

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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JULY-AUGUST 2013

SPECIAL EVENTS COPPERSTATE 1000 | MUDFEST 2013
EQUIPMENT GOODYEAR EAGLE SPORT ALL-SEASON
GREEN TECHNOLOGY BRIDGESTONE ARIZONA BIORUBBER PLANT
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ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

news & features July-August 2013

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COVER: Beautiful road-ready classics are shown off at the Field of Dreams event at Tempe Diablo Stadium, which leads up to the starting flag for the 23rd Annual Bell Lexus Copperstate 1000 Road Rally (see page 26). *Photo: Joe Sage.*



Photo: Joe Sage



Photo: Joe Sage



Photo: Larry Edsall



Photo: Joe Sage



Photo: Joe Sage



Photo: Joe Sage

START YOUR ENGINES : FROM THE PUBLISHER

This issue has kept us hopping, as many do. We have been to San Francisco, San Diego and Baltimore for new vehicle launches, Washington state to test the best in mud, 1000 miles on Arizona roads, to the Bondurant School for track time with new tires and to the southeast Valley to see how a special kind of farm can grow more new tires. Between all that, we've driven two SUVs, one luxury sedan and one big 4x4 pickup.

Did we say someone can grow tires? Bridgestone is hard at work with an alternative to the rubber tree, another plant that does well in Arizona's climate. **Larry Edsall** brings us the back story on these efforts. Larry also drives along on the 23rd running of the Bell Lexus Copperstate 1000 and brings us its highlights.

Since monsoon rains are not always predictable, we seized the opportunity to join another press group in the Pacific Northwest, as they ran their annual Mudfest event, which pits off-road, near-off-road and other all-wheel-drive vehicles against rough, wet terrain that the Cascade Mountains of Washington dish out best.

Mudfest happened very near a Goodyear track event we had attended last year, but this year Goodyear brought their latest goods to the Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving here in Arizona, where we tested on track and wet/dry handling course.

The Lexus IS has always targeted the BMW 3 Series, Audi A4 and the like, so for the new model, we hit an autocross—and the beautiful East Bay hill country—in the San Francisco Bay Area. Fiat is bringing the new 500L into the US via the port at Baltimore, so we drove that new vehicle there. And the Kia Cadenza—Kia's expansion into a flagship level sedan—benefited from the style and class of our own neighboring San Diego.

Enjoy the ride.

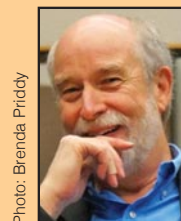


Photo: Brenda Priddy

Joe Sage

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MINI Countryman ALL4 takes Off Road Award

A reader's vote held by Off Road magazine has chosen the MINI Country ALL4 for its 2013 "Off Road Award" and ranked the vehicle second overall in the subcompact SUV category. This popular version of this leader in the small car segment is handy and capable around town, but really outdoes the competition in the wild, as the first MINI with four doors, a large tailgate and its available ALL4 all-wheel drive system. The ALL4 permanent all-wheel-drive system was developed specifically for MINI and uses an electromagnetic center differential to distribute power seamlessly between the front and rear axles. Its electronic management system is integrated directly in the dynamic stability control unit, to vary drive torque where it is needed, quickly. This provides optimum grip starting on snow or loose sand, as well as on slippery surfaces or even for sporty handling on twisty paved roads. The launch of the 3-door MINI Paceman in March (see Mudfest in this issue) gives the brand a second vehicle with available ALL4 all-wheel-drive capability. ▼



MINI Countryman ALL4

Porsche 911 50th Anniversary Edition



PORSCHE 50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

▲ Porsche will be celebrating the 911's 50th anniversary of the 911 at the International Motor Show in Frankfurt, in September, with a special anniversary model based on the 911 Carrera S. The anniversary 911 features the wide body typically seen on all-wheel-drive Carrera 4 models. The special edition will be limited to 1963 cars, representing the year of the 911's original world premiere. In the US, the 911 50th Anniversary Edition will include a Powerkit increasing power to 430 hp and a Sport Chrono Package, which boosts throttle response, as well as handling, providing harder damping and more direct steering. The 911 50th Anniversary Edition hits 0-to-60 mph in 4.2 seconds and has a top speed of 186 mph. The limited edition model will be available this fall, priced from \$124,100.

EDMUNDS RETAINED VALUE AWARDS

Jeep and Acura took the top spots in Edmunds.com's third annual Best Retained Value Awards, for brands and new car models with the highest projected residual values after five years, based on their average True Market Value price when sold new. In brand-level awards, Jeep won in the non-luxury division with a projected 50.6 percent residual value after five years, and Acura won the luxury

crown with a projected five-year residual value of 45.1 percent. Edmunds.com also issued model-level awards in 22 separate categories. Ford and Toyota tied for the most model winners, with four each. All vehicle makes with over 100,000 unit sales in the US in 2012 were eligible for the year's brand-level awards. All model-year 2013 vehicles launched by the end of 2012 and with March 2013 unit sales of at least 20 percent of the average for its segment were eligible for the model-level awards. Edmunds determined each model's competitive segment by body type and sales-weighted average MSRP of all styles in that model's body type. A full list of all 22 model winners can be found on Edmunds.com's Best Retained Value Awards page at www.edmunds.com.

MCLAREN AND FORZA MOTORSPORT 5

You can race the McLaren P1 in game format with Forza Motorsport 5, but actually take a ride in one? At the Goodwood Festival of Speed? Dream on. But wait... McLaren Automotive has teamed up with Xbox to offer one of the best seats of the summer, in the passenger seat of the McLaren P1 while it makes its global dynamic debut at the world famous event. One lucky winner gets to experience the famous Goodwood Hill course, as part of the McLaren 50th anniversary

celebration. Through a collaboration with Microsoft's Turn 10 Studios, the competition follows the announcement of a new Xbox One console with the McLaren P1 as cover art, promoting the forthcoming Forza Motorsport® 5. Further details of the flagship motorsport title were then given at E3, the annual video game conference and show in Los Angeles earlier this week, by Dan Greenawalt, Creative Director for Turn 10 Studios. The McLaren P1 (see *Auto News Update* in our May/June issue) is currently in final development, ahead of first deliveries later this year. It will be a rare sight even after production, with only 375 being built. Enter the competition at www.ForzaMcLarenRide.com.

JOHNSON VALLEY RIDING AREA UPDATE

The National Defense Authorization Act, which includes language to create the Johnson Valley National Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area in California, rather than include it in military development, has cleared the US House, according to the American Motorcyclist Association. On June 14, the House approved the authorization bill, HR 1960. The measure now goes to the Senate for further consideration. The US Navy has wanted to expand the Marine Corps Air

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Toyota Arizona Proving Ground

Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms into the 189,000-acre Johnson Valley area, a long-standing popular area across the San Bernardino Mountains from Los Angeles. The protective language was written by Rep. Paul Cook (R-CA), a member of the House Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs Committees, who has served as an infantry officer and retired after 26 years as a colonel in the US Marine Corps, where he was awarded the Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts in combat. Several years ago, the US Department of the Navy began a formal process to take over 365,906 acres of public land near San Bernardino to use for live-fire training for the Marines. Cook's bill would designate Johnson Valley OHV as the Johnson Valley National OHV Recreation Area—designated specifically for recreational uses, including OHV use, camping and hiking. Marine Corps activities would be allowed twice a year and couldn't include any explosives that could be left behind.

TOYOTA PROVING GROUND: 20 YEARS

▲ An Arizona automotive landmark, the Toyota Arizona Proving Ground (TAPG)—Toyota's largest vehicle evaluation investment in the US—celebrated its 20th anniversary this spring. Located about 40 miles from Phoenix, TAPG is a 12,000-

acre facility with one 10-mile high speed oval track and several miles of other test tracks. The facility is primarily for the development of North America, testing performance and reliability. At its opening in 1993, Toyota chairman Dr. Shochiro Toyoda called the Arizona Proving Ground, "another milestone for us in putting our American operations on a truly American footing." Today, TAPG employs over 50 people, with its investment exceeding \$108 million. Toyota has made a point of preserving the vast majority of the area in its natural state.

NEW FAST CHARGE ELECTRIC DEVICE

Eight automakers have agreed to adopt a new "combo" fast charge connector, to be developed as an industry standard for charging stations coast to coast. The consortium envisions charging stations everywhere—"outside of drug stores and doughnut shops"—with the ability of electric vehicle owners to power up during lunch. The current home process typically takes several hours, working off household (or office) AC current. The new project adds DC power, which can recharge EV batteries up to 80 percent capacity in under 20 minutes. (At the dawn of the electric age, over a century ago, Thomas Edison argued for AC as a standard, while Nikola Tesla pushed for DC, making it

even more interesting to watch this resurface in the new millennium.) General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, BMW, Daimler, Volkswagen, Audi and Porsche together gave their blessing to the Society of Automotive Engineer's (SAE's) AC and DC "combo" fast charge connector. Their goal of standardization is intended to pave the way for deployment of more commercially and strategically located DC fast charging stations across the US. The first electric vehicles expected to benefit from the new DC fast charging are the Chevrolet Spark EV and the BMW i3.

MITSUBISHI OUTLANDER AT PIKES PEAK

Mitsubishi, the Presenting Sponsor at the 2013 Pikes Peak International Hill Climb at the end of June, has secured Official Safety Vehicle duties for its completely redesigned 2014 Mitsubishi Outlander (see Mudfest elsewhere in this issue) for this year's 91st running of the prestigious event. With available advanced-tech safety features including lane departure warning, adaptive cruise control and forward collision mitigation, the seven-passenger crossover is available with Super All-Wheel Control (S-AWC) all-wheel drive, for which Pikes Peak should be a good showcase for its stability, traction and con-

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2014 Volkswagen Golf GTD



...trol—not only for the many serpentine twists and turns of the course, but also the harsh weather and road conditions that can change in an instant along this high-elevation route. The Pikes Peak International Hill Climb road course is 12.42 miles long, with 156 corners, starting at a base elevation of 9,390 feet and finishing at 14,110 feet—nearly three miles above sea level. First run in 1916, this annual event is the second oldest motor race in America after the Indianapolis 500.

DIESEL GT: VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTD

▲ GTD stands for Gran Turismo Diesel—a new long-distance car in the enormously popular Volkswagen Golf range. The new Golf GTD has a winning combination of 181 hp and 280 lb-ft of torque, with fuel economy of 56 MPG (with manual transmission) and ultra low CO₂ emissions. The GTD will also be available with a DSG dual-clutch gearbox, getting 52 MPG. With either transmission, the new Golf GTD conforms to stringent new Euro-6 emissions standards taking effect in 2014. This Golf is the first GTD to have a stop/start system on board as standard, and in battery regeneration mode it utilizes deceleration phases to charge the battery. The engine's 2.0-litre common rail turbo-diesel design is not only net-

worked with BlueMotion technologies, but was also completely redesigned for increased efficiency. Acceleration, overtake speeds and top speeds are all aimed at making this hatch feel like a sports car.

BONHAMS BANBURY RUN RESULTS

Bonhams sale of Collectors' Motorcycles and Motor Cars, held in association with the Vintage Motor Cycle Club's Banbury Run in June in the UK, saw some 100 lots sold for a combined total of £1.51 million (\$2.3 million). Highlights among the motorcycles sold included two restoration projects offered from deceased estates. A 1928 AJS 349cc K7 that had been in storage since the 1960s sold for more than 10 times its \$1515 estimate at \$16,000±, while an incomplete c.1951 Norton 490cc ES2/International stored since the late 1970s/early '80s realized \$10,800 against the same estimate. Top-selling motorcycle was a restored 1907 NSU 460cc that had been in the Dover Transport Museum, which achieved \$21,000±. Highlights among the motor cars on offer at the sale included 100 per cent sold at \$626,600 for The Leven Collection, a private collection of 19 cars. Notable results within the collection included a combined total of \$202,000± for three Jaguar E-Types, and the \$28,228 realized for a 1992 Ford Sierra Cosworth Sports Saloon against an

\$12,120-15,150 estimate. Top-selling motor car lot was a 1966 Aston Martin DB6 Sports Saloon at \$202,500± against an estimate of \$91,000-121,000±. Bonhams returns to Scottsdale next January for their 3rd annual auction here.

2000 LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR

The Lamborghini Aventador LP 700-4 has achieved an important milestone, as the 2,000th vehicle—a Nero Nemesis car, chassis number 2,000—rolled off the assembly line destined for the US. Its owner, Thaddeus Arroyo, CIO for AT&T, is a passionate Lamborghini customer, who already owns a Lamborghini Gallardo LP 550-2 Spyder. Following a test drive of the Aventador LP 700-4 during an event in Palm Beach, he immediately decided to purchase one. The Sant' Agata Bolognese plant's productivity has noticeably increased for the Aventador LP 700-4 compared to the previous flagship model: the Murciélago took four years and half to reach 2000 units. Launched in 2001, the Murciélago reached the milestone in March 2006. The Aventador has reached this milestone in just over two years. Production is currently nearly five cars per day. In 2013 the Aventador LP 700-4 Roadster joined the successful coupé.

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NISSAN VERSA NOTE AT \$13,990

▲ The 2014 Nissan Versa Note, which went on sale in June, is the fourth all-new Nissan in recent months, following the redesigns of Altima, Pathfinder and Sentra. The Versa lineup has held the top spot in entry segment sales for 20 consecutive months and 38 of the prior 44 months. New styling, clever interior layout and advanced technology are key to the redo. Features include a class-exclusive around-view monitor, available active grille shutter for enhanced fuel economy, available Divide-N-Hide adjustable rear load floor height, available Nissan-Connect with navigation, hands-free text, Google search, Pandora, Bluetooth, and more. The Versa Note starts at \$13,990 for the 2014 Nissan Versa Note S with 5-speed manual transmission—\$680 lower than the outgoing Versa Hatch S M/T. Two CVT models (S Plus and SV) start at \$15,240 and \$15,990, respectively. Fuel economy for the front-wheel-drive Nissan Versa Note is 40 MPG highway and best-in-class 31/35 MPG (city/combined), for CVT-equipped models.

SCION IQ: BEST 5-YEAR COST TO OWN

The tiny 2013 Scion iQ has earned Kelley Blue Book's 5-Year Cost to Own Award, in recognition of its lowest projected costs of ownership in the subcompact category.

Information is developed using Kelley Blue Book Residual Values to calculate depreciation costs for new cars. The analysis also considers fuel, insurance, maintenance and repair costs. The iQ has a 1.3-liter, four-cylinder engine that produces 94 hp and 89 lb-ft of torque and a continuously variable transmission (CVT). The iQ is ULEV-II rated and has an estimated combined fuel economy rating of 37 MPG. The iQ comes standard with Scion Service Boost, a complimentary plan covering normal factory-scheduled maintenance for two years or 25,000 miles, whichever comes first, plus three years of 24-hour roadside assistance.

CHEVROLET SS PRICE DETERMINED

The US-exclusive Chevrolet SS—the first rear-drive Chevrolet performance sedan since 1996—comes well-equipped in only one model, with the only options being a power-operated sunroof (\$900) and full-size spare tire (\$500). A 415-hp LS3 6.2L small-block V8 powers the SS, with 415 lb-ft of torque to help it sprint from 0 to 60 mph in about five seconds. The V8 is matched with a six-speed automatic with paddle shifters. Handling is optimized with a nearly 50/50 weight distribution and a low center of gravity—made possible in part by an aluminum hood and rear deck lid that are 30 percent lighter than

steel panels. The SS will be available in five exterior colors: Mystic Green, Silver Ice Metallic, Red Hot 2, Phantom Black Metallic and Heron White. All have a Jet Black interior with sport front bucket seats. Suggested retail price for the 2014 Chevrolet SS will be \$44,470, including destination charge. The SS will be subject to the gas guzzler tax.

SCION FR-S WINS "BEST FOR MONEY"

The 2013 Scion FR-S has won the Best Sports Car for the Money title from *US News & World Report*, an annual award recognizing value, quality and critical acclaim across 21 vehicle categories. Judges look at safety records, reliability and opinions of industry experts, and the expected five-year total cost of ownership and average purchase price contribute to overall scores. The FR-S comes standard with 17-inch alloy wheels, a limited-slip differential and 2.0-liter flat boxer engine that produces 200 horsepower and 151 pound-feet of torque. Its distinctive lightweight design and impressive handling have built a following since its introduction last year. The FR-S starts at \$25,255 with a six-speed manual transmission or \$26,355 with a six-speed automatic transmission with paddle shifters and Dynamic Rev Management technology. ■

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HOTTEST DEAL IN A LEXUS JUST GOT HOTTER

Fast, fuel efficient, fully featured...
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By Joe Sage



The Lexus IS has always been a multifaceted and versatile car—much like those it goes head-to-head with, notably the Audi A4, BMW 3 Series and Mercedes-Benz C-Class. Most are rear-drive-based (all but Audi), all have had all-wheel-drive available, all have had performance versions (Audi S4, BMW M, Mercedes-AMG and Lexus IS F). Some offer manual transmissions.

Lexus invited us to northern California to drive a new-generation 2014 IS on autocross courses at the decommissioned Alameda Naval Air Station, next to the busy Port of Oakland—where their F SPORT version could show its stuff—and on great two-lane roads in the East Bay hills.

Models and reduced pricing

The Lexus IS is the brand's "entry luxe" model, aimed at young buyers moving up, empty nesters sizing down, and conquests moving over from competing brands. The IS attracts Lexus' young-

est buyer, at an average age of 45.

There are 250 vs 350 models; F SPORT vs standard models; and rear-wheel vs all-wheel drive.

The key difference between 250 and 350 is the engine: a 2.5-liter V6 with 204 hp and achieving 30 MPG highway, or a 306-hp 3.5-liter V6. While 0-to-60 time improves from 7.7 seconds for the IS 250 to just 5.6 for the IS 350, fuel mileage only dips from 30 to 28, a pretty good tradeoff. Base price for an IS 250 is \$35,950 and for an IS 350, \$39,465, again a pretty easy move to the 350.

Whichever way you go, the rationalization process is easier than ever, with the new IS 350

The IS F SPORT models (facing page) are easily distinguished from the regular models by their lower front fascia—with a mesh grill plus deep scoops that imply performance air intake on the F SPORT.

priced 2.1 percent lower than last year, the differential between the IS 250 and IS 350 trimmed by a whopping 33 percent, and over \$1400 in previous options now included as standard for 2014.

The F SPORT spot

A familiar member of the lineup has been the IS F, whose 5.0L V8 pumps out 416 hp and hits 0-to-60 in 4.6 seconds (with fuel economy of just 18 MPG highway). You can still buy an IS F, but it will be a 2013 model, starting at \$61,750. Unlike comparing IS 250 to IS 350, moving to an IS F offers a less dramatic gain in quickness at considerably more cost, and the drop in fuel economy is significant. The jury is out on whether a new IS F will follow.



What you can get in lieu of a new IS F is an F SPORT model—an option package, really. IS 250 and 350 F SPORT versions have the same engine, power and fuel mileage as standard models.

This is much the same game being played by the Germans: Audi with its S-Line trim or BMW and Mercedes-Benz with M or AMG details available on more standard vehicles. What you do get with an F SPORT is a more affordable car with an F on it. The price differential is that of a typical option package: an IS 250 adds \$3465 to become an IS 250 F SPORT, and an IS 350 adds \$3970.

For that, you get sport-tuned adaptable variable suspension with a Sport+ mode (added to the Eco, normal and Sport settings of all models), bolstered front sport seats, and instrumentation that picks up cues from the über-rare Lexus LFA supercar. An F SPORT also includes aluminum pedals, silver interior trim, perforated leather steering wheel and shift knob, and other features.

All models have a 6-speed automatic except for the RWD IS 350, which has an 8-speed (from the prior year's IS F). All-wheel drive adds \$2535 to an IS 250 or \$2235 to an IS 350. Going the full distance to an IS 350 with AWD seems reasonable.

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Inside and outside the IS

The new IS includes an industry first: HD radio for traffic and weather with no subscription, which Lexus says will replace SiriusXM in all models going forward. This is augmented by Lexus Enform apps for stocks, sports and fuel prices. A Mark Levinson audio and navigation system adds Doppler maps and dynamic traffic info. Nav adds birds-eye views and 3D building maps. Climate and other controls are raised for a more tactile interface to help you keep your eyes on the road.

The new IS is 3.5 inches longer, on a 2.5-inch-longer wheelbase. Rear seat space is additionally increased through sculpted front seatbacks

We flew two hours to SFO and gathered in downtown San Francisco. In the morning we shuttled to Alameda, where two different acceleration, handling and autocross tracks were set up. The new IS was joined by the prior IS and competing vehicles. We also took a road loop north out of Oakland, inland through the San Pablo Dam region, back through the Caldecott Tunnel into Oakland, then back across the old Bay Bridge, to our flights.

and improved rear door opening angles.

Outside, the car has a bit higher beltline, which heads noticeably uphill at the back of the rear side glass. This is echoed in a character line that sweeps from the rocker panel up through the rear wheel—emphasizing the car's rear-drive character—to join the dramatic slice of the taillights. This all looks best when seen in person.

Developed to be the "most fun-to-drive" car in its segment, the new IS has drivetrain, suspension and handling features fine-tuned over a million miles of testing. Its rework is comprehensive, with countless details such as side mirrors moved back a little to simultaneously improve aerodynamics, increase straight-line stability and reduce noise-vibration-harshness.

The driver's hip point and cowl line are moved down for a comfort and performance stance. The body is lighter and more rigid than the previous model, with advanced bonding methods from the top-dollar Lexus LS. It grabs the road better with new rear suspension based on the rear-drive GS, including new shocks and relocated sway bars.

Look and driving stance are improved by a half-inch-wider track, made possible by tighter "hemming" of the metal lip around wheel wells.

The car of course receives the Lexus "spindle grille" currently working its way onto every Lexus model, and it sports DRLs separated from the headlamps, exclusive within this segment.

The steering feels solid and mechanical. Econormal-Sport-Sport+ suspension settings are subtle, but do bring something to the table.

Selecting your own new IS

There is a great deal of overlap once you start shopping among all the variables. A 250 F SPORT costs about the same as a standard 350. Bigger engine or sport suspension? This seems a devil's bargain. For more dough, the problem is solved: an IS 350 F SPORT with AWD runs \$48,460 with delivery. (Add every option, and you hit \$50,035.)

The conundrum may come from its identity as "entry luxe." If you come at this car as an entry buyer, you may stop with the standard IS 250, and you will have a fine ride. As you start to apply the luxe (or expensive-is-desirable) factor, your trade-offs are largely between power and style, though the F SPORT does nudge drive performance, too. One look at those sport seats and aluminum pedals, and you'll know who you are. If we had to choose, our leanings might be toward the bigger engine over the F trimmings. If we didn't have to choose, we'd pile it all on—a loaded IS 350 F SPORT with AWD, though above \$50 grand, there is a lot of competition. We'd try to stick with the 350's engine, but other considerations are going to be driven by your own budget and soul. ■

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In pursuit of homegrown tires

By Larry Edsall

Because “Guayule farmer” isn’t an official job description at Bridgestone Americas Inc., Bill Niaura says his title is Director of New Business Development, for an experiment the world’s largest tire and rubber company is conducting at two sites in Arizona.

New business, indeed. Currently all of the world’s supply of natural rubber—the material used in everything from automobile tires to rubber gloves—comes from outside the United States. But Bridgestone is investing millions of dollars to determine if a plant that is native to the desert of northern Mexico and the southwestern United States might become a viable alternative source for such rubber.

The plant is guayule, which is pronounced “why-YOU-lee.”

America’s dependence on imported oil is a widely known subject of political debate and economic concern. However, largely overlooked is the fact that none of the world’s supply of natural rubber is produced within

the country, or even on the North American continent.

That rubber—nearly 11 million tons of it a year—comes from the white sap of a species of Hevea trees, which grow only in equatorial areas. The trees are native to Brazil’s Amazon region, but have been exported. Some 93 percent of the world’s natural rubber supply comes from Southeast Asia, with 4 percent from Africa and 3 percent from South America, Niaura told the Phoenix Automotive Press Association during a presentation on Bridgestone’s new Arizona-based guayule research project.

Guayule, a woody shrub, produces natural rubber in its bark and roots. Some believe it was from guayule that the Aztec extracted the rubber they used in their ball games.

Research by Bridgestone and others has shown the natural rubber guayule produces can be directly substituted for that from the Hevea tree, Niaura said. He added that Bridgestone believes the potential yield per acre might be even greater for guayule once

the wild plant is domesticated for agricultural production. Niaura’s task is to lead the research teams that will determine if that can be done, and if a viable business case can be made for guayule as a significant source for viable natural rubber production.

Last year, Bridgestone Americas Tire Operations purchased 281 acres of farmland near Eloy. The company will use that land as an agricultural research facility. Among the challenges the research team faces, Niaura said, will be obtaining enough seeds to plant rows of guayule. Each flower that blooms on a guayule plant produces five seeds, he said, but only one of those seeds contains a viable embryo to start a new plant.

But cultivating guayule is only part of the challenge. Soon, the company will break ground at a corner of the former General Motors desert proving grounds in Mesa for a facility to do research on extracting the rubber and other resources from guayule plants.

While Hevea rubber is collected by bleeding the tree’s sap, the entire guayule plant must be harvested and processed, said Niaura, who has a graduate degree from the University of Akron in polymer sciences and has worked for Bridgestone for 20 years.

Niaura said only about 7 percent of the plant’s mass is natural rubber and a business

case must be made for using the rest of the plant as well. Some of that mass, he said, is a pine tar-like resin that can be used by the adhesives industry. The remaining biomass could be burned to produce energy—Niaura said the biomass has the same energy density as coal, but with the benefit of being carbon neutral.

But Bridgestone also wants to explore another possible use for this byproduct of natural rubber production: It seems that termites will not eat the woody part of the guayule plant—in fact, they’ll starve themselves first, Niaura said—and it may be that the biomass left after extracting rubber and resin might be used in a termite-proof product for the building materials industry.

Bridgestone hopes to have a pilot crop growing at Eloy by 2015 but has not set a target date for potential commercialization of guayule natural rubber.

Asked how many people the two facilities employ, Niaura started to count on his fingers.

“Now?” he said. “About 10.”

But, he added, eventually some 45 people will work at the two experimental stations.

However, should the experiments prove viable, well, that’s when Niaura’s full job description comes into play. ■



(Top) Groundbreaking for the new Biorubber Process Research Center in Mesa, Arizona (rendering at left). Left to right: Hank Hara, chief technology officer, Bridgestone Americas Tire Operations, LLC; Hiroshi Mouri, president, Bridgestone Americas Center for Research and Technology; Bill Niaura, director of new business development, Bridgestone Americas, Inc.; Gary Garfield, CEO and president, Bridgestone Americas Inc.; Scott Smith, mayor of Mesa; Tatsuro Hamada, VP and officer of tire research and material development, and central research, Bridgestone Corporation; Hideki Komatsu, director, central research, Bridgestone Corporation; Mick Suzuki, vice president of business strategy and enterprise support, Bridgestone Americas, Inc.

(Center) Guayule plants and a tire made from guayule on exhibit at the Bridgestone Biorubber Process Research Center.

(Right) Program director Bill Niaura.



High and mighty

By Joe Sage



“TOYOTA understands that American truck buyers have different needs, so we offer a choice of a compact or full-size truck, even while most of our competitors have abandoned the compact market.

“Tundra and Tacoma sold nearly a quarter million trucks in 2012—claiming 18 percent of the combined retail compact and half-ton pickup truck market, which is about the same as our retail passenger-car share. And all of them are built in North America.

“In addition, no full-size truck has more North American parts content than Tundra.

“We’re optimistic about the future of the full-size pick-up truck market. The recession hit the segment hard—probably harder than any other—and there were only 1.1 million sold in 2009.

“But in 2012—with the economy growing in many areas—the segment exceeded 1.6 million units, and we see it hitting 1.8 million by 2015.

“The full-size truck segment has typically been one of the most loyal in the industry, with owners continually replacing their old trucks with new ones, and in today’s market some are taking the opportunity to change brands.

“We’ve also seen more segment switching as people move from SUVs and cars to the unique capabilities and increasing comfort of full-size pickups. With increased personal use, the mix of half-ton Crew Cabs has grown from 48 percent to almost 60 percent over the last five years.

“There is also a growing trend towards more premium grades with additional features and distinctive styling.”

These are the words of Bill Fay, VP of Toyota Division Group and GM of Toyota Motor Sales USA, at the Chicago Auto Show in February, when we witnessed the reveal of a very new 2014 Tundra. We quote him now because five months later, we are once more driving the 2013 model.



2013 Toyota Tundra CrewMax 4x4

As you can see by the photo insets at left, our Tundra was heavily branded: Toyota, of course, and Tundra, of course; 4x4, which we’re always happy to see; FlexFuel ready; Limited trim; powered by an iForce 5.7L V8; and certified by TRD, the Toyota Racing Development group. This truck should be ready for anything from trail to club, just as Toyota has set out to deliver, per the demographic and market developments VP Fay described above.

A base 2013 Tundra starts as low as \$25,455, with a regular cab, two-wheel drive and a 4.0L V6, still capable of towing over 10,000 pounds while achieving 16/20 MPG (city/highway).

A base 2013 Tundra CrewMax starts as low as \$30,635 with a 4.6L V8 and two-wheel drive (and delivering 13/17 MPG),

Bring your trim spec up to the Limited level—which falls between the base Tundra and a Platinum model—and add four-wheel drive, and you have a combination that includes the 381-hp 5.7-liter iForce V8 (with 401 lb-ft of torque). This is our test vehicle, which stickered at a base price of \$43,895. The truck is available with or without the FlexFuel feature, priced the same either way. TRD badging came with an off-road package.

Our tester was additionally outfitted with a 7-inch touchscreen interface that includes voice activation, DVD-based navigation, backup camera, 12-speaker JBL audio with 4-disc CD plus AM/FM/SXM/MP3 including USB iPod, hands-free phone and Bluetooth music streaming, all for an extremely reasonable \$1340. That TRD off-road package is even more reasonable, bringing five-spoke 18-inch alloy wheels, BFGoodrich Rugged Trail T/Ax, off-road-tuned suspension, Bilstein shocks, fuel tank skid plates and that TRD badging for only—and yes, we had to read the sticker more than once and pinch ourselves—\$70 (note: we have scrutinized the consumer build-your-own site and not been able to recreate this). Seat, mirror and steering wheel memory added \$465, a power moonroof \$180 and carpet mats plus sill protector \$195. Grand total for our truck (with \$995 destination): \$47,770.

The options included some real bargains. When you choose your trim level, though, you’ll want to pay better attention, as our \$43,895 base compares with just \$34,930 for a base-trim Tundra or \$48,170 for Platinum.

Fay seems to be on the mark about customers being willing to change brands. It has been years now since the Tundra graduated from what many called 7/8ths scale to a truly full-sized glorious beast. The days of wondering how a Japanese truck could hope to take on the usual Detroit triad are clearly in the rear-view mirror. (And, as Fay

pointed out, nobody beats the North American manufactured content of Toyota’s entry, anyway.) These are the same four brands, after all, that are represented in NASCAR (at least to the degree that RAM may equal Dodge).

In NASCAR, they have been working very hard this past year to bring about a little more (or any) brand differentiation among the four badges’ vehicle bodies. It is much improved, but the fundamental sizes and shapes are mostly still dictated to be the same. What’s surprising when you think about it, then, is how distinctly different the big four brands’ big pickup styling is. Cab styling also varies considerably among brands; unlike with some brands, we find the Toyota Tundra highly attractive whether in regular, extended (they call it “Double”) or crew cab (CrewMax) form.

Our time with this truck was relatively brief, but that may be appropriate, as its remaining time on your dealer’s lot will be, too. We did find some basically flat construction area dirt and gravel in which to give it a spin, but did no off-roading. Time around town was smooth and comfortable.

We gave the big CrewMax high marks in maneuverability. Even with its 19-foot-almost-one-inch length (and 145.7-inch wheelbase), this Tundra achieves a 44-foot turning circle. We don’t expect this to equal a Fiat, or even a midsize Tacoma, but whether getting in and out of our tight photo spot, or jockeying our way through parking lots, we noted its remarkably tight handling more than once.

We expect most of these comparatives to be very similar for the new 2014 model. If you’re interested in this 2013 Tundra, your time is growing short. Time to visit the dealer and check stock. Toyota appears to have done a great job updating this standard for 2014, but you will probably not regret buying what will soon be last year’s model, if you can get the right deal. ■

We can focus on the 2013 Tundra only just so much, when we had already flown to Chicago in February to see an all-new 2014 revealed. Toyota has introduced a run of new vehicles over the past year, including the Avalon (which we covered at launch in San Antonio in November) and the RAV4 (ditto at Cave Creek later in February).

Given the red-blooded nature of the US full-size truck market, Toyota emphasizes that the Tundra was again engineered by Toyota Technical Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan and styled at Caltly Design Research centers in Newport Beach and Ann Arbor. The truck will again be built exclusively at Toyota’s plant in San Antonio.

Models will include a work-oriented SR, volume-leading SR5, a Limited and two premium grades: Platinum and the all-new 1794 Edition—a tribute to the original ranch, founded in 1794, upon which the San Antonio Tundra plant is located. Toyota promises more distinct differences among model grades, both in exterior styling and interior style and appointments. Platinum and 1794 Edition interiors are especially impressive.

Cab styles, engine options, 4x2 or 4x4 drivetrains, and a maximum tow rating of 10,000 pounds are unchanged.

The truck’s revised styling is immediately recognizable as new, but also as a Tundra. The rear box, with angular humps and creases, is a quick way to spot the new model. The 2014 Toyota Tundra hits dealers in September. ■



Kia flagship sets sail

By Joe Sage



When an entirely new third-generation Kia Optima was introduced for 2011, the company's mission was to move beyond their already successful efforts to build a reputation through low prices, great fuel economy and a generous and confident warranty—elements that in aggregate they call “logic”—to tackling buyers’ emotions. They had broken through with the appropriately named Kia Soul,

and their next move was to invigorate the huge midsize sedan segment. The new 2011 Optima carried forward designer Peter Schreyer’s “tiger nose” grille design and other evolving cues, increasing the model’s sales from 25,000 in 2010 to an incredible 150,000 in 2012—holding its own against Honda Accord, Toyota Camry, Ford Fusion and other longtime midsize champs.

All this helped propel Kia to where it is today:

the eighth largest brand in the US, with the number 87 spot among Interbrand’s prestigious Top 100 Global Brands.

But Kia spotted an evolving void in their lineup.

Buyers in a challenged economy have been avoiding what Kia Motors America (KMA) PR director Scott McKee calls grandiose grandstanding. Instead, he says, to them “smart is the new rich.”

Optima had been attracting more affluent and



Kia has made its presence increasingly known over the past decade or so. The new Cadenza flagship delivers the most presence yet, inside and out.

style-conscious shoppers, with some 40 percent coming from large, near-luxury and luxury brands.

Conversely, at the same time, while most competitors’ midsize sedan transactions fall below \$25,000, fully two-thirds of Optima’s have been above that. And some of those buyers were starting to tell dealers that they “really like the quality and features and price you offer, but actually wish you had something a little more expensive and a little fancier.” If you were a loyal Kia customer—and they have plenty of those—there was nowhere higher to go within the brand.

Combine those two thoughts, and you see where Kia identified an opportunity.

Enter the solution: the 2014 Kia Cadenza, the brand’s new full-size flagship sedan. McKee tells us the new Cadenza “makes everything you thought you knew about Kia a thing of the past.”

Developing a flagship not only fills that sweet spot on the scale, but it addresses the next phase of Kia’s overall product and image development—pursuing modest growth, while focusing on ever-better product quality, elevating the ownership experience and strengthening the brand. Kia thus now has “halo” cars at the bottom and top.

As the company’s sales grow, they find they are able to inch up prices a bit across the board. But a flagship product adds a whole new tier.

Value is traditionally considered to be a formula that balances cost against quality and/or service (“pick two,” marketers say). Kia’s new definition of value is verbalized a little differently, saying “value is no longer about price—it’s about what you get for your money.” That still offers the



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same equation, but they are setting the stage for the main news: a Kia at a higher price tag.

To see how it all comes together, we traveled to San Diego to give the Cadenza a spin.

There's something so familiar about the Kia Cadenza, we feel as though we have already met it even as we first lay eyes on it. Our first thought is that this is because it's a lot like the Optima, just a half-size larger. But this is not really the case. The Cadenza is basically twice the car the Optima is (and the Optima is a fine car). Base price is a good place to start: fortyish (\$38,100) for Cadenza vs twentyish (\$21,350) for Optima.

Within the Cadenza price, Kia is delivering a new feature: a 36-month (or 37,500-mile) program covering the first five factory-scheduled service visits. As with the original 10-year/100,000-mile Kia warranty (also still included), this bolsters the quality image of a new flagship product, but also suggests an image of the premium dealer experience a flagship should deliver.

And yes, all this is under \$40 grand base. In fact, fully loaded, the Kia Cadenza is out the door for just \$41,100, which as McKee says "beats all the competitors, no compromises." The idea is that on this car "premium comes standard."

Kia says this is their most technically advanced car ever—with UVO eServices, blind spot detection (Kia's first), adaptive cruise control and a 550-watt Infinity sound system (we have yet to meet Infinity audio we didn't love).

Kia research showed 95 percent of GM buyers purchase OnStar "as an insurance policy," but 69 percent do not renew because of cost. Therefore, UVO comes standard—free with no subscription for 10 years or 100,000 miles, with 8-inch screen and navigation, tightly integrated with your Apple or Android smartphone, with Kia cloud computing and dedicated apps bringing you auto 911, remote diagnostics and more. Software updates will soon add remote start and other features.

Cadenza is actually built on the same frame as the Optima, but reengineered on a two-inch-longer wheelbase, five inches longer, one inch higher—adding up to best-in-class interior volume, class-leading front legroom, more accommodating rear space and ample headroom.

Cadenza is powered by a 3.3-liter V6—the same engine as the Sorento utility vehicle—with 293 hp and a rating of 19/28 MPG (city/highway). An all-new exhaust system reduces noise and boosts fuel economy. Special attention has been paid to handling, with extremely flat cornering once only expected in top-dollar German sedans.

Although Kia and Hyundai are both owned by the same parent company, both brands make a point of disclaiming any developmental ties or general product cross-awareness in the US.



From the posh shores of Del Mar, through the rolling hills of Riverside County, back through north San Diego County and down the coast, the Kia Cadenza conquers the roads and blends well with the styles.

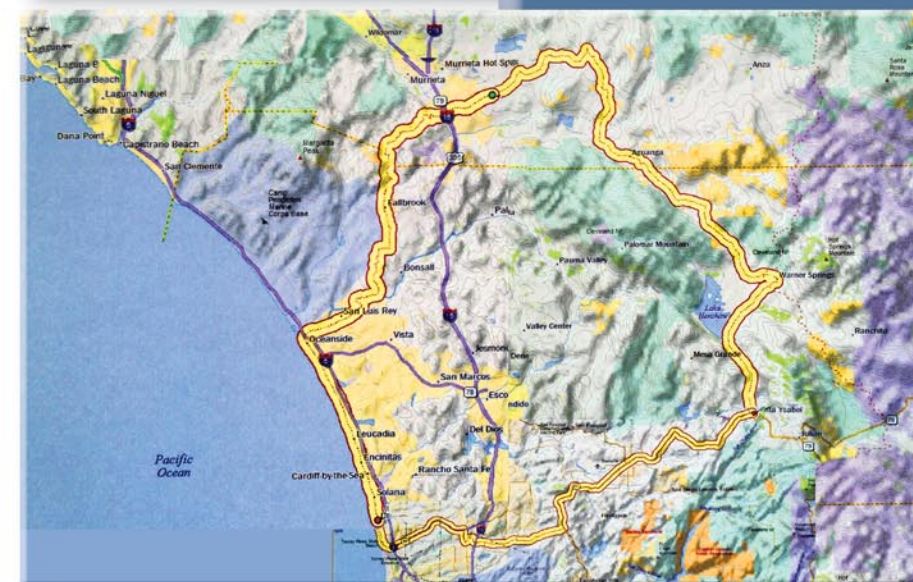
Nonetheless, when pressed by the media at launch, KMA product planning director Orth Hedrick described the Kia Cadenza as pretty close to the Hyundai Azera (which we review in this issue.) But, unlike Kia, Hyundai has two more models above that (Genesis and Equus). This is not to denigrate the Cadenza; it is to underscore that this is a top-end model at a value price.

The uninitiated sometimes ask us about quality and reliability of the Korean brands. We generally point out two things: one, that nobody thinks twice about the wondrous nature of their LG flatscreens and Samsung phones; and two, that despite all their advances, the company still provides the same 10-year/100,000-mile warranty, a significant sign of product confidence.

We've already often noted a phenomenal rate of improvement in fit and finish over the past decade. If not self-evident, there is hard data: JD Power identifies a 36 percent increase in Kia's durability-reliability since 2009.

On top of that, Kia tells us the Cadenza has been tested to what are usually brutal commercial standards: the powertrain running for 300 continuous hours, of which 20 are over redline—which they say is unmatched by any other manufacturer.

Success has led Kia to continually raise the bar on their products, increasing quality, style and features while keeping their prices and warranties very favorable. And it has now led them to build into a new market. We might have not seen this coming, but now that it's here, there is no mistaking that there was still plenty of headroom for such a move, which—not a surprise—has been masterfully executed in the Cadenza. ■



1000 MILES, 1000 TALES

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LARRY EDSALL



Rick and Nancy Rome's "spare" 1931 Chrysler CM-6 sport roadster

If you are of a certain age, you may remember a television series entitled, *The Naked City*. On the air from 1958-63, the program used a docudrama format—commonplace now, groundbreaking then—to follow the work of a group of supposedly fictional New York City police detectives.

Car guys and gals may be interested to discover that the same production and writing team behind *The Naked City* also was responsible for the *Route 66* television series that aired from 1960-64.

We share such television nostalgia and TV trivia because we want to share the line that ended each episode of those *Naked City* telecasts—an anonymous voice telling us, "There are eight million stories in the Naked City. This has been one of them."

We use that line, and the tie between *The Naked City* and *Route 66*, to inform you that a record 94 cars participated in the Copperstate 1000 vintage sports car rally this year, the 23rd annual mille miglia tour of Arizona highways and byways, and that each of those cars—and its driver and co-driver—came home with a story, more than one of which we share below.

FLYING DOWN THE HIGHWAY

John and Peg Leshinski of Scottsdale are Copperstate regulars who this year decided to do the drive in a 1951 Allard K-2, one of only 35 such open-cockpit roadsters built by British racing driver and sports car constructor Sydney Allard still known to exist. This particular Allard was purchased new by Al Unser Sr., who raced it up Pikes Peak (and who later would win the Indianapolis 500 four times).

Because the Allard not only has an open cockpit but only a pair of very small wind deflectors instead of a true windshield, John Leshinski wanted Peg to be both as comfortable and as protected as possible, so he decided they should wear period-correct helmets on the rally.

He found a French company that makes just such helmets, and with clear and full-face wind visors. "They looked like what Phil Hill wore," John Leshinski said in reference to the only native-born American ever to win the world Grand Prix driving championship, in 1961.

This year, the Copperstate route included not only Arizona roads, but a stretch of northbound pavement across the Mojave



Desert in California. It was on that stretch that a big southbound semi and its trailer created turbulence so strong it dislodged the Allard's hood, which broke the leather strap across the bonnet (the British term for a car hood), and the loose hood slammed back over the passenger compartment, smacking John and Peg Leshinski in their heads, or, more accurately, on their helmets.

Peg compared the impact to being "hit by a railroad tie."

Somehow, John got the car stopped safely, neither of them was injured, so, with help from others who stopped, they removed what remained of the hood and continued on along the route.

GOOD THING THEY HAD A SPARE

Each year, the Copperstate 1000 launches from Tempe Diablo Stadium, spring training home of baseball's Los Angeles Angels. To celebrate the Copperstate, a

(No. 26 at top, engine exposed below and on the road at bottom) John & Peg Leshinski's 1951 Allard K-2 that finished the event with its hood blown off. (No. 15 above and No. 18 at left) Rick and Nancy Rome's 1959 Devis SS and the 1931 Chrysler CM-6 sport roadster they were fortunate to have on hand when the Devin was unable to continue.



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Scott Morris and Rochelle Jensen in a 1973 Ferrari 365 GTS/4 Daytona Spider follow Trent and Jen Abbott in their 1971 Porsche 911E as the Copperstate contingent follows 89A on its way to Jerome.

Field of Dreams car show is staged, with the Copperstate cars parked on the out-field grass and the warning track around the infield of the baseball field, and with cars from area car clubs in the parking lots on either side of the stadium.

One of the cars in the stadium this year was a 1959 Devin SS, purchased last summer by Rick and Nancy Rome of Dallas at the Russo and Steele classic car auction in Monterey, California.

The Romes' SS was the last of these 18 sports racers built by Bill Devin, an Oklahoma native who created the first engine with belt-driven overhead camshafts (though he didn't patent his invention). Devin's desire was to build American cars that could compete with Europe's best on the race track. He started by building racing-style bodies for various chassis, and then complete cars such as the SS.

The Romes had traveled only a few miles from the stadium when the engine in their car imploded. The Copperstate is sponsored by the Bell Lexus dealership, and part of the sponsorship package has the dealership supplying several new sedans that Copperstate entrants can use should their cars become disabled.

Such a car was made available to the Romes, but instead of using it to continue along the route, they drove it back to the stadium, where another car they'd recently acquired (at the Bonhams auction in Scottsdale in January) had been parked (awaiting the Devin's return and both cars' transport to Dallas).

That car was a 1931 Chrysler CM-6 sport roadster, just like the Chryslers that raced at Le Mans and in the famed Italian Mille Miglia. Back at the stadium, the Romes climbed aboard, took a shortcut across the desert and caught up with the Copperstate contingent in Laughlin, Nevada, and then completed the full route without further incident, and while driving the oldest car in the rally.

A CORVETTE WITH ITALIAN FLAIR

Gordon Kelly is remembered in the industrial design community for creating



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the ubiquitous shell-backed plastic lawn chair and for designing toilets (hey, someone had to do it) for Kohler. But Kelly's passion was automobile design, and for several years he was head of transportation product design at Brooks Stevens Associates, a world-famous styling studio in Milwaukee. It was Kelly who was responsible for the stunning lines of the 1962 Studebaker Gran Turismo Hawk.

While attending European auto shows, Kelly realized that what he wanted to drive was a car that had the style of an early 1950s Italian coupe, but the mechanical components of a modern American car, namely the Chevrolet Corvette. So he designed such a car, built a scale model and carried that model to Europe, where he visited all the leading coachbuilders before agreeing that Carrozzeria Vignale should turn his drawings and model into a full-scale automobile, and thus the 1961 Kelly Vignale Corvette, a car that was a star of auto shows from Paris (in 1961) to Pebble Beach (in 1994).

Kelly became ill during that Pebble Beach show, and would die a few months later. Several years after that, John Breslow of Scottsdale would buy the Italian-bodied car from Kelly's family, would commission a book about Kelly and his car (*Driven by a Dream*, written by the author of this article), and would reintroduce the car by driving it on the full 1111.1-mile route of the 2013 Copperstate 1000.

FOLLOWING IN DAD'S TIRE TREADS

Remember the earlier mention in this article of Phil Hill? Well, his son, Derek, was part of the Copperstate contingent this year.

Chris Andrews of Fort Worth, Texas, brought two cars to the event. He and Jennifer Moore drove Andrews' 1962 Shelby Cobra 289 while his 1962 Aston Martin DB4 was assigned to Wayne Carini and Hill. Carini is a car restoration specialist and host of the *Chasing Classic Cars* television show. Hill is an auto racer and was the driver in those Cadillac commercials that sent an ATS to challenge some of the world's most spectacular stretches of pavement, for which Hill and the Cadillac film crew traveled from Monaco to Morocco and from China to Patagonia.

We must mention again that Derek Hill is the son of Phil Hill.

We also must mention that the first car Phil Hill drove and raced in Europe was a 1953 Ferrari 340 MM Le Mans Spyder.

And guess what? The very 1953 Ferrari 340 MM Le Mans Spyder that Phil Hill drove and raced in Europe is now owned by Michael and Katharina Leventhal of Chicago. Not only are the Leventhals regulars on the Copperstate, but they regularly drive the route in the 340 MM. On the second day of the Copperstate this year, they asked Derek Hill if he'd like to drive his Dad's car.

"That was very special," Derek Hill said

after the drive, "driving the very same car that was the first car my Dad drove and raced in Europe."

AND THE AWARDS GO TO...

Several awards are given to Copperstate 1000 participants at the conclusion of the rally. For example, the Leshinskis received the "Condolence" award, and John Breslow received the "Immaculate Presentation" award because of his car's clean appearance and mechanical consistency through the four-day drive.

The "Director's" award, presented by Phoenix Art Museum director James Ballinger to the "best sculpture on wheels," went to a 1961 Lister Jaguar Knobbly owned by Colin Comer of Milwaukee while the "Participants" award, decided in a vote of the participants in response to the question "Which car on the rally would you most like to take home?" went to a 1955 Aston Martin DB3S owned by Scott and Jody Rosen of North Salem, New York.

The "Good Samaritan" award went to John Standifer and Jason Henderson, who were on the rally as mechanics working for Chris Andrews, but who also worked not only on other Copperstate cars in need of help but even a non-rally motorist whose car was stalled by an ailing fuel pump. Standifer and Henderson not only fixed the problem, but gave the motorist an extra fuel pump they had just in case it might be needed farther down the road.

The "MAC" award, given by the Men's Arts Council that organizes the rally, went to Arizona DPS Sgt. Shane McFarland, who had much with which to deal on the rally route this year. The eight DPS officers who accompany the rally also give an award; this year it went to Copperstate rookies Mike and Kathleen Christodolou of Fountain Hills, and only in part for the fact they came to the aid of one of the DPS officers after his motorcycle was struck by a car (not a car in the rally). The officer sustained injuries severe enough he had to be flown from Sedona to the intensive care unit of a hospital in Phoenix, where he was expected to make a complete recovery.

That recuperation figured to be aided by the 10-90 Copperstate Foundation, started a couple of years ago by Copperstate participants to provide direct aid to DPS officers and families in just such cases (10-90 is the radio code for "officer needs assistance").

In recognition for his work in helping start the foundation, a special award was given to Bennett Dorrance of Paradise Valley.

The Copperstate's annual top award—the Louis E. Laflin III Spirit Award, named in honor of and given in the memory of the rally's founder—went to Scottsdale resident Gordon Apker, a long-time Copperstate participant who, through the years, has recruited many of his friends to join the rally and its effort to raise money for the Phoenix Art Museum and for the rally's police benevolence causes. ■



(No. 61, top and below) John and Sonia Breslow's 1961 Chevrolet Corvette by Vignale. (No. 11 and No. 48 above) Chris Andrews and Jennifer Moore's 1962 Shelby Cobra 289 and their 1962 Aston Martin DB4 to be driven by Wayne Carini and Derek Hill. (Left) Michael and Katharina Leventhal's 1953 Ferrari 340 MM Le Mans Spyder (also below), being driven by Derek Hill.



superscale

BY JOE SAGE

THE ACADIA IS A MIRACLE OF PACKAGING THAT FEELS SPACIOUS AND LUXURIOUS IN A MANAGABLE SIZE AT A MANAGEABLE PRICE

The GMC Acadia has been catching our eye for some time now. The styling just clicks, and the size looks right—we know it has seven seats, yet doesn't look too big to handle routinely. What's more, we had had mixed feelings about

the five-passenger Terrain. We've warmed up to it more now (see our May/June issue), but at the same time had said we'd find it worth having two more kids, just so we'd need an Acadia.

The time arrived to try it out. Our probable odds of not be disappointed were only enhanced as we received our Acadia in Denali trim and with AWD

—as we would prefer to order one. It even came in the pearlescent White Diamond Tricoat paint that had been so attractive around town.

Acadia was launched in 2007, and a Denali version arrived in mid-2010 for the 2011 model year. What had actually been catching our eye was the prior generation. For 2013, sheetmetal was freshened, immediately noticeable in its bold but refined grille, accompanied by a cleaner front fascia and bolder headlight treatment now featuring LEDs. It has taken no time for us to like the style and stance of the restyled Acadia even more.

The new Acadia's interior features improved soft-touch materials, new ambient lighting, and accent stitching on a par with vehicles at a much

higher price point. On the safety front, the 2013 model introduced an industry first: a front center air bag. You can bet electronics have been upgraded, so welcome GM's Color Touch system for infotainment, navigation, many general controls and available IntelliLink services. Side blind zone alert, rear cross traffic alert and rear vision camera are standard. Creature comforts benefit from 8-way power seats in front, with the driver's seat additionally including lumbar support memory and a reclining feature.

The automatic transmission lever and connecting mechanisms have been reengineered for improved shift quality, and ride and handling benefit from new dual-flow damper shocks and struts.

There are five Acadia trim levels, but all have the same 3.6-liter VVT gasoline direct injection V6 engine. At 4850 pounds for our AWD version (or



4656 with FWD), there is a lot to move around, yet it still has a 23 MPG highway fuel economy rating.

We entered and settled into a rich chocolate brown leather interior with the aforementioned stitching (the photo above is of a standard Acadia), reminiscent of a top-flight Infiniti interior. We turned the key to discover a heads-up display, à la its performance cousin the Corvette—a feature GM implements well.

A two-three-two configuration is common in 7-seaters, largely due to dimensional constraints toward the rear. The Acadia's seven seats are executed with two thrones in the front and two captain's chairs in the second row, relegating a threesome to the rear. This setup provides regal

Unlike many 7-passenger SUVs and crossovers which provide seating in a 2-3-2 configuration, the Acadia's 2-2-3 layout can keep things luxurious for four adults (with additional cargo space in that case, too).

GMC ACADIA AWD DENALI

ENGINE3.6L V6 VVT DI
 TRANS6-speed automatic
 POWERTRAINall-wheel drive
 POWER/TORQUE288 hp, 270 lb-ft torque
 FUEL.....regular unleaded
 BUILD LOCATION.....Lansing, Michigan
 TURNING CIRCLE.....40.4 feet
 BRAKES (FR/R)12.8"/13" 4w ventilated disc
 FUEL MILEAGE..16/23/18 MPG city/hwy/comb

BASE (STICKER)\$47,945

SAFETY: 6 months OnStar w/ crash response and turn-by-turn; remote keyless entry, extended range; airbags including side curtain; TPM; rear vision camera system; side blind zone alert; rear cross traffic alert; rear child door locks; engine immobilizer theft deterrent; StabiliTrak ESC/traction.

EXTERIOR: Spare tire/wheel; power sunroof, second row skylight; dual power fold heated turn signal auto dim outside mirrors; 20" aluminum wheels; HID headlamps; front fogs; power liftgate; roof rack w/ bright side rails; factory trailer hitch; remote start; ultrasonic rear park assist.

INTERIOR: 7-psngr seating, 2nd row captain's chairs, 3rd row split bench; 8-way power front seats, driver's seat w/ recline, lumbar; leather wrap steering wheel; wood accents; power tilt/telescope; power windows w/ express; tri-zone climate; rear cargo storage system; auto dim mirror; univ home remote; two rows leather appointed seating; heated/cooled front seats; Bose premium audio; color touch radio; rear seat audio and headphone jacks; heads-up display.

OPTIONS: White Diamond Tricoat\$995

Nav and rear seat entertainment ...\$2240

DESTINATION\$895

TOTAL AS TESTED\$52,075

KEEP RIGHT >>



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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quarters to four adults or two adults and two teens, while also allowing third row access up the middle, avoiding finger-pinching seat jockeying.

Unlike a Yukon/Yukon XL comparison, where volume is added in the middle and the whole thing becomes significantly longer, with cargo space preserved in the rear, the Acadia is not that much longer than a Terrain. Despite the addition of a spacious third row, the Acadia's wheelbase is just 6.4 inches longer and overall length 13 inches more. The Acadia does gain 6.1 inches of width. Add it all up, and the Acadia has just 24.1 cu.ft. of cargo space behind its last (third) row, while Terrain has 31.1 cu.ft. behind its last (second) row. The Acadia, however, has 70.1 cu.ft. behind its second row, or 116.1 with all but the first row standing. (The Terrain maxes out at 63.9.)

So that choice seems fairly clear, depending upon the reliability of your crystal ball. If you think you will need to carry four people plus considerable cargo, the two vehicles can be compared by budget, style or whim. If you may sometimes need to carry the team, but not necessarily with a lot of gear, the Acadia wins out. If you need to carry seven people and a lot of gear regularly, the smaller space behind Acadia's third row starts to factor in. You are likely looking at the Yukon XL.

The GMC Acadia is built on a front-wheel-drive basis. The AWD version is an intelligent system, pro-rating grip as feedback dictates. This is good for fuel economy and even good for traction, but because of its front bias, we did feel some mild torque steer characteristics at times.

The Acadia does have four-wheel ventilated disc brakes, but its almost 5000 pounds feels at



times as though it could use the stopping power of a set about an inch or two larger or with more calipers.

We loved some specific features in the Acadia, such as an additional glovebox at top dead center of the dashboard, which is where you plug in your iPod (it might get hot in summer) or stash paperwork or, indeed, gloves.

We were impressed with individual climate controls overhead for both the second and third rows. Just having this for the second row—an absolute requirement for some families we know—is hard enough to find. People riding in the rear also benefit from a comprehensive set of entertainment options, complete with headphones.

As with many vehicles, we had to battle the paths of the touchscreen interface for awhile to turn off a feature we hate but others may love, the seats that retract when you shut off the vehi-



cle—a touch of elegance to some, or a practical joke that pulls you away from your groceries just as you reach for them, to others.

The Acadia has a smooth and commanding feel overall, giving us the superscale feeling reflected in our headline. The whole world feels bigger from behind its wheel, and the Denali trim level confirms the feeling. ■



MUDFEST!

For maximum mud, we drive in the NW Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year face-off in the Great Northern Cascades

By Joe Sage
Photos: NWAPA / Armin Ausejo



To get the best idea how SUVs, crossovers and off-roaders can handle the wettest and worst of conditions, we could wait for a good August monsoon storm in Arizona. We do have our share of mud then, if only briefly. But it would be pretty unpredictable to actually schedule a competitive event, with a couple of dozen automakers bringing a couple of dozen prime contenders out for the challenge. For this, we joined our colleagues in the Pacific Northwest.

We flew to Washington state, where the Northwest Automotive Press Association (NWAPA) was holding Mudfest for its 19th time—it is held in Oregon or Washington, variously—and its third consecutive time at the DirtFish Rally School just outside Snoqualmie. The facility is at an elevation of about 600 feet, but is more dramatic than this suggests, tucked up against 4167-foot Mt Si and other peaks of the Northern Cascades.

The event was based out of the cliff-hanging, waterfall-hugging Salish Lodge and Spa—the same place we joined Goodyear last year for the introduction of their Eagle F1 Asymmetric All-Seasons (though that event held its track time at Pacific Raceways in Kent).

DirtFish is built on a 300-plus-acre site with a lengthy industrial past, centered today around abandoned historic sawmills, planers and its pioneer power station, and still surrounded by active timber operations. The facility includes gravel, mud and skidpad-ready paved areas, with open dirt trails and wooded regions ready for our event's dedicated pits and mud tracks. DirtFish has instructors with a full range of backgrounds, from World Rally Championship (WRC) to Formula One, but the emphasis here is normally on WRC,

using Subaru Impreza STI sedans and hatchbacks.

Not so today. We would be testing 23 different vehicles, grouped in five categories from off-road to luxury to compact. As the scope of vehicles has broadened so much in the actual marketplace, this year's subtext was changed from Sport Utility Vehicle of the Year to Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year. (You can find some parallel between this and the Phoenix-based Active Lifestyle Vehicle of the Year awards held in October.)

Some thirty automotive reviewers and testers participated, and the manufacturers provided key personnel to point out features or address any questions or concerns with each vehicle. Drivers scored each vehicle subjectively on a variety of attributes, including on-road and off-road characteristics; powertrain and braking; interior, exterior and technology features; fuel efficiency; and value.

On-road testing included a circuit along evergreen-lined two-lane mountain highways in the vicinity of DirtFish, plus a wet pavement autocross course on site. Every vehicle but the off-road class also ran a moderate off-road course, created with plenty of mud, ruts, gravel and dirt. The full-blown off-road category tackled a much tougher course with extreme conditions that challenged their locking differentials, maximum axle articulation, and approach, breakover and departure angles.

Competition was often very tight, but each category did produce a statistical winner. An overall Northwest Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year was also selected. Categories and entrants (alphabetically within groups) were as follows. Most were 2013 models, unless noted below as 2014 or in one case 2012.

COMPACT CLASS

.....\$ as tested	.....MPG	.....HP	.....Torque	
Ford Escape Titanium 4WD	.....\$35,630	.....21/28	.....240	.....270
Hyundai Santa Fe Sport (5p) AWD 2.0T	.....\$35,925	.....19/24	.....264	.....269
Mazda CX-5 Grand Touring AWD (2014)	.....\$31,890	.....24/30	.....184	.....185
MINI Cooper S Paceman ALL4	.....\$38,050	.....23/30	.....181	.....177
Subaru XV Crosstrek 2.0i Premium 5-dr Manual	.....\$22,790	.....25/33	.....148	.....145

This was a wildly diverse grouping, with some vehicles along fairly traditional CUV lines and others blurring the lines more (with all of this open to interpretation). Horsepower varies by more than 60 percent, and prices vary by almost 70 percent. Three have highway fuel mileage topping 30 MPG. The MINI surprised and delighted us, having off-road capabilities on a par with the biggest and

COMPACT CLASS Clockwise: Hyundai Santa Fe Sport AWD 2.0T; Mazda, MINI, Subaru, Ford



LUXURY COMPACT CLASS Clockwise: Acura RDX AWD Tech; BMW, Land Rover



OFF-ROAD CLASS Clockwise: Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Rubicon; Land Rover, Mercedes-Benz



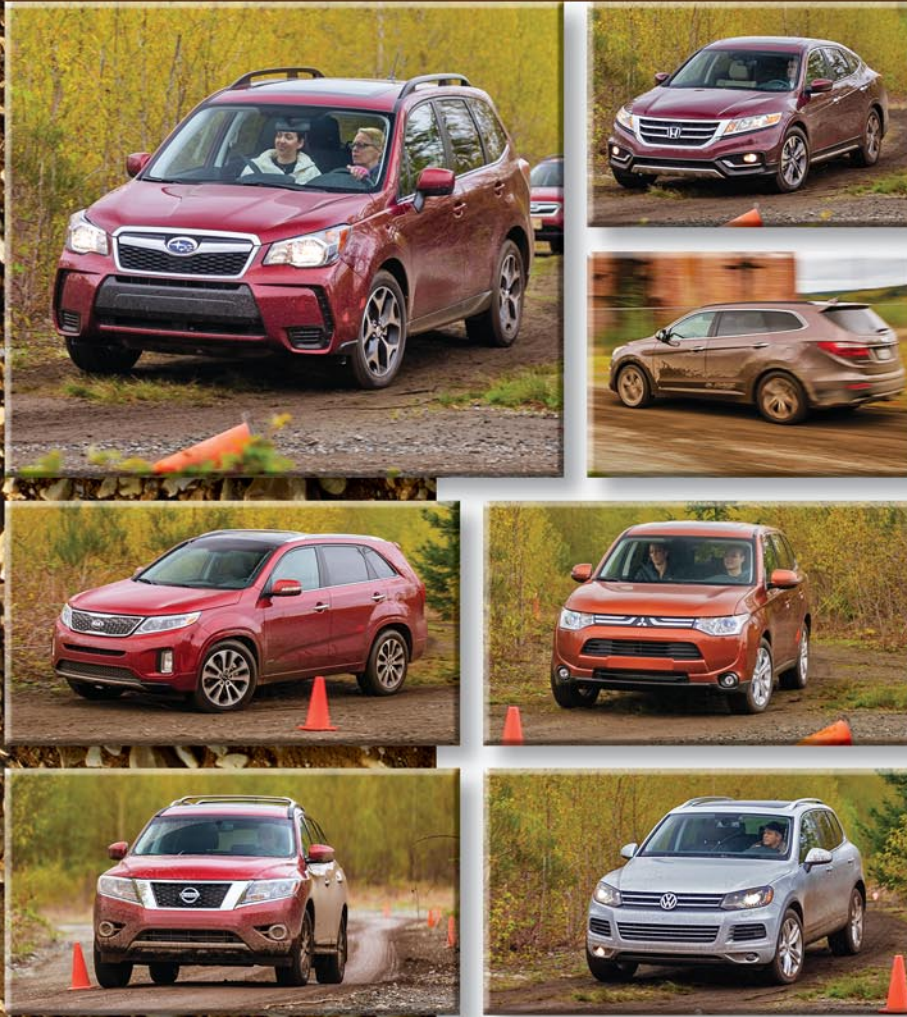
KEEP RIGHT >>

Photo: Joe Sage

Where the roads are dry and the cars are slick.



FAMILY CLASS Clockwise: Subaru Forester 2.0XT, Honda, Hyundai, Mitsubishi, Volkswagen, Nissan, Kia



LUXURY CLASS Clockwise: Jeep Grand Cherokee, BMW, Buick, Volkswagen, Mercedes-Benz



best, but its price worked against it in the points tally. The Crosstrek delivers tremendous value and capability, but felt a little light and rough around the edges at times. The CX-5 is topped by Ford and Hyundai for power, but we didn't feel any lack. We made several notes about what a pleasure it was to drive, and for us it came in second. (You can read about the CX-5 further, elsewhere in this issue.) Despite the lowest fuel economy and a relatively high price (both of which were scoring factors), the Santa Fe Sport received all 5s on our own score sheet, and that matches the group's outcome. **Best Compact: Hyundai Santa Fe Sport AWD 2.0T.**

LUXURY COMPACT CLASS

.....\$ as testedMPGHPTorque

Acura RDX AWD Tech	.....\$40,315	.....19/27	.....273	.....251
BMW X1 xDrive 35i	.....\$48,095	.....18/27	.....300	.....300
Land Rover LR2	.....\$48,295	.....17/24	.....240	.....250

We drove the BMW X1 a few months ago and largely dismissed it as a station wagon wanting to claim the X name. Here, it scored just 55 percent of what the other two did on our sheet—despite its power advantage. Our logbook noted that we expected nothing in particular from the Acura but were highly impressed and “found no fault at all.” The LR2 was a fine machine that actually totaled a half point higher overall with us than the Acura did—despite knocking a point off for some yaw characteristics on the paved roads. In the group tally, the Acura got the nod, surely benefiting from its price, fuel mileage and power advantages over the Land Rover. **Best Luxury Compact: Acura RDX AWD Tech.**

OFF-ROAD CLASS

.....\$ as testedMPGHPTorque

Jeep® Wrangler Unlimited Rubicon 10th 4X4	.....\$43,400	.....16/20	.....285	.....260
Land Rover Range Rover Supercharged	.....\$111,120	.....13/19	.....510	.....461
Mercedes-Benz G550	.....\$118,155	.....12/15	.....382	.....391

Some of our course was tailor-made for a six-wheel-drive logging truck, but our vehicles in this category were much more civilized than that. At least two of them were. Really, what can you say to a couple of \$110-grand-plus off-roaders like the Geländewagen and a supercharged Range Rover? Through the oddities of grouping to assess maximum capabilities—which that posh and pricey pair both delivered in spades—these shared the category with the always, always capable Jeep Wrangler, which comes in at about a third the price of either of the others. It also hits 20 MPG. For distance cruising, you may want to blow the dough on those high-dollar, high-horsepower alternatives, but this was an off-road test, and in bang for the buck, the Jeep was tops with the judges. But it's a stellar category. Our own score sheet had the Jeep in second place by only a half-point—and this with the G-Wagen getting all 5s, across the board, other than in fuel economy and price (both of which scored 2s). And the Range Rover was barely a point and a half behind those.

Best Off-road: Jeep® Wrangler Unlimited Rubicon 10th Anniversary 4x4.

FAMILY CLASS

.....\$ as testedMPGHPTorque

Honda Crosstour 4WD EXLN V6	.....\$37,920	.....19/28	.....278	.....252
Hyundai Santa Fe (7p) LTD AWD	.....\$38,730	.....18/24	.....290	.....252
Kia Sorento SX AWD (2014)	.....\$38,550	.....18/24	.....290	.....252
Mitsubishi Outlander GT (2014)	.....\$32,720	.....24/29	.....166	.....162
Nissan Pathfinder SL FWD	.....\$40,470	.....19/25	.....260	.....240
Subaru Forester 2.0XT Premium CVT (2014)	.....\$28,820	.....23/28	.....250	.....258
Volkswagen Touareg TDI Executive	.....\$60,480	.....20/29	.....240	.....406

The price point on the Touareg diesel seems better suited to the Luxury group. In fact, in our scoring, it would have come in second if it had been applied to that group—and without a ding for cost in this group, it would have about tied for first. Its prodigious diesel torque is one reason.



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2013 EVENT SCHEDULE

MARCH

March 8-10 • Scottsdale, AZ

★ 4th SPRING NATIONALS

WestWorld of Scottsdale — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral & All American Sunday.

March 15-17 • Fort Worth, TX

★ 3rd SPRING LONE STAR NATIONALS

Texas Motor Speedway — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral & All American Sunday.

March 23 & 24 • Pleasanton, CA

31st ALL AMERICAN GET-TOGETHER

Fairgrounds in Pleasanton — Featuring All Years of American Made & Powered Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet & Cars 4 Sale Corral.

APRIL

April 5-7 • Del Mar, CA

★ 13th MEGUIAR'S DEL MAR NATIONALS

Del Mar Fairgrounds — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral & All American Sunday.

MAY

May 17-19 • Nashville, TN

★ 8th NASHVILLE NATIONALS

LP Field, Tennessee Titan Stadium — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral & All American Sunday.

JUNE

June 1 & 2 • Pleasanton, CA

20th SUMMER GET-TOGETHER

Fairgrounds in Pleasanton — Featuring All Years of American Made & Powered Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet & Cars 4 Sale Corral.

★	National Event
	Drags
	AutoCross
	All American Sunday

June 7-9 • Loveland, CO

★ 16th COLORADO NATIONALS

The Ranch Events Complex — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral & All American Sunday.

June 14-16 • West Springfield, MA

★ 22nd GRUNDY WORLDWIDE INSURANCE EAST COAST NATIONALS

Eastern States Exposition — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral & All American Sunday.

JULY

July 5-7 • Des Moines, IA

★ 22nd HEARTLAND NATIONALS

Iowa State Fairgrounds — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Saturday Night Fireworks Extravaganza, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral & All American Sunday.

July 12-14 • Columbus, OH

★ 16th GOODGUYS PPG NATIONALS

Ohio Expo Center — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Friday Nite Vintage Drags, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral & All American Sunday.

July 26-28 • Puyallup, WA

★ 26th WESCO AUTOBODY SUPPLY PACIFIC NORTHWEST NATIONALS

Puyallup Fair & Events Center — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Friday Nite Vintage Drags, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral & All American Sunday.

AUGUST

August 16-18 • Spokane, WA

★ 12th GREAT NORTHWEST NATIONALS

Spokane Co. Fair & Expo Center — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral & All American Sunday.

August 23-25 • Pleasanton, CA

★ 27th WEST COAST NATIONALS

Fairgrounds in Pleasanton — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral, Mini Engine Display.

SEPTEMBER

September 20-22 • Indianapolis, IN

★ 3rd WIX FILTERS SPEEDWAY NATIONALS

Indianapolis Motor Speedway — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral & All American Sunday.

OCTOBER

October 4-6 • Fort Worth, TX

★ 21st LONE STAR NATIONALS

Texas Motor Speedway — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral & All American Sunday.

October 25-27 • Charlotte, NC

★ 20th SOUTHEASTERN NATIONALS

Charlotte Motor Speedway — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral & All American Sunday.

NOVEMBER

November 9 & 10 • Pleasanton, CA

24th AUTUMN GET-TOGETHER

Fairgrounds in Pleasanton — Featuring All Years of American Made & Powered Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet & Cars 4 Sale Corral.

November 15-17 • Scottsdale, AZ

★ 16th SOUTHWEST NATIONALS

WestWorld of Scottsdale — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral & All American Sunday.

November 22-24 • Del Mar, CA

★ 3rd FALL DEL MAR NATIONALS

Del Mar Fairgrounds — Featuring Hot Rods, Customs, Classics, Muscle Cars and Trucks thru '72, Goodguys AutoCross, Vendors, Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral & All American Sunday.

Goodguys Schedule as of 10/15/12. All dates subject to change.

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The Outlander gets a nod from us as a “more improved” entry, and its fuel economy is tops here, but price could be a little better for the relatively low engine power it delivers. Compare these same qualities—cost, power, fuel economy—and it’s not hard to see how the Subaru Forester conquered this category with the judges overall. (In our own tally, however, the Hyundai came in first, and the Kia Sorento tied the Forester for second.) **Best Family: Subaru Forester 2.0XT Premium CVT.**

LUXURY CLASS

.....\$ as tested	MPG	HP	Torque
BMW X3 xDrive 28i	21/28	240	260
Buick Enclave AWD Premium	16/22	288	270
Jeep® Grand Cherokee Overland 4X4 (2014)	14/20	360	390
Mercedes-Benz GL450 4Matic	14/19	362	406
Volkswagen Touareg Hybrid (2012)	20/24	333	325

The X5 has long been our preferred BMW X, but this day we had the X1 and the X3. Our X3 felt a bit like a stripper, but in fact was optioned up to \$52k-plus from a base of \$38,500. The Buick—a real beauty on the first day—unfortunately fell out of service before the second day and was not scored. The Mercedes-Benz GL is a perennial favorite of ours, as is the Grand Cherokee, but the Jeep surprisingly fell well ahead of the Benz in point-by-point scoring, partly because the GL costs almost twice what the others in this category do. The VW Hybrid (a 2012 model) came in second in our tally, knocked down a bit for its price relative to all but the GL. Overall, the Grand Cherokee was our winner in this category and also won with the overall group. **Best Luxury: Jeep® Grand Cherokee Overland 4X4.**

OVERALL WINNER

The Grand Cherokee had our highest score (by one point) of any vehicle in all categories of this event. Apparently our own score sheet outcome was reflected throughout the full group of judges, as they crowned one champion: the **Northwest Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year: Jeep® Grand Cherokee Overland 4X4.**

DRIVING IMPRESSION : 2013 NISSAN ALTIMA 2.5 SV

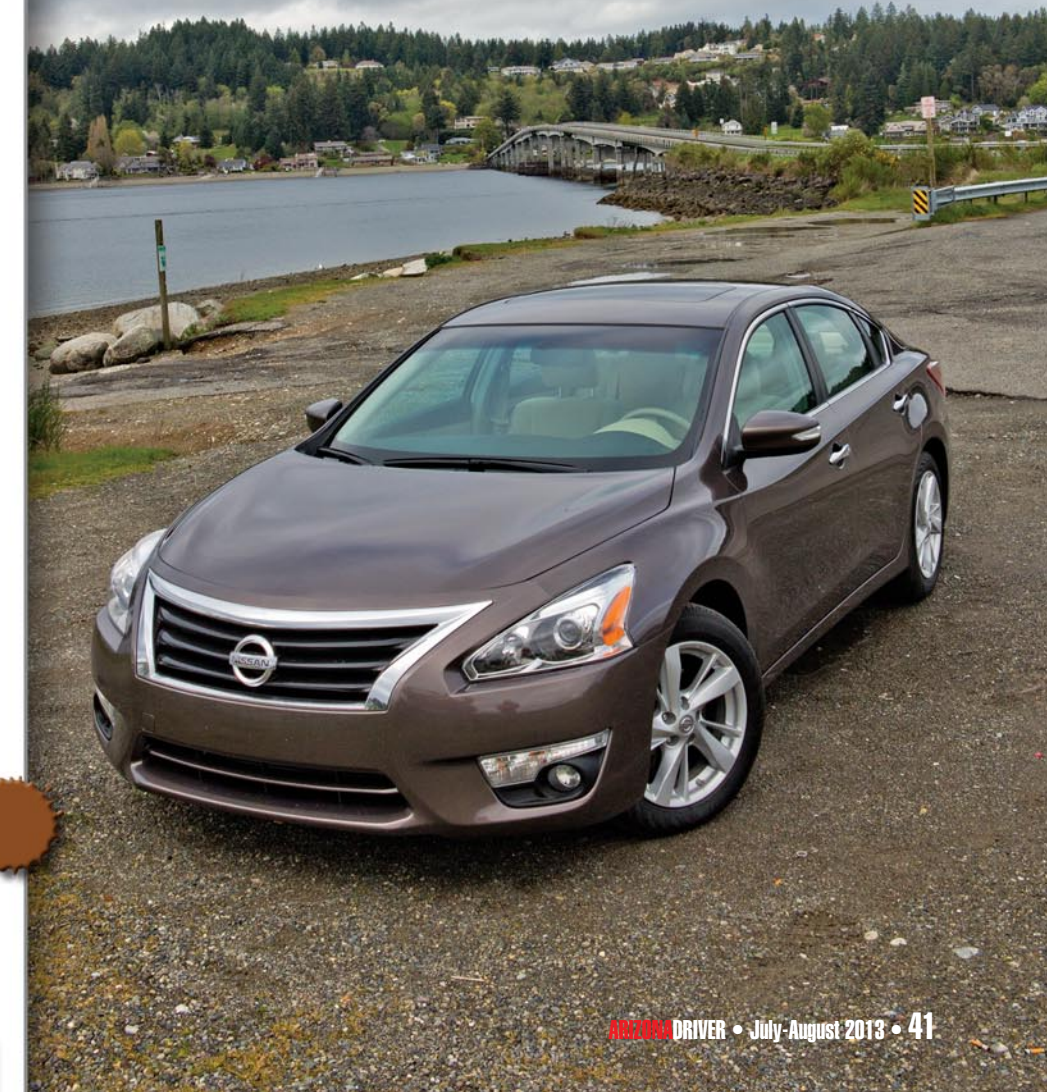
Well over halfway to max

The Nissan Maxima impressed us so well a couple of years ago—delivering a fine large sedan ride for a front-wheel-driver—that we looked forward to the all-new 2013 Altima with great anticipation. While in Washington state for Mudfest, we drove one on our airport-to-Snoqualmie run, plus a bonus day or two in the islands. Our Altima was a top-trim SV. There are three models, the price spread is fairly close, and they all have the same powertrain—the distinctions could just as easily be option packages. The base model starts at just \$21,760, and this SV at \$24,080. We’d go for the top model. (We had a stripper Altima rental in Colorado a few weeks later, which confirmed this.) Add one generally useful but not essential (unless you want a moonroof) package, and ours was out the door for \$27,005.

Our drive time was limited, but it did include steep climbs, as well as the rough

road surfaces that Pacific Northwest weather creates. We noted plenty of passing power on uphill at highway speeds, and solid, smooth suspension on the roughest of patches, with no front-drive torque, same as the Maxima. The nav and audio interface was simple and effective, typical Nissan.

We appreciate the fit, finish, fixtures and style of the Maxima, and had hoped for a downsized version in the new Altima. And...? It has come much closer than before. In the rich Java Metallic finish and top SV trim of our tester, the gap closes significantly. Focus on this one and not the old stripper rental, and things really start to gel. ■



HOT NEW GOODYEAR ALL-SEASONS

BY JOE SAGE

TESTING AT THE BOB BONDURANT SCHOOL OF HIGH PERFORMANCE DRIVING DURING RECORD HIGH TEMPERATURES

When you get exposed to the design and engineering processes behind a new tire, it's definitely more fascinating than it may be when you are simply down on your treads and standing in the store. In fact, there is so much that goes into any new tire's development, that by the

time you've heard it all, you really start to wonder where they can go from here, as they generally seem to have solved every challenge they had in front of them.

Ten months ago, we reported to you from Washington state, where we drove mostly BMW 3 Series in the driving rain

on the Pacific Raceways track, and various sedans on an autocross circuit at the same venue, plus on the open road, testing the new Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric All-Season tire. At the time (see our Sept/Oct 2012 issue), we said that this tire may have "(broken) through all that has come before," and that "by the time we were done learning about the development of (this) tire... we were hard pressed to figure what the team would tackle next, that hadn't just been solved for all time."

So, here was our chance.

This time, we drove the new Goodyear Eagle Sport All-Season in extreme heat (even for Arizona) in late May, at the Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving on the Gila River Indian Community outside Chandler. We drove Cadillac CTS-Vs on the track and Audi A4 quattros on a handling track. This included a signif-

icant artificially wet stretch despite the blazing sun desert conditions, as well as hot brake tests and other tight handling.

Once again, we got the feeling that the tire had been reinvented from scratch and that all goals had been met and all problems solved. We are not being cynical here. The process is truly impressive. But it did raise the question of where we were with this new tire, relative to the best-ever Eagle F1 Asymmetric All-Season last year.

That turns out to be easily explained. Both are all-season performance tires. The Eagle F1 Asymmetric All-Season is considered an ultra-high performance tire, while the Eagle Sport All-Season is more of a mid-tier tire. To the marketers, the Eagle Sport driver typically loves their vehicle (and loves to improve it), enjoys driving and is generally a fun and capable driver. The Eagle F1 Asymmetric driver is seen as far more focused, so engaged in their drive that "they may not even turn on the radio." This driver is likely to create more wear and to see less snow.

You may have already determined who you are by what you drive—fully 50 percent between the two lineups is decided simply by the sizes available, coordinated as they are with their most appropriate vehicles. You will also see far more truck fitments with the Eagle Sport All-Season.

The Eagle Sport All-Season tire replaces the venerable Eagle GT in Goodyear's lineup. The whole performance segment is on a roll, having grown over 35 percent from 2006 to 2012 (from 17 to 23 percent of total tire fitments). Three percent annual growth is predicted, ongoing, outpacing the industry's one-percent growth overall. One key reason is that original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) are now installing such tires on their cars, new, driven by demand and by the fact the original tires will last a lot longer than they used to. There are 47 sizes at launch, but this tire is also OEM-tunable, so manufacturers are able to optimize for their specific vehicle.

(Left) Our wet/dry handling course at Bondurant was run in the Audi A4 quattro sedan, the benchmark chassis for this tire's development. • (Right, top to bottom) We ran hot laps with the Goodyear Eagle Sport All-Season as well as competitive rubber in the Cadillac CTS-V sedan on the Bondurant track. • Champion racer Bob Bondurant welcomes the event. • A reminder that Goodyear Eagle is the brand of NASCAR, along with another reminder that a lot more than rubber goes into any new tire.



It is the job of Tara Foote, Goodyear's brand manager for performance tires, to analyze customer and OEM trends and requests, creating goals for the next wave of tire development, then to bring those goals to the chemists and engineers—whose creative work is just beginning.

Goals for this tire sound broad, but were assembled very specifically. They included achieving excellent performance in both dry and wet handling, with a smooth and quiet ride, plus enhanced ice and snow traction, with an industry-leading treadwear warranty and OEM compatibility.

The ensuing design and engineering process (as described in detail in our Sept/Oct 2012 issue) is more computerized





When it's time to develop a new tire, Tara Foote, Goodyear brand manager for performance tires, analyzes the market and sends parameters to the engineers. The new Goodyear Eagle Sport All-Season tire, replacing the Eagle GT in a wide variety of fits including mid- and upper-tier sport sedans, is the latest result. We experienced them at the Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving, using the Audi A4 quattro on a specially prepared wet and dry handling course and the Cadillac CTS-V on the Bondurant high-speed track.

significantly outperforming, respectively.

The new Goodyear Eagle Sport All-Season was 'comparable' in wet stopping and either 'outperformed' or 'significantly outperformed' in every other category. Areas of significantly outperforming included wet handling lateral acceleration—which we were able to verify on the Bondurant handling course—and ice stopping, which we were not. Goodyear test results had indicated the tire outperformed in both dry and wet handling lap times, dry stopping—which was dramatic during our own session—dry handling lap times, 100-foot slalom vehicle speed, dry handling lateral acceleration and evasive lane change speed.

Step back and admire the intricacy of the final result, at left. It's an integrated piece of art and science that provides the hugely important interface between your hurtling machine under influence of your own driving skills—and the pavement.

Each new tire seemingly accomplishes everything, and each seems to be better than the ultimate one that came before. The Goodyear Eagle Sport All-Season tire has a 50,000-mile warranty and is available in both V and W ratings (expanded from just V for the old Eagle GT). ■

than ever, allowing highly analyzed variables to be developed into the test product stage, before they head to the track to confirm progress on their new designs.

The Eagle Sport All-Season's design includes deep circumferential grooves for water evacuation, a significant footprint for dry surface grip, and angled lateral grooves in an asymmetric pattern for cornering grip. Grooves are wider on the inboard side than outboard to optimize load carrying on the one hand and cornering grip on the other, while achieving improved wear performance. Lateral and circumferential blades are added for the additional challenging combination of requirements for grip in both ice and snow—themselves two very different conditions—while improving ride quality, promoting long tread life and even wear, and reducing noise.

Competitive performance testing rates differentials as under 5 percent, 5-10 percent and over 10 percent. These are designated as comparable, outperforming or



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FORCE MULTIPLIER

BY JOE SAGE

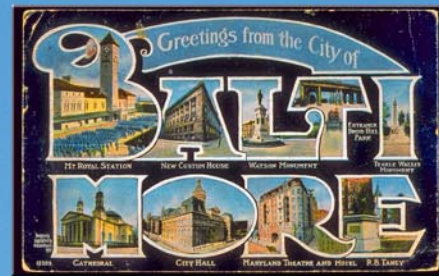
If you dig through Fiat's heritage, you can find instances of quite different cars sharing variations on the same name, and you can find instances of quite similar cars having quite different names over the years. The new Fiat 500L is a quite different car from the Fiat 500 just introduced to our shores over the past couple of years. Yet, as that one starts to gain brand recognition, the company has seen fit to build on its equity by applying the 500 name to this one. We could certainly make a case for the dead opposite approach, but this deed is done. Meet the Fiat 500L.

One glance at our lead photo and you can tell this vehicle can take you to a lot of fun places. For our launch drive, we flew to Baltimore, Maryland.

This is the port of entry for Fiat into the US and one of only two eastern ports (the other is Norfolk, Virginia) with main shipping channels at least 50 feet deep. History also runs deep here, seen in Revolutionary and Civil War-era buildings, as well as the US Naval Academy at Annapolis (the background of our lead photo). Baltimore is also home to modern heartbeats like Pier Six Pavilion, where Sting had performed the night before we arrived.

The deep port is essential, you could say, because the Fiat 500L is bigger than the Fiat 500 you have just been getting to know over the past year or two—significantly bigger.

Unlike with an Audi A8L, or a Lexus LS 460L, or a BMW 760Li, the "L" in Fiat 500L does not signify just a long-wheelbase version of the Fiat 500. In fact, it is no version of the Fiat 500 at all. This is a completely different vehicle, apart from that mini-compact 500, in a new category: a B-segment multi-purpose vehicle, or small wagon. The 500L is over two feet longer, 6 inches wider and 6 inches taller. Whereas the 500's identity is first and fore-



most as a small car, the 500L is designed to be both roomy and compact—approaching van or SUV utility, while coming across as "the anti-SUV." Its interior volume is that of a large car, per EPA standards.

The little 500 carries forward much DNA from the classic Cinquecento of decades earlier. The new 500L carries elements crossbred from a variety of prior Fiats, notably the Multipla (see sketches at right). The 500L is built from a new "small wide" Fiat global architecture and shares nothing with the 500. (And despite its global foundation, the 500L's powertrain here is unique to NAFTA.) So why not call this a 600, rather than a 500 variant?



We hope when the new name rolls off the tongue, the new image springs to mind along with it.

But none of that is supposed to matter. Fiat has plenty of data on their customer base, and it shows that their buyer seeks emotional fulfillment over straight logic. They want a car that is fun to drive, and they value Italian styling (including some quiriness). The buyer does seek value, but this is never about price alone. In fact, if Fiat's information and hunches are right, their customers don't cross-shop price. Data show that they know who they are, they know what they want, and having found it in Fiat they don't even look for competition. Fiat in turn claims they don't think about that—they simply are here to sell their product to those who want and need it.

Some 78 percent of their buyers have no kids, 54 percent seek a fun drive, 38 percent are after economy (which you might have thought would be higher) and 34 percent like Fiat's sporty nature (which at 101 hp for the basic 500 isn't defined in the Porsche or Corvette sense). As for size, 83 percent trade to Fiat from a C-segment or higher vehicle. Since that includes such small cars as the Audi A3 or Volkswagen Golf, it almost guarantees that buyers previously had that or larger. Fiat, though, see this as statistical evidence that their brand appeals to everybody, and well it might.

The Fiat 500L does deliver quirky Italian styling and a fun drive. First impression of the Fiat 500L may be that it's kind of big, relative to the little 500. In actuality, it's a very spacious package but in a very small footprint. Our all-day route included the full mix: urban driving in areas new and old (including rough cobblestones), multilane highway driving, and open two-lanes over hill and dale. Its power-to-weight ratio is impressive, and its handling precise and firm. One reason would be four

COMPARATIVE SPECIFICATIONS

	Fiat 500L	*Fiat 500
*(note: there are also 500e, 500c, 500T and Abarth models)		
EPA class	Small station wagon	Mini-compact
Engines	1.4L turbo four	1.4L four
Power (hp)	160	101
Torque (lb-ft)	184	98
Fuel capacity (gal)	13.2	10.5
MPG (city/hwy) manual	25/33	31/40
MPG (city/hwy) alt**	24/33	27/34
**[alt trans is Euro twin-clutch on 500L, 6-sp auto on 500]		
Length (in)	167.3	139.6
Wheelbase (in)	102.8	90.6
Height (in)	65.7	59.8
Width (in, wo/w mirrors)	69.8 (80.2)	64.1 (73.6)
Total interior vol (cu.ft.)	98.8	85.1
Weight (lb)	3203-3254	2363-2434
Weight distribution (f/r%)	61/39	64/36 (66/34auto)
Drag coefficient (Cd)	0.310-0.320	0.332-0.359
Turning circle (ft)	32.3	30.6
Base price	\$19,100	\$16,000



Above: the Fiat 500L's huge panoramic sunroof and greenhouse all around underscores the spacious difference between this and the regular Fiat 500.

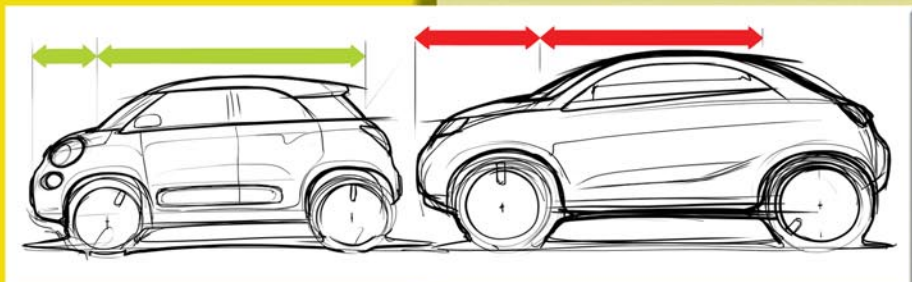
At right: the 500L carries style and heritage cues from the Fiat 600 Multipla and Type 186 Multipla. And third, a sketch working toward the new 500L.

At bottom: the new Fiat 500L next to the Fiat 500.



KEEP RIGHT >>





Historic highlights of Baltimore, Maryland's back roads and the contemporary Inner Harbor waterfront all made for a great couple of days back east.

The Fiat 500L's greenhouse proportions deliver more of a wraparound view than most currently predominant high-beltline, thick-rear-pillar crossovers.

greenhouse first struck us as a stretch—figuratively and literally—from the familiar 500. Viewed from inside, it provides a largely unobstructed view in all directions, indispensable to the whole nature of the beast—wide open but solid and secure. Fiat calls the 500L “architecture on wheels” and says it was designed from the inside out—as the inside is where we all spend huge amounts of our time. The 360-degree view is highlighted from the outside by blacked-out pillars and a color-contrasted “floating” roof on most models (a factor in their offer of over 30 available color combinations).

There are four models of the Fiat 500L: Pop, Easy, Trekking and Lounge. (That makes one sound effect, one adjective, one participle and one noun or maybe verb—which we bring up only because Trekking seems an unusual part of speech for a vehicle name.) On the other hand, Fiat figures Trekking will sell the best. This is the yellow model with white roof shown in both our first and last photos, and it starts at \$21,195. Pop is the least expensive at \$19,100 (but don't call it “base”—Fiat says none are considered “entry level”). Easy slots in between, at \$20,195, and Lounge is the high styler at \$24,195—including all features of the Trekking model, but couched in a different image, with chrome mirrors and less cladding.

Despite the sells-itself spiel, Fiat identifies a few obvious competitors: Kia Soul, MINI Countryman, Honda Fit, Chevy Sonic—all of which have received high praise in our pages. Fiat promises the 500L will deliver best in class interior volume, head and shoulder room, and cargo volume. Again emphasizing they are “not hung up on the competition,” they again mention Kia Soul. Fiat hopes the 500L will double the brand's market share. With this significantly broader two-model lineup, we can imagine brand recognition growing at more than the sum of its parts.

Anecdotally, Fiat seems to have a hit on their hands. We haven't heard immediate sales figures, but in the short time between our launch drive and this issue going to press, we have been surprised to see quite a few Fiat 500Ls on the road. Awareness of Fiat seems to be growing exponentially, too, with the 500, 500 Cabrio, 500T and Abarth now joined by the all-electric Fiat 500e. Put it all together, and Fiat's involvement with Chrysler in the US has certainly started to make its mark. For some solid entertainment, locate the car's new TV spot online: *The Italians Are Coming*. It carries the spirit that signals a fun revolution. ■

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Clean Sweep

The curvaceous Azera is a prime contender

By Joe Sage

Hyundai's passenger car lineup is very complex. Sedans alone vary tremendously (see list at lower right), from the extremely affordable Accent to the flagship Equus, able to go toe-to-toe with such top-dollar segment champs as the Mercedes-Benz S-Class (at a fraction of its cost). There are near-sedans, such as the Veloster (a body shape all its own), and related non-sedans, such as Genesis Coupe, Elantra Coupe and Elantra GT.

One look at the Hyundai Azera and you might think it is shooting for the "four-door coupe" niche, sharing some of that type of sweeping elegance

with known contenders in that niche (Mercedes CLS, Audi A7, Volkswagen CC)—but they avoid that name game. Besides, the Azera was distinctly and clearly a sedan for most of its history.

So if this is yet another sedan, in a lineup as well-populated as this one is, what is its particular *raison d'être*? It may come down to subtleties (and specifics) of style and features. It largely comes down to positioning—delivering a vehicle that looks and feels as delicious as the flagship Equus, but at a price point below the Genesis Sedan.

Still, do they need that many sedans? One thing

for certain: they are not likely to get rid of this one any time soon. Since the launch of this generation in 2012, Hyundai claims Azera as the hottest-selling nameplate in the large car segment. It surely is one of the fastest-selling: inventory turnaround averages 16 days, compared with Nissan Maxima at 65 days, Toyota Avalon at 28, Buick LaCrosse at 63 and Ford Taurus at 70 days (per data from Hyundai). Azera also claims a 61 percent conquest rate—buyers coming to the car from other brands, always one of any manufacturer's prime goals.

There are some specific distinctions. The Hyundai Azera is classified as a full-size sedan and competes in that segment. The Sonata is also classified as full-size but largely sells against competing midsize cars. Azera is a near-luxury model with front-wheel drive. The Genesis Sedan is a full-size rear-drive sedan competing in the luxury segment. (The Genesis Coupe starts at just \$24,250, so figuring its relationship to the full-size, luxury Genesis Sedan is another drill entire-

ly.) Aside from anyone's firm preference between rear- and front-wheel drive, choosing among the group can still be daunting.

Nonetheless, once you have it on your radar, the Azera stands out from the crowd.

One notable thing about the Azera's particular combination of luxury, size and price is that it is Hyundai's first V6 vehicle to achieve 30 MPG highway fuel economy—and this with a 293-hp engine (best-in-class power-per-liter output).

Azera also boasts the segment's top front seat headroom (40.3 inches) and legroom (45.5 inches). Even with the stylish sweep of its roofline, the rear seat is close behind, with 37.6 inches for your friends' heads and 36.8 for their legs (provided in part by front seats with scalloped rears).

Standard interior features include leather seating, a ten-way power driver's seat (eight-way for the front passenger), with a driver's seat optional cushion extension, plus integrated memory system for the seat, steering wheel and side mirrors. Also included are manual rear side window shades. Our test vehicle's one optional package also added a power rear window shade—a feature more often seen in such vehicles as the Lexus LS 460L or Audi A8 L, in the \$110,000 range.

Our car's black glass roof caps off its optional power tilt and slide panoramic sunroof (also part of our one add-on package), which adds to the Azera's spacious interior look and feel.

Additional standard features inside include navigation with rearview camera, Bluetooth hands-free phone and streaming audio with voice recognition, the Blue Link telematics system, and heated front and rear seats. Dual climate control for the front also feeds standard second row air vents, and even the glove box is cooled, standard.

We've mentioned the one and only option package a couple of times already because it covers a broad spectrum. Despite being known as a Technology Package—perhaps because so many tech features are already standard—this bundle includes everything from a couple of tech upgrades, such as an always welcome Infinity premium audio system with subwoofer, and electronic rear parking assistance, to features that could certainly be categorized in other ways, whether performance, style or luxury. These include 19-inch hyper-silver alloy wheels with plus-size tires, ventilated front seats, a driver's cushion extension (welcome on long trips), power tilt/telescope steering wheel and attractive ambient interior lighting. The package adds more than



HYUNDAI LINEUP COMPARO

	2013 BASE PRICE
ACCENT	\$14,545
ELANTRA	\$16,965
VELOSTER	\$17,600
SONATA	\$21,195
AZERA	\$32,250
GENESIS	\$34,200
EQUUS	\$59,250

KEEP RIGHT >>



BASE PRICE	\$32,250
TECHNOLOGY PACKAGE...19" alloy wheels, pano sunroof, HID xenon headlights, rear parking sensors, Infinity premium audio, ventilated front seats, power rear sunshade, power steering column, driver memory, ambient interior lighting	\$4000
CARPETED FLOOR MATS	\$100
IPOD CABLE	na
DESTINATION	\$875
TOTAL.....	\$37,225

10 percent to the car's price, but the total remains well under \$40 grand. It is the only package there is, and it leaves nothing lacking. We would opt for it, without question. The Infinity audio upgrade and the cooled seats would be reason enough, right there.

Center stack styling has somewhat the zoomy look of a boombox, while coming off as classy and elegant at the same time. Interface details are easy to find and generally adjustable in mercifully few steps. The audio interface is quick, providing complete information instantaneously as you tune through radio channels or iPod titles.

Hyundai stylists have done an especially nice job with exterior details on this car. Body sculpting is different from most of the rest of the lineup's sheet metal and does a nice job of extending a distinctive shape suggesting a larger and even more prestigious vehicle. It's different from the rising beltlines just about universal today, creating more of an arced line that sweeps up from the middle of the rear side windows.

A chrome bar tapers from above the headlights to wrap around the edge of the hood to the beltline at the door. It looks great and it's unusual, reminiscent perhaps of something last seen in the era of dreamy GM styling of the late '50s and early '60s. Hyundai may have put their finger on something from that era, evolved to work really well today. To augment the upswept lines above the rocker panel, they again do something different from everybody else: an insert of chrome defining the bottom of the doors while clearing the top of the rocker with an uphill sweep. Complex and stylish headlight and taillight assemblies each have three little circular reflectors providing a spacy detail, again still with a stylish look (and only ever so slightly reminding us of classic Buick portholes).

The Azera's economical but strong V6 gave us all the freeway power we needed, conquering every challenging situation. Its 36.5-foot turning circle rates very well for a full-size sedan. The 3605-pound Azera delivers the feeling of a tighter, lighter and more spry car than its size might suggest. We noted the 6-speed SHIFTRONIC transmission repeatedly for its smooth and powerful acceleration and shifting. (We also had good results with its manumatic function.)

As we roamed the competitive streets and parking lots of the northeast Valley, we had the general feeling that we were driving one of the best brands going and one of their best models going. Once you tune in to this particular spot in the lineup, you notice a lot of admiring glances and a number of curious ones. Among a wide variety of other Hyundais and a lot of other brands, the Azera fills a very sweet slot. ■

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Nailed it.

by Joe Sage

Last year's CX-5 was a winner but could have benefited from a stronger engine. This year's CX-5 has that engine.

In a stroke of fate, history almost repeated itself this year, from last, but there were a couple of rewrites. Last year, we received the 2013 Mazda CX-5 just in time to drive it to Northwest Colorado for the 4th of July. And last year—given all those days and miles, which could work either way—we really liked the vehicle. But we thought it could use a little more power, which was noticeable in the Rocky Mountains but also on I-17 headed north right here at home.

This year, we received the 2014 Mazda CX-5, by sheer coincidence, just in time to repeat that drive to Colorado, though this time for high school graduation instead of the Fourth. Time, however, did not allow for the drive—unfortunate for the poetic balance as much as for the comparison. On the other hand, this year did bring us the one thing we had wished for last year: a bit more powerful engine.

Both last year's and this year's were delivered in top Grand Touring trim (there are three levels) and in front-wheel drive (AWD is also available). Both last year's and this year's had standard feature

inclusion lists a mile long. Last year's had no options, while this year's had two small ones (a bumper guard and a cargo cover) and one significant package (GT Tech Package at \$1625). Base price went up \$575 over the year, and our total this year was \$30,340, versus \$27,840 last year (see sidebar for Tech Package inclusions).

The big difference was that last year's had a 160-hp SKYACTIV 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine, while this year's had a 184-hp SKYACTIV 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine. Fuel mileage ratings for the new engine are 25/32 MPG (city/highway) or 27 MPG combined. Last year's were 26/32/29 (with the smaller engine and automatic transmission). To put that in perspective, had we taken our 2000-mile repeat road trip, which was almost all highway time, our fuel expense would have theoretically been the same, at 32 MPG both years. If we went with combined ratings, we would have used 74 gallons instead of 69 (or spent about 20 bucks more this time). Since it skewed toward mostly highway, with a couple of short stretches around Moab and

Steamboat Springs, call it ten bucks. The roughly 19 percent boost in horsepower is more than worth it.

The new CX-5 is still available with a 2.0 four, but now slightly downrated to 155 hp. Both are available in FWD or AWD, and the mileage drops a touch in AWD (from 25/32/27 to 24/32/26 MPG city/hwy/combined, with the 2.5L).

With the 2-liter engine, transmissions are different: the AWD model has the same 6-speed automatic, but the FWD has a 5-speed automatic. The small engine with FWD is also available with a 5-speed manual. As with last year's model, our one remaining wish would be for an all-wheel-drive model with a manual transmission—either engine, though we would favor the 2.5L (which as of now doesn't offer a manual even with FWD).

The 2014 Mazda CX-5 has a 5.8-inch touchscreen for rearview camera, available nav, hands-free phone and audio and other controls. The audio is pumped from a 9-speaker Bose system which still includes CD as well as MP3—not over-the-top sound, but solid and with a very responsive tuning interface. Climate control is dual-zone.

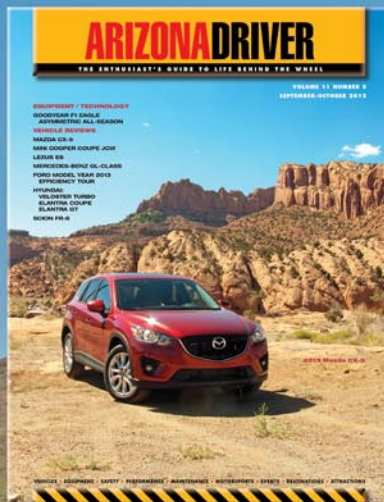
The difference in power was noticeable right away in Valley traffic. Despite no interstate odyssey, we managed enough quick uphill Interstate to also confirm the additional grunt. The 6-speed automatic felt great.

Over-shoulder interior rear 3/4 visibility is good,

even with the solid presence of a somewhat combined C-D pillar with a small window in between. It all comes together.

"The future" does not always stand the test of time. Stylists' crystal balls can be right on, or they can be way off. Mazda's crystal balls are pretty much right on. The CX-7 and CX-9 zoomed into the future years ahead of others. The old Mazda Tribute was a stylish alternative to the Ford Escape. Ironically, we now like the CX-5 partly because the Escape has rebalanced away from this, to the curvier side, and we like the lingering two-box basis of the Mazda. Bear in mind they have maintained this while also delivering the best aerodynamics in the segment: a Cd of 0.33.

The smooth and solid 2014 Mazda CX-5 should be at dealers by the time you read this. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE/TRANS2.5L 4-cyl / 6-spd auto
 POWER/TORQUE184 hp / 185 lb-ft
 DRIVETRAINFWD
 PAINTSky Blue Metallic Clearcoat
 INTERIORBlack leather trim sport seats
 MPG (EST)25/32/27 city/hwy/comb

BASE\$27,620

- GRAND TOURING TECH PACKAGE: navigation, auto-leveling HID headlamps, adaptive front lighting, Smart City Brake Support, keyless entry, auto-dim mirror with HomeLink.....\$1625
- Rear bumper guard.....\$100
- Retractable cargo cover.....\$200
- Sirius Satellite Radio.....n/c
- Destination\$795

TOTAL\$30,340

THE INSIDE TRACK: BRIEFS & RUMORS



■ Michelin has entered into a technical support agreement with **VÜHL** Automotive, the company behind the VÜHL 05, an all-new lightweight, road-legal supercar making its world public debut at the Goodwood Festival of Speed, July 11-14, 2013. With technology from around the world—and sporting Michelin tires—the car's handling has been optimized in the UK, with further testing and development coming in the US and Europe later this year. Bodies will be fabricated in Canada with final assembly in Mexico City.

■ The world's 30 millionth **Volkswagen** Golf has come off the assembly line in Wolfsburg—the latest record for the most successful European car ever. Production of the original Golf began in early 1974. Since then, an average of over 2000 people have purchased a new Golf every day for the past 39 years. Number 30 million was a Golf TDI BlueMotion, the most fuel efficient Golf ever built.

■ **Smith Electric** Vehicles Corp. of the UK, a global producer of all-electric medium-duty commercial vehicles, has now produced over 700 all-electric Edison and Newton trucks, which have generated over five million miles on the road, as adoption of commercial electric vehicles by major blue chip corporations globally continues to expand. Those five million electric miles have offset an estimated 700,000 gallons of fuel and eliminated over 10,000 tons of greenhouse gases.

■ **Kia** is ranked 37th in Interbrand's list of the 50 Best Global Green Brands (of any sort) for 2013, the first time on this list of sustainability and environmental performance among the world's 100 most valuable brands. Businesses are assessed by market perception, as well as actual environmental performance of the company and its products and services. Kia made it onto Interbrand's 100 Best Global Brands rankings for the first time in 2012, in 87th place. According to the Interbrand study, Kia has placed eco-management at the forefront of its brand strategy alongside an emphasis on quality and design management since 2006, with huge progress in vehicle performance, including a strong



focus on fuel efficiency (and with a long-term goal of zero-emissions). The company has improved the environmental performance of its supply chain, production centers and logistics, minimized emissions from its operations and reduced the use of water during the manufacturing process, as well as recycling more than 90 percent of production waste.

■ **GoBankingRates.com**, a personal finance site, has issued a report investigating what the term “luxury” really means in the automotive industry, finding that it relates more to an experience rather than specific features. From there, they identified the top six least expensive luxury cars, listed here with base prices:

1. 2014 Acura ILX Sedan (\$26,900)
2. 2013 BMW 1 Series Coupe (\$30,510)
3. 2013 BMW 1 Series Coupe (\$32,125)
4. 2013 Volvo S60 Sedan (\$31,900)
5. 2013 Audi A4 Sedan (\$32,500)
6. 2013 Cadillac ATS (\$33,095)

The organization says that bridging the gap between luxury and frugality is a challenge for auto loan borrowers today.

■ Carroll **Shelby** Licensing Inc. has teamed up with Priceline.com and expert “Negotiator” William Shatner. In a recent commercial to promote Priceline's hotel reservation service, he and his daughter, played by *The Big Bang Theory's* Kaley Cuoco, roar across the screen in a big block Shelby Cobra. Shatner drops his daughter off with a mountaintop clan of monks and returns twenty years later in the same car. (His daughter is now as savvy as her famous father in finding consumers the best travel deals.)

■ Bringing new technology to the search for off-street parking, **Audi** is adding INRIX Park—a real-time navigation service for existing and new Audi connect® subscribers. Demonstrated at the annual Telematics Detroit 2013 conference, it is immediately available with all active accounts—more than 100,000 Audi models already on the road in the US today, with thousands more sold each month. INRIX Park lets customers easily compare rates, gauge proximity to their destination and get turn-by-turn directions for over 18,000 participating parking locations in the US (and 42,000 more across Europe). The roster is expected to grow.



■ At the Miami International Boat Show, the world was introduced to the third collaboration between the Cigarette Racing Team and **Mercedes-AMG**, in the form of two boats including the 42' Huntress inspired by the G63 AMG. The Cigarette 42' Huntress is designed with the same attributes that define their offshore performance boats—extremely durable superstructure, awe inspiring performance and race-rigging. The center console layout and overall capacity of the Huntress allows these Cigarette performance roots to be expressed on glassy seas or in rough water environments that would make other performance boats cringe—all while providing space for a sizeable group of friends or family.

■ Kicking off the 2013 race season, **Mazda** has delivered a fleet of 15 special-liveried 2014 Mazda6 sedans, CX-5 sport utility vehicles and powerful MX-5 sports cars to Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca near Monterey, California. “Soul Red Metallic” vehicles bear Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca identification, from Mazda's design team in Irvine. “The Mazdas serve a variety of purposes, from utilitarian duties, to participating in parades and civic activities, to serving as pace cars, and as such are instrumental in our jobs,” said Gill Campbell, the facility's CEO and general manager. Five major events fill the 2013 schedule: the recently concluded American Le Mans Monterey; Red Bull US Grand Prix with the MotoGP World Championship July 19-21; Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion August 16-18; Continental Tire Sports Car Festival September 7-8; and the FIM SuperBike World Championship September 27-29.

■ The **Volkswagen** XL1 is the most fuel-efficient production car in the world, with a European combined fuel consumption rating of 261 MPG. With its plug-in hybrid system, this two-seater also has a 32-mile range in zero-emissions all-electric mode. The XL1 is built around light weight (1953 pounds), high aerodynamics (0.19 Cd) and low center of gravity. The XL1 can cruise at a steady 62 mph using just 8.3 horsepower. In all-electric mode, the XL1 requires less than 0.1 kWh to cover over a kilometer (0.16 kWh for over a mile). Its plug-in hybrid system comprises a 47-hp two-cylinder TDI engine, a 27-hp electric motor, seven-speed DSG dual-clutch automatic transmission and lithium-ion battery. CO₂ emissions as tested in Europe are just 21 g/km. The XL1 has a top speed of 99 mph and can accelerate from 0 to 62 mph in 12.7 seconds. Its 261 MPG fuel economy rating remains unmatched.



brand presented the club with a check for \$3,000, which in turn was donated to the non-profit help organization Women With Willpower. The club's entry form was randomly drawn from more over 100 entries, by personality Steve Parker. ■



UPCOMING FEATURES

2014 Hyundai Equus launch (Miami)



2013 Jeep® Wrangler Unlimited Moab Edition



Russo and Steele Newport Beach results



2013 Nissan Pathfinder 4x2 SL Premium



Barrett-Jackson Hot August Night results



2013 MINI John Cooper Works Roadster



2014 Mazda6



2014 Jeep® Cherokee & Dodge Durango (Seattle)



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