

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 17 NUMBER 6
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2018

*TRACKS/TRUCKS/LUXE
COMPAROS/DRIVES
EVENTS/TRAVEL
/ AND MUCH MORE*

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AS VOTED ON BY THE TEXAS AUTO WRITERS
THE 2018 NISSAN TITAN MIDNIGHT EDITION

Nature. It can feel treacherous at times. Tame it with the legendary Cummins Turbo diesel with 555 lb-ft torque in the 2018 Nissan Titan XD PRO-4X. It has all the muscle you need to power through the most punishing paths and its Intelligent AroundView Monitor gives you a virtual birds eye 360° so you can easily move through them. Nissan Titan XD PRO-4X, the Titan of the outdoors.

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COVER: What's better than the open road?



"LandSpeed" Louise Ann Noeth

Joe Sage

Kevin McCauley / TAWA

START YOUR ENGINES : FROM THE PUBLISHER

Compare, contrast, challenge. And pass judgment. We are members of a number of automotive press associations around the United States (see list at lower right) for a variety of reasons, from keeping in touch with friends and contributors, to participating in certain of their events when possible. Two we would not miss are represented in this issue—NWAPA's Run to the Sun in Oregon and TAWA's Texas Truck Rodeo.

Run to the Sun was a drive-and-enjoy-only event until last year, when judging and awards were added. The Texas Truck Rodeo has granted high-profile awards for well over 20 years, consistently covered by a wide range of national media and bragged about by its trophy winners in national and even international advertising. Both occurred this fall, with the unexpected twist that Oregon was sunny and relatively warm (considering snow on Mt Hood and the fresh feel of fall in the morning air), while Texas was breaking records for rainfall, flooding and generally bone-chilling cold.

A third comparo was held here in Arizona, a privately run rather than press association event (though to most people, it appears about the same). And yes, we had sunshine, blue skies and perfect temperatures once we were back home for that one.

One thing we all gain from multiple awards events is that, sure enough, some of the results are different, even among identical entrants. Such are the whims of even the most educated judge and voter. The manufacturers are quite stoic, running the gantlet at all of these, when voting results can be so unpredictable. This is useful to note for any who are seeking guidance on a purchase—proof that awards, expert and experienced though we judges may variously be, are never the last word on your decision. Each vehicle entered in any of these events has been chosen as the best of the best by its maker, and each is certainly worthy of a serious look.

Enjoy the ride!

Joe Sage

Publisher/ Executive Editor

ARIZONA DRIVER
MAGAZINE



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MAMA.....Midwest Automotive Media Association
MPGMotor Press Guild
NWAPA..Northwest Automotive Press Association
PAPA.....Phoenix Automotive Press Association
RMAP.....Rocky Mountain Automotive Press
SAMA.....Southern Automotive Media Association
TAWA.....Texas Auto Writers Association
WAJ.....Western Automotive Journalists

ACM.....LeMay—America's Car Museum
Sturgis....Sturgis Motorcycle Museum & Hall of Fame
USFRA...Utah Salt Flats Racing Association
USMA.....United States Motorsports Association

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ARIZONA DRIVER MAGAZINE
 PO Box 13387, Scottsdale AZ 85267
 Advertising: 480-948-0200

SPECIAL EVENTS: JANUARY AUCTIONS

	THURSDAY 10	FRIDAY 11	SATURDAY 12	SUNDAY 13	MONDAY 14	TUESDAY 15	WEDS 16	THURSDAY 17	FRIDAY 18	SATURDAY 19	SUNDAY 20
Barrett-Jackson											
Bonhams											
Gooding & Co											
RM Sotheby's											
Russo and Steele											
Silver Auctions											
Worldwide Auctioneers											

PREVIEW
AUCTION

**Arizona
January
Auction
Week
2019**

Barrett-Jackson
48th Annual Collector Car Auction Event
Nine days:
 Saturday, January 12 - Sunday, January 20, 2019
 WestWorld
 16601 N Pima Road, Scottsdale AZ 85260
 (AZ Loop 101 & FLWright Blvd)

Bonhams
8th Annual Scottsdale Auction
 Thursday, Jan 17, 2019
 (viewing Tuesday-Thursday, Jan 15-17)
 Westin Kierland Resort & Spa
 6902 E Greenway Pkwy, Scottsdale AZ 85254

Gooding & Company
12th Annual Scottsdale Auction
 Friday-Saturday, Jan 18-19, 2019
 (viewing Weds-Sat, Jan 16-19)
 Fashion Square
 4700 N Scottsdale Rd, Scottsdale AZ 85251
 (Goldwater & E Highland Ave)

RM Sotheby's
20th Annual Automobiles of Arizona
 Thursday-Friday, Jan 17-18, 2019
 (preview Weds-Fri, Jan 16-18 unconfirmed)
 Arizona Biltmore
 2400 E Missouri Ave, Phoenix AZ 85016
 (24th and Camelback)

Russo and Steele
19th Annual Sports & Muscle in Scottsdale
 Wednesday-Sunday, January 16-20, 2019
 (preview Weds Jan 16, sale starts Thurs Jan 17)
 Salt River Fields
 7555 N Pima Rd, Scottsdale, AZ 85258
 (Indian Bend Road / Talking Stick Way at AZ Loop 101)

Silver Auctions Arizona
22nd Arizona January Auction
 Friday-Sunday, Jan 11-13, 2019
NEW LOCATION:
 Peoria Sports Complex
 16101 N 83rd Ave, Peoria AZ 85382

Worldwide Auctioneers
3rd Annual Arizona January Auction
 Wednesday, Jan 16, 2019
 (preview Sunday-Weds, Jan 13-16 unconfirmed)
 6460 E McDowell Road, Scottsdale AZ 85257
 (McDowell Rd & 64th St/Galvin Pkwy)

Torva

Fine Art of Fine Automobiles



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AUTOMOTIVE NEWS UPDATE



Bugatti Divo

▼ French luxury performance car builder **Bugatti** has developed a new super sports car tuned for agility, nimbleness and optimum handling performance on winding roads, powered by Bugatti's well-known eight-liter W16 engine with a power output of 1500 PS (1480 hp). Aerodynamics have been intensively fine-tuned through a considerable amount of detailed work. Air intakes on the front cover reduce effective cross-sectional area, improving air flow. An optimized "air curtain" improves flow over the front and rear of the car's sides. A new wide front spoiler provides higher downforce and guides more air to the front air inlets, benefiting the cooling system. Brakes are cooled by four independent air sources on each side of the vehicle: a high-pressure area above the front bumper, inlets on the front wings, an inlet on the front radiator and diffusers ahead of the tires. A heat shield carries hot air out through the wheels, to keep brakes from overheating and maintain optimum tire temperature. This system, already used on the Chiron, also benefits on the Divo from the vacuum generated by the air curtain on the tires, and the wheel arches are ventilated via slats on the wings. The roof forms a flow-optimized NACA air duct, which combines with a specially designed engine compartment cover for a very high air mass flow to the engine compartment. A new, height-adjustable rear spoiler functions as an air brake when turned forward, with different angles for individual driving modes. The rear spoiler is 72 inches wide,

23 percent wider than on the Chiron, for more efficient, higher air brake performance and significantly more downforce, also boosted by a redesigned rear diffuser, which also accommodates four tailpipes. The main objective in chassis development was to improve cornering dynamics, making the Divo sharper, more agile and more nimble. The Bugatti Divo is 77 lbs lighter and has 198 lbs more downforce than the standard Chiron. Lateral accelera-



Lamborghini Aventador SVJ

tion of the Divo has been boosted to 1.6g. Maximum speed is (uh) limited to 236 mph. The Divo can lap the Nardò handling circuit in southern Italy eight seconds faster than Chiron. The series will only consist of 40 vehicles. Upon the start of presentations to selected customers, the strictly limited small series, with a net unit price of 5 million euros (about \$5.8 million), sold out immediately.

▼ Automobili **Lamborghini** has unveiled the next generation of the Aventador—the Lamborghini Aventador SVJ—which will be limited to 900 units. The "SV" designation historically stands for Superveloce—"super fast"—and the "J" for Jota, which boasts track and performance superiority. The SVJ has already backed up this claim with a new Nürburgring-Nordschleife production car record for running the 20.6-km lap in just 6:44.97. The car runs zero-to-62 mph in 2.8 seconds and has a top speed above 217 mph. Downforce has been improved by 40 percent on both axles over the SV, and drag coefficient is boosted by one percent. The car is wider than the SV. Its new front bumper has integrated side fins with a new air intake and a full suite of Aerodinamica Lamborghini Attiva (ALA), Lamborghini's patented active aerodynamic technologies. Upper body aerodynamic optimization contributes 70 percent to the total downforce improvement in the SVJ over the SV. The rear wing of the SVJ is based on a new air foil, with

side winglets to reduce turbulence while providing high downforce on the straights as well as in high speed corners. The enhanced powertrain features a new titanium intake valve, new-shape intake runner and modified intake cylinder head duct. A new, lightweight exhaust system reduces backpressure (as well as producing the most emotive sound), and the optimized seven-speed Independent Shifting

Road (ISR) gearbox is calibrated for increased performance in terms of both power and torque. Suspension has been reworked for higher mechanical and aerodynamic grip, with anti-roll bar stiffness



Ford GT Heritage Edition

improved by 50 percent compared to the SV. A higher damping force range, up by 15 percent over the SV, and recalibrated Magneto Rheological Suspension (LMS) improve body and wheel control, with a focus on track performance. SVJ's four-wheel-drive system has improved torque split to maximize traction and agility, with the car's higher stability allowing a further 3 percent of torque to be sent to the rear axle. Rear-wheel steering further improves the car's stability while reducing braking distances, particularly in combined braking/turning conditions such as high speed cornering. New Pirelli P Zero Corsa tires have been specifically developed for the car, with higher vertical stiffness to accommodate the SVJ's higher downforce. Suggested retail price is set at \$517,770.

▼ The 2019 **Ford** GT Heritage Edition honors the legendary American Gulf Oil-sponsored Ford GT40 by featuring the most famous paint scheme in motorsports—plus a set of additional exclusive touches. "Many view the Gulf Oil paint scheme as the most famous in motorsports," said Joe Hinrichs, Ford president, global operations. "The 1968 GT40 quickly became a global sensation after beating its European competitors on the track four times in a row, and in honor of the 50th anniversary of its win, we're paying fresh tribute to the original with a new heritage limited edition." Known among racing enthusiasts as chassis No. 1075, the 1968 GT was one of just a few individual cars to

achieve repeat victories in the 24 Hours of Le Mans. For the first time, an optional package provides exposed carbon fiber accents for both the interior and exterior of the Ford GT Heritage Edition. For 2019,

the package offers the No. 9 graphics on the hood and doors, as well as a ghosted image on the interior door panels. For 2020, No. 6 honors the same car that went on to win Le Mans in 1969 with a different number. The Heritage Edition features exposed carbon fiber A-pillars and sports unique 20-inch one-piece forged aluminum wheels in high-gloss dark stainless with black lug nuts. Orange calipers and silver rearview mirror caps



Lexus LY 650 Luxury Yacht

complete the look. Ebony Alcantara wraps the seats, instrument panel, pillars, headliner and steering wheel. Contrasting blue and orange stitching accentuates the seats and steering wheel, with a new seat embossment inspired by the original 1968 Le Mans-winning car, as well as clear and polished anodized paddle shifters. High-gloss dark stainless appliques accent the instrument panel, door register bezels

and x-brace to round out the interior. Much like previous heritage models, the Ford GT Heritage Edition features a unique serialized identification plate, plus exposed matte carbon fiber door sills, air register pods and center console.

▼ Exploration into non-automotive ventures by the **Lexus** brand has led to involvement in culinary, design and film luxury lifestyle experiences, and it has now led to the reveal of the Lexus LY 650 Luxury Yacht. Bearing expressions of contemporary Lexus L-finesse design language applied beyond the world of automobiles, the production LY 650 picks up where the stunning Lexus Sport Yacht Concept left off almost two years ago. Encouraged by significant public interest in the concept, a follow-up maritime effort was fueled by executive VP Shigeki Tomoyama's desire to "present a dream-like vision of the luxury lifestyle, one where the Lexus Yacht expands the potential of Lexus mobility to the ocean." Marquis-Larson Boat Group, in Pulaski, Wisconsin, has been selected to build, sell and service the yacht. Their extensive experience with bespoke boat building has included their work bringing the Lexus Sport Yacht Concept to life, with a blend of artisanal craftsmanship, modern technology and inspired design. Com-



pronounced bow, curved deck accents and accentuated aft hips. The profile features an elegant rise and fall from the roofline, flowing into rising, broad hips of the rear section. The first completed Lexus

mission. The all-electric e-Niro—the first fully electric crossover utility vehicle by Kia—boasts highway range of 301 miles or 382 in the city (beating many gasoline tanks) from its 64 kWh long-range battery

Sport bits including a sport suspension with electronically controlled dampers, M Sport braking system and an electronically controlled M Sport differential in the rear axle transmission. The BMW M Performance two-seater sprints from zero to 62 mph in 4.6 seconds.

▼ Dave Ferguson and Jiajun Zhu have devoted their careers to robotics and machine learning, most recently as principal engineers at Google's self-driving car project (now Waymo). They founded **Nuro** in 2016 to harness the power of robotics and artificial intelligence to solve new challenges at a global scale, with a team comprising veterans in robotics, consumer electronics, autonomous vehicles and automotive—from Google, Waymo, Apple, Uber, Tesla, and GM—with top academic credentials. Members of the team have won numerous world competitions, including DARPA Urban Challenge, DARPA Robotics Challenge and ImageNet. Look for their name on the road now in Scottsdale, as they have partnered with Kroger (locally Fry's supermarkets) to create a nifty and compact autonomous supermarket delivery vehicle—though for now, they are running a fleet of Prius sedans, with their logo emblazoned on the sides. They will be gauging everything from vehicle behavior,



LY 650 is expected to be ready for its global debut in the second half of 2019.

▼ The new **Kia ProCeed** shooting brake made its debut at the Paris Motor Show in October, along with the new high-performance Ceed GT, ProCeed GT, Ceed GT Line, and the Kia e-Niro crossover EV. The new Kia ProCeed—designed, developed and engineered in Germany—offers space and versatility in a five-door shooting brake body. The new ProCeed (its name evolves from the gen-two Kia pro_ceed three-door coupe) will be manufactured at Kia's Žilina plant in Slovakia, alongside Ceed and Ceed Sportswagon, introduced earlier this year. ProCeed is conceived as an alternative to a three-door hatch, with a compact footprint but substantial proportions. With the DNA of a coupe, the car is lower and longer than both the Ceed five-door hatch and Sportswagon, with a raked silhouette uncommon in the family car segment. Inside are premium soft-touch surfaces, an instrument panel angled slightly toward the driver, and a seven-inch "floating" touchscreen system with audio and climate controls below. The original cee'd GT and pro_ceed GT, the first ever performance hatchbacks from a Korean brand, were launched in 2013. The new Ceed GT picks up where these left off, a driver's car with a potent 1.6-liter T-GDi turbo. For the first time in a Kia performance hatchback in Europe, the new Ceed GT comes with a seven-speed double-clutch or standard six-speed manual trans-

pack, with a 193-mile 39.2 kWh battery optional. The new e-Niro, built in Korea, goes on sale in Europe by the end of 2018. The ProCeed goes on sale only in Europe in early 2019. All are sold in Europe with a 7-year, 150,000-km warranty standard, which also covers the lithium-ion polymer battery pack in the e-Niro.

▼ **BMW** has revealed the new BMW Z4, beginning with the exclusive BMW Z4

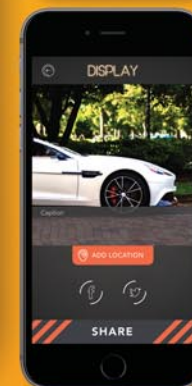
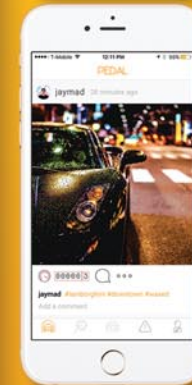
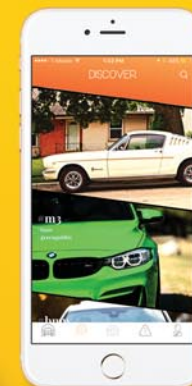
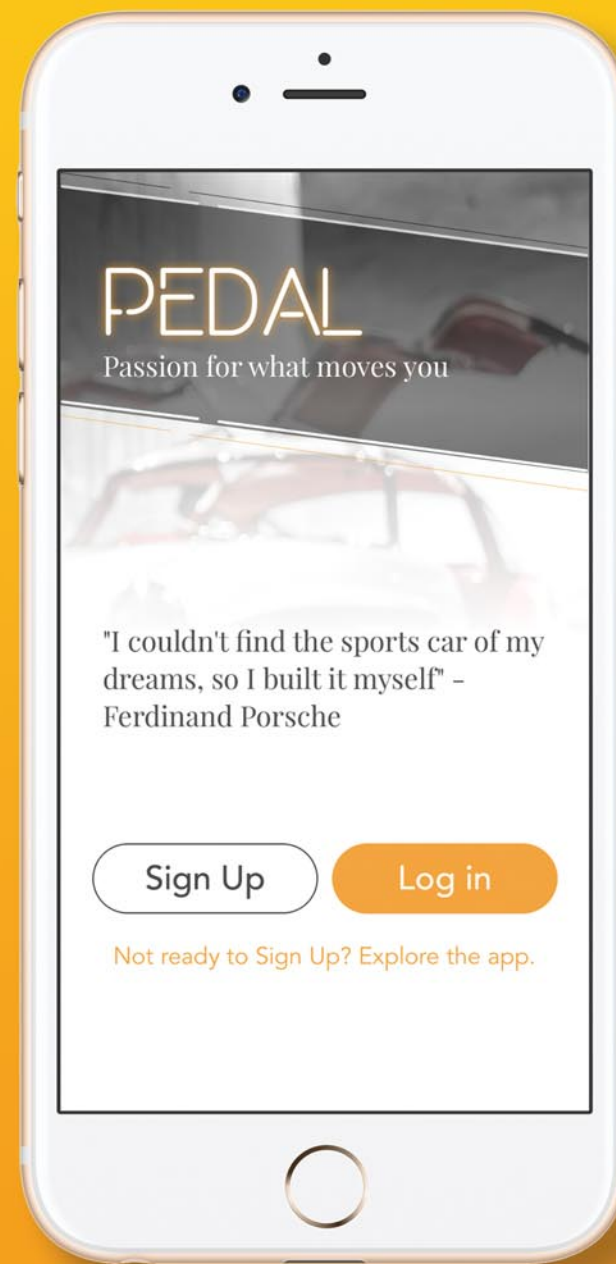


M40i First Edition shown at Pebble Beach in August, featuring model-specific design and equipment features, as well as a Frozen Orange metallic paint job. The roadster features a midship sitting position for the driver, a low center of gravity, perfect 50:50 weight distribution, wide tracks and a compact wheelbase for agile handling. The Z4 M40i First Edition is powered by a 340-hp straight-six engine and features M

to timing and logistics, to consumer acceptance, to reactions of human drivers who must cohabit with this experiment. The Nuro-Kroger project joins other early adoption projects in the Valley, which include autonomous Chrysler Pacifica minivans operated by Waymo mostly in Chandler and have in the past also included Uber's autonomous Volvo XC90 SUV fleet operating out of Tempe. ■



PASSION FOR WHAT MOVES YOU



Pedal is the must-have free app for automotive enthusiasts—the social networking community to capture and share the passion that moves you. Regardless of vehicle: car, truck, van or motorcycle. Whether you're a collector, dreamer or fan. An individual, organization or business.

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PEDAL

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Mountain climbing

Hitting the high road in Southern Colorado by Tyson Hugie

There are famously more ways than ever to get high in Colorado. One that has been both legal and also popular and world famous for a hundred years or so is the drive (or cog railroad) to the top of Pikes Peak, the twentieth-tallest peak in the highest state in the nation, though it is rated as 'the second most topographically prominent.'

High altitude destinations are sought-after refuges for any Arizonan during our warmest summer months. Which is perhaps why, on a return trip from Colorado Springs to Phoenix this summer, the worst traffic I hit on the entire 850-mile stretch on a Sunday afternoon was between Heber and Payson. The secret is out—cooler temperatures up north motivate thousands of folks from the Valley to head for the hills each weekend.

Each year for the last 14 years, I've been part of an annual car club event that brings together owners and enthusiasts of 1990s Acuras. The event has been held in various regions of the country, from Morristown NJ in the east, to Sacramento CA in the west, to Houston TX to the south. For 2018, Colorado had its first chance to play host to the group. With monsoon season ramping up and

the 10-day forecast looking like an apocalyptic inferno in Arizona, it was a perfect time to get out of Dodge... in an Acura.

NALM—the National Acura Legend Meet—was headquartered at the Country Lodge in Woodland Park, about 20 miles northwest of Colorado Springs on US Highway 24. It's a quaint Rockies town, nestled among old mining communities, and a stopping point for those who travel between the Springs and points statewide. This year's capstone event, for those who dared attempt it, was a climb up one of Colorado's famous "Fourteeners"—a term given to any mountain peak whose elevation exceeds 14,000 feet. Pikes Peak, at 14,115, is one of the most notorious, having played host to an annual hill climb racing event for over 100 years.

There was no racing involved in our group's event, however. Rather, I think participants kept speeds intentionally low, at the risk of breaking anything on our old automobiles. Even so, only 10 of the 11 participants made it to the summit, after one attendee experienced a failed transmission near the halfway point. The road has over 150 curves over its 19-mile ascent, which climbs a



staggering vertical mile in elevation. It's a two-hands-on-the-wheel driving experience, and a little unnerving to anyone who's not keen on heights.

Our caravan of cars rose above the pine trees to the barren mountainside above timberline, with periodic signage alongside the highway noting our progress, in both miles and elevation. Each passing mile brought lower temperatures and more jaw-dropping scenery. Windows down, I noticed two things: the smell of wildfire was heavy, not surprising given a wide ban on fires this summer. And it got extremely cold! At the summit, it was a balmy 42 degrees—in July—and windy. I was glad I had packed a sweatshirt.

The primitive but cozy summit house (built in 1963) had the perfect refreshments to counter the chilly exterior environment: coffee, hot cocoa and fresh donuts. The donuts are a Pikes Peak tradition and have gained popularity as some of the world's

best (or at least most famous) to the 600,000 or so visitors who make it to the summit house each year. I sampled them and was impressed.

The Pikes Peak Cog Railway, it should be noted, does typically provide transport services between Manitou Springs and the summit, but is currently out of service until further notice. Construction is underway on a new, modern summit house, so the railway's re-opening will likely coincide with that.

For some, the descent down Pikes Peak Highway is even more gut-wrenching than the ascent, and drivers are reminded multiple times to utilize lower gears. A few miles into the trip, a mandatory brake check brings everyone to a complete stop, and a park ranger directs a temperature gun at brake components to assess readings. Any vehicle with a brake temperature in excess of 300 degrees

is asked to cool off. Somehow, I ended up with the best "score" of our group, at 154 degrees, and was sent on my way. I think there should be an award or certificate for that.

Colorado's culture, scenery and weather are a huge draw for Arizona residents—whether for ski outings in the wintertime or for summer excursions like mine to escape the heat. If you decide to head up Pikes Peak, keep in mind summit level parking is limited. When it fills, travelers are required to ride shuttle buses from parking lots at lower elevations, so plan to arrive before 8:30 am or after 4:00 pm, which are off-peak times. Enjoy the landscape, and go easy on the brakes. Maybe you can even make a stop at Four Corners on your way home from our neighboring state. ■



VELOCIROCKET

WHAT THE VELOSTER WAS BORN TO BE BY JOE SAGE

The new Hyundai N Brand will develop into a full lineup of performance vehicles, akin to Mercedes-AMG, Audi S/RS, BMW M, Lexus F, Nissan NISMO and others. The 2019 Veloster N—proclaimed “the most fun-to-drive Hyundai ever”—is the first to arrive in our market.

Many brands use a “halo car” to inspire excitement for the rest of their lineup—for instance, the Ford GT supercar, though few in sales, may bring people into the dealerships who are then more excited about buying a Focus. It’s sort of a production version of “race on Sunday, sell on Monday.”

Hyundai’s approach to the N Brand is a “reverse halo.” Rather than creating an expensive car with a high-performance aura, they are building upon a car at the affordable end of the scale, for a sort of accessible exclusivity, in that ever-popular niche that usually requires a bunch of aftermarket mods, the pocket rocket. This plan simultaneously exposes the broader marketplace to the new N Brand and a new set of customers to Hyundai—who are as dead serious about the performance capabilities of their new sub-brand as their target market is.

Performance bloodlines run deep for Hyundai, and the N Brand arrives with plenty of heritage. Its US chief product spokesman Derek Joyce’s résumé includes the planning and development teams

for both the Hyundai Tiburon and the 350-hp rear-drive Hyundai Genesis Coupe in the past.

The brand’s World Rally Championship cars (see our May/June 2015 Rally México cover story), are i20 hatchbacks, a model not sold in the US. Also in the global lineup is the i30, which is the Elantra GT hatchback in the US. An i30 N was the first N Brand car to market, hitting Europe at the start of the year in both hatch and coupe versions. The Veloster N followed, introduced in South Korea mid-year, and our domestic Veloster N arrives next.

“N” stands for both the Namyang, South Korea R&D facility, where the Veloster N was conceived, and for the famed Nürburgring course in Germany, where its capabilities were honed.

Hyundai chose the lower-slung Veloster in our market for its better roll, pitch and yaw metrics, due to the lower profile itself and the accompanying reduced glass and steel of that profile.

Sales in Europe and South Korea have massively outpaced projections. They had predicted 2,800 units for the entire year in Europe, but by September had sold 4,678 with another 1,294 on backorder. In Korea, they had forecast just 100 units for June through December, but 785 were delivered June to September, with 284 more on backorder.

The halo effect has worked wonders. In Europe,

82 percent of N buyers are new to the Hyundai brand, while in Korea it’s 85 percent. The cars are also bringing in younger buyers—much younger. Most brands work very hard to bring average buying ages down just a year or two, but the European i30 N has dropped the average age by 19 years (to 32), and the Korean Veloster N has dropped the average by 11 years (to 36). Younger buyers are welcome not only because they can be repeat buyers for longer, but because they are generally considered to have higher technical expectations, while at the same time buying for emotional as well as rational reasons. One of the themes for N is “we don’t just build cars; we create a feeling,”

and this is taken as confirmation of that approach.

To get a full feel for the fruits of their labor and what awaits you at the dealership soon, we joined Hyundai’s N Brand team at Thunderhill Raceway Park, about 85 miles north of Sacramento, where we could really wring it out.

Hyundai N Brand has worked to deliver top performance at an entry price—the standard model is expected to come in below \$28,000, and a Performance Package below \$30,000—benefitting, as in so many instances, from Hyundai’s in-house steel-making and machining capabilities.

There were three key pillars in development of the Hyundai Veloster N—it was to be a “corner rascal,” i.e. the car loves corners; it had to be an everyday sports car, a good daily driver; and it had to have race track capability, as built, with no extra options needed. There would be “N Line” packages available (in a similar fashion to the

KEEP RIGHT >>

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	.....alum Theta 2.0L turbo GDI 4-cyl
HP/TORQUE	.....250 (opt 275) hp / 260 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....9.5:1
TRANSMISSION	.....rev-match 6-spd manual
DRIVETRAIN	.....FWD
DIFFERENTIAL	.....Opt: N Corner Carving Diff; e-LSD limited slip diff w/ electronic control
SUSPENSION	.....Electronically controlled: F: McPherson strut, 23mm (opt 21mm) stblzr bar; R: multi-link, 19mm stblzr bar;
STEERING	.....rack mounted motor driven PS
BRAKES	.....F: 13.0 (opt 13.6) x 1.2 vented; R: 11.8x0.5 solid (opt 12.4x0.8 vented)
WHEELS/TIRES	.....18x7.5 alloy / 225/40R18 (opt) 19x8.0 / 235/35R19
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....167.9 / 104.3 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....38.1 / 35.9 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....42.6 / 34.1 in
SEATING CAPACITY	.....four
CARGO CAPACITY	.....19.9 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....3036-3117 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	.....13.2 gal
MPG	.....22/28/25 (city/hwy/comb)

TARGET PRICING:

STANDARD PACKAGE	.....< \$28,000
PERFORMANCE PACKAGE	.....< \$30,000

INCLUSIONS

SAFETY FEATURES: Driver’s blind spot mirror, rear camera w/ dynamic guidelines, vehicle stability mgmt (VSM), electronic stability control (ESC), traction control system (TCS), 4-wheel disc anti-lock brakes (ABS), occupant classification system (OCS) and more.

EXTERIOR FEATURES: Projector headlights, LED low-beam headlights, rear LED taillights, dual folding power heated gloss black side mirrors, side mirror turn indicators, window beltline black molding, body color door handles, LED DRLs, auto headlight control, gloss black rear spoiler w/ LED CHMSL, unique gloss black grille, tinted glass, front 2-spd variable intermittent wipers/washers, rear wiper, shark-fin antenna and more.

INTERIOR FEATURES: LED shift-timing indicator, a/c, power windows/locks, driver’s auto-up window, 6-way adjustable driver seat, driver height adjustment, front passenger slide/recline, center armrest w storage bin, front/rear door map pockets w bottle holders, cloth seats, 60/40 fold-down rear seat, rear cupholders and storage console, alloy pedals, 12v outlet, front cupholders, dual vanity mirrors w cover, tilt-telescopic wheel, exterior temperature display, proximity key entry w push button start, Bluetooth hands-free phone system w phonebook transfer, steering-wheel-mounted cruise, rev match control, steering-wheel-mounted audio and Bluetooth controls, 8” display, Infinity premium audio system w external amp & subwoofer, 8 speakers, Apple/Android, Blue Link Connected Car System, 4.2” color TFT cluster display, phone/MP3 aux input jacks, dual charging USB and more.





optional electronic limited slip differential (e-LSD).

The N ESC is also calibrated for everyday driving, as are its seats, its 250-hp/260-lbft 2.0L GDI twin-scroll turbo engine—itsself a notable jump up from the standard Veloster Turbo's 201-hp 1.6L turbo—and its adjustable drive modes.

On the track, Veloster N benefits from its rear spoiler, enhanced cooling, selectable (on/off) rev matching that can render heel-and-toe skills obsolete, an appropriately subtle yet thrilling exhaust note, up-specced N brakes, even a model-specific short-throw shifter for its 6-speed manual, with precise gate feel in your hand. The car's spirit is at your fingertips from the driver's seat through not only its performance and the shifter, but also a model-exclusive steering wheel and gauges (including nifty sequential signal indicator lights).

It's a formula for engaged and spirited driving. In line with its dual mission as a daily driver—an "only car" for many owners—Hyundai emphasizes that they don't expect to have a top track's fastest speed or lap time, but when it comes to cornering, it's a champ. Hence our use of Thunderhill Raceway for a first drive. This was our chance to prove out the engineers' track-based mission and its suitability for full-time use—dynamic response and endurance that does not fade.

The car's high durability N transmission with double-layer facing clutch disk and carbon synchro ring can handle extra fast downshifting provided by the rev-matching manual. A launch control feature helps newer drivers tap the max out of the system.

Though a solid performer, the Veloster N is not intended to be "a fancy, expensive car," says Albert Biermann, president and head of Hyundai's Vehicle Performance Division. This approach to top engi-

neering but performance-entry price positioning is shown in the brakes, an in-house build. Bearing red "N" calipers, pricey third-party brakes such as Brembo were purposely avoided, with N Brand's in-house design (13-in front and 11.8 rear, single piston) not only intended to provide the same kind of strong non-fade performance, but to also be affordable when replacement time rolls around. ("If you can't afford to fix it, you can't afford to own it," as the saying goes.) Front fascia ducting provides strong air cooling to the front brakes.

For our long track day, optional larger brakes (13.6-in, 12.4-in) were installed, but Biermann says the average owner would not need those for a typical half-day track session.

Aerodynamics and airflow tech—including the brakes' air curtain ducts, plus a front cooling duct, front splitter, rear spoiler and aerodynamic side skirts—plant the car solidly on the pavement. "We want your heartbeat going up because of enjoyable driving," says Biermann, not because of surprises from an unplanted car.

The car's body and chassis ("the most important suspension part," per Biermann) receive additional strength from reinforced welds throughout the body shell, chassis reinforcements to transfer lateral load, and reinforced front shock mounts—adding up to a 6.9 percent increase in torsional stiffness over the base model. Hyundai always benefits from the rare fact that they own their own steel foundries, making extensive use of high-strength steel possible without driving up the cost.

N Power Sense axle geometry improves traction, reduces the roll angle and increases lateral support up front during acceleration. You can still tell a bit that it's a front-driver, but hot hatch fans embrace that, and it's mitigated by increased yaw response in the rear axle. Front-drive torque steer is also reduced through the smarts of the rack-mounted electronic power steering unit, which compensates in hard cornering (or on uneven surfaces), requiring fewer sudden driver responses.

Veloster N's corner-carving strength comes from several engineering advances. Its ESC—with normal, sport and "off" modes—detects banked track conditions and responds accordingly, with several levels of brake-applied torque vectoring. Electronics in the optional limited slip differential reduce slip and understeer, increasing that carving feel. And electronically controlled variable valve suspension—comprising both wheel and body sensors—detects loads by road or track use and controls dive, roll and lift accordingly.

Active sound control in the exhaust does more than provide sound effects—when running in N mode, it actually retards ignition timing to create explosive crackling and afterburn popping sounds.

One place the Veloster N did tap top-rated performance third parties is where the rubber meets the road. Standard are 18-inch Michelin Pilot Super Sport summer tires; optional are Pirelli HN-code 19-inch tires developed specifically to the car's chassis dynamics on track, while bearing a tougher sidewall for everyday roads. There are also Pirelli Trofeo N streetable competition tires available for the 19-inch wheels (which were available to us at Thunderhill), as a dealer option.

Veloster N goes up against such others as VW Golf GTI, Ford Focus ST and Honda Civic Type R. Low, wide and nimble, Veloster is the shortest of the set (just a hair shorter than the GTI) and the lowest by quite a bit. At its base weight, it's also the lightest.

The list of standard inclusions is generous (see previous page), from keyless start and automatic climate control, to LED lights front and rear, to an 8-inch audio display with Infinity premium sound, Android and Apple connectivity and the full suite of Blue Link connected car apps and features.

It would all be quite a lot for that under-\$28k anticipated price, even without its track capabilities. The Performance Package that can add about \$2 grand bumps the engine from 250 to 275 hp, adds the N Corner Carving e-LSD limited slip diff, includes the variable exhaust valve system, bumps wheels and tires up to 19-inches with the lower-profile Pirelli P Zero summer tires, and brings you those upsized brakes.

All copies come with that 6-speed manual now, though there is talk of a high-performance dual-clutch automatic a couple of years down the road. Preserving weight and headroom, there is no sunroof. The 2019 Hyundai Veloster N is available in Racing Red, Phantom Black, Chalk White and of course its trademark rallysport Performance Blue—and looks superb in all colors.

With its performance credentials already firmly cemented—Bryan Herta Autosport has already taken the TCR Manufacturers' Title in the 2018 Pirelli World Challenge road racing series in the European sister car, the i30 N—the 2019 Hyundai Veloster N goes on sale by the end of the year. ■

mentioned German and Japanese brands), with styling cues and refined powertrain and chassis, while the full "N" models are engineered and built with fully dedicated powertrains, chassis and technology. Though the Veloster N is considered 100 percent ready as is, there are also a series of N options if you'd like to juice it up even more.

Toward its cornering goal, the Veloster N has upgraded suspension, transmission, tires, steering, its own N electronic stability control (ESC) and an



SACTO TO THUNDERHILL & BACK

Saving the new 2019 Hyundai Veloster N drive for the track, but with our lodging in Sacramento, 85 miles to the south via I-5, we drove a refreshed 2019 Hyundai Tucson north and Elantra south between the two.

2019 Hyundai Tucson This third-generation compact crossover introduced in 2016 has received a midcycle refresh for 2019, with upgrades inside and out, including a new cascading grille, new center stack design, more advanced safety features and expanded connectivity options. The prior 1.6 turbo has been discontinued from the lineup, with base models bearing a 161-hp 2.0L Nu 4-cylinder and SEL-and-up models fitted with a 181-hp 2.4L Theta 4-cylinder, all running through the same 6-speed-w-OD transmission to either front- or all-wheel drive. Ours was a top trim Ultimate AWD model. Also new are an electronic parking brake, auto stop-start (2.4L), new 17-, 18- and 19-inch wheels, rain-sensing wipers on top trims, available second row USB and wireless charging on upper trims, expanded Hyundai SmartSense driver assistance tech varying by trim level, and three new exterior paint colors.

2019 Hyundai Elantra Sedan Following in the footsteps of the prior introduction of new 2018 Elantra GT and GT Sport hatchbacks comes a new Elantra sedan, with its own completely distinct sheet metal tip to tail, including a markedly different grille design. (The car had been revealed to us at the new Santa Fe launch this summer in Utah, but this was our first drive time.) It, too, receives an expanded set of SmartSense tech on mid to upper trims, has new 15-, 16- and 17-inch wheel designs (15s are for the fuel-frugal Eco model), a new center stack with revised air handling and storage options, wireless charging available on top trim models, and an upgraded rear camera with dynamic guidelines.

Both were notably spacious, comfortable and capable on our 90-minute drives. ■



First wheel-driven car to pass 500 mph

TEAM Vesco Turbinator II drives past 500 mph at Bonneville Salt Flats

By "LandSpeed" Louise Ann Noeth

TEAM Vesco's Turbinator II, owned and built by Rick Vesco and driven by Dave Spangler of Dana Point, California, has had quite a season. Powered by a Lycoming T3 turbine tuned by Advanced Turbine Services, the craft's engine feeds a bespoke reduction gear case that distributes its blistering horsepower to all four wheels simultaneously. At Southern California Timing Association (SCTA) Speed Week in August, it earned the *Hot Rod Magazine* Top Time Trophy with a 463.038 mph in Class 3/T. Bigger news would follow.

During the World of Speed time trials hosted by the Utah Salt Flats Racing Association (USFRA) on September 14-17, TEAM Vesco was the top record setter, with a blistering 482.646 mph certified National Record in T-3 Class, exceeding the team's own existing World Record of 458 mph, set by Don Vesco in October 2001.

Team Vesco was not done. Spangler's top one-way speed of 492 mph had put the team within eight miles per hour of its 500 mph goal, which would be a first for a wheel-driven car.

"We have the power with our 5,000-hp Lycoming internal combustion shaft turbine engine and will attempt to finish the job at the SCTA's World Finals," said driver Spangler of the upcoming October 2-5 event. "We have a good chance to reach our magic 500 number."

And this they did. When the team returned to the salt in October, driver Dave Spangler and the TEAM Vesco Turbinator II roared into history as the first wheel-driven automobile to exceed 500 mph on Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats, averaging 493



Driver Dave Spangler and crewman Bill Lee after making history above 500 mph in the Turbinator II.

mph in the measured mile and recording a 503.332 mph mark as it exited the timing lights—indicating the car was still accelerating.

"Dave drove the car straight and true," said jubilant Team matriarch "Jinx" Vesco. "We have looked over everything, and nothing was hurt. We are ready for our record run! It's been a very long time in coming."

A return run would be needed to satisfy SCTA requirements, with the second run averaged to determine any new National Record. A hundred participants had made 112 runs, and 25 qualified for records. Unfortunately, the rest of the meet

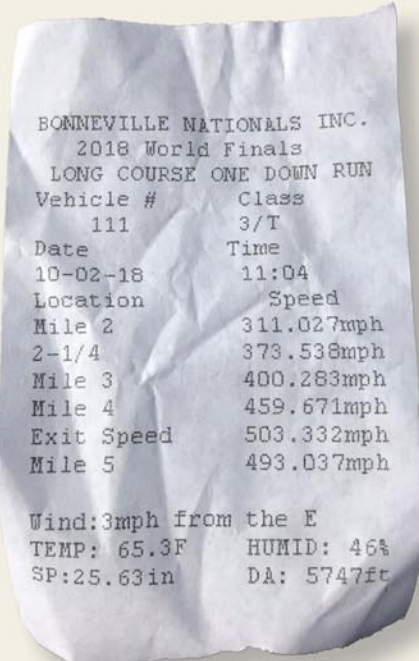


was rained out, and they never got to make the back-up or "return" runs.

Thus 458 mph from 2001 remains a World Record, despite being slower than the new 482.646-mph National Record set in September. It's very



SCTA time slip with Turbinator II's historic 503 mph speed recorded October 2, 2018, at 11:04 am MST.



rare for that to happen, but salt and weather conditions rule, and this year it was the weather that kept any new World Record from being certified.

Top speed before the rains hit was the Turbinator II's 503 mph. Also noteworthy was Ed Umland, who ran 403 mph on pump gas in his hand-built streamliner powered by an LSX engine he yanked out of his daily driver hot rod.

SCTA president and World Finals race director Pat McDowell says, "Our organization is very glad to part of history. The is an epic event."

"And amazingly, 500 miles per hour DOES look different than 400."

You can see the 503-mph run—complete with one parachute ripping off at 478 mph—as "First 500 mph Run" on Jinx Vesco's YouTube channel.

Due to an extremely dry spring and summer, the halite salt crust presented a concrete-like hard surface, lending itself to great traction racing. The amateur racing community agrees the 2018 track has been the best racing surface in two decades.

However, "people need to remember that the salt surface remains very thin," Vesco cautions. "Decades of BLM mismanagement has allowed evaporative mining operations to pump away millions of tons of salt for more than 50 years. We trust that the Save The Salt Coalition's multi-tiered and multi-year restoration plans will rebuild our 13-mile International Raceway to safe racing conditions."

For more info, visit www.savethesalt.org.



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Sports coupe reinterpreted

BY JOE SAGE

The BMW X2, a lower- and sloped-roof sibling of the X1 crossover, strikes us as what a classic 1950s hardtop sports car might be today—compact, minimal, quick, personal—but updated for modern crash protection, upsized to seat five, still with a let's-just-drive-somewhere air about it. Or perhaps it's what a small sport sedan fan, those who bought the BMW 2002 40 years ago, might want in an era when fewer are buying sedans.

The X2 competes with mini-utes such as Audi Q2 and Volvo XC40, but mostly evokes fraternal twins Infiniti QX30 (\$29,950) and Mercedes-Benz GLA 250 (\$33,950), which share a platform and drivetrain with two different skins and interfaces.

The BMW X2 starts out pricier than those two, at \$36,400 for an sDrive28i with front-wheel drive. This xDrive28i has two grand well spent on AWD (even faster to 60 mph), though the big four-0 is now staring us down. And you're sure to blow past the 40 mark, just for heated seats (included in many sub-\$20k cars, but here requiring a \$2600 package you could otherwise live without).

The M SportX Package has desirable features that

SPECIFICATIONS

SEATING	.....five
ENGINE	.....2.0L TwinPower 4-cyl turbo
HP/TORQUE	.....228 hp / 258 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....8-spd auto, sport/manual modes
DRIVETRAIN	.....AWD
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	.....6.3 sec / 130 mph
SUSPENSION	.....F: single-joint spring-strut axle in lightweight aluminum-steel construction R: multi-arm axle in lightweight steel w separate spring and damper configuration
STEERING	.....electric power rack & pinion
BRAKES (REGEN)	.....F: 1-piston, floating caliper, vented R: 1-piston, floating caliper, vented
WHEELS/TIRES	.....(std) 7.5x18 / 225/50R18 95V AS
LENGTH/WHEELBASE	.....172.2 / 105.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....37.2 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....7.2 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....(w/o sunroof) 39.8 / 37.1 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....40.3 / 36.7 in
CARGO VOLUME	.....21.6 / 50.1 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....3662 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	.....16.1 gal
MPG	.....21/31/25 (city/hwy/comb)

bring you closer to the big five-0 mark. A few more items and you've passed it. But forget all that logical price stuff. This is the kind of vehicle you buy anyway, if you just fall in love with it.

Cabin space is quite adequate for a small vehicle once inside, but the B-pillar and rear door make front access tight, and details like cupholders are notably small. The car has sturdy underpinnings and seems a bit of a heavyweight for the smallest in the lineup; thus whereas it does well on the freeway—where its small size is a big advantage—its

BASE PRICE	.....\$38,400
GALVANIC GOLD METALLIC	.....550
SENSATEC OYSTER/BLACK INTERIOR	.....nc
DRIVING ASSISTANCE PKG: Active Driving Assist	.....700
PREMIUM PACKAGE: heated front seats, heads-up display, real time traffic info, remote services, nav touchpad	.....2600
M SPORT X PACKAGE: sport auto transmission, power-fold mirrors, univ garage door opener, keyless entry, pano sunroof, lumbar support, SiriusXM (w 1 year), M sport suspension, 19" M light alloy double spoke wheels, sport seats, alum hexagon trim w pearl, M steering wheel, M SportX exterior package, shadowline exterior trim, anthracite headliner	.....4650
(unspecified)	.....400
PARK DISTANCE CONTROL	.....800
APPLE CARPLAY COMPATIBILITY	.....300
WIRELESS CHARGING & WIFI HOT SPOT	.....500
HARMAN/KARDON PREMIUM AUDIO	.....875
M REAL SPOILER	.....150
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....995
TOTAL	.....\$50,920

(Note: the unspecified \$400 item on the Monroney sheet led us to the consumer build site, where that was not clarified, while a few other details also varied from our sample's info.)

horsepower level made us abandon many competitive acceleration ambitions on the on-ramps.

Good news, however, as an X2 M35i is coming for 2019, with BMW's most-powerful-ever 2.0L turbo—302 hp with a 4.9-second zero-to-60 time. At that point, this modern sports coupe or sedan—that's-not-a-sedan should really come into its own.

The X2 is pricier than the classic sports coupe, but safer and more reliable, and it can go off-road—all part of this more contemporary interpretation of things. ■



AN ELECTRIC EVENING

By Joe Sage

We've often described media days at one of the big international auto shows as sort of one big Pink Floyd stadium tour concert every 20 or 30 minutes for two days, complete with smoke, pounding music and perhaps backup dancers. It's quite something for each manufacturer to produce, but at least their efforts benefit from elements of scale—as hundreds from all over the world are on hand in one focused window of time.

Audi recently went all out, auto show style and then some, with about two thousand attendees—media, dealers and tech industry—all arriving in San Francisco at once, and just for them. After a few years of stunning show cars and technical news, Audi was ready to show off a near-production e-tron EV.

We flew in and shuttled downtown, where many who had arrived earlier were at Bill Graham Civic Auditorium for Audi Tech Park, a pop-up display offering a first look at the Audi e-tron for the masses. With or without

that as a hors d'oeuvre, all two thousand of us headed to the San Francisco piers, where we boarded old technology—a stern-paddle-wheeler—to cross the Bay to Richmond, a traditionally industrial city north of Oakland and Berkeley. The sun was setting behind the Golden Gate Bridge and Mt Tamalpais, and the fog rolled in over San Francisco, as a new dawn awaited us at the Craneway Pavilion, once a huge Ford assembly plant, converted during World War II to tank and jeep production, now a component of the Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historic Park—an appropriate venue for the technical might that will drive our automotive future.

As darkness took hold and our boat glided toward Richmond Inner Harbor, a smattering of fireworks appeared above the shoreline. No, wait, those are *drones*, hundreds of them, coordinated and patterned into a kinetic light show, finally swirling into a cylindrical shape, separating and rotating to become four huge Audi rings in the sky. The walls of Craneway Pavilion had their own light show afoot, with bright blue circuit boards dancing to throbbing house music. The stage was set.

Indoors were lights, music, another flotilla of mini drones, and—action! The theme was announced: “Electric Goes Audi,” a technology-comes-to-us flip of a phrase.

AUDI E-TRON Audi revealed multiple versions of the new 2019 e-tron, some with trick new virtual side mirrors (shown on the silver car at right; not available yet), in signature Antigua Blue Metallic and liquid Florett Silver metallic. A First Edition will be available in Daytona Grey pearl effect.

The Audi A3 e-tron Sportback PHEV (plug-in hybrid) has been available since 2017, capable of all-electric commuting distances and gasoline-hybrid road trips. The new 2019 Audi e-tron is their first fully electric production model, with considerable emphasis on fast charging, as well as performance and utility.

The new Audi e-tron is a midsize SUV, close in length to the Audi A6, with cargo volume of 28.5 cu.ft. with five passengers or 57 cu.ft. with the rear seats down, specifications that reinforce its mission as a capable daily utility vehicle or a road trip cruiser.

Immediately recognizable as an Audi family member, e-tron's grille area is infilled with platinum grey, while details tip to tail are tweaked to maximize aerodynamics moreso than ever. As many vehicles in the past have expressed their power core via hood scoops and strong wheel haunches, e-tron puts emphasis on its “energy center,” the battery, via forcefully flowing black door inserts. Rear lighting with a horizontal emphasis reflects high-end A7, A8 and Q8 models, while four cross-slats in the rear diffuser celebrate the absence of tailpipes in this zero-emission EV.

Regulated cooling air inlet ducts cool the front brakes, while 20-inch wheels are aerodynamically optimized and fitted with ultra-low rolling resistance tires, while a fully clad underbody features an aluminum plate to both protect the high-voltage battery and optimize airflow. Adaptive speed-dependent air suspension is standard.

Waste heat from electric cabin heat and cooling, as well as battery cooling, runs to a heat pump that extends mileage range by up to ten percent. Highly flexible thermal management also allows fast DC charging for long battery life.

Two electric motors provide sporty driving, hitting zero-to-60 mph in 5.5 seconds, with a top speed of 124 mph. As in any EV, full torque is in force from the first touch of the pedal. (Final power and torque specs will be announced later.)

CHARGING STATIONS Audi's “Charging Stations Unleashed” plan, developed with Electrify America, is the charging station of the near future (at right), where EV drivers can grab a bite while their vehicle recharges. Electrify America is investing \$2 billion in a nationwide network of highway and community DC fast chargers and Level 2 stations at workplace and multi-unit dwellings.

ARCADIA POWER Audi has become the first automaker to partner with Arcadia Power, a nationwide digital utility service that matches your electricity usage with renewable energy sources, saving on your power bill through price alert and community solar programs, so e-tron-owning homeowners and renters alike can invest in renewable energy without the added costs of their own rooftop solar unit.

AMAZON In the first collaboration between Amazon Home Services and an automaker, Audi and Amazon aim to make home EV charging as easy as ordering any other item or service from Amazon, with extensive information on EV home charging installation and equipment, upfront info on electrical costs, and the ability to schedule an electrician to install your EV charger.

AUDI E-TRON ARRIVAL Three models of Audi e-tron are planned at rollout. Premium Plus (\$74,800) includes top view cameras, comfort pre-conditioning, driver assist features, LED lighting inside and out, Matrix headlights, virtual cockpit, 705w B&O 16-speaker audio, heated/cooled 12-way power front seats, leather, panoramic sunroof and lots more. Prestige (\$81,800) adds heads-up display, contour massage seats, power door closers, rear sunshade, dual-acoustic side windows, Valcona leather and an air quality package. And the First Edition (\$86,700) adds 21-inch b-color black wheels, aluminum-optic exterior trim, orange brake calipers, ash wood inlays and more. The Audi e-tron is expected to arrive in US showrooms during the second quarter of 2019. ■



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A WEEK WITH : 2018 CHEVROLET COLORADO 4WD ZR2 CREW SHORT BOX DURAMAX DIESEL

Outfitted by Joe Sage

Midsize, equipped with a high grunt diesel and off-road outfitted, this truck will strike some as the best of multiple worlds. Big pickup loyalists may note that no midsize can carry 4x8 building materials or tow 10,000 pounds. Fans will note that it can fit in more garages and parking spots and squeeze through more off-road challenges than a big 'un. Statisticians will note you can meet or beat this smaller truck's fuel economy—at least this XR2 with its off-road setup—even in a few full-size pickups, diesel or otherwise.

But the elements it bundles together are a win. The ZR2 has an aggressive stance, with tough suspension and ample clearance, plus subtle yet bold badge elements. You can meet or beat a ZR2 diesel's fuel mileage with several trims, though the diesel ZR2 beats a gasoline ZR2 by quite a margin. But you won't touch the diesel's torque, so strong you'll likely doublecheck its horsepower figure.

We took the ZR2 way off the beaten path, where it tackled two-track trails admirably and exhibited

great control on washboard and cliffhanging turns at speed along gravel roads—a tight little unit we could drive all day. On or off pavement, the truck was smooth and well planted, with an unusually good balance of firmness and connected road feel.

Ultimately, the ZR2 is a sport truck, not a ranch truck, not a construction truck, and this particular package applies that thinking to maximum effect.

This Dusk Special Edition package is tempting, though we'd prefer to be selective. A full-size spare is great off-road, but with its carrier you lose a big share of its small bed—and spend over \$4000.

Chevy Colorado goes up against Toyota Tacoma and Nissan Frontier, the ZR2 against TRD off-roaders and Nissan PRO-4X. The Chevy has less shoulder and hip room than Tacoma, despite being two inches wider, but more headroom and legroom.

Market research obviously suggests heavy interest in this category, as a new Ford Ranger joins the fray about as you read this—and we'd be surprised if Ram isn't busily working on a new midsize truck, too, as auto show season looms.

Let's see where evolution takes things next. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	.....2.8L I-4 16v Duramax DOHC common rail dir inj turbo-diesel, cast iron block, cast alum heads
DRIVETRAIN	.....4WD
HP/TORQUE	.....186 hp / 369 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....Hydra-Matic 6L50 6-spd auto
FINAL DRIVE RATIO	.....3.42
STEERING	.....elec power-assist rack & pinion
SUSPENSION	.....F: indep coil-over-shock w Multimatic Dynamic Suspensions Spool Valve dampers, locking diff R: solid axle w semi-elliptic 2-stage multi-leaf springs, Multimatic DSSV dampers, locking diff
BRAKES	.....power-assist four-wheel disc w Duralife long-life rotors, ABS, hill-descent: F: 12.20"; R: 12.75"
WHEELS/TIRES	.....17x8 alum / P265/65R17
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....212.4 in / 128.5 in
TRACK (F/R)	.....65.9 in
SEATING CAPACITY	.....five
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....41.4 / 38.3 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....45.0 / 35.8 in
WEIGHT	.....5011 lb
MAX PAYLOAD	.....1100 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....(Active Tow alignment incl) 5000 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	.....21 gal
FUEL / MPG	.....(diesel) 19/22/20 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE (gasoline)	.....\$42,000
2.8L DURAMAX 4-CYL TURBO DIESEL:	trailer brake controller, exhaust brake, 6-spd auto trans.....\$3,500
ZR2 DUSK SPECIAL EDITION PKG:	17" black alum wheels incl matching full-size spare, off-road light kit (dealer installed), off-road sport bar (dealer installed), black bowtie emblem pkg (dealer installed).....\$3,425
SPARE TIRE CARRIER, REAR	(dealer installed).....\$615
PRICE: ZR2 DIESEL\$49,540
CAJUN RED TINTCOAT495
DESTINATION CHARGE995
TOTAL\$51,030

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Tough elegance

4x4 diesel half-ton in premium trim

BY JOE SAGE

Though no strangers to diesel powertrains and certainly no strangers to building the F-150—the best-selling vehicle of any type in America for decades—Ford has finally merged the two. They have also been optionally furnishing rugged pickups with increasingly elegant trims and features for a number of years. This F-150 Turbo Diesel in top Platinum trim incorporates both these trends.

Diesel engines have devoted fans for a number of reasons—for them, the only way to go. For those who consider all possibilities, diesel's main advantages are prodigious torque and generally higher fuel economy. (Diesel fuel was once cheaper at the pump, too, but that advantage has largely evaporated with the cost of improved formulas and the opportunity that comes with popularity.)

Choosing an F-150 powertrain can be complex, but that's the reason there are choices. It has only been a few years since their offer of an EcoBoost six-cylinder was a gamble, in a beef-and-brawn segment that had long had a V8 image. But sales were startlingly strong from the get-go. F-150 offers two EcoBoost V6 engines—a 325-hp 2.7L (standard) and a 375-hp 3.5L. (There's a 450-hp high-output version of the 3.5L available on Raptor

and top trim Limited.) An entry F-150 is also available with a 290-hp naturally aspirated 3.3L V6. And there is indeed still a 395-hp 5.0L V8.

The new Power Stroke 3.0L V6 turbo diesel has just 250 hp, but you won't much notice this—except at the pump, where the diesel expects to beat all the others, as independently measured or forecast to date (EPA numbers are pending)—because of all its torque. The turbo diesel's 440 lb-ft outperforms the base V6, the smaller EcoBoost V6 and even the V8 (at 265, 400 and 400, respectively). The 3.5L EcoBoost, however, beats the diesel on torque (at 470 lb-ft standard or 510 high output).

The diesel is pricier than any of the gasoline trucks. The engine adds \$3000—and is only available in three upper trims (Lariat through Platinum).

The high-torque diesel has an 11,400-lb tow rating, beaten by the 3.5L EcoBoost (and virtually tied with the V8's 11,600). But the diesel's full torque is on tap by just 1,750 rpm—great for acceleration and highway cruising for anyone, but indispensable for some specific hard core tasks—say a rancher or contractor powering out of deep mud with a heavy trailer. Of course, either may be more likely to go for an F-250, -350 or -450 with up to 34,000 pounds of tow capacity for, say, sixteen head of cattle. If your theoretical needs approach this on a lighter scale—say hauling your boat out of a lake during a muddy flash flood—the F-150 turbo diesel fills a gap not filled before. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	.....3.0L Power Stroke V6 Turbo Diesel
DRIVETRAIN	.....4x4
HP/TORQUE	.....250 hp / 440 lb-ft
TRANS	.....electronic 10-spd w tow/haul, sport modes
SUSPENSION	.....F: indep double-wishbone w coil-over shocks, stamped lower control arm, stblzr bar R: wide-track Hotchkiss design w two-stage variable leaf springs & outboard-mounted shocks
STEERING	.....electric power-assisted w drift control
BRAKES	.....power, vented front & rear discs w 4-whl ABS
WHEELS/TIRES	.....20" polished alum / 275/55R20 A/T
BED	.....5.5 ft
LENGTH/WHEELBASE	.....231.9 / 145 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....40.8 / 40.4 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....43.9 / 43.6 in
TOW CAPACITY	.....11,200 lb
GCWR	.....17,100 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	.....23.0 gal (36.0 avail)
MPG	.....target: 30 mpg EPA est

BASE PRICE (gasoline)	.....\$57,910
3.0L POWER STROKE V6 TURBO DIESEL	.....3000

PRICE: TURBO DIESEL	.....\$60,910
RUBY RED METALLIC	.....395
20" POLISHED ALUMINUM WHEELS	.....incl
PREF EQUIP GROUP 701A: PLATINUM SERIES: incl Group 700A package (a list a mile long including wood trim, B&O PLAY premium audio, voice nav, fade-to-off lighting and more), plus tech package, 360-degree camera w split view, active park assist, adaptive cruise-stop-go-pre-collision & pedestrian detect, tailgate step	.....2540
3.55 ELECTRONIC LOCK REAR AXLE	.....470
TRAILER TOW PACKAGE	.....995
PRO TRAILER BACKUP ASSIST	.....395
WHEEL WELL LINER	.....180
SPRAY-IN BEDLINER	.....495
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1395
TOTAL	.....\$67,775



Home turf comparo

Evolutionary event holds its first run BY JOE SAGE

This event is based upon the Active Lifestyle Vehicle Awards event of the prior 14 years, but reengineered in several ways. Formerly held on a mix of off-road and on-road courses (both of which varied over time), in its first year, the Southwest Lifestyle Media Drive was held adjacent to the Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving, on the Gila River Indian Community south of Chandler, utilizing local paved roads, and—for a few vehicles of an off-road-enough nature—also a dirt course built inside Bondurant's west track.

ALV had mixed automotive and lifestyle media judges with local marathon runners and other active people representing the event's targeted demographic. That demographic remains at least a subset, though all drivers are now professional automotive media. As with the prior ALV, the new SLMD is a privately-owned and -run venture, as opposed to a formal press association event.

Vehicles were evaluated in five categories: two for cars, two for SUVs and CUVs, one for trucks. All are 2019 models unless noted otherwise.

CAR OF THE YEAR: BEST VALUE

Fiat 124 Spider Abarth

160-hp 1.4L turbo - 6-spd manual.....26/35/30 mpg
.....\$28,195 / \$38,210

A two-door roadster, the Fiat 124 Spider is in a world of its own in this group. As an Abarth, it is in a higher orbit than a regular 124 Spider. It's one of just three 6-speed manuals in the event. With precise handling, engineering and build and 184 lb-ft of torque, this car is all fun.

Kia Forte EX Launch Edition

147-hp 2.0L 4cyl - iVT trans30/40/34 mpg
.....\$17,690 / \$26,220

Forte, Kia's number one seller for first-time buyers, has style and feature cues from Stinger in this new gen-three model, and this top-trim EX Launch Edition adds 17-in graphite alloys, 320-watt harmon/kardon premium audio, LED lights in and out, power sunroof, rear spoiler and more. A 6-speed manual is available on the base model.

Toyota Corolla Hatchback XSE

168-hp 2.0L 4cyl - dynamic CVT.....30/38/33 mpg
.....\$19,900 / \$27,823

Hot hatches are coming on strong, and this new Corolla, here in top XSE trim with many more add-ons inside and out, is ready to rumble. Ours here had a CVT automatic, but note that it's available with a 6-speed manual.

Volkswagen Golf Alltrack TSI SE w/ 4Motion
168-hp 1.8L turbo - 6-spd manual.....21/30/24 mpg
.....\$29,765 / \$30,910

(2018 model) Bearing one of three manual transmissions at the event, this all-wheel-drive German SportWagen bears all the personality and skill Europe has to offer, at a fraction of the cost of its cousin the Audi quattro.

WINNER: With the lowest base price, lowest as-built price and highest fuel mileage of the group, the Kia Forte apparently had the winning formula.

1ST PLACE: Kia Forte EX

RUNNERUP: Volkswagen Golf Alltrack (2018)

CAR OF THE YEAR: PERFORMANCE

Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat Redeye WB

797-hp 6.2L V8 suprchg - 8-spd auto...13/22/16 mpg
.....\$69,650 / \$81,331

The name on this one is a mile long (Widebody completes it) and its engine spec is a good quarter-mile—Supercharged 6.2L HEMI Hellcat High Output V8. Fortunately, covering a mile or quarter-mile in no time is this car's distinct forte. Its Widebody treatment echoes the outgoing 840-hp Demon, which this effectively replaces in the lineup, with a bit more daily-driverish demeanor.

Ford Mustang Bullitt

480-hp 5.0L V8 - 6-spd manual.....15/24/18 mpg
.....\$46,595 / \$51,290

(2018 model) This third-ever Mustang Bullitt arrives on the 50th anniversary of the classic Steve McQueen film of the same name (with what is still considered an all-time best car chase scene). With 20 more horses and a higher top speed than a regular Mustang GT, Bullitt is distinguished by its lack of badging and Highland Green paint job (black is also available). This is the third of the three cars at the event with a 6-speed manual.

WINNER: Mustang lovers, take heart, as Bullitt won at Run to the Sun (also in this issue), but on our home turf, Challenger SRT Redeye took the gold.

1ST PLACE: Dodge Challenger SRT Redeye

RUNNERUP: Ford Mustang Bullitt (2018)

SUV/CUV OF THE YEAR: BEST VALUE

Chevrolet Traverse FWD 3LT Leather

310-hp 3.6L V6 - 9-spd auto18/27/21 mpg
.....\$41,700 / \$44,490

(2018 model) The three-row Traverse, updated for 2018, starts at just under \$30,000 and is available as a front- or all-wheel-driver. This is the middle of seven trim levels. Its wide-angle-zoom rear camera mirror is a stunner.

Honda Pilot AWD Elite

280-hp 3.5L V6 - 9-spd auto19/26/22 mpg
.....\$31,450 / \$48,020

Once boxy and trucklike, the three-row Honda Pilot received more streamlined styling in 2016 for its third generation and a styling refresh for 2019, as well as receiving a new transmission and a range of new tech features.

Jeep Wrangler 4-Door Sahara 4x4

270-hp 14 turbo - 8-spd auto22/24/22 mpg
.....\$38,295 / \$50,045

(2018 model) The SUV that needs no introduction, Jeep Wrangler is entirely new this year, with weight savings, the option of this potent yet fuel-saving four-cylinder turbo, and off-road credentials second to none (though not much pushed at this event). Sport. Utility. Vehicle.

Kia Niro PHEV EX Premium

139-hp 1.6T+elec - 6-spd DCT48/44/46 mpg
.....\$27,900 / \$35,575

(2018 model) Kia Niro is the brand's fully dedicated hybrid model, here with an added layer of plug-in hybrid (PHEV) technology, all in a neat, trim yet capacious package—and with the lowest price and highest MPG in this group.

Subaru Ascent Premium

260-hp 2.4L turbo boxer - CVT21/27/23 mpg
.....\$34,995 / \$36,630

This entirely new Subaru (see elsewhere in this issue) distinguishes itself from the rest of their lineup by its significantly larger size and capacity, a true three-row SUV.

WINNER: Unlike the prior ALV event from which this sprang, there was not a distinct off-road category, surely costing the Jeep Wrangler, nor Urban and/or Green categories, surely costing the almost-50-mpg Kia Niro PHEV. Among three mainstream three-row SUVs, the newest took the prize.

1ST PLACE: Subaru Ascent

RUNNERUP: Kia Niro PHEV (2018)

SUV/CUV OF THE YEAR: LUXURY

Infiniti QX50 Essential AWD

268-hp 2.0L var compres turbo - CVT ...24/30/26 mpg
.....\$45,150 / \$59,085

Infiniti's second-to-smallest SUV, the QX50's new-this-year variable compression turbocharged engine (runner-up for Best Powertrain at the Texas Truck Rodeo) gives this top-trim all-wheel-driver ample horsepower and 30 mpg highway fuel mileage at the same time.

Lexus LX 570

383-hp 5.7L V8 - 8-spd auto13/18/15 mpg
.....\$90,380 / \$98,445

(2018 model) The largest of four Lexus SUVs, the LX was

last fully revised in 2007, but has received three facelifts in the interim, most significantly in 2015, along with an all-new interior. Available in just two models, two-row or three-row, both AWD, this is the top model.

WINNER: The degree to which price is considered at a comparo event is often debated, even in a luxury category such as this, though there's no way to gauge it in final results. But this category's winner goes for about twice as much as its competitor.

1ST PLACE: Lexus LX 570 (2018)

RUNNERUP: Infiniti QX50

SOUTHWEST TRUCK OF THE YEAR

Chevrolet Colorado 4WD ZR2 Crew Short Box

308-hp 3.6L V6 - 8-spd auto16/18/17 mpg
.....\$42,500 / \$44,885

The midsize Chevy Colorado has generated much buzz among those who don't want or need a full-size cab or bed in their pickup, and the new ZR2 off-road-intensive model (think factory Baja) has created a new level of buzz. There is also a diesel (see elsewhere in this issue).

Ford F-150 4x4 SuperCrew Platinum Diesel

250-hp 3.6L V6 turbo diesel - 10-spd ...22/30/25 mpg
.....\$57,910 / \$67,380

(2018 model) This exact truck, with F-150's plushiest cab and top trim, is reviewed elsewhere in this issue. This is the first diesel F-150, which, along with a 10-speed automatic, delivers by far the highest mpg in this group.

GMC Sierra 1500 AT4

420-hp 6.2L V8 - 10-spd auto15/19/17 mpg
.....\$53,200 / \$62,885

This AT4 model is a purpose-built off-roader, new this year, but not at the expense of any other creature comforts or capabilities. Standout features include a multi-talented tailgate that works as a seat, step or eight-foot materials stop; and multiple trailer settings memory. Six engines are available for Sierra, three for AT4 (a 5.3L V8, this 460-lbft 6.2L V8 and soon a 3.0L inline-six diesel).

Ram 1500 Laramie Longhorn Crew Cab 4x4

395-hp 5.7L V8 - 8-spd auto15/21/17 mpg
.....\$53,695 / \$67,335

Ram 1500 is entirely new for 2019, top to bottom, inside and out (see our May/June issue), with extensive use of lightweight high-strength steel boosting its payload and tow capacity. This sample is next-to-top trim (by just \$2600) and has a HEMI multi-displacement VVT engine (an eTorque 5.7L HEMI MDS VVT is also available).

WINNER: This was a tough category, with four highly capable trucks on-road or off. This seems to be Ram's year, though, as the 1500 also won Truck of the Year (with Ram 2500 runnerup) at the Texas Truck Rodeo, where this Ram 1500 Laramie Longhorn model also won the Luxury Pickup category.

1ST PLACE: Ram 1500 Laramie Longhorn

RUNNERUP: Ford F-150 Diesel (2018) ■

CAR—BEST VALUE2019 Kia Forte EX Launch Edition



CAR—PERFORMANCE2019 Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat Redeye Widebody



SUV/CROSSOVER—BEST VALUE2019 Subaru Ascent



SUV/CROSSOVER—LUXURY2018 Lexus LX 570



TRUCK2019 Ram 1500 Longhorn Limited





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A WEEK WITH : 2018 FORD FUSION PLATINUM HYBRID

Awareness

BY JOE SAGE

There are nine versions of Ford Fusion for 2019. Five have conventional powertrains, of which the top two models offer an emphasis on premium fitment (Titanium) or performance (V6 Sport). The other four are hybrids, in three of those five trim levels (eschewing the entry model and by default the sporty V6), with just the top Titanium model available in traditional hybrid form or Energi plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) form.

Media evaluation fleets sometimes run ahead of retail availability toward year-end, sometimes not. The Fusion Hybrid driven here is a 2018 model (itself a carryover from 2017), one of four trim levels, of which the top premium trim is Platinum, while the Fusion Energi PHEV has had three trims, all but the base. Our sample is the non-PHEV top trim Platinum Hybrid—one step above Titanium in 2018, while for 2019 Titanium will be top dog. At this point on the calendar, you should be able to get your hands on either a 2018 or 2019 model.

We received this sedan in our cycle right after a pickup truck, going from a turbo diesel to a gasoline hybrid and from over 5000 pounds to not much over 3500. We were moving to a vehicle with roughly double the fuel mileage, while the change in vehicle power was—well, impossible to com-

pare. Ford states combined gas and electric horsepower, but torque for only the gasoline engine. The electric motor, though not stated, contributes 47 more horses total. Electric torque can kick in early, which helps with quickness. All in all, forget the numbers and just go put your foot on the pedal.

Coming straight from a high-torque diesel pickup was unfair to the Fusion Hybrid for its first mile, after which we enthusiastically noted its speed in general and its immediate power on tap. Easing into a two-lane freeway on-ramp, we immediately realized we could easily grab an open lane and conquer the competition. Nice.

We noted idiosyncrasies of the hybrid setup during our week—in outside temps over 100, we did not always get enough cool cabin air (though the fans were running strong); we wished for an auto start-stop defeat switch (presumably incompatible with the hybrid system, which cycles for its own reasons); and the car was harsh on speedbumps, perhaps due to battery weight and location.

We were aware of the car's hybrid nature in those small ways, but also in a big way, as its fuel gauge just never seemed to drop much, no matter how far we drove it, using just half a tank in a hard-driving, distance-devouring week.

For a spacious midsize sedan that does *not* go out of its way to virtue-signal its hybrid nature by style, the Ford Fusion Hybrid is a great solution. ■

SPECIFICATIONS (2018)

ENGINE	2.0L IVCAT Atkinson cycle I-4,
HP/TORQUE / gasoline engine	141 hp / 129 lb-ft
ELECTRIC MOTOR	88kW perm-magnet AC-synchronous
HP/TORQUE / electric motor	not stated
COMBINED SYSTEM POWER	188 hp / not stated
BATTERY	lithium-ion battery
TRANS	electronically controlled CVT
DRIVETRAIN	FWD
SUSPENSION	F: indep short-long-arm w stblzr bar R: indep multi-link
STEERING	elec power-assist
BRAKES	regen braking, 4-wheel disc, ABS
WHEELS	18-in alum painted pocket
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	191.8 in / 112.2 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	not stated
TURNING CIRCLE	not stated
SEATING	five
HEADROOM (F/R)	39.2 / 37.8 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	44.3 max / 38.3 in
CARGO CAPACITY	12.0 cu.ft
WEIGHT	3668 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	14.0 gal
FUEL ECONOMY	43/41/42 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE (2018) **\$37,275**

INCLUDES (2018 PLATINUM):

Cruise control, dual-zone auto climate, capless fuel filler, power side mirrors w integrated blind spot mirrors, keyless start, rotary shift dial, SmartGauge® w EcoGuide, AM/FM stereo/single-CD player w MP3 and 9 speakers, two 12-volt powerpoints, SYNC 3 w 8" color LCD capacitive touchscreen (Titanium, Platinum trims) w AppLink, 911 Assist, two smart-charge USB ports.

RUBY RED TINTED CLEARCOAT	395
INFLATABLE REAR SEATBELTS	225
DESTINATION CHARGE	875

TOTAL (2018) **\$38,770**



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By Joe Sage - Photos: cars by Doug Berger and Bailey O'Bar for NWAPA / scenics by Joe Sage

Although each vehicle at a comparative drive event is chosen by its manufacturer to show off something special, there is room for both objectivity and subjectivity—as they choose and as we analyze. Some cost considerably more than others, have more horsepower than others or have specific features lacking in others, while others may just have more personality or novelty.

When you have your hands on the wheels of a potent lineup like this, on great open roads—but not your hand on your wallet, a ballpoint pen in one hand and a sales contract on the table—it can be easy to momentarily forget about cost, specific power or other details. This is not all bad. Though all that is considered, the Northwest Automotive Press Association's annual Run to the Sun event also surely goes right to the heart and soul.

This year's event covered 527 miles in north-central Oregon, through Cascade Mountains, canyons, grasslands and lava outcrops on two-lane roads, as well as along the mighty Columbia River (driving on the Washington side for a stretch).

Run to the Sun is distinguished from other comparos by having a predetermined driver and vehicle sequence, vital to keeping things moving on a long road route, efficient while also ensuring every

driver drives each and every car.

Vehicles were categorized in five groups: Convertibles, Performance Coupes, Performance Sedans and Performance SUVs. We would vote for a favorite in each category, as well as one overall.

Vehicle photos are alphabetical by category, while our narrative is by our drive sequence. MPG is highway; prices are the particular model's base and as driven. Models are 2018 or 2019 as noted.

Day 1.

A one-vehicle day, this covers the longest drive segment of the event, from the Portland airport to our overnight spot outside Welches, Oregon (elevation 1320 feet), near the base of Mt Hood.

Each driver's first car is a matter of where the scissors snip the list. Our particular rotation had us start out in the middle of the largest category, Performance Sedans.

PERFORMANCE SEDANS

Kia Stinger GT2 RWD V6 (2018)
365 hp / 25 mpg.....\$49,200 / \$50,100
There's considerable variety in the Kia Stinger lineup—most notably four-cylinder and V6 models with rear- or all-wheel drive—and we've driven all before, all lively performers, four-door pony cars of a sort, presented as grand tourers. Here we had the top rear-driver (for \$2100 more, you can have AWD), which as a GT2 includes a limited-slip rear differential and shift-by-wire instead of

cable. It was a great vehicle for leg one, escaping from the Portland area to wooded mountain two-lanes.

Day 2.

For our longest drive day, with eleven vehicle-route segments, we resumed with two Performance Sedans, then moved on to other categories. (In our rotation, we would not visit the top of the sedan list till the end of Day Three.)

PERFORMANCE SEDANS (cont'd)

Subaru WRX STI Type RA (2018)
310 hp / 22 mpg.....\$48,995 / \$49,855
This potent AWD daily driver off-road rally champion has a higher base price than anything in the Subaru lineup except the top trim of the new three-row Ascent SUV (see elsewhere in this issue). Already top performance-specified from A to Z, our sample was a 2018 special edition—featuring weight reduction, revised gearing and five bonus horses—the Type RA as in “record attempt,” in honor of their 2017 fastest-ever sedan lap at the Nürburgring. We loved its very cool contextually personalized digital instrumentation set with analog style cues.

Genesis G70 RWD 3.3T Dynamic Edition (2019)
365 hp / 26 mpg.....\$50,250 / \$51,245
Hyundai and Kia generally make a point of neither comparing nor discussing commonalities in their US lineups. However, Genesis, now split off as a third (and more up-market) brand, freely described the differences between their new G70 grand tourer and its first-to-market cousin the Kia Stinger. Genesis G70 engine and drivetrain fundamentals are essentially the same as Stinger. But the

G70 is a few inches shorter, thus also a bit lighter, and has a sportier suspension setup, duly noted as we had this for a cliffhanging open road stretch around Mt Hood.

PERFORMANCE SUVs

Acura RDX SH-AWD A-Spec (2019)
272 hp / 26 mpg.....\$45,500 / \$46,495
In a performance-built category, this Acura features an A-Spec package that adds sportiness—wheels, spoilers, fog lights, aluminum pedals and such—geared toward style but not adding horses. It also doesn't add too many dollars—this is the most affordable in the group, though with the other three averaging 508 hp and two getting fuel mileage in the 20s, competition is stiff.

Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio AWD (2018)
505 hp / 23 mpg.....\$79,795 / \$85,890
Power and price climbed quickly in this group, with the Alfa Romeo priced 75 to 85 percent higher (base and as tested) than the Acura, but also with horsepower 86 percent higher. With all that power, the Alfa's fuel mileage is only 11.5 percent lower than the Acura. The Stelvio, particularly in top performance Quadrifoglio AWD trim, had bagged a lot of comparo trophies already—a promising start, but let's see who else showed up here....

Maserati Levante GTS (2019)
550 hp / 18 mpg.....\$119,980 / \$131,800
Horsepower continued to climb within this group, as did price. If we thought the Alfa had a significant cost bump above the Acura, we just jumped up another 50 percent with the Maserati Levante GTS. Fuel mileage moves down, comparatively, but none of that matters when you drive it, and it likely won't matter for those who buy it and feed it, either. The Levante GTS (which we had met in Michigan this summer) is a new entry, at notably lower price than the Levante Trofeo, while trading off just 40 horses, from 590 down to 550—a more than fair trade against their top dog. And the cabin is a knockout.

Mercedes-AMG GLC63 4MATIC SUV (2018)
469 hp / 22 mpg.....\$69,900 / \$87,440
Among these four entries, the AMG hits a Goldilocks spot in power, fuel mileage and base price, although as outfitted here costs about like the Alfa. The GLC lineup offers many choices, as noted in our last issue's writeup on the GLC43 Coupe—box or coupe body styles, regular

KEEP RIGHT >>

PERFORMANCE SUVs (alphabetical)



Acura RDX A-Spec



Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio



Maserati Levante GTS



Mercedes-AMG GLC63 SUV

PERFORMANCE COUPES (alphabetical)



Chevrolet Camaro ZL1



Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat Redeye WB



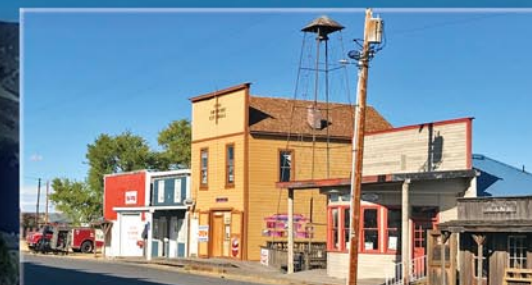
Ford Mustang Bullitt



Ford Mustang GT



Toyota 86 TRD Special Edition



or AMG flavors, with multiple powertrains in any. As noted then, all this can actually lead to a simple decision among them. The Run to the Sun model gave us a chance to compare its 469-hp V8 GLC63 with that prior 362-hp biturbo V6 GLC43. The only German in this group, potent and solidly featured, it gave us a 42 percent drop in price but just a 15 percent drop in power from the Maserati.

PERFORMANCE COUPES

Toyota 86 TRD Special Edition (2019)

205 hp / 28 mpg.....\$32,420 / \$35,008

The Toyota 86 coupe—also covered in our last issue, the former Scion FR-S, though always a Toyota 86 in much of the world, also a twin to the Subaru BRZ—has the best fuel mileage in this group, though all are close enough to not likely be a deciding factor. It also has the lowest price by quite a bit, which very likely could be a deciding factor for many buyers, though the tradeoff in horsepower is far more than pro rata to price in our set. The core draw with the 86 is its traditional sports car fun formula.

Ford Mustang GT Coupe Premium (2018)

460 hp / 25 mpg.....\$39,095 / \$51,185

Mustang comes as a 310-hp four-cylinder EcoBoost or a 460-hp V8 GT. This GT adds \$2200 in Premium touches (ambient lighting, voice-activated touchscreen and such), as well as a Level 2 Performance Package with 19-inch wheels, Magne-Ride damping, Torsen rear axle and rear spoiler (\$6600), plus performance exhaust and Recaro seats (\$895, \$1595), bringing it above \$50 grand. Ford entered this Mustang GT along with a Mustang Bullitt. We've seen comparo events where two similar vehicles are entered as one for voting, but here they would be separate. Might this split the vote so neither could win?

Chevrolet Camaro ZL1 Coupe (2018)

650 hp / 21 mpg.....\$61,500 / \$68,585

Sound expensive for a Camaro? Instead of comparing it with their base model, look at Corvette ZR1. Both have 6.2L supercharged V8s, though Corvette's is built to 755 hp. The Camaro is just 125 pounds heavier than the Corvette. And price? Corvette ZR1 starts at \$121,000 (almost exactly double the Camaro ZL1) and runs up above \$130 grand. The Camaro ZL1 is a great performer, just the right bit showy but not too much so, and comes with those sure-to-be-mentioned Corvette ZR1 bragging rights.

Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat Redeye (2019)

797 hp / 22 mp.....\$58,650 / \$90,590

Dodge Challenger always broadcasts a strong persona

when it shows up next to the other ponies. Push it to SRT Hellcat levels, and its horsepower eclipses all (yet with launch control and cylinder deactivation keeping it useful on weekends or on a daily basis). And this year? Meet the Challenger SRT Hellcat Redeye Widebody (featured in our last issue), at 797 hp far exceeding the basic Hellcat (just pushed from 707 to 717 hp) and basically filling the needs of former dragstrip-ready SRT Demon buyers (that was 840 hp) in a more, well, arguably mainstream setup.

Ford Mustang Bullitt (2019)

480 hp / [tbd] mpg.....\$46,595 / \$52,885

Mustang Bullitt carries a lot of character with it wherever it goes, starting with the name's 50-year heritage. (Also see our prior issue for a full feature.) A limited edition built on the Mustang GT, Bullitt has 20 more horses and a bit higher starting price, but even this max-level Recaro version is just \$1700 higher than the GT Premium also running in this group. (The Bullitt is a 2019 model, to the GT's 2018.) Though available also in black, ours came—as almost all surely should—in Steve McQueen *Bullitt* movie-evoking Highland Green. Probably more people came up to our group at various stops asking whether they could steal this or the Redeye than any others.

Day 3.

Six vehicles sounds easy after an eleven-vehicle day, but Day Three has some of the longest legs and ends earlier, with lunchtime voting and early afternoon departures. With a morning temperature of 34 degrees (at an elevation about the same as Scottsdale), we started out with the convertibles—and nonetheless yes, of course, top down!

CONVERTIBLES

Fiat 500c POP Cabrio (2018)

135 hp / 33 mpg.....\$17,740 / \$21,170

Price seems to be everything with certain models at this event—and it's certainly a major bragging point for the Fiat 500 Cabrio. At \$17,740 base, it's the least expensive open-top new car in America. The savings continue with its high fuel mileage. Dragstrip power is not its game, but fun certainly is, in spades. Power-to-pounds, its 135 hp proves to be a lot more than it sounds like on paper.

Mazda MX-5 Miata RF (2019)

181 hp / 34 mpg.....\$33,335 / \$35,905

Miata has its roots in affordable classic sports car per-

formance, so comparing its power and fuel mileage with the Fiat (35 percent more horsepower and about the same fuel mileage), things may be looking quite good here for the Miata, but its price has been climbing, in this case hitting around double the Fiat's price. Replacing the old soft top Miata last year, this retractable hardtop boasts perfect 50/50 weight distribution.

PERFORMANCE SEDANS (resume)

Lexus ES 350 F Sport (2019)

302 hp / 31 mpg.....\$44,035 / \$52,414

This is the first of three in a row that are amped-up models of mild-mannered sedans, aiming to take on better known performance-first brands. Lexus ES, a mainstay of conservative sedan shopping for years, receives its first F Sport treatment for 2019. We used to think of F Sport models as not-really-full-on F cars, but have come to appreciate them considerably as less expensive, more fuel-efficient yet potent turbos as an alternative to V8s. Add F Sport bits to an unassuming ES, buckle up and punch it.

Buick Regal GS AWD (2018)

310 hp / 27 mpg.....\$39,070 / \$44,115

Buick has already been polishing their brand, upping their image as premium performers, rather than the staid sedan lineup of days now long gone. Take the extremely useful Regal Sportback sedan, GS-engineer it with a 310-hp V6, standard all-wheel drive, Brembo dual-piston front brakes and more, and this has a fair shot at being the "BMW killer" so many have aspired to.

Buick Regal TourX: There are several support vehicles at the event, as well as a "spare" in case of mechanical failure or a mishap with one of the entries. For this, Buick also provided a Regal TourX, a shooting brake or wagon format we would have loved to also try (but did not need to).

Volkswagen Passat GT V6 (2018)

280 hp / 28 mpg.....\$29,145 / \$29,995

The VW Passat GT seems to be another sleeper version of a generally innocuous sedan, though they come at it from different ends of the equation. It can be seen as upping the four-cylinder models with a 280-hp V6, but perhaps more notably, it takes the V6 from the pricier SEL top-premium Passat and puts it in a simpler sport trim that gives you the fancier car's horsepower while saving over five grand. Subtle red trim identifies the GT.

BMW M5 Sedan (2018)

600 hp / 21 mpg.....\$102,600 / \$129,795

BMW's M vehicles are well established as über-perform-

ance alternatives to their mainstream equivalents, performance oriented in every way (this M5 pumps out 600 hp, far and away the highest output in this group) and priced accordingly (also far and away the highest in this group). For us, it was the last drive of the event and thus a great way to wish Run to the Sun could continue for days more—which we always wish, anyway.

Note: Below are the first three in our particular rotation again, for reference; see first page for more info.

Kia Stinger GT2 RWD V6 (2018)

365 hp / 25 mpg.....\$49,200 / \$50,100

Subaru WRX STI Type RA (2018)

310 hp / 22 mpg.....\$48,995 / \$49,855

Genesis G70 RWD 3.3T Dynamic Edition (2019)

365 hp / 26 mpg.....\$50,250 / \$51,245

Awards.

That's a wrap on driving—now the results of voting (for only the second year). Would vehicles win by performance? price? intangibles? all of the above? We don't get to see the tallies, but with just 18 votes per category, one or two tight votes could make all the difference. We also don't reveal our own votes, but our top votes matched some, others not. The subjective nature of the awards is reflected in each being called "Most Fun," rather than "Best."

MOST FUN IN THE SUN (CONVERTIBLE)

2019 Mazda MX-5 Miata RF

MOST FUN PERFORMANCE COUPE

2019 Ford Mustang Bullitt

MOST FUN PERFORMANCE SEDAN

2018 BMW M5

MOST FUN PERFORMANCE SUV

2018 Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio

MOST FUN TO DRIVE VEHICLE

2018 Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio

Arizona tends toward top dog sport and performance vehicles, and most of our roads are this clear and dry almost all of the time. A couple of wins are likely to be different here, but as always with Run to the Sun, there was not a loser in the entire group. And, as always, we're already looking forward to next year. ■

CONVERTIBLES (alphabetical)



Fiat 500 Cabrio



Mazda MX-5 Miata Grand Touring RF

PERFORMANCE SEDANS (alphabetical)



BMW M5



Buick Regal GS



Genesis G70



Kia Stinger GT



Lexus ES 350 F Sport



Subaru WRX STI Type RA



Volkswagen Passat GT



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Shown: Garage Hotrod T-Shirt / SKU: 03-BKG-VI

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- Cool car guy quality color graphics • 6 lbs • 16" x 7" x 7.5"

Car Guy Hotrod Steel Tool Box / SKU: 10-BKG-WCR

Car Guy Car Repair Steel Tool Box / SKU: 10-BKG-MCR

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— Many thanks! Jackie B.

♥ My husband just loves everything, especially me for getting him such cool stuff. I'd have to say we will be lifetime customers, oh ya!! Thank you, Greasemonkeys.
— Sincerely, Pam



♥ I just had the most wonderful buying experience! I only hope my father asks for something from The Busted Knuckle Garage for Christmas so I can do business with such a wonderful company once more.
— Cheers! Michelle

♥ First, let me be the one thanking you! I honestly cannot remember such extraordinary customer service.
— Thanks again, "JR" Jean

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A BONUS DAY IN OREGON WITH : 2018 BUICK REGAL GS AWD

America's own German sport sedan

BY
JOE
SAGE

We stayed in Oregon for an extra day after Run to the Sun—and we lucked out. One of the manufacturers got wind of our bonus time and offered us the overtime use of their car.

We had finished the event in the Performance Sedan category, and the last four were all sport-modified variants of basic sedans—Lexus F Sport, Buick GS, Volkswagen GT and BMW M. At about \$130,000, the BMW was in a different realm (see the prior feature on Run to the Sun for a few more specs and details), but the other three, ranging from roughly \$30,000 to a bit over \$50,000, are all quite reasonably available to the sports-minded buyer without a stratospheric budget.

The Buick Regal GS AWD inhabits roughly the middle of that price range, at \$39,070 (or \$44,115 with a maximum variety of extras on our sample). And yet it has the highest horsepower of the three. In fact, for 2018, its engine was boosted by 51 hp, just in time to win this faceoff, and its transmission and always welcome all-wheel-drive unit have also been upgraded.

The Regal also comes in an appealing package—a “sportback” body form that looks for all the

world like a sedan until you open the rear hatch, revealing not just a trunk, but a cavernous cargo area, with 31.5 cubic feet of volume behind seating for five, or 60.7 behind the front seats. We went for an Oregon waterfall tour with a family of four and could have had a week's luggage for all five of us, had we needed. With the rear seats down, two people can easily load up for an extended beach or ski vacation, enjoying the feel of a fastback grand tourer en route. Bonus: the rear liftgate has a sturdy grab handle and can be yanked shut quickly if so desired, two rarities. Another bonus: active noise cancellation in the cabin makes any kind of drive even more tranquil inside, while offering an exhilarating drive.

On top of the car's basic value pricing, our sample's add-ons were all very reasonable priced (see sidebar—e.g. Bose audio, touchscreen, nav and HD radio all for just \$945), another huge advantage of a domestic brand over its German competitors. We'd expect domestic service to cost far less, too.

That's right—the Buick Regal GS not only seeks to be a BMW 3-killer, as so many do, but states out loud that they also have Audi in their sites. Can they back that up? Indeed they can. Not only does the Regal GS have the winning formula outlined here, but it has the pedigree. Benefitting from long-standing GM-Opel synergies, this Buick is built in Ruesselsheim, Germany. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	cast aluminum 3.6L V6
HP/TORQUE	310 hp / 282 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	9-speed automatic
DRIVETRAIN	AWD
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson strut w/ coils, continuous damping control; R: five-link independent
STEERING	elec variable-power assist
BRAKES	4-wheel disc, ABS/ESC, red Brembo front calipers
WHEELS/TIRES	19" alum / Continental A/S 245/40R19
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	192.9 in / 111.4 in
SEATING	five
HEADROOM (F/R)	38.8 / 37.4 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	42.1 / 36.9 in
CARGO CAPACITY	31.5 / 60.7 cu ft
WEIGHT	3796 lb
FUEL ECONOMY	19/27/22 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE **\$39,070**

INCLUDES: teen driver feature, 8-way pwr driver & passenger seats, one-touch pwr front windows, 40/20/40 tri-fold fold-flat rear seat, keyless entry/start & EX Key passive entry, ambient interior lighting, dual zone climate, auto-dim mirror, cruise, heated front seats, heated steering wheel, cabin active noise cancellation, Apple/Android, solar absorbing glass, LED tail-lamps, remote start and more.

SIGHTS & SOUNDS PKG: Buick 8" touchscreen infotainment w/ nav, HD radio, Bose premium audio945

DRIVER CONFIDENCE PKG: adaptive cruise, following distance indicator, forward collision alert, forward auto braking, lane keep assist w/ lane departure warning, forward pedestrian detect, heads-up display, power moonroof1690

APPEARANCE PKG: wireless charging, LED headlamps, cornering lamps, auto leveling headlamps485

DESTINATION CHARGE925

TOTAL **\$44,115**



Our Buick Regal GS AWD in the shadow of St Johns Bridge, Portland, Oregon.

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Interstate 11 High-priority projects underway on Nogales to Las Vegas highway

Project purpose

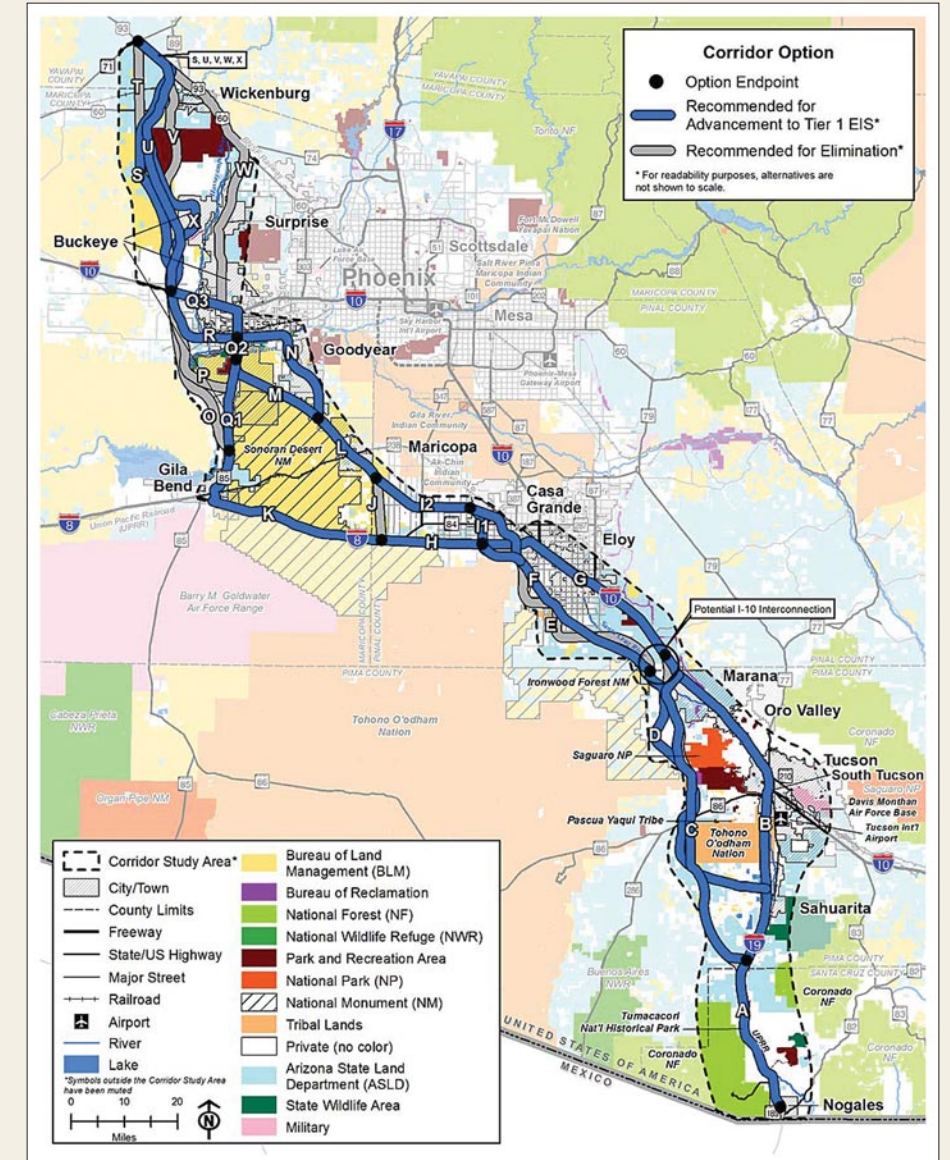
- Provide a high-priority, access-controlled, north-south transportation corridor
- Support improved regional mobility for people, goods, and homeland security
- Connect major metropolitan areas and markets with Mexico and Canada
- Enhance access to the high-capacity transportation network to support economic vitality

New Interstate 11 is planned to (a) connect Phoenix and Las Vegas, the two largest cities in the country not directly connected by an interstate highway; while (b) spanning Arizona from Mexico to Nevada. Since 2014, signs have marked US 93 in Arizona as the "Future I-11 Corridor." In 2015, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, or FAST Act, formally designated the I-11 corridor in Arizona, generally following AZ 189 and Interstate 19 from Nogales to Tucson, I-10 from Tucson to Phoenix, and US 93 from Wickenburg to Hoover Dam on the Nevada state line.

The designation didn't include funding but identified I-11 as a high-priority corridor eligible for federal funding. The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) is working with federal, state and local partners to identify funding for I-11, expected to incorporate a combination of new and existing roadways. Having invested over half a billion dollars over 20 years to turn much of the primary route between Phoenix and Las Vegas into a modern four-lane divided highway, ADOT has committed additional funds for US 93 over the next five years.

As I-11 comes closer to reality in Arizona, US 93 would be upgraded to interstate highway standards, including high-spec traffic interchanges. Currently all but 39 miles of the 200-mile drive from Wickenburg to the Nevada state line has been upgraded to a four-lane divided highway to improve traffic flow, support movement of freight and enhance safety through this heavily traveled area. The entire northern segment of US 93 from the Nevada state line to Kingman (mileposts 1 to 68) is now a four-lane divided highway, following completion of a \$71 million project in 2010.

ADOT's 2019-2023 Five-Year Transportation Facilities Construction Program includes more than \$155 million dedicated to projects to improve US 93 from Wickenburg to the Nevada state line north of Kingman, the designated route of I-11. This includes three projects that will widen an additional 11 miles of US 93 to four-lane divided highway and the start of right-of-way acquisition for a



new US 93 interchange with I-40 in Kingman.

ADOT is currently funding and conducting an environmental study to identify a potential 2,000-foot wide corridor for I-11 between Nogales and Wickenburg. The Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement, required by the National Environmental Policy Act, is expected to be complete in late 2019 or early 2020. Tier 2 environmental studies would be required to narrow a corridor into a specific freeway alignment if the build option is selected as part of the Tier 1 study.

In addition to completed and planned improvements on US 93, a \$134 million ADOT project beginning next year will upgrade AZ 189, a 3.75-mile highway connecting Interstate 19 with the Mariposa Port of Entry at Nogales, a route essential to trade with Mexico, Arizona's largest international trading partner. ■



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Riding the storm out in style

BY JOE SAGE

The Lexus RX 350 F Sport was our beast and our refuge when the remnants of Hurricane Rosa rolled through the Sonoran Desert this fall, breaking a wide range of weather records, and it was perfectly suited to the task—tough and capable outside, warm and commanding inside, while always making sure to look its best for any occasion.

We would have reflexively preferred the all-wheel-drive version, but truth be told, we had to doublecheck that this was a front-driver, as its suite of electronic stability goodies made that fact never cross our mind, even with enough mud and deep water for a serious challenge even in town.

We might not have reflexively chosen a performance model for these conditions, though we are always happy to receive a Lexus F Sport (or full F) model in any circumstances. The ESC systems ensured this was never a deficit in the worst of the storm, either. Though built for reasonable speed (for a 4464-pounder) and agile handling, everything from its chain-link grille to its 20-inch wheels to its stormy Nebula Gray Pearl paint says, “bring it on.”

We see a lot of white RX 350s, and we’d like to see the RX in the (not available) Flare Yellow paint of an RC F Sport coupe we had a few months back.

But this dark gray really brings out the carved-from-a-solid-ingot nature of the RX’s styling.

Toyota Highlander’s upscale cousin, Lexus RX is inescapably defined by its styling, with complex sheet metal notable at a glance, while even more intricacies are striking over time. Lexus has been playing with these elements for years—the creases and their trademark spindle grille—and yes, it took time, but they have really come together. It varies by model, but in general, anyone who says the grille is polarizing hasn’t looked at them lately.

As for F Sport, this is as good as it gets, and we mean that in top-dog positive way. Several Lexus sedan and coupe models give you a choice between an F Sport upgrade or a full-on F model—a decision between the F’s big-block V8 power and F Sport’s V6 agility—but in the RX, there is no F and no such conundrum. You want sporty? F Sport. You want tough? F Sport. Want top features? F Sport.

Other subsets within the RX lineup include hybrids and a RX 350L model (same wheelbase but a four-inch longer body and three rows). There is a long hybrid, and there is an F Sport Hybrid, but so far not a long F Sport, so your choices are many but not endless. One more equalizer? Most but not all models have a 3500-pound tow capacity. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

SEATING CAPACITY	.....five
ENGINE	.....3.5L alum block-heads DOHC 24v VVT V6
HP/TORQUE	.....290 hp / 263 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....8-spd auto electronically controlled
DRIVETRAIN	.....FWD (AWD available)
0-60 / TOP SPEED	.....(FWD) 7.9 sec / 124 mph
SUSPENSION	.....F: MacPherson strut, coils; R: double wishbone, coils
STEERING	.....elec power rack & pinion, electronic assist
BRAKES	.....F: 12.9" vented / R: 13.3" vented
WHEELS/TIRES	.....20x8 / 235/55R20
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....192.5 / 109.8 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....8.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....38.8 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....39.4 / 39.1 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....44.1 / 38.0 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....(max) 56.3 cu.ft.
WEIGHT	.....(FWD) 4222 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....3500 lb
FUEL / FUEL CAPACITY	..... premium max perf / 19.2 gal
FUEL ECONOMY	.....20/27/23 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	.....\$48,920
F SPORT PACKAGE	includes 20" F Sport aluminum super chrome alloy wheels; F Sport exclusive leather interior trim, aluminum pedals, shift knob & meters; F Sport exterior trim; heated/ventilated F Sport front seats; adaptable variable suspension w sport+ drive mode.....incl
DRIVER ASSIST	blind spot monitor w rear cross-traffic braking and intuitive park assist .....1065
PANORAMIC MOONROOF	w aluminum roof rails .....1850
NAV/AUDIO PKG	12.3" nav, Mark Levinson 15-spkr premium audio, Lexus Enform app suite, 1-yr destinations .....3200
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....995
TOTAL	.....\$56,030



BORN IN A CROSSFIRE HURRICANE

BONE-CHILLING TRUCK RODEO MIXES IT UP WITH THE WEATHERMAN

by Joe Sage / Photos: Kevin McCauley @capturingthemachine / and Joe Sage

Mudfest is the longstanding nickname of one of the largely off-road vehicle comparos we drive and judge in every year, the Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year Awards in the Pacific Northwest. However, it was hard for us not to think of that term during this year's Texas Truck Rodeo in the Hill Country outside Austin.

(Mudfest is an event of NWAPA, the Northwest Automotive Press Association; Texas Truck Rodeo is an event of TAWA, the Texas Auto Writers Association; we are members of both groups.)

There's quite a bit of travel in our line of work, and we readily admit to looking ahead at the weather map, knowing we hope to see some rain or blizzards or something else exciting. Living in the Valley of the Sun can do that to you. Not that we mind our relentlessly perfect weather—it's a fundamental reason to live here. Sure, we have some extremely wild monsoon storms and the occasional snowy surprise for an hour or so midwinter. But if we can hit a wild storm elsewhere in our travels,

that'd be something. At least in theory.

Temperatures in the Sonoran Desert had only just within the prior week or so dropped from about 110 to more like 80 degrees, as the fringes of Hurricane Sergio barely brushed us. When we arrived in Austin on a Sunday afternoon, the temp was about the same. But Sergio's huge ball of remnant storm weather had also headed for Texas, and by morning, it had dropped another 40 degrees—and the rains had begun.

The drive from our hotel to the Longhorn River Ranch, site of the Texas Truck Rodeo, takes about 45 minutes. By the time we stepped out of the car out there, wind-whipped rain cut right to the bone, and all including a few with knee-high rubber boots were slogging through deep mud—grassy fields an hour earlier—in a scene reminiscent of something between Woodstock and basic training.

They call this "driving rain," but not for the reason we would hope for, on our first driving day.

The 1632-acre ranch has open meadows, tree-



lined lakes and streams and significant elevation changes. Four courses comprise a Level One route for the heartiest and hardest off-roaders, with steep grades, deep ruts, rolling rockslides and a number of normal water crossings; a slightly less extreme Level Two course for solid weekend adventure off-roaders; a Level Three course of dirt and gravel roads suited to all-wheel-drivers good for weekend fishing and picnic trips; and a Level Four course on two-lane paved country roads in the immediate region for crossovers without any serious off-road intentions. Many vehicles can run on more than one of these routes.

Before a fresh, warm Mexican breakfast could even be served—in a tent that was as cold as the outdoors and threatening to become just as wet, flapping in the wind as the mud followed us in—the course crews had taken a new test run on the Level One course, and the decision had already been made to close that. When rocky hillclimbs become water courses, too, there was just too much risk to life, limb, pricey machinery and even the ongoing pace of the event to take a chance on likely predictable mishaps.

With almost 50 vehicles to drive, in 18 categories, we proceeded to grab some of the toughest, to tackle the Level Two course, which proved to be as nasty as Level One would usually be, probably moreso. This was not, as they say, our first rodeo, and tough conditions are not only to be expected but to be embraced—to a degree. A succession of modern cabins with premium creature comforts made the drives themselves fine from the inside, though visibility was slipping outside, in sheets of rain that at times approached a whiteout snowstorm, while notably deep water in the route's otherwise desirable rocks and ruts were creating fountains of mud that reduced visibility further, both on our glass and in the view ahead. Most of all, though, a few factors were continuing to build against the event. Whereas other off-road events have happened to have a paved lot or a large barn as staging areas, this locale is one hundred percent grass and dirt. No matter how comfortable anyone could delude themselves into thinking they were while driving, there was no way to get out of one vehicle and choose another without getting soaked even moreso—socks and boots, especially. As for the ranch, after any such event every effort is made to return things to their normal state, but we were destroying the place rapidly. And on top of all that, anyone could tell, after the first couple of hours, that we would never get anywhere near the needed number of vehicles driven by the needed number of drivers.

But what could you do? Such an event takes as much preparation and logistical work—and personnel—as the invasion of a small country. And there is not a person there or a company involved that doesn't have a schedule that's booked to the gills well into the future. Rescheduling would be beyond impractical and effectively impossible. And other than the generally decreasing feasibility of it all, we were all ready to rock.

A power core of participants, crew and manufacturers' representatives powwowed in one of the ranch's stone houses, as others variously drove, huddled in the tent, wrung out their socks a few more times, or in at least one case just sat in the



KEEP RIGHT >>

muddy meadow in a front-drive crossover with wheels hopelessly spinning in place.

A decision was made. We would move the event, lock stock and burritos, back to the hotel, in itself no easy task. Trucks and utilities were quickly allocated among us all, and we drove back to the hotel. Meanwhile, staff and management at our base, the Sonesta Bee Cave Austin Hotel, pulled unimaginable strings to accommodate an event they'd never even experienced, other than lodging and feeding us. By the time we arrived back at the hotel, they had cleared out virtually all of their underground garage just for our purposes.

We are probably all a bit jaded at these events, even the toughest ones, in that most people expect to just show up and start driving, with all the details taken care of by the invisible hands of their hardest-working colleagues. As such, drivers quickly adapted to working through their same vehicle lists from the depths of the large garage.

But the hotel deserves huge praise for their efforts, as do the manufacturers, who told us they completely trusted the organization to come up with as workable an alternate solution as possible in these conditions. And the show goes on.

Our new course was on pavement, with a short and a long route quickly established and mapped. Being in the Hill Country—though a rapidly developing portion of the Hill Country—roads were a mix of lightly traveled hilly and curvy four-lane boulevards and stretches of busier suburban business. Most drivers quickly adapted, mixing in various improvised routes in the same region. Someone even came up with an off-road feature in an undeveloped area not far from our hotel—with its own heavy rain, mud and sudden lakes, a great detour and photo op for a few of the tougher units.

The pace picked back up, and since all the drivers and manufacturers are very accustomed to doing this the usual way, with dirt and rocks, we were able to translate our experiences and evaluations into that mindset. It's certainly not as powerful as the real thing, but it was surprisingly effective—and suitable enough to gauge features and performance enough to vote.

Our dinner that night was held at another ranch almost as far out as Lomhorn River Ranch, though we moved the whole thing indoors there, too, with zero discussion needed. As the rains continued, we found ourselves stuck on a small country road, in the dark, in flash flood waters quickly rising from 18 inches to two feet and still rising. Backing up a couple of full-size buses in these conditions was its own subadventure. We later learned that some had hit similar flooding while driving out to dinner and had had to just give up.

There was still another drive day ahead, and Murphy's Law would of course have us awake to

blue skies and sunshine. Not this time around. That was a good thing, really, as a modified event on a beautiful day would have been kind of frustrating, though there is no way the staging meadows and original courses at the ranch could have been re-prepped overnight, anyway.

By early afternoon, the driving was complete, and it was time to vote. Just as we had been able to combine prior experience with new drives to evaluate the vehicles, we were able to rate their attributes effectively on our ballots.

Our awards dinner was held at Star Hill Ranch, one of our favorites, a venue that has created a frontier Texas town from a variety of actual historic buildings brought in from around the state. Usually, dinner is held on the dirt main street, with a band playing on the general store's steps and the top winning vehicles driven out of the shadows and into the lights to receive their trophies.

As Star Hill Ranch is a popular wedding location, there is a chapel and also a big dance hall. And as you might suspect, this rainy year the dinner and presentations were moved indoors.

CATEGORY AWARDS

Following are winners and runners-up in various individual vehicle categories (as well as others from those categories, alphabetically). All were 2019 models, unless noted otherwise.

Crossovers

COMPACT CROSSOVER

- 1st.....Nissan Kicks SR
- 2ndMazda CX-3 Grand Touring AWD
- others.....Jeep Compass Limited
-Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross SEL
-Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV GT

MIDSIZE CROSSOVER

- 1st.....Nissan Murano Midnight Ed AWD (2018)
- 2ndHonda Pilot Elite

FULL-SIZE CROSSOVER

- 1st.....Mazda CX-9 Signature AWD
- 2ndVolkswagen Tiguan SEL (2018)

LUXURY CROSSOVER

- 1st.....Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio (2018)
- 2ndLexus UX 250h F Sport
- others.....Infiniti QX50 Essential

SUVs

SUBCOMPACT SUV

- 1st.....Hyundai Kona Ultimate AWD (2018)
- 2ndFiat 500X Trekking AWD (2018)

COMPACT SUV

- 1st.....Toyota RAV4 Adventure
- 2ndJeep Cherokee Trailhawk
- others.....Hyundai Santa Fe Ultimate 2.0T
-Jeep Cherokee Limited
-Nissan Rogue SL AWD
-Toyota RAV4 XSE HV

MIDSIZE SUV

- 1st.....Jeep Wrangler Sahara (2018)
- 2ndToyota 4Runner Nightshade Limited
- others.....Kia Sorento SXL AWD
-Subaru Ascent Limited 8-Passenger
-Toyota Volkswagen Atlas SEL (2018)

FULL-SIZE SUV

- 1st.....Dodge Durango SRT
- 2ndNissan Armada Platinum 4x4

Luxury SUVs

COMPACT LUXURY SUV

- 1st.....Volvo XC40 R-Design
- 2ndAcura RDX Advance

MIDSIZE LUXURY SUV

- 1st.....Jeep Grand Cherokee Summit
- 2ndLexus RX 350L

FULL-SIZE LUXURY SUV

- 1st.....Maserati Levante GTS
- 2ndInfiniti QX80 Limited

Off-Road Utility Vehicles

OFF-ROAD UTILITY VEHICLE

- 1st.....Jeep Wrangler Rubicon (2018)
- 2ndToyota 4Runner TRD Pro

Trucks

MIDSIZE PICKUP

- 1st.....Toyota Tacoma TRD Pro

FULL-SIZE PICKUP

- 1st.....Ram 1500 Limited
- 2ndNissan Titan Crew Cab SL
- others.....Toyota Tundra TRD Pro

HEAVY DUTY PICKUP

- 1st.....Ram 2500 Power Wagon (2018)

LUXURY PICKUP

- 1st.....Ram 1500 Laramie Longhorn
- 2ndNissan Titan Platinum Reserve

OFF-ROAD PICKUP

- 1st.....Ram 1500 Rebel
- 2ndNissan Titan PRO-4X

COMMERCIAL VEHICLE

- 1st.....Nissan Titan XD Single Cab

FEATURE AWARDS

Manufacturers enter their proudest new features and technologies for these awards.

BEST TECHNOLOGY

- 1st.....FCA UConnect 4C With 12-inch Screen
- 2ndInfiniti Smart Rearview Mirror

BEST POWERTRAIN

- 1st.....Ram eTorque Mild Hybrid
- 2ndInfiniti VC-Turbo

BEST CONNECTIVITY

- 1st.....Volvo Sensus

OVERALL AWARDS

These are the big dog trophies, the ones likely to generate Super Bowl commercials.

Truck of Texas

- 1st.....Ram 1500
- 2ndRam 2500 Power Wagon (2018)

SUV of Texas

- 1st.....Maserati Levante GTS
- 2ndJeep Wrangler Rubicon (2018)

Crossover of Texas

- 1st.....Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio (2018)
- 2ndMazda CX-9

"Epic" is a highly overused word, but no-one disputed it was appropriate here. The storm met or surpassed records for rainfall, flash floods and rising lakes even while we were there, and it continued for days more. Odds are good that next year's Truck Rodeo will have beautiful weather. Meadows and trails will have been handsomely restored. And the event will proceed normally. But everyone will still be talking about this year. ■

Truck of the Year: Ram 1500



SUV of the Year: Maserati Levante GTS



CUV of the Year: Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio



Hyundai Kona



Honda Pilot



Lexus LX 570



Jeep Wrangler



Toyota Tacoma



Nissan Titan



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A WEEK WITH : 2018 TOYOTA HIGHLANDER SE V6 FWD

Definition. by Joe Sage

There are fully six crossovers and SUVs in Toyota's lineup (eight counting two hybrids), from the little C-HR to the mighty Sequoia and luxurious Land Cruiser, and six trim levels of the Highlander (nine counting three hybrids), from the base LE at \$31,330 to the Hybrid Limited Platinum at \$48,630. With three trim levels below and five above is the Highlander SE, the model here, with a nice set of premium, sport and tech features (see sidebar).

One fundamental option of note is all-wheel-drive at just \$1065 more (ours was a front-driver). With so many Toyota utilities on the market, so many trims of the Highlander among them, and Toyota sales high in general, it's no wonder they may fade into the background a bit. This may have been the case for us with the Highlander, until we realized earlier this year that it had caught our eye a number of times and decided we hadn't been paying enough attention to it.

In fact, it has been exactly five years since we last had a Highlander in our fleet. At the time, we had noted that while it was kind of vanilla, that is indeed the best-selling flavor of ice cream, so it made sense that it could be much the same with Toyota's hot-selling three-row SUV.

At that time, we had also noted the impending 2014 model, which would be an all-new third-generation effort. The 2018 model driven here is that

same generation, but with a refresh in 2016, which included an upgraded direct-injection V6, a new 8-speed transmission and a facelift. The facelift has done wonders, creating an overall shape as enticing as, though decidedly different from, its Lexus cousins (Highlander's direct cousin is the Lexus RX 350, also featured in this issue).

We consistently seem to like three-row SUVs, whether we personally need them or not. Each has its own traits, while collectively they share a great deal. The Toyota Highlander nails all the fundamentals to the point that it could be in the dictionary as the illustration for "3-row SUV." Yet in its current iteration, it has considerable presence.

We also like a high degree of utility in an SUV. Highlander's ground clearance and departure angle are fairly close to Grand Cherokee's—quite a benchmark—though its approach angle (thanks to its dramatically restyled nose) is considerably less. But as a three-row, a better comparison might be Dodge Durango, which it edges out on approach and departure angles and only misses by a tenth of an inch on ground clearance.

It's clear the parent company takes one route for Lexus and one for Toyota, and it's easy to see the Toyota advantage in Highlander—it's slim and trim outside, spacious inside (except for third row legs), nicely instrumented and featured, all while delivering almost 300 hp, yet reasonably close to 30 mpg highway, and all for \$40 grand. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

SEATING	.....eight (seven with captain's chairs)
ENGINE	.....3.5L DOHC 24v Atkinson cycle V6 w VVT-i
HP/TORQUE	.....295 hp / 263 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....8-spd direct shift electronic auto
DRIVETRAIN	.....FWD
SUSPENSION	.....F: indep MacPherson strut w L-shaped lower arm w stblzr bar (Sport-tuned for SE) R: dbl-wishbone style multi-link (Sport-tuned for SE)
STEERING	.....electric power steering
BRAKES	.....F: 12.9 vented disc twin-piston steel calipers R: 12.2 solid disc single-piston alum caliper
WHEELS/TIRES	.....7.5x19 / P245/55 R19 A/S
LENGTH/WHEELBASE	.....192.5 / 109.8 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....38.7 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....8.0 in
APPROACH/DEPARTURE	.....18.0 / 23.1 deg
HEADROOM (F/2/3)	.....(w/o moonroof) 40.7 / 39.9 / 35.9 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	.....44.2 / 38.4 / 27.7 in
CARGO VOLUME	.....13.8 / 42.3 / 83.7 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....4430-4590 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....(V6) 5000 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....87 oct reg / 19.2 gal
MPG	.....21/27/23 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	.....\$40,090
REAR SEAT ENTERTAINMENT	.....BluRay DVD, 9-inch display, RCA jacks, remote, two wireless headsets.....1510
SE PACKAGE	.....Toyota Safety Sense P (TSS-P, including pre-collision w vehicle & pedestrian detection, lane departure alert, auto high beams, dynamic radar cruise control, road sign assist, lane tracing assist), 19-in multi-spoke machined alloy wheels, sport-tuned suspension, projector-beam halogen dark-accent headlights w auto on/off and LED DRLs, leather-trimmed first- and second-row seats, Entune premium audio w integrated navigation and app suite.....incl
CARPETED FLOOR MATS, CARGO MAT	.....224
REAR BUMPER APPLIQUE	.....69
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....995
TOTAL	.....\$43,188



TRAVEL SITES TO BE SEEN



sedona.net
flagstaff.com
prescott.com
thecanyon.com
grandcanyon.net
oakcreekcabins.com

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 Spas - Galleries - Artists
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 Special Offers - 11th Hour Getaways

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Subaru Ascending BY JOE SAGE

Many people's first response to the Subaru Ascent SUV is: a big, three-row two-and-a-quarter-ton Subaru? Aren't they known for small cars? Don't Crosstrek, Forester and Outback cover this? All Subaru vehicles are all-wheel-drive (except the BRZ rear-drive sports car shared with Toyota). But while existing models are sporty and useful vehicles, they haven't quite been SUVs.

In simplified terms of both engineering and market positioning, Crosstrek is basically a tough-and-sport-styled Impreza; Forester basically a tall-bodied Impreza; and Outback basically a Legacy wagon. All are great in snow and rain or on a dirt road weekend. But the Ascent enters new terrain.

The Subaru Ascent (see chart below) goes well beyond the people and cargo specs of Crosstrek and Forester. Dimensionally, it's much like an Outback with a third row (and most other human factors upped a bit, as well). Yet it is nowhere near, say, a Chevy Suburban. There are many three-row SUVs and crossovers it is closer to, but the Suburban example shows there is no reason for small-Subaru purists to panic. The lineup is enhanced by

the Ascent—and their eye is still on the ball.

The Ascent is in a sweet spot, not too big, but with decent interior size, 5000-pound tow capacity, even moderately useful off-roading specs.

Our notes were far more extensive than average, but distill down to two things. A few details we would change would include moving device connectivity away from the shifter and into the sizable console storage bin, and creating more gap-free flat cargo space. Its 260-hp boxer engine outperformed many a seemingly impressive vehicle in traffic. We did not have a chance to go offroad nor to tow, but specs confirm those capabilities.

Subaru has the most loyal repeat buyers in the business, so with crossovers of all sorts such hot sellers right now, no dealer would want to see a customer unable to find what they currently need. Keep a growing family with the brand now, and when the kids are grown, they'll still be around.

Ascent can easily nudge its way into a crowded segment, starting with Subaru's existing customers losing any urge to stray, while enhancing the brand's overall utility image, as well. ■

(rounded off).....	Subaru Crosstrek	Forester	Outback	Ascent	Chevy Suburban
SEATS.....	5	5	5	7 or 8	7-8-9
LENGTH/WB.....	165/105	182/105	190/108	197/114	224/130 IN
TURNING CIRCLE.....	35	35	36	38	43 FT
HEADROOM F/R(3).....	40/38	41/40	41/39	41/40/31	43/39/38 IN
LEGROOM F/R(3).....	43/36	43/39	43/38	42/39/32	45/40/34 IN
SHOULDERS F/R(3).....	57/56	58/57	58/57	61/60/58	65/65/63 IN
CARGO CAPACITY.....	21/55	35/76	35/73	18/47/86	39/77/122 CF
FLOOR LENGTH.....	---	36/73	42/78	20/48/82	32/64/100 IN
WEIGHT.....	3113-3239	3449-3588	3644-3902	4430-4603	±5586 LB
TOWING.....	---	1500	2700	5000	8000-8300 LB
STARTING PRICE.....	\$21,895	\$24,295	\$26,345	\$31,995	\$51,895

SPECIFICATIONS

SEATING CAPACITYeight
ENGINE2.4L alum 4-cyl twin-scroll turbo boxer
DRIVETRAINSymmetrical AWD
HP/TORQUE260 hp / 277 lb-ft
TRANSMISSIONhigh-torque Lineartronic CVT
SUSPENSION4-wheel independent:
 F: MacPherson-type struts, lower L-arms
 coils, stblzr bar; liquid-filled rubber engine mounts
 R: double wishbone, coils, stblzr bar
STEERINGelec power-assist rack & pinion
BRAKESpower-assist 4-wheel disc w EBD,
 4-channel/4-sensor ABS w Brake Assist & Brake
 Override safety systems; Active Torque Vectoring
 F: 13.1 vented disc; **R:** 13.0 vented disc
WHEELS/TIRES18x7.5 (20 avail) / 245/60R18 A/S
LENGTH / WHEELBASE196.8 / 113.8 in
TURNING CIRCLE38.0 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE8.7 in
APPROACH/BRKOV/DEPART17.6 / 18.2 / 21.8 deg
HEADROOM (F/2/3)(w/o moonrfl) 41.3 / 40.0 / 36.3 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)42.2 / 38.6 / 31.7 in
CARGO CAPACITY17.8 / 47.5 / 86.5 cu.ft
FLOOR LENGTH19.9 / 47.6 / 82.5 in
WEIGHT4477 lb
TOW CAPACITY5000 lb
FUEL / FUEL CAPACITY87 oct reg / 19.3 gal
MPG(18" wheels) 21/27/23 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE (Premium 8-passenger)\$34,195
OPTION PACKAGE (CODE 12): keyless entry/start, auto-dim
 rearview mirror w Homelink, reverse auto brake, power
 rear gate w auto close and height memory1460
DESTINATION CHARGE975

TOTAL\$36,630

AVAILABLE TRIMS:

Base (8-passenger)\$31,995
Premium (7- or 8-passenger)\$34,195-38,455
Limited (7- or 8-passenger)\$38,995
Touring (7-passenger)\$44,695



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SPECIAL EVENT : PRESCOTT MAN ADVANCES IN HOT WHEELS COMPETITION



Dan Robertson of Prescott and his son William with their custom '66 Chevy pickup.

Hottest Hot Wheels

LARGEST HOT WHEELS TRAVELING CAR SHOW VISITS ARIZONA

The Hot Wheels Legends Tour—in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the legendary first Hot Wheels cars (known to collectors as the “Sweet 16”)—visited the Valley this fall, giving fans a chance to meet the original Hot Wheels designer and to show off their car or truck, as the Tour—free to the public—searched for a custom car worthy of becoming a Hot Wheels model itself.

A panel of expert judges would be casting their votes for vehicles that will become a new “Sweet 16,” to be sold at stores around the globe. Participants could also enter their cars or trucks to win a trip to 2018 SEMA Show in Las Vegas—and could even drive through a life-size blister pack.

Held at the Walmart Supercenter on W Ranch

Santa Fe Blvd in Avondale, the show was a chance to get up close and personal with both a huge Hot Wheels die-cast car display and a fleet of Hot Wheels life-size vehicles travelling around the country from the Hot Wheels Garage.

Judges included Hot Wheels designers Phil Riehlman and Mark Jones; hot rod icon Del Uschenko; car builder Phill F80; and representatives of the Headturners Car Club.

Dan Robertson of Prescott and his custom 1966 Chevy pickup emerged from the pack at the Phoenix stop, earning the chance to compete against 15 other tour stop winners for that magical chance to have his truck made into a Hot Wheels die-cast ready to be lapped up by a new

generation of collectors worldwide.

Dan’s truck was a father/son build. He and his son found the chassis, and built the truck just for fun. The Robertsons are a full family of Arizona drag racers, who have been building and drag racing cars for a long time—it’s a part of their family tradition. In fact, Robertson and his late wife used to race together.

Dan’s complete remake of this pickup includes a tube chassis; 2000-hp Rodeck 530 engine; 3-disc Crower clutch; 3-speed Lenco transmission; air shift; 9.5-inch Ford full floater rear end; 4-link rear suspension; and 17.5-inch-wide top fuel tires. On the dragstrip, the truck runs 152 mph in 9.55 seconds at quarter throttle.

The winner, announced at the SEMA Show, was Luis Rodriguez of Hope, NJ, whose hand-crafted “2JetZ” car will now be the lucky one recreated as a 1:64 Hot Wheels die-cast collectible. ■





▼ A new lineup of Classic Infotainment Systems from **Jaguar Land Rover** in the UK provides modern audio, navigation and infotainment functionality in classic styling for most classic cars. Compatible with negative ground vehicles, they are available in five designs including two Jaguar and two Land Rover branded units. Its 3.5-inch high-resolution touchscreen features include FM, AM and digital radio, customizable satellite navigation (in up to 32 languages) and Bluetooth Premium sound from a single DIN-sized head unit with built-in 4x45-watt output. The touchscreen is integrated between traditional rotary controls and buttons, the navigation system's Europe-wide route guidance can be displayed as 2D or 3D maps or as turn arrow instructions and includes traffic alerts. Other key features include telephone functionality, including phonebook transfer via Bluetooth and support for up to four devices, with 1250 contacts per device. The internal microphone understands English, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Russian. Jaguar Land Rover Classic Infotainment Systems came to market in Europe in September, priced from about \$1550. In the UK, upfitting service is available at Jaguar Land Rover Classic Works in Warwickshire and at authorized Jaguar and Land Rover dealers.

▼ A Frost & Sullivan consultancy analysis of the **high-performance plastics** (HPPs) market in automotive and aerospace industries finds ever-increasing trends in

lightweighting, engine downsizing and vehicle electrification that are expected to drive demand and adoption of HPPs, anticipating the HPP market in automotive and aerospace to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 6.2 percent until 2024, reaching \$3.05 billion. From a regional perspective, APAC will remain a key market for HPPs in the automotive industry, owing to the high volume of production, whereas the demand for HPPs in



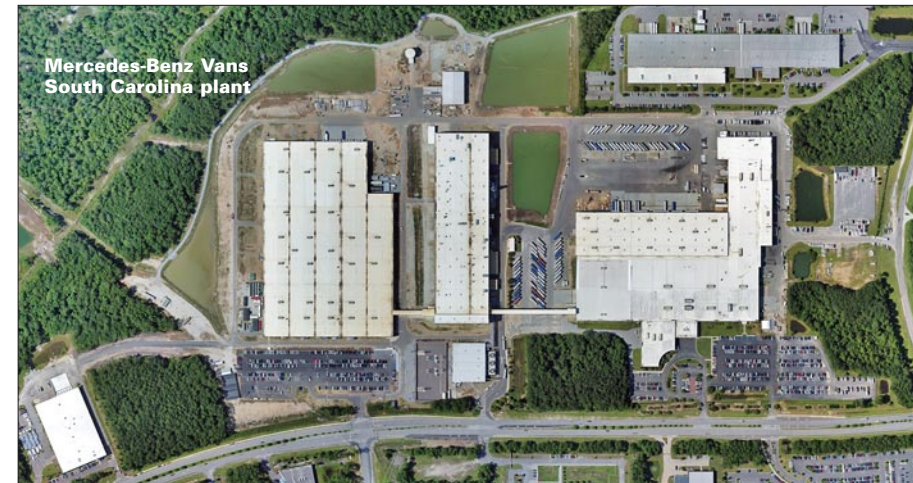
the aerospace industry will come from Europe and North America due to the concentration of component manufacturing in these regions. Key trends include growing performance requirements accelerating the adoption of composite-grade HPPs in both automotive and aerospace due to superior performance qualities; developments in 3D printing materials, processes and technology readiness; manufacturer

expansion into new regions; tightening CO2 emissions regulations that compel lightweighting; and advantages over metal counterparts in a number of challenging applications such as engine components, fuel tanks and bearing cages.

▼ **Kia** has revealed next-generation Separated Sound Zone (SSZ) technology that allows each passenger in a vehicle to experience an audio stream tailored to his or her individual needs, including music, hands-free phone calls or vehicle alerts, while maintaining a headphone-free social space where passengers can converse freely. SSZ technology creates and controls the acoustic fields of the car, allowing the driver and each passenger to hear isolated sounds. The many speakers installed in the vehicle feature technology that uses scientific principles to reduce or increase audio levels of sound waves, negating the overlap of sounds being heard in each seat, without the need for headphones. In a vehicle equipped with next-generation SSZ technology, each passenger can connect their smartphone via Bluetooth and

listen to their own music without interference from, or interfering with, other passengers' audio streams. Hands-free phone calls can also be isolated to individual passengers, ensuring privacy during important phone conversations on the move. The SSZ technology can eliminate unnecessary sounds for passengers—navigation or various driver alerts—but provide them for the driver, while maintaining an enter-

tainment or quiet area for the other passengers, a particularly strong application for drivers with a sleeping child in the vehicle. SSZ technology has been in development since 2014, and the completed



mass production system is expected to be ready for installation in vehicles within one to two years. A video of Separated Sound Zone technology can be found on Hyundai's Korean YouTube channel.

▼ **Electrify America**, a company investing in electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and promoting adoption of Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs), launched a first-ever national ad campaign on TV, radio and online at PlugintothePresent.com. The spot, titled "JetStones," aims to broaden consumer awareness of EV advantages and availability, plus a growing network of EV fast chargers in metropolitan areas, along highways, and in communities at workplaces and multiunit dwellings. Using the theme songs from classic Warner Bros. Hanna-Barbera cartoons "The Jetsons" and "The Flintstones," the campaign is a playful take on the transition of personal transportation from the Stone Age to the reality of EVs available today. The spot features EVs from six manufacturers to showcase a wide variety available in today's marketplace. The brand-neutral campaign is part of a \$45 million education and public awareness initiative. Electrify America, a subsidiary of Volkswagen Group of America, is investing \$2 billion over 10 years in ZEV infrastructure and awareness.

▼ **Mercedes-Benz Vans** has opened its new South Carolina Sprinter plant for the North American market. The decision to build a new production facility in time for

the launch of the new Sprinter model in the USA was announced in March 2015. The facility, in North Charleston, is now up and running following a two-year construction period. Total investment is about

500 million dollars, with more than 900 people working at the expanded site and that number set to grow to 1,300 by the end of 2020. Suppliers create an additional estimated 600 new jobs in the area. To coincide with the opening, Mercedes-Benz Vans also announced it would be producing Sprinter vans here for Amazon's new Delivery Service Partner program. Small business owners will work with third-party fleet management companies to procure



customized vans and get special leases to keep startup costs low.

▼ **HW Hunter Ram of The West Truck Center** has opened a 40,000-square-foot Ram facility, now the largest stand-alone Ram dealership in the country by size. The facility, on seven acres in Lancaster, California, costing more than \$10 million to build and employing 70 people, was de-

signed by HW Hunter co-owners Tim and Tom Fuller to meet growing demand for all Ram nameplates—light-duty and heavy-duty Ram pickups, and ProMaster and ProMaster City vans—with three Quick Lube stalls for oil changes and fast maintenance, heavy-duty lifts, large service bays, and an extensive parts and accessories department. HW Hunter has served the Antelope Valley since 1944. The Fullers are the grandsons of dealership founder HW "Hank" Hunter. FCA has embarked on a multi-year plan for more stand-alone Ram dealers in select markets.

▼ In Europe, **Volkswagen** has started advance sales of an upscale R-Line exterior package for the (not sold in the US) up! model, to give the popular subcompact car a clearly sportier look, with a wide range of colors and options for personalization. The package includes a sporty front bumper, chrome trim for fog lights, striking side sills matching the car's color, a silver-colored trim strip in the radiator grille, "R-Line" logos on side panels, black roof and black mirror caps, darkened rear side windows and rear window (65 percent light-absorbing, and fog lights (on move up! and high up! trims). The package includes "Triangle" 16-inch glossy black alloy wheels with 185/50R16 tires, or as

another option there are "Polygon" 17-inch alloy wheels (in black or glossy black) with 195/40 R17 tires. The prices for the R-Line exterior package start at 795 euros (about \$920). The Volkswagen up!, which weighs from 2040 to 2210 pounds, bears a 60-hp 1.0-liter 3-cylinder gasoline engine and your choice of 5-speed manual or ASG automatic transmissions, with or without engine auto start-stop. ■

UPCOMING FEATURES

SEMA Show highlights



LA Auto Show



2020 Mercedes-Benz GLE



Detroit Auto Show



Rolls-Royce Cullinan



January Auctions



Road trip to Havasu Falls



Lyn St James Talladega 30th Anniversary



Tyson Hugie

Courtesy Lyn St James

THE ALL-NEW RAM 1500

NOW ACCEPTING

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