

# ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 16 NUMBER 6  
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2017

**OFF-ROAD  
SALT FLATS  
SUPERCARS  
AND MORE**

McLaren  
570S Spider

VEHICLES • EQUIPMENT • TECHNOLOGY • PEOPLE • EVENTS • DESTINATIONS • ATTRACTIONS



news/features

November-December 2017

Business / Motorsports

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As PIR's \$178 million redevelopment heads toward completion next year, with some parts ready for NASCAR in November, a new partnership is about to retire the venerable PIR name completely.

Comparo/Awards Event

**ALV: Active Lifestyle Vehicle of the Year 2017** **B** .....10  
This two-dozen-plus-vehicle one-day event in the hills and on the two-lanes of Arizona combines impressions of active athletes and automotive media pros, with awards in a number of categories.

A Week With Special Events

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**Arizona Auction Week January 2018** **C** .....14  
With seven events to keep you busy, we have a recap of last year, a look at the coming months and the schedules for all of it.

A Week With Comparo/Awards Event

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**NWAPA Run to the Sun 2017** **D** .....18  
This two-dozen-vehicle three-day event in Oregon puts media behind the wheel in sports, luxury and muscle coupes, sedans, supercars, convertibles and SUVs—totaling some 10,000 hp and \$2 million—for about 500 miles total, with awards presented (for the first time) in four categories and overall. *By Joe Sage*

A Week With

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A Few Days With

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Escape from Newark Airport? This rig conquers the challenge.

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Scottsdale's Queen of Speed, already The World's Fastest Female Motorcycle Racer, is working on capturing the overall world land speed record. We join her at the Salt Flats for the effort (and learn a few things about wind and weather). *By Randall Bohl*

A Week With

**2017 BMW X4 M40i** .....33

Comparo/Awards Event

**TAWA Texas Truck Rodeo 2017** **G** .....34  
Sixty-four pickups and utilities worth some \$4 million convene in Texas Hill Country for two days, in one of the longest-standing and most significant awards events in the nation, with over 70 drivers and dozens of manufacturer reps at hand. There are 17 category awards plus overall truck, SUV and CUV awards. *By Joe Sage*

A Week With

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A Week With

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Last year's Grand Prix of Scottsdale winners are committed to reminding everyone of the importance of early screening.

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**COVER:** The McLaren 570S Spider offers refined 562-hp performance, midengine balance, open air fun, a premium high-tech cabin—and 23 mpg highway. The UK-based supercar builder's sales are growing, as is the lineup. This \$208,000 entry, their most affordable ever, can realistically take sales from well-established performance sports cars, as many of those have become surprisingly commonplace. The McLaren 570S Spider—here showing off its carbon fiber construction, dihedral doors and retractable hardtop in Curacao Blue finish, atop Pirelli P ZERO CORSA tires and carbon-ceramic brakes (six-piston front calipers, four-piston rear)—was our first (and longest) drive at the 24-vehicle Oregon high country roadrunning event, Run to the Sun.

Phoenix Raceway



Mark Elias



Joe Sage



Joe Sage



Randall Bohl



Joe Sage



# AUTOMOTIVE NEWS UPDATE



▼ **McLaren Automotive** was named as Britain's leading mid-market growth company in a recent national survey. Following successive record-breaking years for vehicle sales and financial performance, the luxury sports and supercar builder has been ranked as the number one company overall in *The (London) Sunday Times* Top Track 250 league table, which ranks some of Britain's biggest companies by sales, growth and profitability. McLaren saw sales rise 44 percent to about \$860 million (£650M) in 2016, with profits more than doubling to ±\$87 million, due to rising demand from North America and Europe. Last year, the company sold a record 3,286 cars. A 2,100-strong workforce designs, develops and hand-assembles cars at its global headquarters at the McLaren Production Centre in Woking, Surrey, UK. This was McLaren Automotive's fourth consecutive year of profitability in only six years, since the start of sales in 2011, an increase in profit before tax of 70 percent for 2016 over 2015. Operating profit was the company's highest ever, at 10 percent of turnover and a 180 percent increase year-over-year (all without "needing" an SUV). During 2016, McLaren Automotive invested ±\$170 million in new projects for its three defined product families: the Sports Series, Super Series and Ultimate Series. As part of its long-term Track22 business plan—The Road to 2022—the company plans to release 15 new models or derivatives by the end of 2022. First was the McLaren 720S, which quickly sold

out for this year with 1,500 orders taken. McLaren invests heavily in research and development, with a track record of technology firsts from introducing carbon-fiber into Formula 1, to the P1TM hypercar, the world's first hybrid in that segment. The company aims to produce more than 4,500 vehicles annually by the end of 2022, with at least 50 percent featuring hybrid powertrain technology. McLaren Automotive is the largest part of the newly



formed McLaren Group, a single corporate structure that also includes a Formula 1 racing team and technology business.

▼ **Shelby American** is finishing a "secret weapon" program Carroll Shelby had envisioned for 1964's 24 Hours of Le Mans, with a limited production series of big block Shelby Cobra Daytona Coupes. Six aluminum cars will be built to Shelby's

specifications for the original race car. The first in the series of the limited production build (CSX2603) was introduced to the public during Monterey and Pebble Beach events in mid-August. In 1964, Carroll Shelby had asked renowned fabricator John Ohlsen to lengthen the chassis of one of his six Daytona Coupes (CSX2286) to replace the 289 Ford V8 with a NASCAR-inspired big block. The experimental racecar was supposed to become Shelby's "secret weapon" for the 1964 Le Mans race. Phoenix's Bob Bondurant was one of the development drivers for the big block car, stating that the Cobra's tremendous torque allowed him to burn rubber and get sideways in any gear. Bondurant noted that the Shelby "went like stink" and speculated that it could have topped 200 miles per hour at Le Mans. Weighing about 2,200 pounds, with world class aerodynamics and the power of a big block, the car had tremendous performance potential. However, destiny intervened. The truck carrying CSX2286 to Le Mans was involved in an accident that damaged the Shelby too much to be repaired in time for

the race. It never ran a lap in competition with the 427 and was returned to small block configuration by Shelby American. Dan Gurney and Allen Grant drove CSX2286 at Le Mans with the smaller 289 engine the next year, but the Cobra did not finish the race. The continuation big block Daytona Coupes follow the same specs as the Ohlsen modified racecar. Their aluminum body can be painted in

# Big numbers on the open road

WE COVER OVER 500 INLAND NORTHWEST TWO-LANE HIGHWAY MILES IN ABOUT TWO DAYS IN 24 PERFORMANCE VEHICLES WORTH ABOUT \$2 MILLION AND BEARING ABOUT 10,000 HP

By Joe Sage - Photos by Joe Sage and Doug Berger / NWAPA

Try this mental drill on the freeway sometime: add up the cars in your immediate vicinity and see how many millions of dollars' worth it is. It's enlightening, but only moreso at Run to the Sun—where we have our own specially selected fleet including supercars running into six figures each.

Hosted by the Northwest Automotive Press Association (NWAPA), Run to the Sun brings this scenario to life each fall in the Pacific Northwest, most often in north-central Oregon, where terrain, grasslands, lava outcrops and roads themselves are very similar to parts of Arizona's high country.

Run to the Sun has long been distinguished from other multi-vehicle comparo drives by two factors:

First, it's the only multi-vehicle event we attend—and possibly the only one in the industry—that predetermines not only the route but vehicle and

driver sequence, essential to making sure each person drives each car, all within the allotted time. Other events—road, track or off-road—have fixed staging areas and a fixed course or courses, losing time as everyone returns to the pool and decides what to drive next, often with bottlenecks around a couple of superstar models. Run to the Sun covers a lot of ground, each swap is in a different spot, and it's important to keep things moving.

Second, Run to the Sun has pretty much stood alone by never having its vehicles categorized and not generating awards. Each manufacturer simply brings something very special from their lineup. The event was originally an all-convertible affair, but began evolving when convertibles were few, adding muscle, supercar and luxury vehicles. The common threads are sport and performance.

Nothing is as reliably constant as change, however, and for this year's event the cars were categorized and judged, and awards were given in four groups: Convertibles, Performance Coupes, Performance Sedans and Performance SUVs. Participating media would for the first time vote for a favorite in each category, as well as one overall.

Variety has always been the name of the game

here. Now with judging categories overlaid, variety becomes all the more apparent. The performance sedan group ran from under \$20k to almost \$80k base, convertibles from the \$30s to over \$200k, performance coupes from about \$60k to the upper \$100s, and so on—each diverse group vying for the same single trophy in that class. Vehicles were a mix of 2018 and 2017 models (and one 2016).

Categorization was partly motivated by the addition of SUVs to the event this year, with new premium performance utilities from several makers.

Following is our drive sequence. (Sidebar photos are alphabetical by group.) Fuel mileage stated is highway; two prices stated are base and ours as outfitted. The Corvette Grand Sport changed categories (but not its drive sequence) as its removable hard top suggested the convertibles group, and one vehicle went out of service, all noted below.

**Day One.** Each driver grabs their first vehicle at Portland International Airport and drives about an hour to our base camp near Welches, Oregon (elevation 1320 feet) at the base of Mt Hood. It's a one-vehicle Day One with an extra long drive, which gives the event a head start and eases the load a little for the next two busy days. We started things off with a bang, with our longest drive of the entire event in the McLaren 570S Spider, our first in the convertibles class.

## CONVERTIBLES

### McLaren 570S Spider

• 562 hp • 23 mpg est • \$208,000 est base  
McLaren is not the only highly sculptured high-horsepower midengine supercar, but it's the only one from a small (and rapidly growing) UK builder. Their latest entry, the 570S—

here in power retractable spider form—is the most affordable, dramatically so by McLaren standards. In an era of cookie-cutter prestige, a McLaren—certainly this one in Curacao Blue—still turns heads. With great handling, ample power and an inviting balanced-tech cockpit, this car stakes out distinctive turf.

**Day Two.** For the longest drive day, with 15 segments, we first resumed with convertibles.

### Mercedes-AMG GT C Roadster

• 550 hp • tbd mpg • \$157,000 / \$179,065  
We had driven the Mercedes-AMG GT and GT C Roadsters—AMG's second-ever in-house build—at their launch in Arizona last spring, and they went straight to our cover (May/June 2017). A full family of coupes and convertibles in two powertrains each, these are poised to potentially displace a good proportion of 911 sales.

### Mazda MX-5 Miata Grand Touring RF

• 155 hp • 33 mpg • \$32,620 / \$33,885  
We had also recently driven the Mazda MX-5 RF, which also scored a cover (Sept/Oct). Replacing the old ragtop Miata, this retractable hardtop, the most affordable and fuel economical in this group, has perfect 50/50 weight distribution among its many appealing traits.

### Chevrolet Corvette Grand Sport Coupe

• 460 hp • 25 mpg • \$65,495 / \$99,230  
(Note: this removable-top car was driven in sequence with Performance Coupes, below, but moved to Convertibles for voting.) Grand Sport has always occupied a great balance point in the Corvette lineup—a high-horsepower model closer in price to the base Stingray than to the Z06. Ours had options bumping its price 50 percent—the \$15,000 Carbon 65 Edition package atop a \$9745 3LT package, limited to just 650 copies. There is an actual GS convertible available (\$4000 more), but the coupe's removable hardtop prompted organizers to move it in with convertibles.

KEEP RIGHT >>

## CONVERTIBLES (alphabetical)



Chevrolet Corvette Grand Sport Coupe



Mazda MX-5 Miata Grand Touring RF



McLaren 570S Spider



Mercedes-AMG GT C Roadster

## PERFORMANCE COUPES (alphabetical)



Acura NSX



Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat Widebody



Infiniti Q60 Red Sport 400



Lexus LC 500 Coupe



Nissan GT-R NISMO

