

Action way beyond the suburbs

BY JOE SAGE

Even in this highly globalized era for the automotive industry, Detroit is still the Motor City, and its heartbeat has an irresistible siren song. We also find perhaps a perverse pleasure in a taste of winter—especially knowing we'll be back among the palms and cactus in about a day, in this case.

Chevrolet brought a cluster of press corps to town for a big event, or several related events rolled into one. First, this is Suburban's 85th birthday—for 2020, it becomes the longest-running nameplate in the business.

Second, they were introducing an all-new 12th generation 2021 Chevy Suburban to coincide with this momentous occasion.

Third, they would introduce the corresponding new 2021 Chevy Tahoe at the same time.

And if all those reasons for being in Michigan still don't get you on a plane, the whole affair was set in motion days earlier on the West Coast.

BEFOREHAND: HOLLYWOOD

You know the Hollywood Walk of Fame pays tribute to the likes of Harrison Ford and Jennifer Lopez, even canine actors and cartoon characters. But now there's a star for a (highly active) inanimate object—the Chevy Suburban, the first vehicle ever thus honored. "It's one of the most versatile vehicles in the business, able to fit with any type of character," says Dennis McCarthy, Hollywood picture car coordinator. It can "instantly give a scene added importance. When a convoy of black Suburbans appears on screen, you know that's not the time to leave your seat to buy popcorn." Suburban has been featured in more than 1,750 films and TV series since 1952. Add Tahoe (introduced in 1995) and there are more than 2,500. Chevy has had often showcased their newest model Suburbans in films, so its Award of Excellence star as the next generation is launched brings things full circle.

FIRST STOP: MILFORD, MICHIGAN

It takes all day to get to Detroit, with about a five-hour flight and a two- (winter) or three-hour (summer) clock change, so our program started with an overnight stay in Detroit. In the morning, it was off to GM's Milford Proving Ground, among the lakes and woods to the northwest, for a behind-the-scenes look at the development of key features and technologies in the new Suburban and Tahoe. Much here is confidential. A ride along on the test courses with the engineers gave a feel for the vehicles' new advanced suspension, including independent rear suspension, as well as available Magnetic Ride Control and first-in-class air suspension available with four-corner load leveling and up to four inches of height adjustment. No hands-on drive time yet, but soon!

NEXT STOP: DETROIT

From Milford, it was off to Little Caesar's Arena in downtown Detroit, for a full celebration of Suburban's big birthday and the wraps officially taken off the new models of both Suburban and Tahoe.

Styling and content follow the new Silverado and Silverado HD pickups introduced over the past year or so to great acclaim, along with advances in the multi-row occupant and enclosed cargo amenities that are the main mission for these big SUVs.

Interiors start with space: 19 percent more from the first row back in Suburban, and a whopping 66 percent boost for Tahoe behind its third row, both claiming best in class status. Tahoe also adds 10 inches of third-row legroom.

Five displays—10-inch touchscreen, available 8-inch cluster, 15-inch heads-up, and dual 12.6-inch rear seat displays—include class leaders.

Expanded safety features are highlighted by auto emergency braking, HD surround cameras and rear pedestrian alert. New cameras continue with nine views for trailering plus side blind zone alert, as well as trailer tire monitoring and stored trailer profiles, again picking up from Silverado.

GEARS IN MOTION: ARLINGTON TX

Production is at Arlington Assembly near Dallas, a big-SUV-specific facility that also builds corresponding GMC Yukon and Cadillac Escalade models.

Suburban and Tahoe are offered in a segment-topping six trim levels: LS and LT, plus an urban-styled RST, off-road specialist Z71, premium-tech Premier and a new top-tier High Country model.

The gen-nine Suburban launched in 2000, and *Arizona Driver Magazine* in 2002, making this the fourth generation of Suburban in our shared time-span. Even before we were in this game, we had long noted a phenomenon in which each new-gen Suburban looks startlingly different at first and might take some getting used to—and yet within about a week, or even a second glance, the new model looked exactly as a Suburban should. And while the old one still looked great, too, it looked like the old one. This has long been a benchmark for us on how any next-gen vehicle should be executed. Chevy's Suburban team clearly has a special knack for this, and although this new generation is not startling if you're familiar with Chevy's pickup evolution, they have certainly done it again. ■

EARLY KEY SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINES	
5.3L V8	VVT high-pressure dir.inj, 16v OHV, dynamic fuel mgmt, stop/start HP/TORQUE: 355 hp / 383 lb-ft
6.2L V8	VVT high-pressure dir.inj, 16v OHV, dynamic fuel mgmt, stop/start HP/TORQUE: 420 hp / 460 lb-ft
3.0L I-6 Turbo Diesel	DOHC 24v, high-pressure common rail dir.inj., electronic throttle valve HP/TORQUE: 277 hp / 460 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	6.2L: 10L80 10-spd auto
FINAL DRIVE RATIO	(all engines) 3.23
DRIVETRAIN	RWD / 4WD
SUSPENSION	F: indep coil-over shocks, stblzr bar; R: indep multi-link w coil-over shocks, stblzr bar; Avail F/R: Air Ride adaptive suspension and Magnetic Ride Control
BRAKES	F: 13" vented, R: 13.6" vented
WHEELS	aluminum 18" standard, 20", 22" avail
TIRES	all-season 18-20-22", also all-terrain 20"

SUBURBAN

LENGTH / WHEELBASE	225.7 / 134.1 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	— / 42.0 / 36.7 in
CARGO VOLUME	41.1 to 144.7 cu.ft

TAHOE

LENGTH / WHEELBASE	210.7 / 120.9 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	— / 42.0 / 34.9 in
CARGO VOLUME	25.5 to 122.9 cu.ft

2021 Chevrolet Suburban

