from 1938 to 2003 (or 1949 to 1979 in the US).

The prior New Beetle was a lot of fun as a concept car (the Concept One, at the 1994 shows), and it was also fun when Volkswagen decided to put it into production (from 1997 to 2011)—one of the first in a retro craze that brought us new Mustangs and Challengers, as well as retro-derivatives such as the Plymouth Prowler and Cruiser and Chevrolet SSR and HHR.

But now, a full 19 years after the Concept One, we find this newest model refreshing. While it maintains the same basic, modern front-engine layout of the New Beetle (as opposed to the old Type 1 bug), its bodywork is now more reminiscent of the original.

These evolutionary distinctions are even more obvious when comparing the hardtop versions (see the final page of this article). For our first block of time with the newest Beetle, however, we received the convertible.

## Engines, pricing and MPG

Volkswagen made its mark in the United States originally through a formula of simplicity and economy. The Beetle still delivers both. There are three engines available, of which the third, a diesel, just joined the lineup. Our test car came with the 170-hp 2.5L five-cylinder gasoline engine and 6-speed automatic with Tiptronic and Sport mode—the only transmission available in the convertible with this engine, though the hardtop 2.5L also offers a 6-speed manual. The other gasoline engine, a 200-hp four-cylinder 2.0L Turbo, is available with a DSG dual-clutch automatic or 6-speed manual.

Real world fuel mileage is likely to be indistinguishable among the hardtops, based on city/highway ratings of 22/29 or 22/31 (automatic or manual) for the 2.5L, and 21/30 or 22/30 (automatic or manual) for the 2-liter

With issues of time and moderate complexity, and with it gobbling up trunk space when stowed, the boot is likely to be left at home by many owners. We gave it a good try, but ultimately did without. The car looks good with the top down, with or without the boot, and without it, drop time is extremely fast—just over 9 seconds.

Turbo. The TDI turbocharged 2.0L diesel hardtop—available with DSG or 6-speed manual—tops the mileage charts, at 29/39 or 28/41 MPG city/highway (automatic or manual), and its 140-hp engine delivers where a diesel always will—in torque, with 236 lb-ft, against the gasoline models' 177 or 207 lb-ft.

Mileage drops in most cases in the convertibles, due to a little weight and a degree of aerodynamics, though still achieving as high as 41 MPG highway in the diesel manual. Our particular tester—the 2.5L Convertible, automatic only—is rated at 21/27 MPG city/highway.

The hardtop Beetle—they call it the Beetle Coupe, but really, in a world full of coupes, there is only one bug—starts at \$19,995 and the Beetle Convertible at \$24,995 (with our car's 2.5L engine). Option packages (including '50s, '60s and '70s style packages we saw at the LA Auto Show) can add as much as \$3600 on top of that. The 2.0L Turbo starts about \$3000 higher—\$27,795—and offers up to \$4600 in packages. The TDI has a base just \$100 higher than the Turbo, and option packages are tamer.

Our test car came with no Monroney sticker, but had optional Technology, Sound and Navigation touchscreen features, which together sticker at \$28,495. An alarm, very useful in a ragtop, is still an option after those. A door sill protector can say Volkswagen, Beetle or Bug—that last one surprising since Beetle is the formal name of the car, but we approve. Individual options can add another \$2700 (we didn't tally every item in ours), so with destination charge you can approach \$32,000.

## Life inside the bug

From the get-go, we found that the Beetle is roomy, with unusually clean and clear instruments and controls. The car seems notably large and surprisingly wide inside. Despite a visible reduction in height from the prior model, the roof in our ragtop left several inches of headroom, even for over-six-footers.

Our logbook gave mixed reviews to some features. Our car's seats had leather surfaces and attractive stitching, but manual operation, including pump-operated height adjustment with not a lot of range. We did have push-button start, though it often took a couple of pushes. Mirror controls seemed the opposite of intuitive, as far as left and right are concerned, as was the convertible top control (press up to go down and vice versa), and the center armrest is in conflict with the handbrake. The mirrors could be bigger, both inside and out. That kind of thing.

But mostly we loved its straightforward nature. Most of the instrument panel and center stack controls, including the screen interface, are intuitive, complete and nicely uncomplicated. Headlights have a simple on/off switch. There is some redundancy between touch and knobs, with everything right about where it needs to be. A notable exception might be setting tone for audio, which took some digging in both the interface and the printed manual. It is context-aware, always a huge plus, but kind of buried and not that intuitive. Once conquered, though, it gave us pretty decent sound.

At night, subtle blue rings of light around the speakers in the doors are a nice touch, and they provide a sec-

ondary glow to parts of the door panels.

Power window implementation is well executed: you can operate four individually, or just stay on the front ones and the back ones will follow, a simple pleasure that could be easily enough skipped by lesser engineers.

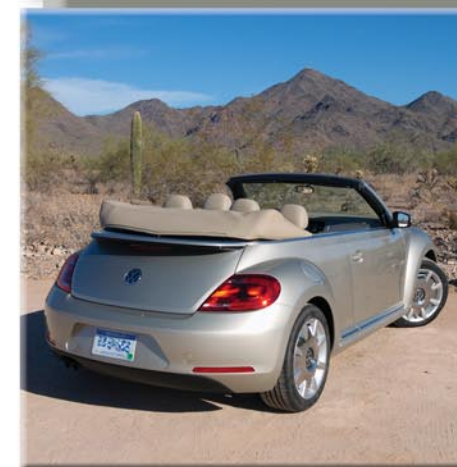
Our test car did not have a backup camera, but the Beetle Convertible does have a heated glass rear window, and that helps immensely, especially in the nasty, window-fogging weather we had for some of our week.

We found the convertible boot not much fun to install really well, and it consumes much of the trunk when stowed. It's intended to give an elegant look, but is not an equally elegant implementation. We suspect many owners will just leave it on the garage shelf until resale time. The car has a nice casual feel when just dropped as-is, anyway. We generally benchmark 15 seconds as a decent time to drop a ragtop, 20 for a retractable hardtop. The Beetle's top drops in about 9.5 seconds, with one button, no latch, and the windows following along—hard to beat. As for a total involving the boot, we didn't even try timing that. Save it for the car show.

## Beetle on the road

The Beetle drives well. It feels very solid and road-connected. It's plenty peppy once in motion, though we initially noted it could be a little slow off the line. We ended up attributing that perhaps not so much to power as to shift. If we were focused on maneuvers—entering traffic at speed from a right-turn standstill—we might not notice a lag, but other times we would.

With the transmission in S instead of D, we were hard pressed to notice a big difference, in motion, though when starting up—which had been the weak





point—the S setting may come through a bit. To use the manumatic function, however, you have to be in D.

On one downhill run ending at a stoplight, we noticed that the car's pep might slightly overpower its brakes. The 2.5L comes with 11.3x1.0-inch vented front and 10.7x0.4-inch solid rear discs, while the 2.0L Turbo, which weighs just 66 pounds more, has 12.3-inch fronts. (The TDI weighs more than either, but has the same 10.7-inchers as our 2.5L.)

We weren't expecting to particularly notice the fuel mileage, with mostly routine driving in about a 20-mile radius—no drives across the Valley or into the hills—but we ran the tank down quickly. In fact, we had noticed, after our first 5 or 6 miles in the car, that the fuel gauge already sat at 3/4 tank. The original delivery drive was probably about 30 miles, which should have used as

**The pattern of fingerprints on the touchscreen (already, at 1000 miles) is hard to ignore, but it does represent a clever interface pattern, well organized and quick to navigate. All in all, the instrumentation is refreshingly straightforward.**

**It doesn't rain much in Arizona, but when it does, it can pour, and it's good to know your vehicle doesn't leak—especially your ragtop. Some cold, wet days with the Beetle Convertible really put this to the test, which it passed with a solid A-plus. (It was still nice to have the sun come back out, though.)**



little as one gallon—call it two with a restart and our 6 miles—and it's a 14.5-gallon tank. At a reasonable average of 25 MPG (against its 21/27 rating), that should give us over 360 miles. Based on clues at hand—the trip odo was at 202 when we hit about 1/8 tank and was likely set at the outset (earlier would only be worse)—our average seems to be just under 16 MPG. Our methodology is less than fully scientific, again because we weren't expecting to study this—until it caught our attention. And we do tend to drive aggressively. But this seems to suggest additional real world study.

We remained mightily impressed with the Beetle's handling: it conveyed no drift, torque or other front-drive downsides. Of course we wish it were a rear-drive, and a mid-engine adaptation of the rear-engine/rear-drive formula of the original bug—yeah, a \$20,000 Boxster—but it delivers well as is. We found an excellent combination of a feeling of open air with road connectedness, solid comfort and even an isolated cabin. You feel the road and you don't, at the same time—a perfect balance.

### Hey, handsome

Our facing page shows how this newest Volkswagen Beetle evokes elements of its forebears. Automotive stylists are under considerable pressure when they revise and modernize something with a lot of heritage, all the moreso when that has been applied to the vehicle already. This one has been masterfully done. The fact that the final product seems to have happened so naturally just underscores this achievement.

The Beetle Convertible is a handsome looking vehicle. There is a crisp, somewhat angular shape to the soft top, with a neat crease across the back and longitudinal seams that align with the gaps of the trunk lid.

We noticed the Beetle has surprising commonality with a VW Golf, when parked side by side—its dimensions, windshield angle, size and even the shape from the nose to the doors—giving it an aggressively hunkered-down attitude while still preserving the personality and shape of the Beetle. You certainly wouldn't have said this about the old New Beetle.

Driving a Beetle Convertible always puts a smile on your face. And having a top that looks just as good up, and which drops in just over 9 seconds, trumps all.

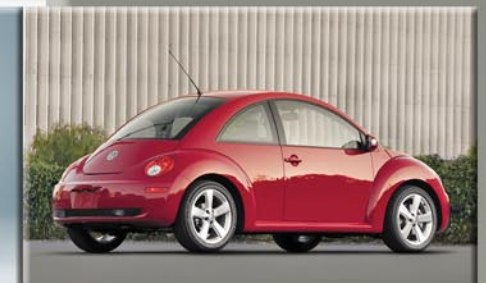
They nailed the style. Retro is nice, but timelessness can't be faked. As much fun as the old New Beetle was as an exercise and even a product, the new just-plain-Beetle hits the nail more squarely on the head. ■



**We recalled what a large chunk of rear visibility was taken out by the dropped top on older bugs. With that in mind, we had noticed most of VW's first photos and videos of the new Beetle seemed to shy away from showing it (top left, this page). In retrospect, we realize they apparently just hadn't finished developing the boot yet, at that time. We think many Beetles will still be run this way. And as demonstrated by these promotional photos, that's not such a bad thing, anyway, is it?**



**Rows two and three show the original Type 1 bug and the past decade's New Beetle. Despite plenty of style details pulled from the old New Beetle, the newest Beetle (convertible in top row and hardtop in bottom row on this page) more successfully captures the spirit of the original, while adding what many suggest is a higher level of testosterone.**



**More subtle, but apparent to our eye, is an overall feel of common DNA between the newest Beetle and the more mainstream VW Golf and GTI lineup.**

**The biggest key in the Beetle's styling is a return to more of a two-box treatment, with a more vertical windshield (despite the slipperiness these times mostly dictate) defining a separation between the hood and the cabin. This is evocative of the Type 1 beetle and noticeably different from the almost continuous arc of the prior New Beetle. It also puts the driver in a more forward position relative to the windshield, if not to the chassis itself, eliminating the old New Beetle's feeling of a four-foot-deep dashboard and a driver position halfway back in the cabin. We see continuity, evolution and more firmly grounded homage to Beetle roots, all in one.**





# Black Grilled Beauty

By Joe Sage - Photos by Randall Bohl

**“W**e found the car in Georgia,” says Beverly Brower. She and husband Kefton were on vacation, and this 1935 Pontiac two-door sedan was offered by sale—in running, driving condition—by a high school principal in the area. “The first time we saw it, I just fell in love with it,” she says.

Its paint was two-tone blue, with dark fenders and a light blue roof, clean chrome and a tweed interior.

## FOR WANT OF A NAIL...

Bev and Kef live in Chandler now, but when they bought the car, 16 years ago, they still lived in Columbus, Ohio. They would put three, four, five thousand miles a year on the old Pontiac, much of it driving between car shows. While driving back from the Street Nationals in 1999, they stopped on a rain-slicked highway and the car behind them did not, crushing the driver's-side fender.

The good news is that a friend was able to repaint the whole car for the insurance money, and this led to the gorgeous color scheme we see today—satin Nissan Charcoal and Chrysler Bright Platinum with a very subtle green base to it. “The end result is better,” says Kefton, “but you’d never want to go through that again.”

But first, they had needed a replacement fender. “It’s so funny,” says Kef. “We’d been coming to Arizona for years, but the year before the accident, I had actually scouted old Wiseman’s junkyard in Casa Grande. They had one of these cars, but by phone had said, ‘oh everything on it is junk; there’s really nothing salvageable.’” It seemed a routine dead end to a nonspecific mission.

“Then we had the accident,” Kef continues, and while in Arizona on another visit, he “called him again and he said ‘yeah, the car’s still sitting there, it has the fenders on it, but they’re junk.’ I thought, well, I can’t find anything; maybe I can fix that.” He drove down, walked out back, came at it from the passenger side, “and that fender was just like someone had taken a ball peen hammer to it—it was beaten to a pulp!” On the driver’s side, though, the fender was good other than a little tear in the back from being lifted and moved. Kef took the fender home to Ohio. “That car sat in that junkyard here for 30 years,” Kef muses, “waiting for me!”

“These cars are very rare,” he reminds us. “Any time I find extra parts, I buy them.” The Browers moved to the Valley in 2001. And their home in Chandler now has an extra pair of fenders up in the attic, in case any of this ever happens again.



## IT'S WHAT'S UP FRONT THAT COUNTS

While we admired the Pontiac, Kef Brower remarked that “usually with this car we don’t get too many who photograph the whole car. But every time we’re here, we get a dozen or so who take pictures of the hood ornament.” It goes well with the Pontiac emblems on the grille and the sides of the engine compartment, with the overall paint job and with the grille. That grille, a beautiful black, looks as though it could be anodized.

“It’s the original grille,” says Kef, “but they would have been chrome. That’s one thing I didn’t do stock. When we bought the car, it was two-tone blue, and the grilles were done the same way. I stripped them and looked at them. They were rusted pretty good. It would be \$1600 just to chrome that—and this was 15 years ago. We didn’t mind it the way it was, so we redid it the same way, painted.” But black. Beautiful. And we figure it’s one reason people go straight to the hood ornament.

Kef says “even with these bumpers, friends we follow to shows will say, man, I had to keep turning the mirror,” due to the chrome. As for the grille, “if it were chromed, we wouldn’t be able to see at all,” says Bev.

On balance, the ‘35 Pontiac is “completely stock on the outside,” says Kef, “just the way it would have come from the factory. And then it has a modern drivetrain, so you can drive it.”

## MECHANICS OF A MODERN ‘35 PONTIAC

The Browers bought their ‘35 Pontiac sedan in 1995 and put its new motor in the next year—a 350 Chevy crate motor. The car had had a Corvette motor when they bought it, but it “wouldn’t run on pump gas; we just had a lot of trouble with it,” says Kef. So he just went to the Chevrolet dealership and bought that hot rod staple, a crate motor. The car has Mustang II front suspension, an 8-inch Ford rear end and 4-wheel disc brakes.

The transmission is also 350 Chevy. “I kind of went old school, says Kef. “If you look inside this car, the floor is almost perfectly flat. It sits up on the frame rails, so that gives you a nice flat floor. But the 700Rs and R4s or 4L60s now are a much bigger transmission, and you’d have to put a hump in the floor—which can be done, but I like that flat floor. It’s just more comfortable.”

That Mustang II steering is manual rack-and-pinion instead of power. “Now they’ve got it where it doesn’t matter. You can put any pump on that you want,” says Kef, but “back when this was built, they had trouble with the Chevy motor and the Ford rack. The power steering pump made too much pressure and had a real light feel.” He says you miss power steering “when you’re backing into a parking spot, but anywhere from a 10-mile-an-hour roll on, you’re good.”

It’s a great road car. The rear end has 2.79 gears, “so



it drives real nice down the highway. We drove it from Ohio out here. We drive it all the time.” They will take it on a buzz up the highway, or just out to eat.

“In 16 years, it’s got about 30,000 miles on it. When we were in Ohio we drove it more. Here because the shows are so far apart, and in the summertime it’s so hot, we just don’t go to as many, especially far away. Hopefully when we’re retired we’ll drive it more, but we’ve been putting about 1000 miles a year on it here.”

## AT THE CONTROLS

The instrument panel includes what would have been an original radio face, though it’s not a working radio; an aftermarket radio is installed in the glovebox. A tach is added that matches the other gauges. The dash pods—instruments and glovebox—are originals, but were sent to Texas to be refinished in exotic Brazilian woods, then the holes recut for modern gauges. Kef has set aside the original dash pod for the instrument side—a single speedometer with water, temp and volts around that. This was designed to look like that.

Factory locations for the headlight switch, ignition switch, throttle and choke have been adapted to air conditioning controls and such. “I tried not to get rid of anything,” Kefton says. “The Pontiac plate you see on the glovebox was the original radio block-off plate, so I just moved it over. And when I found that radio, I just liked it. It lights up with the lights and it just looks cool.”

Atop the dash is a traffic light finder, a little glass lens. The car does not have a very tall windshield, and you sit very upright, so you can’t always see overhead traffic lights. “Here in Arizona, we have traffic lights on the side, so you can see them, but in Ohio they were all up high, so you needed this. Then without straining your neck, you could just sit back in your seat, look in that lens and see the traffic light when it changed.” This one is a reproduction. It was not an option specifically for this car, but in the ‘30 and ‘40s they were widely used because a lot of cars had sun visors along the top of



KEEP RIGHT >>



their windshields.

**THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY**

Before the Browers moved to Arizona, they had found another very original 1935 Pontiac two-door sedan in Ohio. Someone had seen their existing car and pitched them a mate, so they took a look. It was "bone stock," says Kef. The car had been purchased in an estate sale, and the owner had bought it new.

Beverly took photos of the car and its parts, in great detail, which Kefton keeps in his garage. He used these for years to identify any missing parts, in hopes that he could find them, and he has over the years.

We wondered why he didn't buy that car, suggesting that it sounds irresistible. "It was!" said Kef. "But we were moving out here, and that's a story in itself.

"He wanted \$3500 for it, and that didn't seem bad. I didn't want an original car, but with this car, when you hit the starter button, you couldn't even hear that 6-cylinder run, it ran so smooth." It only needed to have a

partly-completed gas tank replacement wrapped up.

"It had a little surface rust here and there," he continues, "but it had all the chrome, the interior was intact, it felt good, it had all the mohair, all the dash, the motor. It was complete, original, had never been messed with and was straight as an arrow. You could probably even buff up the black paint, other than the rusty spots, and for an Ohio car that was rare.

"The floorpans were solid. These cars have wood in the frame, and the one I own here has 90 percent of its original wood. But that one had 100 percent of it and it was all in excellent shape.

"But we were moving out here."  
With a possible purchase in mind, he looked into having the second Pontiac shipped, which would cost \$1500. Then the shippers threw him a curve, asking, "well, it's driveable, right?" Well, yes, it is. Why?

"So if we just get it to, say, Lincoln, Nebraska and we don't have a truck coming this way, we can just drive it down to Arizona?"

This plan was not shaping up well. "No, you can't drive my car," Kef told them. "If it's going to be driven, I'll drive it. Why would I pay someone \$1500 to ship my car, and they might drive it partway?"

So they went with the path of least resistance and just passed on the whole opportunity.

A year later, after the Browers had settled in Arizona, one of Kef's friends in Ohio saw a friend of the owner of that second Pontiac. He thought it would be a cool surprise to buy that car, build it up, call Kef and say, "Hey, I've got a '35 Pontiac, too!" So the friend of a friend—a wheeler-dealer who figured he could get a better price than \$3500—checked on the car and reported back.

"You won't believe it," he said. "I went back and asked him if he'd come down on the price. The guy had sold it for six hundred dollars! No-one wanted the car. I don't think he ever advertised it. He was just going word-of-mouth, a guy came in and offered six hundred dollars and drove it away."

Needless to say, Kef would have bought it for that, with headroom for proper shipping to Arizona. "Even if I never did anything with the car," he says, "the parts that it had that this one didn't...." Of course we figure it would be so compelling, he would have ended up looking for a third one, for parts for both of these. So it goes.

**PONTIAC LOYALISTS**

As far as the Pontiac brand exiting the marketplace, Kef shrugs and says, "yeah, you hate to see that, but it doesn't really make any difference for this. I didn't really like the newer ones. I like the old Pontiacs." He has also had '64, '68 and '71 GTOs.

He says "you will not find another '35 Pontiac two-door in this whole state. I guarantee it. There is not one. In the whole country, there might be a couple of dozen or so." This 1935 Pontiac Sedan has memories and is not likely to leave the family any time soon. When Bev's mom was alive, she would accompany them to the shows, bragging that "my son-in-law built this" and pointing out its details. And their first dog would ride to shows, sitting up people-style, a real crowd-pleaser.

"I buy other cars and bring them home," says Kefton Brower. But each time, Beverly "says, 'nope, I want to keep the Pontiac.' And that's what we've done." ■



Photo essay by Randall Bohl



# St Elmo's Fire

## "MY DAD'S WHATEVER-YEAR TRUCK"

Story  
and photo  
by Larry Edsall



There were a few more than 2,900 cars on display at the Goodguys Rod & Custom Association's 15th Annual Southwest Nationals at the WestWorld show grounds. Each of them drove into the site carrying not only a driver and perhaps a passenger or two, but a story as well. Here's just one of those stories:

In 1960, Craig Weldon's father, Cal, bought a 1959 GMC pickup truck and used it to move rocks, haul horses and to explore real estate for potential development out in the red rock geography near the family ranch in Sedona.

Cal and a 9-year-old Craig were on just such an exploration one day, parked atop a hill, when a storm rolled in and a bolt of lightning electrified the truck.

"Bam!" Craig says as he tells the story.

"We had just gotten in and let go of the door handles. Lightning hits the right-rear fender, and there was St. Elmo's fire inside the cab. Ball of fire ran up the gear shift lever. My hair stood on end. It was pretty exciting."

Except for some overstimulated nerves and a burnt spot on that right-rear fender, neither the occupants nor the truck were otherwise damaged.

Indeed, it was in that truck that Craig learned to drive, in the process bending one of the front rims during an unintended off-road excursion.

Craig loved that old truck and wanted his father to give it to him, but that didn't happen until after Cal died

in 2007 and the truck "was passed to me," Craig said.

After inheriting the truck, Craig would drive it from time to time—with fond and sometimes frightful memories of riding along with his father. His first inclination was to have the truck restored to the way it was when his father first brought it home, but then he realized he likely wouldn't be spending much time behind the wheel of a vehicle that lacked power steering and power brakes.

So instead of a simple restoration, Weldon turned to CAM Auto Creations of Phoenix for what it called a "restomod" of the truck. That's "resto" as in restoration and "mod" as in modification and modernization.

CAM is owned by Alan and Cheryl Mitchell, although their son, Brady, led the work effort on Weldon's truck.

Alan Mitchell retired five years ago after a career with the US Department of Energy. He'd always worked on cars and wasn't really ready to retire, so he opened his own shop, which, as noted on its website, serves as "custom fabricators of personal automotive dreams."

Alan Mitchell said that except for that burnt spot on the right-rear fender and a small area of rust that had to be fixed, the original sheetmetal was retained for the project.

But to undergird that bodywork, a new Art Morrison frame was obtained and outfitted with Morrison upper and lower control arms and adjustable coil-over shocks in front, and triangulated four-link rear suspension, also

with adjustable coil-over shocks. A 3:50 rear gear was installed, as were four-piston Wilwood brakes and offset and painted American Racing Tru-spoke wheels with Nitto high-performance tires.

A blueprinted and Holley-carbureted 430-horsepower crate engine was installed, with a 700R transmission. So were Vintage Air air conditioning and a leather interior by Galvan's Custom Auto Upholstery, another Phoenix shop.

The truck's body color is a special PPG blend named St. Elmo's Sapphire Blue. Even the frame got a custom-blended paint covering, in Phoenix Purple Mist.

From start to finish, the restomod took 14 months.

Although the truck was parked for all to see at the Goodguys show, it's far from being any sort of trailer queen. There's a trailer hitch hidden behind the rear license plate holder, and Weldon plans to put that hitch to good use—though perhaps not during lightning storms—towing his 1974 De Tomaso Pantera to various auto events.

To paraphrase the 1958-63 television series *Naked City*, there were nearly 3000 stories on the Goodguys show field; this has been one of them. ■



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# LEXUS LUXURY, SPORTING STYLE

BY JOE SAGE

The IS is the only convertible in the Lexus lineup, so the calculation is pretty specific: if you would like the luxury, quality and value of a Lexus, but would like to put the top down, this is your car. It has other advantages, too—all founded in its being an iteration of the popular and capable Lexus IS.

There are seven basic models in the Lexus IS lineup: four V6 sedans—an IS 250 and an IS 350 in rear-wheel drive, plus the same two in all-wheel drive—and a fifth sedan, the high-performance Lexus IS F, with a 5-liter V8 and rear-wheel drive only. And there are two convertibles in the lineup: the IS 250 C and IS 350 C, both with rear-wheel drive only. (Apart from the true IS F with V8, there are also F Sport add-ons available for non-F V6 models, as was the case with our tester. This confusing form of enhancement is being done by other brands, too, such as Audi S-Line as opposed to actual S-cars, or a set of M doorsills on your non-M BMW, and so on.)

The Lexus IS 250's 2.5-liter V6 delivers 204 hp, and the IS 350's 3.5-liter 306 hp. Both come with a six-speed paddle-shift automatic. The Lexus IS F's 5.0-liter V8 has 416 hp and an 8-speed paddle-shift automatic.

The IS 250 sedan starts at about \$35,000, the IS 350 at just over \$40,000. Add about \$2500 to either for

AWD. The potent IS F starts at almost \$62,000. Options and accessories quickly add \$5000-10,000 to any.

In between, we have the IS convertibles: the IS 250 C starting at \$42,610 and IS 350 C at \$46,890. Ditto on the options. Our test IS 350 C included an F Sport Package—the least expensive of three different F Sport Packages—this one including F Sport suspension, sport pedals, scuff plates, dark graphite 18-inch wheels, spoilers, special grille, enhanced interior trim, even heated/ventilated front seats—all for \$2550. (Once again, this is not an actual IS F with a V8, but F Sport is a nice option set.) High-intensity headlamps and LED DRLs added \$875, headlamp washers \$100, parking sensors and assist \$500, and a comprehensive nav and audio system—ranging from 12-speaker sound to inclusion of a backup camera—added \$3520. Add trunk mat, cargo net and destination, and this one was out the door for \$55,499.

So what starts out seductively seeming like the \$35,000-ish bargain known as the Lexus IS has quickly worked into the lower end of Porsche territory. But that would be before you option out that Boxster. And the Lexus IS still seals up with a built-in retractable hardtop—at which point it is considered a coupe—though it lags far behind the two-trunk Boxster in luggage capac-

ity. The IS C price point can also be compared with the Mercedes-Benz SLK, which is even more favorable in cost, but shares the loss of luggage space, due to a retractable top and just one trunk. But wait—the Boxster and the SLK are two-seaters. Advantage: IS.

A more direct comparison—invited since the IS was new and commonly described as a 3 Series fighter—is with the four-seat BMW. Against a range of 328i, 335i and 335is convertibles, the Lexus IS has a decent price advantage, and that's a good place to start. As the 3 Series coupes/convertibles become 4 Series, as just announced, the IS advantage will continue to grow.

The Lexus IS C was new in 2009, as we drove it through the mountains and hills of Arkansas for a day at press launch, then drove it for another week in Arizona, later in the year. At the time, we noted that "overall, we haven't seen as much interest in one of our test cars since the new Camaro...from people who know what it is, people who don't and some in between."

Four years later, it's a fair bet that more people know what it is—and, by now, that plenty of them have purchased an IS convertible for themselves.

Our 2013 Lexus IS 350 C was delivered with just 420 miles on it, still sporting a temporary tag. Young, fresh and innocent, but capable of so much.

Rear brakes on a base IS 250 C or IS 350 C are 12.2-inch discs. Fronts are 11.7-inchers with aluminum four-piston calipers for the 250 and 13.2-inch for the 350. Add the F Sport Package to the IS 350 C—our test model—and all are larger, with 14.2-inch drilled rotors and

six-piston aluminum calipers in front, and 13.6-inch two-piston in back. We'd opt for at least that \$2550 basic F Sport Package just for the brakes (although, to be fair, we need to drive the regular ones back to back with these). In our F-packaged car, they were clearly strong—so strong we had to be extra vigilant about any traffic following us on Valley freeways.

The IS with F Sport Package tuning has a nice solid suspension, tight steering and perfect tracking. Brand new tires helped ours perform optimally.

A 306-horse V6 is respectable, though it falls well short of the 416-horse V8 at the core of an IS F. We noted instances where our IS seemed a little hesitant with power, a little slow in gearing, a little governed in output. We chalked it up to programming in pursuit of tightening fuel mileage goals, not atypical. If you have the budget, you will want to drive the actual IS F, to compare. But any hesitancy was by far not a dominant experience. Gunning it up a freeway ramp, we could choose lanes, pass the minivans and the Corvettes and be easily at freeway speed in no time, ready to tackle conditions with power and confidence.

The retractable hardtop does its magic in just a tick over 20 seconds. We've seen faster (see the new VW Beetle ragtop in this issue), but consider 15 decent for a soft top. With the complexities of a hardtop convertible, the IS's time is quite respectable. And you can pass the time by watching the show. As we noted in 2009, "Operating the retractable top is entertainment in itself...fascinatingly complex." It does have a few more parts and motions than the average retractable hardtop.

There's no question this feature—on any retractable—gobbles up space. Stopping at the store (and leaving the top down), we put a gym bag, small briefcase and ballcap in the trunk. That fit fine, but there was no room left for even minor groceries till we juggled it all back.

Our logbook noted some annoyances with the center stack display and controls, which is par for the course. We left the audio on, partly to avoid the default screen, with its big image of a speaker staring us down like HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. We spent an inordinate amount of time struggling with the climate control system, trying to stop heavy cooling on chilly evenings, or heat that finally started flowing

strongly once the top was raised. And we had to extract the passenger seatbelt from the far side of the seat and buckle it across nobody, to stop its ticking and flapping in the breeze.

Being brand new, the radio had never been set. It had some station presets, but no audio settings. These were very easy to accomplish: while waiting for a red light, we were able to dig into the menu, adjust settings easily, and produce very good sound from the Premium Audio system that was part of our nav/audio package. (With the topmost option package, you get a Mark Levinson Premium Audio system, but that one package runs higher than our two together.)

For 2013, Lexus has added availability of Enform 2.0 and App Suite systems, as well as HD radio with iTunes tagging and Bluetooth phone connectivity with automatic phonebook download. All these are in any of four other packages that run from \$6265 to \$8545, but which our test vehicle did not include. It might be nice to have all that—and we'd want to compare the audio output—but driving this up toward \$60,000 before tax would be really starting to push it. Then again, if you want a Lexus convertible, this is the only one, so you might indeed want to pile it all on and max yours out.

We checked our flanks at a traffic light: a beige metallic Lexus RX, a silver LS and our screaming Ultrasonic Blue Metallic IS convertible in the middle. We were definitely in the heart of Lexus country, and we were happy with our model.

One thing we would like to see in the lineup would be the IS C convertible with AWD, as with the sedan. This seems especially appropriate since it has a warm and weathertight hardtop. Weight and space considerations would be amplified by the presence of both a retractable top and an all-wheel-drive system, and that may well be why it doesn't exist so far. But as a fundamental concept, it seems like a hard combination to beat, especially in the diverse conditions of climate and geography offered in Arizona. Spring ski trip or Grand Canyon fall road trip? Say no more.

This is likely the funnest set of vehicles in the Lexus lineup—a tidy and trim luxury package with a sporting bent. The Lexus IS C is light, perky, upbeat and lots of fun to drive—and the top goes down. Lexus loyalists in this segment will likely not be disappointed. ■



# A good sense of purpose

By Joe Sage

The Volvo XC60's Monroney sticker identifies it not as an SUV, nor a crossover, but as a "special purpose vehicle." We actually found it to be a very desirable any-purpose vehicle—which is supported by its status as a finalist in the Active Lifestyle Vehicle Awards, in the Luxury On-Road category (see news elsewhere in this issue). Our logbook noted that although Volvo has a great lineup, if they had just one vehicle, this could be it.

The 3-liter twin-scroll turbo gives this smallish vehicle 300 hp and 325 lb-ft of torque to work with. This combination provides fuel mileage ratings of 17/23 MPG city/highway (20 combined), while earning a ULEV II ultra-low emissions rating.

The simplest XC60 starts at \$34,350, while a top-level R-Design T6 AWD starts at \$44,850. Our test XC60 came

with the T6 turbo and AWD, carrying a base of \$40,650, and its Platinum top trim level added \$4600. (On the base model, the add-ons for three trim levels range from \$2950 to \$7550 for the same Platinum.) With a few more options (see sidebar), ours climbed toward \$50,000.

That moves it beyond big brother XC90's base price of \$39,700, though with similar options, an XC90 would still total about \$4000 more than our Platinum XC60. Fuel mileage is about the same, so you can choose between the two almost purely by size, more so than by budget.

## Good times behind the wheel

The XC60's modest size and decent power suggest a spirited drive, and we largely enjoyed our time behind the wheel. The vehicle had no trouble providing some feel-good moments in aggressive traffic, with our logbook repeatedly noting that it had the power we need-

ed, when we needed it.

We did note the suspension was a bit floaty at times on low speed, straight, paved neighborhood runs.

Driving out of the northeast Valley on Seven Springs Road, with its hills, dales, curves and switchbacks, we were quite happy with the automatic's shift patterns. We took the XC60 on some rough roads indeed, and traction held superbly—as it did on any combination of gravel, dirt, smooth pavement, rough pavement or sand we encountered during our week.

## XC60 controls and ergonomics

Our XC60 arrived with just 574 miles on it (and smelling strongly of fresh adhesives and such—brand new for better or worse). Typically for Volvo, the XC60 is ergonomically friendly and user friendly—it's relatively quick and easy to find where all controls are and what they do. We did find the side view mirrors were hard to adjust, basically requiring three finger-functions in a two-finger space, and the inside mirror stayed dim during the day.

Button and knob functions are increasingly well integrated with screen functions (though proximity among all could be improved). Audio settings were easy to handle, though climate and audio knobs are easily confused in a blind reach. A transparent cap on the shift lever is stylish but makes the shift pattern illegible in bright sun-

light. The liftgate has useful power descent. The XC60's backup camera is tops, including a small simulated top view of the vehicle along the right side, with a graphic display of any corner sensors picking up any obstacles, forward or back. At times, though, a powerful alarm alerted us unnecessarily of such things as the curb we had pulled in to when we parked.

We never were able to find a sync setting for driver and passenger temperatures. The manual does specify that separate temperatures can be set, as we could see, but makes no mention of a unified setting, as we desired. Nor could we find any information deep within the My Car screen database. It's not intuitive, and if it's there, it's buried.

On our quasi-off-road experience, we hit our limits—traction was fine, but width was getting into goat territory—and had to back down a long, cliffhanging distance. A huge back window plus generally high rear visibility all around were of great help.

## A comfortable companion

The XC60 has attractive and dynamic sheetmetal, with a fluidity that mitigates any lingering Volvo boxiness—though it has enough to be highly functional and useful.

By halfway through our week, all details and any quibbles aside, we noted that for easy companionship, decent power, maneuverability and utility, this fills the bill. It's the right size and shape, in an attractive package. Unless you know you need higher fuel mileage than this, the Volvo XC60 belongs on your short list. ■



## SPECIFICATIONS

### 2013 VOLVO XC60 T6 AWD

ENGINE .....3.0L 6-cyl CVT twin-scroll turbo  
 POWER/TORQUE .....300 hp / 325 lb-ft  
 TRANS/DRIVE .....6-spd Geartronic, AWD  
 MPG (EST).....17/23/20 city/hwy/comb  
 PARTS ORIGIN .....Engine UK, transmission Japan, other parts US 1%, Belgium 25%, Germany 20%  
 ASSEMBLY .....Belgium  
 WARRANTY .....48 mo / 50,000 mi  
 .....144 mo / unlim mi corrosion



### SUSPENSION-BRAKES

- Front independent struts, anti-dive
- Dynamic stability traction control
- Roll stability control
- Power rack and pinion steering
- Ventilated disc brakes w/ ABS
- Electronic brake distribution/assistance
- Ready alert brakes

**AUDIO:** 4x40-watt amps, 8 spkrs, in-dash 1xCD, WMA/MP3 capability and USB/AUX inputs, HD radio, Sirius satellite 6 months free, illuminated steering wheel controls

**SAFETY-SECURITY:** City safety system, five 3-point belts with addtl features, unibody high-strength steel safety cage, airbags galore, whiplash protection system, five padded head restraints, adaptive steering column, Safe Approach and Home Safe perimeter lighting, intelligent driver info system, back-up battery for security system, rear foglight, rear child locks, TPM.

**LUXURY-TECHNOLOGY:** 7-inch LCD display, leather seats and steering wheel, pano roof w/ power sunshade, 8-way power for both front seats w/ 3-way memory for driver, keyless drive, trunk release, panic alarm, dual zone climate, Bluetooth phone w/ audio streaming, heated mirrors, integrated roof rails, 40/20/40 flat-folding rear seats, flat-folding front passenger seat and more.

**BASE**.....\$40,650

### XC60 PLATINUM TRIM LEVEL

Nav, rear camera, Volvo premium sound, power tailgate, grocery holder, front/rear park assist, digital compass, electric folding rear headrests, cargo cover, 12V outlets in rear cargo, HomeLink, xenon headlights.....\$4600

- Climate package: heated front/rear seats and windshield washer, interior air quality system .....\$900
- Metallic paint.....\$550
- 18" FENRIR alloy wheels .....\$750
- Destination .....\$895

**TOTAL**.....\$48,345

# THE INSIDE TRACK: BRIEFS & RUMORS

■ **Lexus** revealed the LF-LC Blue concept at the Australian International Motor Show in Sydney. The first LF-LC debuted at the Detroit show earlier in 2012. The



new concept's Opal Blue paint is inspired by the Australian Outback's semi-precious opal stone. Derived from the LFA, LF-LC benefits from Lexus' heavy experience in advanced materials, combining carbon fiber with aluminum alloys to achieve a light body mass with agile response. Its next-gen Advanced Lexus Hybrid Drive has an Atkinson cycle combustion engine combined with an advanced high-energy battery pack, providing more power from a smaller battery than in current Lexus hybrids. The LF-LC Blue concept develops 500 hp, the most of any Lexus hybrid.

■ **Volkswagen** Electronics Research Laboratory (ERL) and Plug and Play Tech Center in Silicon Valley have a new Technology Accelerator program, to incubate ten startups developing next-gen technologies applicable to the automotive industry. Startups will receive access to investors, corporations and mentors within the Plug and Play network, exposure at events, educational seminars and office space. The program is currently accepting applications from technology startups in social media and recommendation engines, vehicle-related mobile device integration, parking apps, detection apps, display and data integration, voice and sound recognition, and visual computing.

■ The **Huet Brothers** Coupé—revealed in drawings last January—has a classically-styled full carbon fiber monocoque body, intended as a quick, nimble, fuel-efficient

daily driver with modern comforts and safety features, all hand-built for a reasonable price. After tens of thousands of online hits and over 100 serious requests, the tiny Netherlands-based company is prepping for production of the HB Coupé Road Racer, a 1760-pound fully-optioned car that "goes like stink," yet has climate control, heated seats, an entertainment system and useful cargo space. The company has 14 pre-orders in Europe and 13



waitlisted for the US and Canada. They say they need 26 more pre-orders from Europe to start production. The standard 170-hp HB Coupé Road Racer costs about \$87,600 and a Cosworth 225-hp version about \$101,500 at current exchange rates.

■ Having wrapped up special orders at the end of October and custom orders at the end of December, **Chevrolet** plans to end production of the 2013 Corvette in February, shutting down the car's assembly plant in Bowling Green, Kentucky for six months, as it retools for the highly anticipated seventh-generation model. Production of the 2014 Corvette is scheduled to begin in August or September. The C7 Corvette will have its debut at a media event in Detroit on Sunday evening, January 13, the night before North American International Auto Show press days.

■ The trucking industry is still a male-dominated sector, despite a shortage of drivers. About one per cent of truck drivers in Europe are women, a very small number but no fewer than in many other parts of the world. In the US, the situation is somewhat better, as women account for more than five per cent of the country's 3.2 million truck drivers. **Women in Trucking**, a nonprofit organization with over 2,300 individual and company members, has been working for a number of years to change attitudes and norms in the industry. With the support of Volvo Trucks, the group has helped to ensure that there are more female truck

drivers in the US than in many other countries. Ellen Voie, founder and president of the organization, says the current US driver shortage could be solved by simply doubling the number of female truck drivers to just over 10 percent.



■ At the São Paulo International Motor Show in Brazil, **Volkswagen** presented a new compact SUV concept, the Taigun. The Taigun is technically similar to VW's up! ultra-compact city car concept. The Taigun concept is about 152 inches long, 68 inches wide and 61.8 inches tall, with a wheelbase of 97.25 inches and short overhangs. The four-seat concept is powered by a new 109-hp 1.0-litre three-cylinder TSI engine with direct fuel injection plus turbocharging technology—the latest in downsizing strategies. The engine delivers a high 129 lb-ft of torque at a low 1,500 rpm. At 2167 lb, this lightweight concept boasts a top speed of 115.5 mph and accelerates from zero to 60 mph in about 8.7 seconds, with fuel economy of about 53 MPG. With 17-inch wheels, good engine torque and decent ground clearance, the Taigun can handle offroad terrain.

■ **NGVAmerica** and **Zeus Intelligence** have a new information service for access to trailer loads of liquefied natural gas (LNG). Zeus has compiled and will regularly update a list of all the LNG facilities around the country that can offload LNG into trailers for truck delivery to user sites. To date, Zeus has identified 34 plants throughout the US. LNG fuel suppliers are increasingly targeting the diesel vehicle market, which consumes 150 million gallons of diesel per day. Highway trucks are the primary consumer. Zeus has determined that at least 47 US fleets have plans to use LNG, and the number of trucks fueled with LNG will soon exceed 4,000. Consequently, numerous new plants are under development. The list is now publicly accessible at [www.ngvamerica.org](http://www.ngvamerica.org).

■ **Honda** Aircraft Company has announced the launch of production for their enthusiastically awaited HondaJet, billed as the world's most advanced light jet. During a press conference at the annual National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) meeting and convention in Orlando, Honda highlighted successful key testing milestones, as the HondaJet moves closer to certification and delivery.

■ New **Kia** pro\_ceed GT three-door and Kia cee'd GT five-door models will go on sale in other parts of the world by mid-2013. The two new performance models will be powered by a new version of Kia's 1.6-litre GDI (gasoline direct injection) engine with twin-scroll turbo and strengthened internal components. Power is 201 hp, up 51 percent over the non-turbo engine, with torque up 61 percent to 195 lb-ft. With a six-speed manual, the new cars' performance target is zero to 60 mph in about 7.5 seconds.



■ **Nissan** has unveiled a 100 percent electric e-NV200 Panel Van concept version of their NV200 (which, with windows, is New York City's latest taxi), at the 64th IAA Commercial Vehicle International Motor Show in Hanover, Germany, emblazoned with FedEx logos. Nissan and FedEx have been working together since



December 2011, first testing e-NV200 prototypes in London, then last July in Yokohama, Japan. Test programs will now expand to Singapore, Brazil and the US. Trial results and feedback will shape the development of the all-electric urban delivery van and its related software. ■

# UPCOMING FEATURES

Arizona auction results



Detroit auto show highlights



Ford Flex Limited AWD



2014 Corvette reveal



Audi A5 2.0T



Infiniti JX35 FWD



Ford Escape Titanium 4WD



Subaru Legacy



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