

TRUCK OF THE YEAR: Not their first rodeo

SUV OF THE YEAR: Yes their first rodeo

By Joe Sage - Photos by Kevin McCauley



The big Truck of Texas trophy went to the Ram 1500 lineup (Luxury Pickup Truck category winner Ram 1500 Limited shown above). The big SUV of Texas trophy went to the new-this-year Kia Telluride (top photo, facing page).

We belong to a number of automotive media associations across the US and are pretty active with a couple—particularly the Northwest and Texas—that have run some of the best comparo events in the business. The Texas AutoWriters Association (TAWA) Texas Truck Rodeo is not only a great event, highlighting vehicles that are just as significant in Arizona—whether on the trail, around town or on the open highway—it is of such prominence and significance that the big title winners (Truck of Texas and SUV of Texas) are likely to brag it up in Super Bowl ads, print ads, pretty much everywhere. This is big medicine.

As such a great event, we wouldn't miss it. Except this year, we missed it. Flights, hotel and general participation were all in place, but other elements of reality kicked in at the last minute.

Too bad, that, as we were looking forward to checking out the Truck Rodeo's big changes this year. Change number one was the venue, moving from a large working ranch in the Hill Country outside Austin to Star Hill Ranch, an event facility where we've actually had the past few years' awards dinners, but it turns out they have a whole lot of other acreage that could be adapted and modified specifically for the event's purposes.

Change number two was in the categories and entries of vehicles. Long ago largely a pickup truck comparo, the Texas Truck Rodeo had naturally grown to include SUVs. Then it grew to include an emerging set of vehicles called crossovers. Then a lot of crossovers were starting to be more carlike. The decision was made to move crossovers to the group's springtime event, the Texas Auto Roundup, which makes sense. There's always going to be subjectivity in drawing the line on such things, but the biggest wild card was that the first round of such decisions would be made last spring, for Roundup, and if someone didn't get the memo, they might be disappointed that their crossover was not going to be in this fall's Rodeo. Fortunately, that all went quite smoothly, and everybody is happy with the change.

Even now, there are still fully 19 categories for Truck Rodeo, not even counting the two final title winners—categories are subdivided by size, luxury level, duty level and so on, plus there are powertrain, towing, safety and other feature awards—so imagine how many categories there would be by now with crossovers still in the mix.

This also brings the awards back into a clear level of focus: one Truck of the Year (known officially as the Truck of Texas) and one SUV of the Year (officially the SUV of Texas).

And here's how it all played out.



CATEGORY WINNERS:

SUBCOMPACT SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE:

2019 Jeep Renegade Trailhawk

COMPACT SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE:

2020 Toyota RAV4 TRD Off-Road

MIDSIZE SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE:

2020 Kia Telluride SX

FULL-SIZE SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE:

2020 Toyota Sequoia TRD Pro

COMPACT LUXURY SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE:

2020 Acura RDX A-Spec SH-AWD

MID-SIZE LUXURY SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE:

2020 Volvo XC90 T8 Inscription

FULL-SIZE LUXURY SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE:

2020 Lexus GX 460 Luxury

MIDSIZE PICKUP TRUCK:

2020 Jeep Gladiator Overland

FULL-SIZE PICKUP TRUCK:

2020 RAM 1500 Rebel

HEAVY DUTY PICKUP TRUCK:

2019 RAM 2500 Laramie Longhorn

LUXURY PICKUP TRUCK:

2020 RAM 1500 Limited

OFF-ROAD PICKUP TRUCK:

2019 RAM 2500 Power Wagon

COMMERCIAL VEHICLE:

2019 Mercedes Sprinter Passenger 4x4

OFF-ROAD SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE:

2020 Jeep Wrangler Rubicon

BEST INFOTAINMENT SYSTEM:

RAM Uconnect System & Touchscreen Display

BEST POWERTRAIN:

RAM EcoDiesel

BEST TOWING:

RAM Rear Air Suspension

BEST SAFETY FEATURE:

Toyota Safety Sense P

BEST DRIVER ASSIST SYSTEM:

Toyota Panoramic View & Multi-Terrain Monitor

TITLE WINNERS:

TRUCK OF TEXAS:

2020 RAM 1500

SUV OF TEXAS:

2020 Kia Telluride

For Ram, this is another big trophy in an already proud trophy case—they have won in Texas multiple times in the past. For Kia, it shows they have done it again—moved into a whole new category, as they did with Sportage, Soul, Stinger and so on—this time the big three-row SUV, and promptly conquered a big slice of it with Telluride. ■

