

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 3

MAY-JUNE 2004



Top Down '04

HONDA S2000

BMW Z4

LEXUS SC430

AUDI S4 CABRIOLET

MERCEDES-BENZ CLK CABRIOLET

Plus updates : '05 Corvette, Special Edition Boxster S, MINI Convertible

■ **AUTO INDUSTRY UPDATE : NEW MUSTANG, FORD GT AND MORE**

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■ **ROAD RAGE FACTS & QUIZ ■ AND MORE!**

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Mercedes-Benz

2004 SLR.....Inquire
2003 S55.....100 mi.
2003 CL600.....100 mi.
2003 CL55 Coupe.....2,179 mi.
2003 SL55 Roadster.....10 mi.
2003 SL55 Roadster.....24 mi.
2003 CL55 Coupe.....200 mi.
2003 SL500.....8,000 mi.
2002 S500 Sedan 4D.....11,524 mi.
2002 S500 Sedan 4D Sport Silver/Ash.....15,100 mi.
2001 CLK 320 Cab.....18,600 mi.
1999 S500 Sedan 4D.....43,083 mi.
1991 SL500 Roadster.....35,055 mi.
1971 280SL.....1,700 mi.
1971 280SL.....74,500 mi.
1959 220C.....Light Blue.....70,000 mi.

Porsche

2004 Carrera GT.....Inquire
2003 Cayenne Turbo.....50 mi.
2003 Cayenne S.....50 mi.
2003 Turbo.....Sea Gray/Gray.....50 mi.
2002 995 Cabriolet 2D.....Sea Gray/Gray.....234 mi.
2002 Boxster.....Silver/Black.....10,400 mi.
2001 995 Turbo.....Arctic Silver/Gray.....9,024 mi.

INVENTORY

Ferrari

2004 Enzo.....Red/Tan.....Inquire
2004 Enzo.....Red/Black.....Inquire
2003 360 F1 Spider.....Black/Black.....100 mi.
2002 360 F1 Spider.....Yellow/Black.....500 mi.
2001 360 Modena.....Yellow/Black.....1,479 mi.
2000 360 Modena.....Silver/Black.....3,015 mi.
2000 350 Maranello.....Black/Black.....2,300 mi.
1999 360 Modena.....Yellow/Black.....2,400 mi.
1987 360 Berlinetta.....Yellow/Black.....16,300 mi.
1995 348 Spider.....Red/Tan.....13,000 mi.

Other Exotics

2002 BMW Alpina Conv. Titan.Sil/Gray.....200 mi.
2002 BMW 330ci Conv. White/Tan.....10,625 mi.
2001 BMW X5 SUV.....Silver/Gray.....45,100 mi.
2001 BMW 740i.....White/Tan.....10,050 mi.
2000 BMW M5 Sedan.....Titan.Sil/Black.....14,700 mi.
1998 BMW 750i.....White/Tan.....43,800 mi.
2003 Dodge Viper SRT-10.....Black/Black.....10 mi.
1966 Ford Cobra.....Black/Gray.....9 mi.
2001 Jaguar XK8 Conv. Pacific Blue/Ivory.....12,800 mi.
1999 Jaguar XK8 Conv. Topaz/Parch.....37,800 mi.
1996 Jaguar XK140 Conv. Black/Tan.....18 mi.
1996 Jaguar XK140 Conv. Red/Tan.....150 mi.
2004 Maybach.....Inquire
2003 Panaz Esperante.....Black/Parch.....70 mi.
1999 Panaz Roadster.....Silver/Black.....580 mi.
1998 Panaz Roadster.....Red/Tan.....1,500 mi.

Bentley/Rolls-Royce

2004 Bentley Continental GT .3 to choose.....Inquire
2002 Bentley Arnage T.....Black/Black.....1,100 mi.
2001 Bentley Azure.....Black/Tan.....1,600 mi.
1989 Bentley Turbo R.....Burgundy/Tan.....43,000 mi.
1987 Rolls-Royce Comiche.....Met./Black/Tan.....14,200 mi.
1987 Rolls-Royce Comiche.....Ivory/Magnolia.....59,599 mi.



2003 Mercedes SL55
Silver/Ash



2004 Porsche Carrera GT
Silver/Black, inquire



2004 Bentley Continental
Inquire



2004 Ferrari Enzo
Red/Black, inquire

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ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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MAY-JUNE 2004

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Top Down '04

We test drive several super open-air rides, each perfect for Arizona: the BMW Z4 and Honda S2000 front-engine rear-drive roadsters in traditional form, the all-new Audi S4 cabriolet, which brings the performance of the S4 all-wheel-drive quattro sedan to the world of the ragtop, the hardtop Lexus SC 430 sport coupe hardtop convertible, and the Mercedes-Benz CLK, in cabriolet form for 2004. Also see the new Corvette, Boxster S Special Edition and MINI convertible, in the Auto Industry Update section. Just in time for the last days of spring, or for a summer trip to San Diego!

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"Top down" and "fun" just seem to roll through the mind and off the tongue in unison. As spring reaches its peak, we look at some of the most popular and desirable convertibles in Arizona, in time for summer drives in the high country or to the California coast. You will find something of interest in a range of prices and also in a range of power and style, but all in the more affordable range (no exotics this time around). It's difficult to believe that just a few years back, there were no convertibles at all for several years, at least not in the US. Somewhere between the Mazda Miata and the Chrysler Sebring, that all turned around, and the success of those pioneers lit a fire under the rest.

In response to many requests, we are reengineering our website, to include content from past and current issues. We're revisiting permissions with writers and photographers, and we're measuring the capacity of our host to manage this many pages in decent resolution. In the past, we've used our site as a promotional resource and email link, but content is king, so here we go. Enjoy.

Meanwhile, we're deep into summer, with our premier Arizona auctioneers, Barrett-Jackson and Russo and Steele, headed to the Petersen Museum in LA and the Monterey Historic Races on the central coast, respectively. Seems like the obvious thing to do is to grab one of those drop-tops and head over to check these out.

Enjoy the drive.



Joe Sage

Joe Sage
Publisher/
Executive Editor

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NEXT CORVETTE IS EVOLUTIONARY At first the all-new C6 Corvette looks pretty familiar, but under closer examination America's most popular sports car is 70 percent new and no surface has gone untouched. Dimensionally it's five inches shorter and one inch narrower, the wheelbase is 1.2 inches longer, but the interior is about the same size. It has larger wheels and tires — 18-inch in the front and 19-inch in the rear. The hidden headlights are gone — the 2005 model has clear lenses sculpted to the front-end styling and housing a pair of bright high-intensity-discharge lights. Three suspensions are available, including one with optional electronically adjustable magnetic shocks. Standard power takes a big leap with a new aluminum 6.0-liter V-8 rated at 400 horsepower. Acceleration times from 0 to 60 mph are estimated to be 4.3 seconds. The biggest improvement is a greatly upgraded interior with options like a navigation system, heads-up display and standard keyless entry and ignition. Prices of the new C6 edition are expected to rise slightly when it reaches dealerships later this year. ▼



2005 Chevrolet Corvette

2005 Ford Mustang Concept



The 2005 Ford Mustang that will soon fill our local roads is changed very little from this stunning original show vehicle, in coupe and convertible forms.

FORD MUSTANG IS ALL-NEW FOR 2005

▲ America's original and only surviving pony car, the Ford Mustang, celebrated 40 years in April. Later this year, Ford rolls out the next generation Mustang, and there's no question as to its roots. The 2005 Mustang looks like a custom version of the original fastback and encompasses design elements that strongly resemble the original grille and lights, the three-element taillights and dozens of other original design features, on both the inside and outside of the four-seater. The platform is brand new, and not a modified version of the Lincoln and Jaguar as was previously rumored. Suspension uses MacPherson struts in the front and a live axle with coil springs in the rear. Ford says it maintained the solid rear axle because it can be better tuned than many of the independent configurations, plus it gives a better drag strip launch. Engine choices include a 202-hp 4.0-liter V-6 for the base model and an aluminum 300-hp 4.6-liter V-8 for the GT. Pricing will start at \$17,000 for the base and \$25,000 for the GT.

ACCORD VARIABLE CYLINDER HYBRID

Later this year, Honda will be introducing a hybrid version of the mid-size Accord that will not only have better performance than the current 240-hp V-6, but will also get fuel economy equivalent to a

four-cylinder engine. The engine will be the first V-6 application of Honda's Integrated Motor Assist technology that allows for the deactivation of three of the engine's six cylinders under certain conditions, such as highway cruising. It's also the first hybrid vehicle to employ Variable Cylinder Management technology.

LEXUS SUV HYBRID: POWER, ECONOMY

Lexus is taking the hybrid concept to new heights with the introduction of the new RX 400h. Powered by a Lexus V-6 Hybrid Synergy Drive system, this RX promises 0 to 60 acceleration times better than the current RX 330's sub-8-second time and fuel economy better than the current average four-cylinder compact sedan, which averages 27.6 mpg. The magic comes by combining a highly efficient 3.3-liter V-6 from the RX 330 with a rear drive electric motor to produce a combined 270-hp, 40 hp more than the current RX 330. The drive system is a "full hybrid," which means the electric motor and gas engine can operate individually or jointly as needed. Propulsion changes are totally seamless. The only obvious sign of the system is an illuminated power meter on the dash, that replaces the traditional tachometer. In addition to the state-of-the-art drive train, the RX 400h has a new Vehicle Dynamics Management system that

anticipates the onset of a skid or slide and then helps correct the situation with a combination of braking and throttle control. The RX 400h arrives at dealerships late in 2004.

CLARIFYING CADILLAC NOMENCLATURE

We've been puzzled by the meaning of Cadillac's new naming scheme, so we asked Cadillac Communications Manager Rob Minton to explain the system to us.

"Beginning with the Cadillac CTS sedan, new Cadillac cars are named using a three-letter alpha designation. The three letters in the vehicle name identify specific characteristics of the vehicle. The first letter will indicate the family or series that the vehicle is in. Cadillac will have a number of families or series that will be defined by several characteristics, including overall vehicle length, engine size, and common component sets. The second and third letters will describe the vehicle body style. The second character will designate the vehicle as a Touring (T), Luxury (L), or Reconfigurable (R) vehicle. The third letter will further designate the vehicle as a Sedan (S), Coupe (C), Crossover (X), or Roadster (R).

XLX is an existing example of Cadillac's new alpha naming strategy. The first letter represents the series (X) and the

KEEP RIGHT >>

2005 Ford GT



FORD GT HORSEPOWER TO EXCEED 550 Ford is finalizing the horsepower ratings of the upcoming Ford GT supercar at more than 550, according to John Coletti, director of Ford's SVT programs. He says that Ford was deliberately not discussing the horsepower number until the vehicles had gone through extensive durability tests. "We completed a 24-hour endurance test," says Coletti, "where it has run for the full 24 hours, and then we repeated the test. The cars are very robust. We haven't had any failures worth mentioning." Coletti also said the GT will easily reach 190 miles per hour. The GT arrives at select Ford dealerships this summer. ▼



Chrysler & Dodge Stow'n Go Minivans

People, seats and stuff galore fit in the new Chrysler minivans.



Pontiac G6

It seems nobody misses Grand Am's plastic side cladding on the new Pontiac G6.

second two describe the type of vehicle (LR - luxury roadster). So, the SRX is in the S series, R for reconfigurable (seating/cargo arrangements) and X for crossover." Thanks, Rob.

CHRYSLER LEVELS HAULING FIELD

▲ Over the years, the battle for features has often been fought in the interior of the minivans. We've seen battles for cupholder supremacy, power doors, entertainment systems and folding seats. Now Chrysler has taken the folding seats competition to the ultimate level by building rear seats, both the second and third rows, that fold completely into the floor. Chrysler calls their new system Stow'n Go. Chrysler engineers described the repackaging as a "nightmare." They said everything under the vehicle - rear suspension, spare tire, fuel tank and exhaust system - all had to be redesigned or relocated to make room. The new seats are standard on the 2005 Chrysler Town & Country LX, Touring and Limited models, along with the Dodge Grand Caravan SXT, and are optional on the Grand Caravan SE.

HONDA PLANS TO BE TOPS IN SAFETY

Honda and Acura will have anti-lock brakes, front-seat side airbags and side curtain airbags by 2007 on all of the sedan and coupe models sold in the US. All of the light trucks, which includes the Odyssey, CR-V, Pilot and MDX, will get Vehicle Safety Assist brakes, throttle control and rollover sensors as standard equipment. These changes should help put Honda in a safety leadership position matching brands like Volvo and Mercedes-

Benz. The company is also working on a range of pedestrian safety design systems that will include special hood structures, hood hinges, breakaway wipers and front frame construction. These changes will help pedestrians better survive if they are hit by a Honda vehicle. Honda had already announced the development of an Advance Compatibility Engineering system that will help vehicles better survive a collision with a larger vehicle.

FORD WILL NOT USE FUTURA NAME

Ford planned to bring back the classic Futura name on its Taurus replacement, but was stopped by Pep Boyse, which has used the name on tires since 1964. A US District Court ruled in Pep Boys' favor, and Ford was unwilling to pay, so now they are scrambling to come up with another name starting with F, to slap on the important new sedan. This is the second time in two years Ford has had name problems: in 2002 they were unable to use GT40 on their new supercar and ended up calling it simply the GT.

PONTIAC G6 REPLACES GRAND AM

▲ Pontiac officials are expecting big things from the upcoming G6, which will replace the current Grand Am for the 2005 model year. Pontiac Marketing General Manager Lynn Meyers calls the G6 "Pontiac's fresh design direction and renewed performance spirit." The sleek clad-free exterior of the G6 represents the new design direction for GM's "excitement" line. In keeping with the brand's performance image, the G6 will get three new powerplants: a 2.4-liter 170-hp aluminum four-cylinder, a 3.5-liter 200-hp V-6 and a 3.9-liter 240-hp V-6. There will be two transmissions: a four-speed automatic with manual shift mode and a six-speed manual for the larger V-6 engine. The sedan will be followed by a 2+2 and convertible.

CADILLAC OFFERS \$70,000 SUV

Cadillac is now offering a special Platinum Edition of the ESV (the SUV

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2004 Porsche Boxster
2004 Porsche Boxster S



PORSCHE HONORS 550 SPYDER Porsche is building a special edition Boxster S to commemorate 50 years of the 550 Spyder. In addition to its race heritage, the 550 is infamous as the model that screen legend James Dean was driving when he was killed. The plan is to build 1,953 of the roadsters (the same number as the first year of production) painted the same silver color as the new Carrera GT supercar. A 3.2-liter flat six-cylinder engine rated at 264 horsepower (six hp more than the standard Boxster S) powers the 550 Spyder. It also gets an upgraded suspension and some cosmetic enhancements for the \$59,900 price tag. The special edition arrives at Porsche dealers starting in March. ▼

2005 MINI Cooper Convertible



MINI COOPER CONVERTIBLE DUE MINI has introduced the convertible version of the MINI Cooper at the recent Geneva Auto Show, and it will go on sale in North America later this year. The topless MINI is covered by an electromechanically operated cloth top that retracts into an "open sunroof" position and then with a second push of the button folds behind the rear seats. For rollover protection the MINI has roll hoops behind the rear seat. The convertible is powered by a 115-hp 1.6-liter four-cylinder engine in the base model and a supercharged 163-hp version for the S. The convertible version is expected to sell for about \$5,000 more than the coupe, or about \$22,500 to \$26,500. ▼



BMW 760i

The 760i chassis, shorter and more nimble than that of the 760Li, is a great starting point for a performance version of the high-tech BMW 7 Series.

based on the same platform as the Chevrolet Suburban) priced at \$69,730, or \$11,000 more than the luxurious standard model. The list of package equipment includes DVD-based navigation, XM Satellite radio, 20-inch chrome wheels, dual screen DVD rear seat entertainment system, heated and cooled seats in the first two rows, heated and cooled cupholders and a long list of other cosmetic and mechanical extras. The only available option is White Diamond paint, which adds \$995 to the price. The other available colors are Black Raven, Quicksilver and Red.

AUDI ADDS MID-SPORTY LINE

To fill a perceived gap between the standard "A" models (A4, A6 A8) and the high performance "S" models, Audi is adding a new "S line." Depending on the model, the S line utilizes some elements from S models, such as suspension packages, ground effects, cosmetic upgrades and — in some cases — more power.

Now that the S line has been fully rolled out in Europe, the US market is getting the treatment, first for the TT and then for A6 2.7 T models. The new V-6 powered TT gets a 3.2-liter V-6 engine (with a horsepower increase from 225 to 250 hp over the top four-cylinder model). The A6 gets a horsepower boost (from 250 to 265 hp), different wheels and a spoiler. The A6 is priced at \$43,870, and the TT is \$40,820 for the coupe and \$43,620 for the roadster.

BMW'S ULTIMATE PERFORMANCE 760i

▲ BMW has added a V-12-powered high performance version of the short wheel-base 7 Series. The 760i has the same direct injection gasoline engine that powers the longer 760Li. It comes standard with the Steptronic 6-speed automatic transmission with wheel mounted manual shift buttons. Standard mechanical equipment includes 20-inch performance wheels (wider in the rear), self-leveling rear suspension, electronic dampening control, Active Roll Stabilization, and variable-ratio-variable-assist steering. For driver convenience, it has 20-way Comfort Seats with Active Support and Active Ventilation, Logic-8 premium Hi-Fi system with 6-CD changer, Bi-xenon headlights, park-distance control and rain-sensing wipers. The 760i goes from 0 to 60 mph in only 5.4 seconds and has a top speed limited to 149 mph. The MSRP is \$110,495 including the destination charge.

DAIMLERCHRYSLER, MITSUBISHI SHARE

With a 37 percent ownership in Mitsubishi, DaimlerChrysler has management control of the Japanese company, and as a result we're going to see a lot more platform and product sharing. Look for a Mitsubishi version of the Dodge minivan, the Durango SUV, and the Dakota-based truck that was recently introduced at the Chicago Auto Show. Chrysler group CEO Dieter Zetsche said the Mitsubishi variants would have their own sheet

metal and interiors, but would likely have all the features of the Chrysler products. Conversely, Chrysler's next generation of small and mid-size cars, which are due in the next two years, will be developed from Mitsubishi platforms. DaimlerChrysler, Mitsubishi and Hyundai (another DaimlerChrysler affiliate) are partners in a Dundee, Mich., engine plant scheduled to open in 2005.

MERCURY OFFERS 4 NEW MODELS

The Mercury brand is on target to add four more new vehicles to get their product count up to seven by the end of 2005. The brand is using Ford-derived products bumped upscale and with more contemporary trim and higher content levels than their Ford counterparts. The revival has already started with the Monterey minivan that was derived from the Ford Freestar. Next up is the Montego sedan based on the upcoming Ford Five Hundred sedan and the Mariner sport wagon developed from the smaller Ford Escape SUV. Both of those models are due this September. Scheduled for 2005 is a mid-size sedan from the 2006 Ford Futura and a sport wagon based on the 2005 Ford Freestyle.

BMW MULTIFUNCTION HIGH-ROOF VEHICLE

Just as the sport utility vehicle was the big thing during the last two decades, the crossover is poised to be the next big

KEEP RIGHT >>



Distinctive as the Crossfire coupe is, the convertible version (tested here on McDowell Road) maintains its spirit and develops a great look of its own.

thing. As the name implies, crossovers represent vehicles that combine the attributes of two or more vehicle types. BMW is working on a new range of such vehicles they call "multifunctional high-roof vehicles." The concept resembles a minivan, but with a seating position above the road level halfway between a sport sedan and SUV, the roominess of a large wagon, luxury car attributes, traction of an SUV and sports-car-like handling. BMW will label the three sizes of their vehicle V1, V3 and V5 corresponding roughly in size to the 1-, 3- and 5-series sedans. The company's next generation six- and eight-cylinder engines, with and without turbochargers, will power the V5. They will also use a new automated manual transmission. If BMW officials approve the V series, they should reach dealerships by mid-2007.

CROSSFIRE SRT-6 & ROADSTER

▲ The two-seat Chrysler Crossfire sports car gets two new versions this year. The first is the SRT-6 coupe powered by a supercharged version of the (Mercedes) 3.2-liter V-6 engine producing 330-hp, as compared with the standard 3.2-liter V-6,

which is rated at 215 horsepower. The coupe is expected to debut in late spring this year. A roadster version will be at dealers this summer. Both cars will have a five-speed automatic transmission with manual shifting linkage, along with performance-enhanced suspension, brakes, stability control, exhaust and tires.

INFINITI LANE DEPARTURE WARNING

Infiniti will be the first manufacturer to offer a Lane Departure Warning (LDW) system. When activated, the LDW will flash a light on the instrument panel and activate a buzzer to alert the driver that the vehicle is leaving the lane. It uses a small camera mounted behind the rear view mirror to read lane markings, a vehicle speed sensor and a microprocessor to determine a potential problem. The system, which only works when the vehicle is traveling over 45 mph, is deactivated when the turn signal is applied or when the camera can't detect lane markers. LDW is automatically reactivated every time the car is started.

"Studies show that 55 percent of fatal accidents in the US are caused by lane departure," said Robert Yakushi, Director,

Product Safety, Regulatory Accessory Quality, Nissan North America, Inc. "These are caused by various factors, including driver distraction, inattention or drowsiness. The Lane Departure Warning system generates a warning to help alert the driver that the vehicle is about to move out of its lane." LDW will be offered later this year as an option on the Infiniti FX crossover models and in the next generation M45 performance luxury sedan, which is scheduled to go on sale in the spring of 2005 as a 2006 model.

ISUZU TO CUT MODEL OFFERINGS

Isuzu has told its dealers that the company plans to stop production of the Axiom and Rodeo in July. That will leave the dealers with only two models to sell: the five- and seven-seat Ascender. The Ascender is sister to Chevrolet Trailblazer, GMC Envoy and Buick Rainier SUVs, along with the upcoming Saab 9-7. Isuzu will not add a new model until 2007, and that is likely to be another SUV positioned between the two Ascenders and built on the same platform at an Isuzu plant in Thailand.

This news comes just after the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)



The Acura RL has taken a striking step into the present with this bold, aggressive new stance.

certified Isuzu's innovative 3.5-liter V-6 direct-injection gasoline engine. The engine meets the EPA's tough new emission requirements that go into effect for 2007 and was going to be used in both the discontinued vehicles. The only other vehicles available in the US that offer direct-injection gasoline engines are the BMW 760Li and the Rolls-Royce Phantom.

MORE LEXUS HYBRIDS ENROUTE

Lexus will jump into the hybrid market later this year with the world's first luxury SUV hybrid, the RX 400H (see item on earlier page), and that may be followed with two more awesome sounding green machines. The mid-level GS hybrid, called the GS350 GT, was unveiled at the Detroit auto show. Its power comes from a 300-hp 3.5-liter V-6 mated to a 170-hp electric motor. The resulting 470-hp sedan will have all-wheel drive and is expected to get up to 60 mpg when it arrives at dealerships in August 2005. The flagship Lexus LS will also get a GT model, the LS500 GT, which will combine a 400-hp 5.0-liter V-8 with a 200 hp electric motor. The 600-hp sedan will be targeted directly at the V-12 powered Mercedes-Benz S-Class flagship, the S600L.

ACURA'S SUPER ALL-WHEEL-DRIVE

Honda has developed a new Super Handling All-Wheel Drive system (SH-AWD) that will debut in the next-generation Acura RL flagship sedan this fall. The SH-AWD is the world's first AWD system to combine front-rear torque distribution control with independently regulated torque distribution to the left

and right rear wheels based on driving conditions. The system monitors driver input and driving conditions to determine the optimum front-rear and lateral torque distribution. That information is relayed to the rear differential where electromagnetic clutches continuously regulate and vary front-rear torque distribution and lateral torque distribution to the rear wheels. The torque is used not only for propulsion, but for cornering as well, resulting in a significant enhancement in the vehicle's maneuverability.

ACURA DEBUTS NEXT RL FLAGSHIP

▲ The next generation Acura RL debuted at the New York Auto Show with the company's typical innovative technology and flair for design. The RL is powered by a 300 hp version of the 3.5-liter VTEC V-6 engine driving a revolutionary all-wheel-drive system (see previous item). The transmission is a five-speed automatic with sequential sport shifting using F1®-type paddle shifters on the wheel. The stylish four-door sedan has a lightweight rigid body unit with an aluminum sub frame, suspension, hood, trunk and front fenders. The new RL is shorter and wider than the current model but with more passenger volume. Adaptive lighting swivels in the direction the vehicle is turning, navigation gives up-to-the-minute traffic information via satellite, and Acura includes wireless telephone interface and keyless access and engine starting. ■

Auto News Update includes a summary of auto news from industry sources, trade journals and consumer magazines compiled for *Arizona Driver* by **BILL & BARBARA SCHAFFER** of *Auto Digest*.

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ARE HUMANS BETTER THAN APES WHEN ROAD RAGE STRIKES?

A CONVERSATION WITH DR. JOYCE BROTHERS

Road rage is an increasingly dangerous phenomenon. It's been estimated the number of incidents increases by 7% per year, yet surprisingly there are virtually no statistics to prove any connection with accidents. Are we becoming more aggressive? Are there early signs of this behavior? Are the trigger mechanisms different for men than women? Can road rage be controlled? Dr. Joyce Brothers, an internationally recognized psychologist, answers those questions.

"Road rage has the potential to make tigers out of pussy cats. It's a sudden break in the driver's perception of what's happening, an unjustified overreaction to a situation that in hindsight is a rather small personal space infraction," comments Dr. Brothers. "Man certainly has evolved over the eons, they've gone to the moon, built supercomputers, yet put them behind the wheel, under the right conditions, and they are unable to cope."

"Men and women have different road rage triggers. Men perceive the vehicle as a safe zone, a protection shell that shields them from outside world. Much like an animal protects its domain, violating a personal space sets off something that turns an otherwise normal, nice-guy-next-door person into a tiger. When this happens, men are at the same mental level as an ape—a being who protects his space at all costs and without logical thought as to the consequences."

"Women, on the other hand, have lists. They like order and structure. Off to food shop, pick up dry cleaning, haul children from school to soccer to home. Their lists can be long and over-ambitious. When they start running out of time, their list deteriorates and so does their ability to react logically to potentially dangerous driving situations."

"Road rage can be controlled. Not easily, but by recognizing what sets you off and then considering behavioral alternatives, one can encounter a danger-

ous situation and still remain in control." Dr. Brothers offers a number of suggestions for controlling road rage:

1. Allow plenty of time for your trip. A 12-mile trip at 35 mph takes about 20 minutes. Same trip at 45 mph is 16 minutes. Speeding to save 4 minutes or 2 stop lights isn't worth the added aggravation.



2. Be considerate of others. The Golden Rule (do unto others as you would have them do unto you) is a powerful mental stop-and-reconsider measure.

3. Don't stand on principle. You might be right, but deadly wrong.

4. If the situation gets tense, avoid eye

contact. Apes understand that eye contact leads to confrontation. Learn from them.

MEN: A vehicle is a dangerous weapon. The laws of physics are unforgiving—speed and mass can be lethal.

WOMEN: Keep lists and appointments reasonable. Prioritize your day's schedule, and factor in delays beyond your control.

The Consequences And Cure

How should one handle rage? What are the consequences of letting it all hang out? What do we teach our children about anger, and if we have a terrible temper, do we need professional help? Compare your views with those of some experts:

1. Men and women tend to handle anger in different ways. True False

2. Children should be taught that anger and rage are no-nos and that these are not acceptable feelings. True False

3. In order for people to change their patterns of expressing temper, they need to seek professional help. True False

4. Parents can't, and don't, pass on their anger and aggressive behavior to their children. True False

5. Expressing anger by yelling, or simply letting it all hang out, diminishes it and is generally productive. True False

6. When a young child has a temper tantrum, give him what he/she wants and explain it in detail later. True False

7. Anger never serves a useful purpose. True False

8. Humor is always the best release for anger and the best way to get back at the person causing the rage. True False

See answers on page 16.

Results? "If you answered six of these eight questions correctly, you're better informed than most on this issue" states Dr. Brothers.

Road rage is easy to detect, easy to prevent, and easy to control. Life is too short to let a moment of anger ruin everything. ■

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1. Men and women tend to handle anger in different ways.

True. Males are allowed much more freedom to express anger than females. Females learn from an early age that it isn't ladylike to explode or express anger directly. This causes many problems when little girls mature into women.

2. Children should be taught that anger and rage are no-nos and that these are not acceptable feelings.

False. Children should be taught that it's all right to feel angry and that this needn't be a denial of love. Both emotions can exist together. What they do need to be taught is how to control rage so that it isn't destructive to others, nor to themselves. They need to find constructive, productive channels.

3. In order for people to change their patterns of expressing temper, they need to seek professional help.

False. This isn't always necessary. We can change and learn new patterns or behavior of our own if we're motivated. Often when we're angry, it helps merely

to take time and count to ten...also try writing down feelings, before verbalizing them, record when you feel angry and what precipitates it. Analyze the results and try quietly talking and listening to others, rather than screaming.

4. Parents can't, and don't, pass on their anger and aggressive behavior to their children.

False. They do. Children learn to be aggressive by imitating their role models, and, unfortunately, aggressive children turn into aggressive adults unless this pattern is broken. While there may be a link between hormones, environment, and some traits toward aggression may be inherited, environment plays a strong role.

5. Expressing anger by yelling, or simply letting it all hang out, diminishes it and is generally productive.

False. This is a dangerous myth. It doesn't diminish, it increases the rage not only in the person who's angry, but also in everyone around him or her. This is counterproductive, as rage is highly contagious.

6. When a young child has a temper tantrum, give him what he/she wants and explain it in detail later.

False. Temper tantrums should never be rewarded. If possible, reassure the child with hugs, if the youngster is old enough reassure through language, but explain that you may have to remove him or her briefly in order to protect the needs of others.

7. Anger never serves a useful purpose.

False. It does serve a useful purpose. It may serve as a warning to others, that they've gone too far and crossed certain boundaries. There are also many legitimate reasons to be angry.

8. Humor is always the best release for anger and the best way to get back at the person causing the rage.

False. Humor can be a wonderful release for anger and tension, but it can also be used as a mask and a sadistic means for a coward not to face the results of his or her own emotions. It can be highly productive or counter-productive, depending upon the way it's being used.

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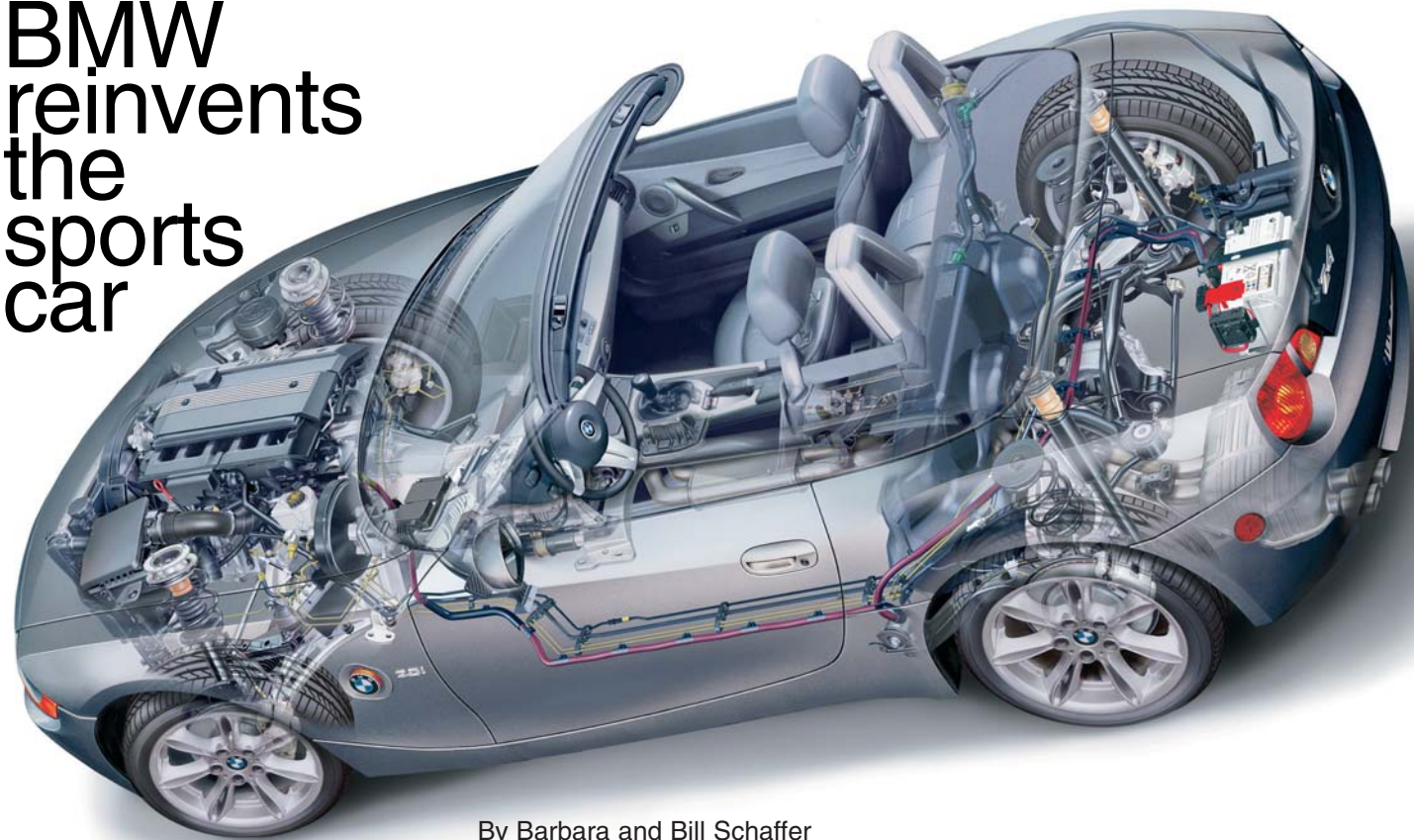


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BMW reinvents the sports car



By Barbara and Bill Schaffer

BARBARA— It's gorgeous and it's making heads turn. I'm talking about the new BMW Z4 we recently drove. Even in "truck country" this little beauty was turning heads 180 degrees.

BILL— BMW is an amazing company. The two-seat Z3, which debuted in 1996, was a great sports car with crisp handling, smooth muscular engine and unique styling. When we first heard about the replacement Z4 sports car, we assumed it would be an evolutionary change from the original. Wrong. It was revolutionary. The styling is cutting-edge and it's much better looking in person than in photos.

Contrary to the expression that beauty is only skin deep, the Z4 is a beauty from its award-winning in-line six-cylinder engine, through its ultra stiff chassis and body, to its fat run-flat tires and tire pressure monitoring system.

BARBARA— Built on a longer wheelbase, the Z4 is wider and longer than the Z3 but looks even larger because of its wider stance. The long and sweeping hood, short front and rear overhangs enhance the athletic and aggressive new look.

The interior has a fresh and modern design, offering many new materials and

features. Sport seats are standard with supportive bolsters to help occupants stay in place during aggressive driving. Accents of brushed aluminum enhance the sporty-looking interior.

BILL— While the Z4 has a new high tech look, it still embraces the traditional roadster configuration of low seating, mounted near the rear wheels behind a long hood. Designed for top-down driving, the open Z4 cockpit is relatively wind-free when the optional wind deflec-

tor is mounted in place on the roll bars behind the seats. With the cloth top up, the cabin is remarkably quiet, thanks to the well insulated top, glass rear window and side windows that drop slightly when the doors are open and then reseal when the doors are closed.

BARBARA— The new Z4 comes very well equipped, with such standard features as remote entry, tilt and telescopic sport steering wheel, leather gearshift boot and handbrake grip, anti-theft AM/FM stereo

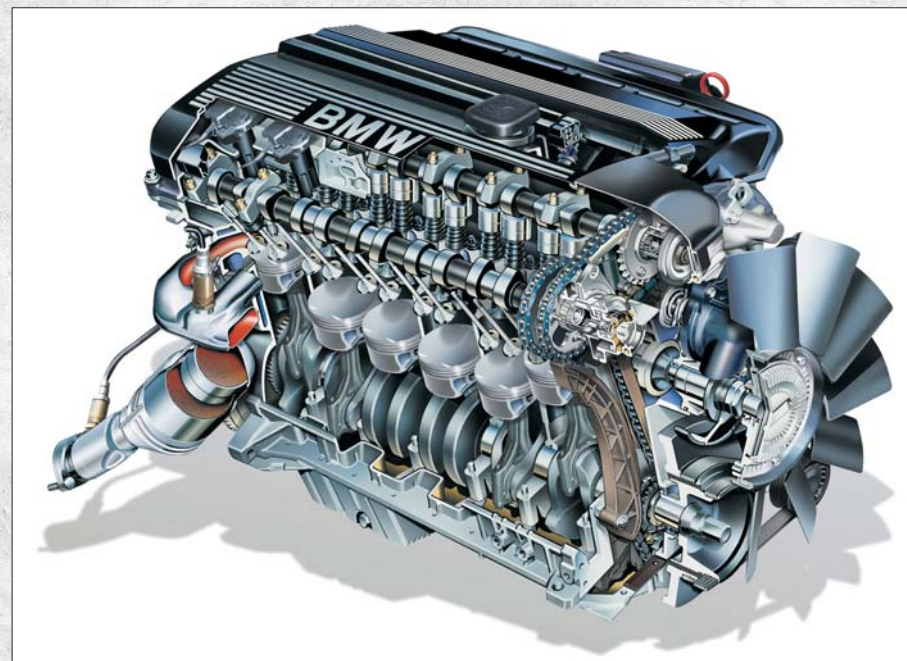


with CD player, six-way manually adjustable sport seats, central locking system with anti-theft feature, power windows, dual power outside mirrors, soft top with heated glass rear window, pre-wired for alarm system and cellular telephone—for the base price of \$33,895. After adding the convenience package, premium package, auto transmission, wood trim, heated front seats and a premium sound system our test Z4 came to just over \$41k including the destination charge. The

more potent and slightly better equipped 3.0i has a base price \$41,045.

BILL— The Z4 is built on an evolutionary version of the company's famous 3 series chassis with the suspension enhanced by new lightweight aluminum parts. The result is one of the best handling precision sports cars ever built.

The two-seat roadster utilizes state of the art Dynamic Brake Control, Dynamic Stability Control with All Season Traction control and a new electric speed sensitive



power steering system.

Our test car had the entry-level 2.5-liter in-line six-cylinder engine with a state-of-the-art Double VANOS steplessly variable valve timing and dual resonance intake system with the optional five-speed automatic transmission (A five-speed manual transmission is standard). It produces a very potent 184 hp and 175 lb.ft. of torque. The optional 3.0-liter engine is similarly configured but produces 225-hp and 214 lb.ft. of torque. The 3.0-liter comes standard with a new six-speed manual transmission or the optional five-speed automatic.

Optional on both models is a new fast shifting six-speed Sequential Manual Gearbox (SMG), which is controlled by paddles on the steering wheel.

BARBARA— I'm always concerned about safety, especially in a small sports car. The Z4 features dual threshold "Smart" airbags for driver and passenger, active knee protection, dual front door-mounted side impact airbags, lower anchors for child restraint system, passenger airbag deactivation switch, safety belts with automatic pretensioners, force limiters rollover protection bars, coded driveaway protection and just in case, run-flat tires.

BILL— Even the entry-level 2.5i Z4 is quick by all standards. I recorded 78 mph in my mailbox acceleration test, which I run from where I pull onto the highway, and accelerate full speed to the first mailbox (about one-eighth mile). As expected the cornering was fabulous. I was comfortable around my 25-mph, 90-degree test corner at 54 mph.

A good selling point for a spouse might be the good fuel economy. The EPA rates the Z4 2.5i at 21 mpg for city driving and 28 mpg on the highway. We averaged 24.1 during our week of spirited driving.

BARBARA— The new BMW Z4 is a very sweet ride with extremely good looks. For everyday driving it just doesn't work for me, but on the weekend? You go girl!

BILL— With its smooth refined power, positive shifting automatic and comfortable ride, I thought the Z4 would make a great stylish everyday car to drive. For those that want that real hot performance the 3.0-liter is capable of 0 to 60 mph times of 5.4 seconds and a top speed of 156 mph. ■

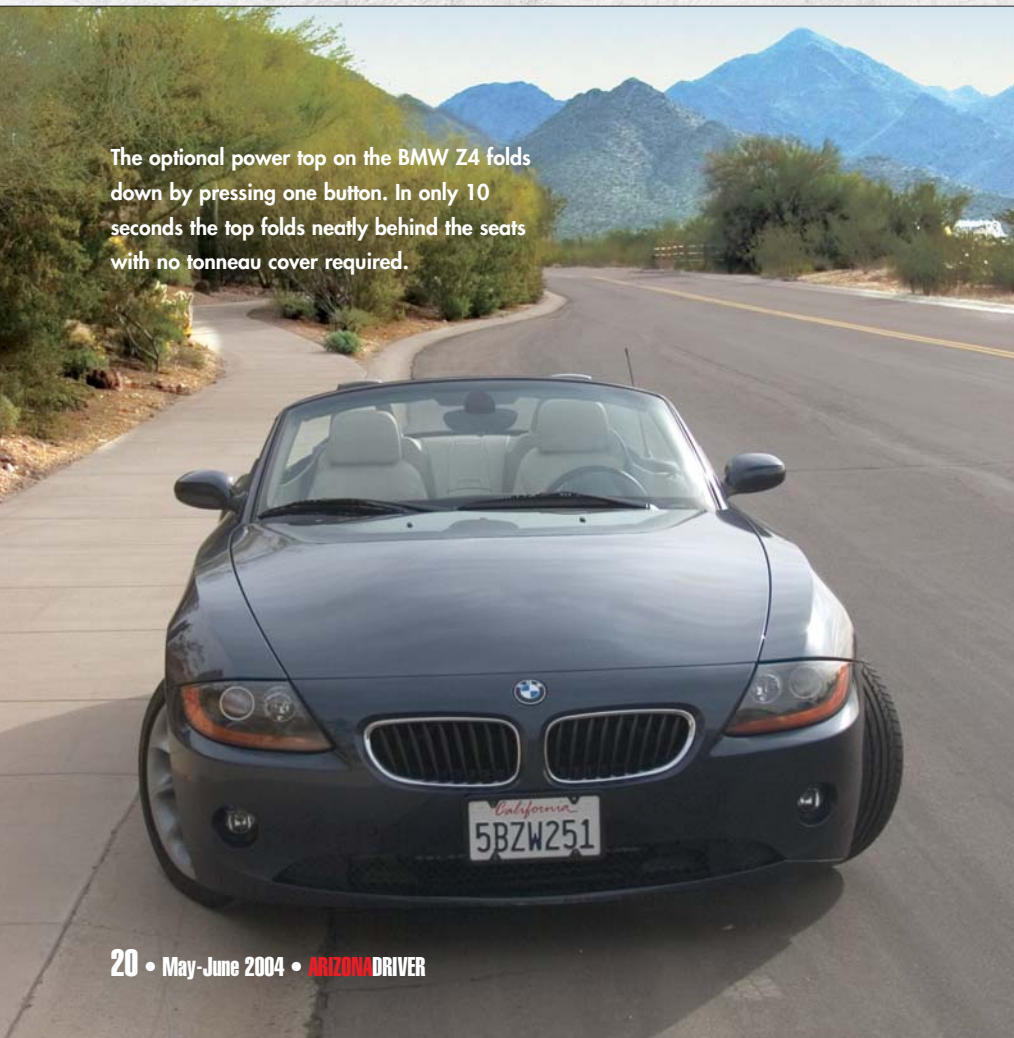


Point and click

By Joe Sage



Lost in translation? This original design study shows a lot more aggressive excitement than the actual finished vehicle, though many essentials have made it in. Of course not everything on paper can be engineered in steel and glass, but we'd love to see some evolution along these lines.



The optional power top on the BMW Z4 folds down by pressing one button. In only 10 seconds the top folds neatly behind the seats with no tonneau cover required.



Are we talking about the onboard computer? Not really. In fact, we are relieved to find that a lot less intrusive in the Z4 than the iDrive in the 7 Series. No, we're talking about a solid little roadster that you can hop in, aim, and enjoy, as it quickly responds to any commands you input.

Introduced in 2003 to replace the pioneering Z3, the Z4 has taken the BMW roadster segment in a strong new direction. Part Z8 and part 5 Series, it brings a better-handling, better-balanced machine to market, though it has some of the love-it-or-hate-it design cues of its sedan siblings. (As shown above, early style studies evolved to accommodate manufacturing realities and to incorporate the trademark dual-kidney grille.)

The Z4 is also available as a 3.0i; we drove the 2.5i. The Z4 is engineered with a high-rigidity roadster body/chassis unit and aluminum hood, plus strut-type front suspension with forged-aluminum lower arms, and central link rear suspension with cast-aluminum upper transverse links. Add Dynamic Stability Control and 4-wheel disc brakes, put this all together,

and you have the well-balanced hot little ride we experienced. Efficiently packaged, but without feeling cramped, this is a roadster that makes you at one with the road and your destination. Speed-sensitive electric power steering is well executed in the Z4; drive-by-wire brings out the skeptic in us on both a theoretical and sometimes as-implemented basis, but in this vehicle, it's transparent and it works.

Features new in our '04 included a multi-function steering wheel with audio controls, rain-sensing windshield wipers and automatic headlight control newly standard. Noteworthy is that the 2004 Z4 has received fitments in preparation for a removable hardtop, offered as an option. It remains surprising, though, that the soft top has manual operation.

BMW Assist, a suite of convenience and safety services built around an integrated wireless communication and positioning system, is newly offered as part of the Premium Package or as a stand-alone option.

The Z4 brings all of BMW's best in a small package. In short, if you like the style, you'll certainly love this car. ■

2004 BMW Z4 2.5i Specifications

DIMENSIONS

EPA Size	.....Two Seater
Weight	.....2,998 lb.
Wheelbase	.....98.2 in.
Length	.....161.1 in.
Width	.....70.1 in.
Height	.....50.1 in.
Fuel Capacity	.....14.5 gal.
Cargo Capacity	.....8.5 to 9.2cu. ft.

MECHANICAL

Engine	.....2.5L DOHC In-line 6-Cyl.
Horsepower	.....184@6000
Torque	.....175@3500
Transmission	.....5-Spd. Auto
Drive	.....Rear wheel
Brakes	.....Disc ABS
Tires	.....225/50R-16

PERFORMANCE

0 to 60 mph	.....7.2 sec.
Speed to mailbox	.....78 mph
Top speed	.....141 mph
Cornering comfort	......54 mph
EPA economy rating	.....21/28 mpg
Our actual fuel econ	.....24.1 mpg



Crank up the fun meter.



By Barbara and Bill Schaffer

Other than color, there are no factory options for the Honda S2000. Two new dealer installed options are an XM Satellite Radio system and twin speaker headrests.

On the fun scale, the Honda S2000 comes in close to the top. When our granddaughter came to visit during spring break, we were testing the Honda S2000, and she wanted to go everywhere in it. Of course, since it seats only two, one of us adults had to stay home. We just climbed in, pushed the button to lower the top and we were off in the cool spring air. We prefer the visibility with the top down. With the top up rear visibility is poor, plus the all-black interior and headliner make it feel a little tight.

There are many great, sophisticated sports cars filled with massive engines and high-tech gadgetry. As much as I love all that paraphernalia, we have to admire the purity of the Honda S2000. With its classic front engine, rear drive and near 50/50 weight distribution, the S2000 captures the essence of a sports car

better than any car we have driven. Rather than piling on extra features Honda engineers have carefully refined the elements of the roadster to maximize its performance, handling and safety. The net result is great driving fun!

The exterior is now bolder, with new front and rear styling elements. The nose has slightly improved aerodynamics. Larger front tires are mounted on 17-inch alloy wheels and 11-inch anti-lock disc brakes provide excellent stopping power.

The interior features a redesigned center console that contains two cup-holders and a new storage tray. The aluminum leather-wrapped shift knob, F1-inspired digital instrument display and separate engine-start button serve as a reminder of the S2000 racing heritage.

Even though the previous version of the S2000 turned 0 to 60 mph in a very fast

5.5 seconds, Honda engineers modified the engine in the 2004 model to further improve low-end performance. By increasing the engine size from 2.0 to 2.2 liters, they were able to boost the torque from 153 lb-ft at 7500 rpms to 162 lb-ft at 6500 rpms. This allows the performance range to start at 3000 rpm rather than 6000 rpm for the previous engine. The horsepower stayed at 240, still making it one of the most powerful naturally aspirated engines on the market.

The six-speed transmission ratios on the first five speeds were also lowered to further enhance the acceleration, and the shifter is as smooth and precise as anything on the market.

As with most Honda and Acura products, there are few if any options, and in the case of the Honda S2000 there are no factory options. We love this system



because there are no surprises as far as the price goes. The Honda S2000 comes standard with leather-trimmed seating surfaces, leather-wrapped steering wheel and shift knob, electric powered soft top with glass rear window and defroster, and convertible top cover. It also has xenon high intensity discharge headlights, aluminum pedals, air conditioning, cruise control, AM/FM/CD player with anti-theft feature, remote mounted audio controls, power windows and door locks, 17-inch alloy wheels and the list continues—all for just \$32,800 plus \$490 destination charge.

To improve the already excellent handling characteristics, larger 17-inch tires (215/45 in the front and 245/40 in the rear) were added. The S2000 uses racing style double wishbone suspension, plus the body and chassis were made

even more rigid to enhance handling.

It continues to use an electrical assist power steering system to improve driver feedback.

The Honda S2000 comes with many safety features, including driver and front passenger air bags, three-point seat belts with pre-tensioners, side impact door beams, integrated roll bars, immobilizer anti-theft system and remote keyless entry system with trunk opener.

The Honda roadster is a blast to drive. Power comes on strong and it seems to rev forever and, in the process, rewards passengers with an exhaust note that resembles a slightly muted F1 racer. The S2000 is best in the country with the top down, racing through the corners, wind in hair and nostrils filled with the aromas of the countryside.

The combination of the modified 2.2-

liter engine and light 2,835 pounds weight produces the great S2000 performance. We recorded an impressive 80 mph in the test that we run from where we pull onto the main highway and accelerate full throttle about one-eighth mile. Cornering was remarkable, too, comfortable around our 90-degree, 25-mph test corner at 54 mph.

We averaged 25.1 mpg, which is on the high side of the EPA rating of 20-mpg for city driving and 25-mpg on the highway.

We had a fabulous time in the S2000. At almost every stoplight somebody would look down at us and say something special. The Honda S2000 does not aspire to be a luxury cruiser nor a high tech innovator, rather it's the essence of the sports car. It does its job with great precision and maximum enjoyment. ■

Tight.

By Joe Sage



The Honda S2000 was introduced in 2000 to commemorate Honda's 50th anniversary. Honda built us a high-performance, 2-seat, open-topped roadster with an advanced front-engine, rear-wheel-drive sports car configuration, incorporating much of what the company learned during five decades of building and racing cars and motorcycles. The original concept was to build a true sports car that could serve as both a practical and fun daily driver and a highly capable weekend track racer.

As an anniversary milestone marker, the roadster was obviously intended to be a Honda icon. And a great icon it is (although it only makes us wish there were more Hondas built with rear-wheel-drive).

For 2004 the S2000 has been heavily redesigned, strengthening performance, enhancing the interior and giving the exterior a subtly bolder appearance. The net gain is an S2000 that is simultaneously an improved track car and an improved daily driver. The engine has

been redesigned and displacement has been increased by 0.2 liters by lengthening the stroke of piston travel. The 2.2-liter, DOHC VTEC 4-cylinder engine produces 240 horsepower and 162 lb-ft of



torque (while still meeting Low-Emission Vehicle—or LEV—standards for California). Honda's VTEC advanced variable valve-timing system operates the engine's 16 valves (4 per cylinder) in both intake and exhaust modes. This system is compact and tailored to this car's high-output, high-rev operating characteristics.

A revised 6-speed manual transmission provides lower gear ratios on gears one through five, and a higher sixth speed gear for highway cruising. The transmission is a compact design and features a direct shift linkage with tight feel and short throws. A Torsen limited-slip differential smoothly delivers power to the rear wheels, regardless of traction conditions. The S2000 engine and transmission are capable of accelerating the S2000 from 0–60 mph in less than 6 seconds.

Honda's racing experience is also evident in the S2000's responsive handling. The chassis has an ideal 50/50 weight distribution, and the body and frame are a hybrid monocoque-frame

structure that forms a rigid, flex-free platform for the S2000's in-wheel double wishbone suspension system and plays an important role in helping the S2000 achieve a high level of safety protection.

In place of a conventional hydraulic power steering system, with its hoses, fluid and power drain, the S2000 uses an electrically assisted system. At low speeds, more power-steering assist is provided, which eases maneuvering and parking. As vehicle speed increases, less power assist is supplied, giving the steering a more direct feel.

Larger front 215/45 87W and rear 245/40 91W tires are mounted on newly-designed 17-inch alloy wheels, and 11-inch brake discs (vented in front) provide excellent stopping power and brake feel. For 2004, new brake pad material improves pedal feel and resists fading in high performance driving. An anti-lock braking system is standard.



2004 Honda S2000 Specifications

Standard Equipment:

Limited slip differential; Electric power-assist steering; Integrated roll bars; Anti theft system; Keyless entry; Leather seating surfaces; AM/FM/CD stereo; Air conditioning with filtration; Cruise control; Power windows and locks; Aluminum pedals; Aero wind screen; Electric powered soft top; Alloy wheels; Xenon high intensity discharge headlights.

Base Price: \$32,800

Options: none

Freight.....\$490

Price as Tested\$33,290

DIMENSIONS

EPA SizeTwo-seat

Weight.....2,835 lb.

Wheelbase94.5 in.

Length.....162.2 in.

Width.....68.9 in.

Height50.0 in.

Fuel Capacity13.2 gal.

Cargo Capacity5.0 cu. ft.

MECHANICAL

Engine.....2.2L DOHC VTEC 4-Cyl.

Horsepower.....240@7800

Torque162@6500

Transmission.....6-Spd. Man.

DriveRear wheel

Brakes.....Disc ABS

Tires: Front.....215/45R17

Rear.....245/4R17

PERFORMANCE

0 to 60 mph.....5.5 sec.

Speed to mailbox.....80 mph

Top speed163 mph

Cornering comfort.....54 mph

EPA economy rating20/25 mpg

Our actual fuel econ.25.1mpg

COMPETITORS

Audi TT convertible,
BMW Z4, Mazda MX-5 Miata,
Mercedes-Benz SLK,
Nissan 350Z roadster,
Toyota MR2 Spyder



The instruments and controls on the S2000 are remarkably clean, simple and yet remarkably thorough, from audio controls to the left and HVAC to the right of the wheel, to the digital tach.

The exterior styling has evolved for 2004, becoming more angular and modern and more than ever looking ready to devour long stretches of road. Its long hood and flared front fenders create the impression of lowness and mass. The nose has slightly improved aerodynamics for 2004 that involved reshaping the front bumper. High sides reinforce the cockpit-like feel of the interior.

Long in the nose and short in the rear, the chassis parks the driver soundly on the rear suspension, in classic Lotus Super 7 position. This makes for a tight and solid, if somewhat harsh ride. The configuration, and the chassis's rigidity, also make for a noticeable dance through urban curves. But the driver is in control.

The interior is modern and designed with the driver's needs in mind. The seats contour to provide excellent lateral support during aggressive turns and help minimize fatigue. Outward visibility is unobstructed. If you are a taller driver, you will find yourself sliding your legs into driving position and feeling as committed to your position as a Mercury astronaut. But that's par for a roadster.

Interior controls absolutely blew us away in terms of both style and function,

the converging points of great design. The controls for both the radio and heater are simple levers, elegant, sturdy, and ready for a quick up or down based on where you intuit you are now, with no cares other than that you want a little more or a little less. Very clean, very effective. For 2004, controls such as the steering, brakes and clutch claim a new level of precision and an even more direct feel. The aluminum leather-wrapped shift knob and lever, F1-inspired digital instrument display and separate engine-start button are a reminder of Honda racing heritage. We tend to favor analog speedo and tach, but this LED speed readout and digital tach (in an arc mimicking an analog range) are informative and intuitive. The red start button may also remind you of the last Aston Martin you drove.

On the track, a broadened powerband comes on sooner and stronger, providing stronger acceleration and more pull through corners. The new suspension tuning enhances vehicle control qualities at the limit, while minimizing bump steer effects from road disturbances. Larger 17-inch wheels and tires provide more grip and maximize the suspension tuning.

We looked forward to receiving our test



Convertible top operation is quick and one-button easy, just 4.5 seconds down by our timing, although we found the two outboard latches somewhat cumbersome to operate.

S2000 at *Arizona Driver Magazine*. We spend quite a bit of time in roadsters, and we've heard one glowing review after another from our colleagues on this one.

We knew it was affordable, compared with Porsche or Lexus, anyway. We were thinking if you want to save a few bucks and get something simple and reliable, it's this or the MR2 Spyder, or maybe the venerable Miata. Well, that grouping was off the mark. The S2000 is a real performer. It's actually not as affordable as we'd preconceived, but at the same time it's far more powerful and better engineered than anything near its segment.

Bill and Barbara point out that the S2000 turns heads, as our reader, Robin, also points out (see sidebar). Funny how that works. Something more rarified like a Porsche turns heads, too, but doesn't always generate the smiles. The S2000 may turn some heads because it's unfamiliar, others because they know exactly what it is. Either way, it'll turn your head, too, each time you park and walk away. A good solid choice. ■

KEEP RIGHT >>



READER'S CHOICE

Robin - Scottsdale

Robin's S2000 is a 2003, bought in 2004 as certified pre-owned.

■ **USED TO DRIVE:** An '02 Mazda Miata for two years, following a '99 Miata for the prior three years.

■ **FAVORITE EVER:** This one! I've also had two Fieros, does that count? and Honda Civics. I had one Civic for 7 years and 280,000 miles, so I learned about Honda's amazing reliability.

■ **OTHERS CONSIDERED:** I wanted something between a BMW and a Corvette! This S2000 hits the mark on style and performance. The Corvette was too big for my garage, and it was expensive. I figured the BMW was too expensive on maintenance, even with warranty, but brakes and oil and so on. I also considered a Nissan 350Z convertible.

■ **WHAT I LIKE:** This Honda looks sleek, like a shark, which is kind of like the Corvette. It's cool, and it turns heads. Guys comment on the color (blue pearl), which I also like. It's also got a blue leather interior...and I have a purse and a Fossil watch that match! I'm glad guys like the car, not just 'cause it's a "guy magnet," but because I think that validates its performance; guys wouldn't like a wimpy car. The cooling system is very good. There is power—lots of it. Trunk space is wonderful. It's got storage all over, inside. The hood is long like a 'Vette, longer than the Miata (so I have to judge distances differently). I like the different wheels and tires, bigger in the back. I love the S2000... it's like getting a BMW with Corvette styling and Honda reliability. It's a muscle car without all the testosterone.

■ **WHAT I DON'T LIKE:** It was expensive! Besides that, I use the mirror adjusting button quite a bit, just to adjust my view on the freeway, and it's in a very awkward position, way back under my elbow on the armrest. I don't know why they didn't put it on the left dash like most. I can unlock both doors from outside with the remote, but from inside, I have to reach over to the handle to unlock the passenger door... maybe I'm doing it wrong, but I don't think so. I would rather have the window controls in the center (like the Miata or a Boxster); I'm just used to that, but it also makes sense to have them where the power top control button is. ▼

Power and glory

By Barbara Schaffer




Just outside Las Vegas, the Ritz Carlton sits on Lake Las Vegas and is surrounded by a new Mediterranean Village designed to look old, like the real Mediterranean. It's a great spot to drive a convertible with the top down, at least in April. By August the temperature would probably be 40 degrees hotter and not as pleasant. That is the location Audi chose to introduce the new high performance S4 Cabriolet to the automotive press. The vehicle certainly matched the location; they both are gorgeous!

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING On the twisting back roads en route to the Valley of Fire State Park, we had a chance to test the quickness of the S4 and let me say, it's fast. No, it's very fast. It can dash from 0 to 100 km (62 mph) in a very quick 5.9 seconds or to a top speed of 155 mph.

DESIGN The sporty S4 Cabriolet has subtle differences from the A4 Cabriolet. The bumper has larger air inlets, the Xenon headlights have titanium-colored surrounds behind the glass, and the outside mirror housings have aluminum finish. The rear features dual tailpipes.

The cockpit is trimmed in gray birch with carbon fiber available as an option. The standard sport seats come with 12-



way power adjustments and have Nappa leather seating surfaces.

MECHANICAL Under the hood is a smooth eight-cylinder engine that growls to produce 340 horsepower and 302 lb-ft of torque. It is paired with either a six-speed manual transmission or a six-speed Tiptronic® automatic transmission with shift paddles behind the steering wheel allowing driver to manually shift. Either transmission transmits the engine's power through Audi's quattro

permanent all-wheel drive system.

SAFETY Safety is a big issue, especially in a soft-top vehicle. The Audi S4 A-pillars contain high-strength reinforcing tubes along with structural reinforcements in the sills plus a strengthening cross-member below the rear seat and special impact absorbing beams. An active roll-over protection system in the double rear bulkhead adds to occupants' safety. Two sensor-controlled protection hoops behind the rear seats are triggered in a

fraction of a second and, together with the extremely rigid windscreen frame, help to maintain an intact "survival zone" for all the car occupants.

PRICE RANGE The Audi S4 comes standard with almost everything, including quattro AWD, power windows, 12-way seats, power locks, leather bucket seats, speed control and dual-zone automatic air conditioning. There's also an audio system with cassette and six-disc CD changer, power roof, rear spoiler stability control system, Avus-style six-spoke alloy wheels and more, for a base price of \$53,850 with the manual or \$55,000 for the Tiptronic automatic. The manual transmission version is subject to a \$1,700 gas-guzzler tax.

Options include Bose® premium sound system with XM or Sirius satellite radio, auto-dimming mirrors, light sensors, heated front seats, special paints, carbon fiber interior trim, a multi-function steering wheel, and the HomeLink® communication system, for an additional combined \$3225, plus the Audi Navigation System for \$1350. ■

BARBARA SCHAFFER is co-editor of *Auto Digest* reviews, rumors and other features.

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by Joe Sage

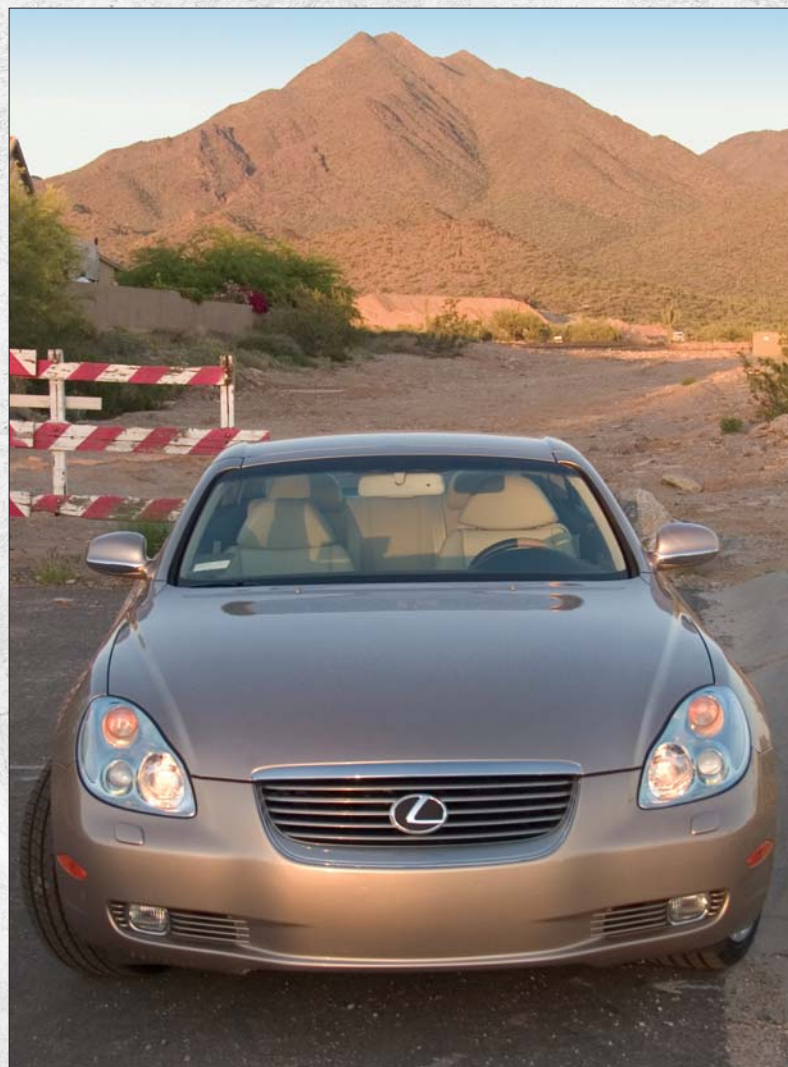


Introduced as a 2002 model, the Lexus SC 430 was the first retractable hardtop convertible in the premium luxury segment. The power hardtop transforms the SC 430 from a coupe into a convertible with the push of a button, a process which takes almost 25 seconds, but includes a complex series of mechanical moves, to reveal the stowage area and to collapse the top so it fits. (This compares with about 15 seconds for a Porsche Boxster, which opens a stowage area but doesn't need to fold a hard top,

or about 5 seconds for a Honda S2000, which parks its soft top behind the seats with no further ado.) The exterior design was created at the Lexus European design center, and the interior is a plush combination of natural materials such as leather and wood. The SC 430 is intended to outperform many sports cars while providing far more luxury, and that is exactly where it finds its niche. For style and interior amenities, it's hard to beat,

KEEP RIGHT >>





and it definitely holds its own on the competitive street. Of course, if you don't want to be too stylish and elegant, this may not be the sports car for you; then again, it may make this the "sleeper" racer you will absolutely love. It's all quite manageable, so you can take it clubbing without ever nailing the gas pedal, and it'll definitely get the job done.

The ULEV-certified, 300-hp 4.3-liter V8 engine employs advanced continuously Variable Valve Timing with intelligence (VVT-i), a system that gives the performance characteristics of larger-displacement engines. VVT-i eliminates the traditional compromise between low-end torque and high-rpm horsepower by optimizing valve overlap throughout the engine's speed range, not just at one or two set speeds. The resulting broad torque curve helps the engine perform as if it had larger displacement, yet without the extra fuel consumption of a larger engine. The Lexus 4.3-liter V8 was one of the first V8 engines to achieve this important certification.

This is coupled with a five-speed automatic transmission, can propel the car from 0-60 mph in 5.9 seconds. Seeking to enhance driving smoothness at every level, Lexus equipped the SC 430 with a system called Intuitive Powertrain Control. Working with the electronic throttle control, the system helps to smooth out acceleration from a standing start by very slightly delaying throttle opening when the driver steps on the accelerator. Thus, if you're not trying to burn a little rubber exiting the golf resort, you won't.

Front and rear double wishbone independent suspension and 18-inch wheels give the SC 430 sportscar-level handling, a Lexus-smooth ride, and—



again—that style.

In the SC 430 hardtop convertible, an advanced climate control system makes top-down driving more comfortable than in conventional convertibles. The system adjusts airflow and temperature automatically, differentiating between top-up and top-down driving needs. The system will automatically take into account the exterior temperature to help ensure occupant comfort. For example, when driving in cooler weather with the top down, the system will direct warm air to the foot and lap areas. On hot days, the system will circulate cool air to the same target locations. We didn't get to try this in southern Arizona in August, and we doubt it can conquer a 115-degree day with the top down, but it certainly will extend anyone's top-down season.

A DVD-based global satellite positioning (GPS) navigation system is standard on the SC 430 hardtop convertible and the LX 470 premium luxury utility vehicle. The system uses a DVD disc for map data—and one disc can hold all the map data for the contiguous United States, plus some of Canada. The system uses a high-speed navigation computer that offers multi-language selection, high-speed route calculation (average of five seconds per route calculation) and fast map scrolling. Convenient features include multi-route calculation, route preview, simplified highway junction graphics and a dual-map screen mode. The navigation systems offered in the SC 430 features touch-screen technology. And, as with other Lexus models we've tested, the best part is that this screen is intuitive, easy to use, and doesn't distract from the driving at hand, as much as some notoriously more complex systems. Mark Levinson Audio: Lexus is the only

automaker to offer an OEM mobile audio system designed by Mark Levinson, standard equipment in the SC 430 hardtop convertible. Audiophiles have recognized Mark Levinson as a leader in high-end home audio components since the early 1970s. The Lexus systems feature discrete amplifier design with ultra-low crossover distortion. All occupants enjoy optimal sound quality no matter where they're sitting.

Lexus recognizes that some thieves find its vehicles as desirable as paying customers do and therefore equips all its 2004 models with an advanced remote keyless entry and security system with immobilizer. Only the correct key will start a Lexus vehicle. For convenience, Lexus integrated the remote lock/unlock unit into the key—there's no separate, bulky remote unit to crowd the customer's pocket.

And for peace of mind and security on the open road, a low tire-pressure warning system is standard, and run-flat tires are offered as an option.

Wow. A sports car that's not finicky, is fully outfitted and that offers any zone from relaxation and total comfort to speed and performance. This vehicle rightly proves appealing to a very broad range of owners.

The SC 430 just had a minor (0.5 percent, or \$300) price increase on April 1, bringing this technically advanced and stylish sporting marvel to an MSRP of \$62,875. A fair chunk of change for what's almost certainly a second (or third or more) car, but it still compares favorably with competitors ranging from ten grand less to 60 grand more. We've seen a lot of these on the road, but driving one is an experience to be given up only reluctantly. ■

SC Chronology

MILESTONES

- May 1991 - Lexus expands its lineup to three models, with the SC 400 sport coupe.
- June 1991 - The SC 400 goes on sale.
- Aug 1991 - The SC 300 sport coupe, with a 3.0-liter inline-six engine, joins the family.
- Sept 1997 - The SC 400/300 sport coupes for 1998 receive Variable Valve Timing with intelligence (VVT-i) in both engines and a five-speed automatic in the SC 400.
- Oct 1999 - Lexus unveils the Lexus Sport Coupe concept vehicle at the Tokyo show.
- Apr 2000 - Lexus announces the SC 430 convertible at the New York Auto Show.
- Jan 2001 - Lexus unveils the second-generation SC 430, at the Detroit show.
- March 2001 - The all-new SC 430 is sold out through the end of the year.
- Oct 2001 - A special edition SC 430 is offered through the 2001 Neiman Marcus Christmas Book. All 99 are sold in 14 hours.
- Oct 2001 - The SC 430 CART/FedEx Championship Series Pace Car debuts at Texaco-Havoline Grand Prix in Houston.
- June 2003 - "Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines" opens, with the SC 430 driven by the villainous "Terminatrix."
- Aug 2003 - The SC 430 Pebble Beach Special Edition, a limited run of 400 units, features exclusive paint, wheels, interior, badging and illuminated doorsill plates.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- Nov 1991 - The SC 400 makes the honor rolls of *Car and Driver*, *Automobile*, *Popular Science* and *Playboy* magazines.
- Feb 1992 - The SC 400 is named "Import Car of the Year" by *Motor Trend* and by the Motoring Press Association.
- Dec 1992 - SC 300 makes *Car and Driver* "10 Best" and *Automobile's* "All-Star" list.
- Dec 1992 - SC 400 named one of *Motor Trend's* "Best Buys."
- March 1993 - American Automobile Association (AAA) names the SC 300 as the best 1993 model in its price range.
- Dec 1993 - SC 300 makes *Car and Driver* "10 Best" and *Automobile's* "All-Star" list for the second year in a row.
- May 1994 - The SC coupes finish third (behind the LS and GS) in J.D. Power and Associates' Initial Quality Study (IQS).
- Jan 1995 - *Car and Driver* names SC 300 one of 1995's "10 Best" cars.
- Feb 1995 - SC 300 is *Automobile* "All-Star."
- June 1996 - Lexus again tops the J.D. Power IQS. The SC 400/300 Coupes scored a noteworthy 45 problems per 100 cars, the best single vehicle model in the study.
- May 2002 - SC 430 ranks second, after the Lexus LS 430, in the premium luxury car category of the J.D. Power IQS.
- Nov 2002 - SC 300/400 takes third place in the premium luxury car segment of J.D. Power Vehicle Dependability Study.
- Feb 2003 - The SC 430 wins the Automotive Market Environmental Superiority (AMES) Award in the sport car category.
- May 2003 - SC 430 ranks second, after the LS 430, in the premium luxury cars category of the J.D. Power IQS.

Top-down Benz



By Barbara Schaffer

With hats and sunglasses on, sun screen slathered on face and arms, and the top down, my driving partner and I, along with 20 other vehicles, headed through the glorious hills of Santa Barbara in the all-new 2004 Mercedes-Benz CLK Cabriolet. Sometimes, life just seems perfect.

DESIGN The new CLK Cabriolet is exclusive, sport, and comfortable, with a coupe-like resemblance to the SL but with seating for four. The CLK has a beltline that runs from the front sloping uphill as it reaches the rear, adding to its sporty look. The clean exterior is a combination of straight lines and harmonious S contours, with no visible antennas.

MECHANICAL We were able to test both the CLK320 with a 3.2-liter V-6 engine producing 215 horsepower and the very exciting CLK500 with a 5.0-liter V-8 engine pumping out a whopping 302 horsepower. Both engines are teamed with a five-speed automatic transmission with overdrive and touch shift. There's also a CLK 55 AMG version with 362 hp.

COMFORT With a larger body in every dimension, the interior space offers more room and comfort for all four occupants. Also, rear occupants can now enjoy single



bucket style seats, plus—with a modified rear entry system—ingress and egress have been made easier.

Dropping the insulated cloth top takes about 20 seconds, and it's as easy as

pressing a button on the center console, or the process can be controlled remotely by a button on the key. For extra safety in the event of a rollover, the CLK has individual pop-up roll bars integrated into



the rear head restraints. When the system senses a rollover, the roll bars deploy in 0.3 seconds.

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING The newly designed chassis improves handling characteristics, or you can choose an optional chassis with an even sportier (harder) spring and shock absorber setup. The CLK500 V-8 has a 0-60 mph acceleration time of 6.0 seconds, but if that doesn't get your adrenaline up enough, try the new CLK55 AMG version, which will do 0-60 mph in a very quick 5.2 seconds.

INNOVATIVE EQUIPMENT Mercedes boasts that the CLK offers the most innovative features in the segment, like bi-xenon high intensity headlamps, Parktronic parking assistance system, DISTRONIC adaptive cruise control, active ventilated and multi-contour seats, keyless "Go" vehicle entry and starting system and integrated antennas in front windshield, trunk lid and rear bumper.

PRICE RANGE A well-equipped CLK320 starts at \$51,120 including destination charges, while the CLK500 comes in at \$61,570 including a \$1,000 gas-guzzler tax and delivery. ■



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ULTRA-HIGH PERFORMANCE BRIDGESTONE POTENZA® RE050

Bridgestone again expanded its performance lineup when it introduced the Potenza® RE050 at the SEMA (Specialty Equipment Market Association) Show in Las Vegas this winter. With a tread design that combines race-inspired technology with rain tire characteristics, the W- and Y-speed rated Potenza RE050 delivers excellent dry and wet handling, sporty responsiveness and a comfortable, quiet ride. In developing the Potenza RE050, Bridgestone turned to a motorsports heritage that includes six consecutive World Championships in Formula One racing by teams on Bridgestone tires. By combining technology derived from the grooved tread design of the Potenza Formula One dry tire and the renowned Potenza F1 rain tire, the Potenza RE050 delivers both excellent grip on dry roads and surefooted traction in the wet.

VERSIONS INCLUDE RUN-FLAT, ASSYMETRICAL

The Potenza RE050 tire line carries a UTQG rating of 140 for treadwear, A for traction, and A for temperature. It is available in 25 popular 17-, 18- and 19-inch sizes.

A companion Potenza RE050 run-flat tire is available in 8 popular 16- through 18-inch sizes for vehicles specifically designed to use run-flat tires.

Bridgestone also is introducing a com-



panion Potenza RE050A, with an asymmetrical tread pattern, which combines large, outside elements for improved handling with smaller, inside elements for water evacuation. The asymmetric tread also allows for easy tire rotation, to help prevent irregular wear.

OEM VEHICLE APPLICATIONS

The Potenza RE050 has been selected as original equipment for premium vehicles including the BMW 5- and 6-Series, the BMW Z4; the Porsche 997; the Mercedes Benz C-, E- and S-Class; the Audi S6 and the super-high performance Enzo Ferrari.

Potenza RE050 tires are also now found on one of the most striking sports cars on the road today—the 2004 Honda S2000, in size P215/45R17 87W for front and P245/40R17 91W for rear fitment, carrying a W-speed rating and the same UTQG ratings of 140 for treadwear, A for traction and A for temperature.

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UNI-T® stands for "Ultimate Network of Intelligent Tire Technology" found only in Bridgestone, Firestone, Dayton and select associate brand tires. One of its core technologies is the CO-CS® Computer Optimized Component System, a super computer that helps determine each ideal combination of tread design, casing shape, materials and construction for a particular application. Tires with UNI-T® have an O-Bead® that eliminates overlapped joints in the bead assembly, improving the way a tire interacts with the rim, and providing a rounder assembly for improved stability. The use of L.L. Carbon®, or Long Link Carbon, an advanced form of carbon black, produces a stronger tire, better able to resist cracking, chipping, tearing and excessive wear.

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BUELL 2004

Demo Days, Fuel in the Frame for a Year, and No Down Payment Programs

Motorcyclists who demo ride a Buell motorcycle through May 31, 2004 during Buell Demo Days will receive a free Buell Sling Bag. A valid motorcycle endorsement and proper riding gear are required for the demo ride. The customized sling bag, a \$50 retail value, is made from heavy-duty denier fabric with nylon lining and features four individual storage compartments.

Those who purchase a Buell before May 31 will receive free gasoline during the Buell "Fuel in the Frame for a Year" promotion. Fuel in the Frame for a Year will be provided through a \$150 Visa Gift Card. The Visa Gift Card is a prepaid card that can be used at millions of worldwide locations. Instead of worrying about rising gas prices, new Buell owners can focus on enjoying the ride. Highway gas mileage averages for the Firebolt and Lightning models are 65 mpg, and the Blast boasts nearly 73 mpg on the highway.

In addition, eligible buyers can also qualify for No Down Payment financing. This option is available through Eaglemark Savings Bank and Harley-Davidson Credit until June 30 on all 2003 and 2004 new, previously untitled Buell motorcycles including Blast.

BUELL 2004 LIGHTNING® XB9S - MSRP \$9,195

Overall Length 76.2 in. (1935 mm) - LOW XB9S 75.7 in. (1923 mm)

Seat Height 30.1 in. (765 mm) - LOW XB92 28.6 in. (726 mm)

Rake 21 degrees

Wheelbase 52.0 in. (1320 mm)

Front Tire Dunlop D207FY 120/70 ZR-17, Rear Tire Dunlop D207FU 180/55 ZR-17

Dry Weight 385 lbs. (175 kg)

ENGINE: 984cc air/oil/fan-cooled, four-stroke, 45 degree V-Twin

Valve Train OHV, two valves per cylinder, self adjusting

Fuel Delivery 45 mm downdraft DDFI II fuel injection

Torque (North America Per SAE J607) 70 ft-lbs @ 5500 rpm

Horsepower (North America Per SAE J607) 92 HP @ 7500 rpm

CHASSIS: Frame Aluminum frame w/ Uniplanar® powertrain vibration isolation system - Fuel in Frame Front Fork Showa® inverted fork w/ adjustable compression damping, rebound damping and spring preload Rear Shock Showa coil-over monoshock w/ remote, underseat reservoir, adjustable compression damping, rebound damping & spring preload

Wheels: Front 6-spoke, ZTL™, cast aluminum; 3.5X17"; Stardust Silver

Rear 6-spoke, cast aluminum; 5.5X17"; Stardust Silver

Brakes: Front ZTL type brake, 6-piston, fixed caliper, 375 mm single-sided, inside out, stainless steel, floating rotor

Rear 240 mm stainless steel, single piston, floating caliper, fixed rotor

COLORS: Midnight Black, Sunfire Yellow

Also shown: **BUELL 2004 LIGHTNING XB12S**

FIREBOLT XB12R



FIREBOLT XB9R



LIGHTNING XB12S



LIGHTNING XB9S



BLAST



BUELL 2004 FIREBOLT XB12R - MSRP \$10,995

Overall Length 76.2 in. (1935 mm)

Seat Height 30.5 in. (775 mm)

Rake 21 degrees

Wheelbase 52.0 in. (1320 mm)

Front Tire Dunlop D207FY 120/70 ZR-17

Rear Tire Dunlop D207FU 180/55 ZR-17

Dry Weight 395 lbs. (179 kg)

ENGINE: 1203cc air/oil/fan-cooled, four-stroke, 45 degree V-Twin

Valve Train OHV, two valves per cylinder, self adjusting

Fuel Delivery 49 mm downdraft DDFI II fuel injection

Torque (North America Per SAE J607) 84 ft-lbs @ 6000 rpm

Horsepower (North America Per SAE J607) 103 HP @ 6800 rpm

CHASSIS: Frame Aluminum frame w/ Uniplanar® powertrain vibration isolation system

- Fuel in Frame

Front Fork Showa® inverted fork w/ adjustable compression damping, rebound damping and spring preload

Rear Shock Showa coil-over monoshock w/ remote, underseat reservoir and adjustable compression damping, rebound damping and spring preload

Wheels: Front 6-spoke, ZTL™, cast aluminum; 3.5X17"; Translucent Amber

Rear 6-spoke, cast aluminum; 5.5X17"; Translucent Amber

Brakes: Front ZTL type brake, 6-piston, fixed caliper, 375 mm single-sided, inside out, stainless steel, floating rotor

Rear 240 mm stainless steel, single piston, floating caliper, fixed rotor

COLORS: Midnight Black, Racing Red



BUELL 2004 FIREBOLT XB9R - MSRP \$9,195

Overall Length 76.2 in. (1935 mm)

Seat Height 30.5 in. (775 mm)

Rake 21 degrees

Front Tire Dunlop D207FY 120/70 ZR-17

Rear Tire Dunlop D207FU 180/55 ZR-17

Dry Weight 385 lbs. (175 kg)

ENGINE: 984cc air/oil/fan-cooled, four-stroke, 45 degree V-Twin

Valve Train OHV, two valves per cylinder, self adjusting

Fuel Delivery 45 mm downdraft DDFI II fuel injection

Torque (North America Per SAE J607) 70 ft-lb @ 5500 rpm

Horsepower (North America Per SAE J607) 92 hp @ 7500 rpm

CHASSIS: Frame Aluminum frame w/ Uniplanar® powertrain vibration isolation system

- Fuel in Frame

Front Fork Showa® inverted fork w/ adjustable compression damping, rebound damping and spring preload

Rear Shock Showa coil-over monoshock w/ remote, underseat reservoir and adjustable compression damping, rebound damping and spring preload

Wheels: Front 6-spoke, ZTL™, cast aluminum, 3.5 x 17", Sky White

Rear 6-spoke, cast aluminum, 5.5 x 17", Sky White

Brakes: Front ZTL type brake, 6-piston, fixed caliper, 375 mm single-sided, inside out, stainless steel, floating rotor

Rear 240 mm stainless steel, single piston, floating caliper, fixed rotor

COLORS: Battle Blue w/ Red/White decals

Also shown: **BUELL 2004 FIREBOLT XB12R**



BUELL 2004 BLAST - MSRP \$4,595

Seat Height: Standard 27.5 in. (699 mm)

Low Profile 25.5 in. (648 mm)

Rake 25 degrees

Wheelbase 55.0 in. (1397 mm)

Front Tire 100/80 - 16 50 s K330 A series bias-belted

Rear Tire 120/80 - 16 60 s K330 A series bias-belted

Dry Weight 360 lbs. (163 kg)

ENGINE: 492cc air-cooled, Four-Stroke, Single Cylinder

Valve Train OHV, two valves, hydraulic adjusters, self-adjusting

Fuel Delivery 40 mm Keihin™ carburetor with auto fuel enricher system

Torque (North America PER SAE J607) 30 ft-lbs @ 3200 rpm

Horsepower (North America PER SAE J607) 34 Crank HP @ 6500 rpm

CHASSIS: Frame Wide beam HSLA steel backbone frame w/ built-in oil reservoir; Uniplanar® powertrain vibration isolation system; Titanium color finish

Front Fork Showa conventional 37.0 mm forks

Rear Shock Showa non-adjustable gas charged compression shock

Wheels: Front 5-spoke cast, 2.50 x 16, Stardust Silver finish

Rear 5-spoke cast, 2.75 x 16, Stardust Silver finish

Brakes: Front Dual-piston, floating caliper, 320 mm stainless steel rotor

Rear Single, piston floating caliper, 220 mm stainless steel rotor

COLORS: Midnight Black, Sunset Orange



BUELL 2004 LIGHTNING XB12S - MSRP \$10,995

Overall Length 76.2 in. (1935 mm)

Seat Height 30.1 in. (765 mm)

Rake 21 degrees

Wheelbase 52.0 in. (1320 mm)

Front Tire Dunlop D207FY 120/70 ZR-17

Rear Tire Dunlop D207FU 180/55 ZR-17

Dry Weight 395 lbs. (179 kg)

ENGINE: 1203cc air/oil/fan-cooled, four-stroke, 45 degree V-Twin

Valve Train OHV, two valves per cylinder, self adjusting

Fuel Delivery 49 mm downdraft DDFI II fuel injection

Torque (North America Per SAE J607) 84 ft-lbs @ 6000 rpm

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CHASSIS: Frame Aluminum frame w/ Uniplanar® powertrain vibration isolation system - Fuel in Frame

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Rear 240 mm stainless steel, single piston, floating caliper, fixed rotor

COLORS: Midnight Black, Racing Red

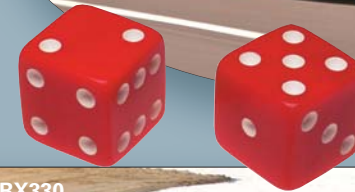


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Toyota Camry



2004 Honda CR-V

What's the shopping process for a mom of two, who's been driving a 1999 Mercury Cougar, wants to replace it with something that has no maintenance needs on the horizon, is still fairly fun and sporty, more useful when it's time for Little League or shopping, reliable, affordable to buy, economical to own, and generally desirable? *How about a minivan?* No, we don't want a minivan, and the Japanese ones are expensive and we don't want an American vehicle. *Why not?* We had one once and had trouble. *But they're built all over the world now; did you ever check the content stickers to see where a particular vehicle is built? There are US brands that are built by the Japanese in Mexico. Do you like that any better?* No, we don't want American.

Okay, well, minivans or SUVs might both work. Oh yes, I like SUVs; I like that high vantage point on the freeway. *So what would you like more than anything else?* A Lexus RX330! Or a BMW X5. Those are nice! *And the payment?* I'd like to keep it where the Cougar payment is, about \$250/month. *Well, at*

about \$20 per thousand financed per month, that's a \$12,500 purchase. Have you thought about leasing? Maybe. There are some great ads, \$239/month for a luxury SUV. It can't hurt to look, can it? But we know we shouldn't state our monthly goal, and we don't want to get caught up at the dealership all day long. Easier said than done. Does that promoted vehicle exist? We try quite a few, and it's a familiar story... it was one stock item that's long gone, or the price was dependent on being a veteran, elderly, disabled and a prior *plus* future customer... or all that *and* it's already sold. Or that's how it felt. Each dealer accuses the others of these tactics, but not themselves. *So how's the lease look on what they DO have?* It's got potential, but

there's that limit of 12,000 miles a year. We drive 15,000; can they allow that? Sure... we'll just figure that out after you sign and the deal is just about done. Or just figure right now you'll trade the vehicle in before the lease is up. *That could work... take a longer term, get a lower rate, don't worry about the mileage and just commit to yourself that you'll be happy with the same brand next time around.* But will we?

We start our search with small, relatively affordable Japanese SUVs, the Toyota

PURCHASE? NEW? CPO?

LEASE?

KEEP RIGHT >>



RAV4 and the Honda CR-V. The CR-V is nice, despite an automatic shift lever sticking straight out of the dash right where you could jam a finger while reaching for other controls. And the RAV4 is a nice vehicle, too, but noticeably small. We spend several hours developing the best possible lease and/or purchase scenario on the CR-V, but we haven't eaten since yesterday, it's 4pm, and we want to grab a bite and talk and think. A bite? They'll bring pizzas in! Talk and think? No way. We leave, eat, don't go back.



Okay, well, there's a lot of uncertainty about where a lease is headed. Let's look harder at what can be purchased. It will have to be a little less expensive vehicle, but then again, we can trade it on something better any time, when we can up the payment. You think used might work? If the miles are low enough, a dealer-purchased certified pre-owned vehicle, with some balance of existing warranty and ALSO an extended warranty can be a great buy... AND it's already depreciated. Got any?



Hmm. Some of these Japanese brands don't have very long warranties; others do. The ones that don't claim their brand is too reliable to need one. The skeptic in us says that if it's so reliable, they certainly could have a better warranty. Even the Koreans have a far better warranty. Want a Korean vehicle? Maybe. We look at the Hyundai Santa Fe, but never drive it.



Well, hey, if we're looking at used, let's revisit the wish list... maybe there's a sweet deal out there on an X5 or an RX300. Certainly the market is flooded with used vehicles now, due to all the zero-zero-rebate-incentivized new-vehicle sales recently. Let's call around. Not a chance on the X5, but the RX300 exists. These have some promise, but the price is still a little high, especially if new enough to be certified.

Well, you know, I've been studying this quite a bit, and it looks like I'd be really happy with a Toyota Highlander. That's in many ways an RX330 with a different body. (Actually, there are quite a few differences beyond style, but this does make a point.) We know our colleagues have liked the Highlander quite a bit. By the way, do you need a truck frame? car frame? off-road capabilities? four-wheel-drive? None of that particularly matters, as long as it's comfortable to drive around town on a daily basis, that's the most important. And four-wheel-drive is just going to use more fuel, isn't it? Well, maybe a little, but it'd be pretty cool to be able to take the kids hiking in Sedona or skiing at Flag some day. Well, we're looking at used now, so serendipity is likely to take a hand in a lot of these finer points anyway.

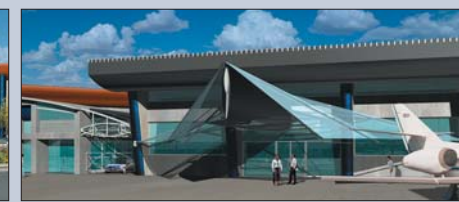
We pursue the Highlander. Nice vehicle, no real magic to it, but it fills the bills on all logical fronts. Can we meet the price? We come very, very close on various versions of new purchase or lease, but the variables are still making heads spin. Since we're at the Toyota dealership, how about a Camry? Best car in the world, some say. Less costly. Ready to make a deal. Only a three-year warranty, though, and the purchase will take at least a 60-month commitment. Are there other sedans that might work? Oh boy. Now this is wide open again. Dozens and dozens of possibilities.

Hey, if a sedan is a possibility, and an SUV offers the space and higher ride you're after, shouldn't we be looking at minivans again? The new Chrysler and Dodge minivans are red hot, with their stow'n'go systems. I already said I don't want to buy American; I had a Plymouth minivan once and had trouble with it. But... that was before DaimlerChrysler... Mercedes influence... international sourcing and robotized manufacturing. Nope. But let's go look at the Mazda MPV. It's been extremely popular since its inception; then again it's evolved a lot since then. Is that a good thing? It might be a great thing. It was kind of high and heavy initially; now it's more of a conventional minivan. Not too conventional, though... it's a more manageable size all its own, and it's very fully featured. We find a good selection of new, a couple of used, and an '03 still sitting on the lot new. Wow. Is this prexy much the final act in this drama? A friend suggested the Mazda3. Great car, but now we're headed in too many directions again. Mazda3 hatch? Then how about the Toyota Matrix or Pontiac Vibe? Don't like 'em, and the Mazda3 is just too small.

Well, wouldn't it be great to get what you actually want? That's the Lexus RX330, and that's just not going to happen. But the SUV is the most desirable format? I suppose so. German or Volvo are out of the question financially. So Japanese is the strongest contender. Well, how about that CR-V? The earlier deal is gone now. But... our intrepid shopper locates a used CR-V, low miles, low price, balance of warranty, though it's not a Honda dealer, so it's not certified. A few more hours of talking, and the facts are on the table. Is this everything we wanted? No. It's not a BMW X5 and it's not a Lexus RX330. But does it do the job? The price is right, it's a Honda and therefore probably fairly bombproof, it's got a higher stance than the Cougar, it's got a higher trim level than a new purchase could achieve within budget, heck it's even all-wheel-drive.

And the deal is done. ■

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THE INSIDE TRACK: BRIEFS & RUMORS

■ The new **Chrysler 300** and the **Dodge Magnum** that launched this spring will be strictly rear-wheel drive versions, but



starting in September the Magnum will be available with optional all-wheel drive and the 300 will get AWD in November.

■ Volkswagen will offer a diesel version of the **Passat** starting in May. The engine assigned to power the mid-size Passat is a 2.0-liter 134 horsepower four-cylinder turbo diesel. This same configuration has been a strong seller in Europe, but this will be the first time Volkswagen has offered a diesel in this size car in the US.

■ Last August Ford pushed a F-150 Lightning pickup around the Ford test track to get the *Guinness Book of Records* title of the "Worlds Fastest Production Pickup" by recording a top speed of 147 mph. Now the new **Dodge Ram SRT-10**, with its 500-hp Viper engine, broke the Ford record by registering 154.587 mph over a "flying kilometer" run at the DaimlerChrysler Proving Grounds in Chelsea, Mich. The SRT-10 was entirely stock with no enhancements or aerodynamic aids.



■ General Motors has given the green light to a new **Saturn** rear-drive sports car based on the same Kappa platform that is being developed for the Pontiac Solstice. Officials say the design features won't be the same as the Curve 2+2 coupe unveiled at the Detroit show in January, but they won't say what it will look like, yet.

■ Toyota may be planning to race the environmentally friendly and award-winning **Prius** hybrid. The company has built a Prius with a 98 horsepower gasoline engine and 60-kilowatt motor (the original has 76 hp and 50 kilowatts). They have also cut the weight from 2890 to 2470 pounds and added a stiffer suspension. The project is designed to show the potential of the Hybrid Synergy Drive.

■ **Mercedes-Benz** will offer a stretched version of the M-Class sport utility vehicle when the second generation comes to market in 2005. The 204-inch version of the M-Class will have three rows of seats and its own unique exterior styling to distinguish it from the regular model. It will come with standard air suspension.

■ It was announced previously that the **Mazda6** platform would be used for the next generation Lincoln Aviator and a Ford equivalent, but now it's been revealed that there will also be a Mazda "all-activity vehicle." According to John Parker, executive vice president of Mazda, the new vehicle will join the Mazda Tribute and MPV minivan, but will not replace either. The new vehicle will be about the same size as the Lexus RX 330.

■ General Motors has announced the sixth generation of the **OnStar** communication system hardware. It features enhanced voice recognition hardware and continuous digit dialing. The system allows subscribers to make phone calls by simply reciting the phone number as would be done in a normal conversation. It also allows numbers to be stored with names like "home" or "office." The new hardware will go into GM products starting with selected midsize SUVs this spring and then will go into a mix of all SUVs, pickups and cars.

■ Toyota's new generation **Solara** coupe will be offered in a topless version starting this summer. Unlike the previous



version, which was derived by cutting off the top and adding a convertible top, the new topless Solara was purpose-built from the ground up to avoid the body twist and cowl shake that often detracts from the converted models. A 225-hp 3.3-liter V-6 engine, attached to a 5-speed automatic transmission, powers the front-drive 2004 Solara convertible.

■ In an effort to bridge the gap between top of the line **BMW** models and the high-performance M versions, the company plans to offer turbocharged gasoline-powered engines on many models. The turbo versions will be on a new direct-injection gasoline powered engine. Some of the turbo cars will have an automatic transmission, which tend to be more popular in the United States.

■ **Subaru** is building a new platform to be used on a new seven-passenger crossover SUV for the US market. The upmarket Subaru will be designed to compete with vehicles like the seven-passenger Acura MDX. This will be an all-new car-style platform. It could also become the basis for the next-generation Saab 9-7x. The new larger Subaru is said to somewhat resemble the BMW X5. It is due in the fall of 2005 as a 2006 model.

■ **Nissan** is testing a QuadraSteer four-wheel steering system for use in the new Titan pickup, along with the Nissan Armada and Infiniti QX56 full-size sport utility vehicles. The system was developed by Delphi and is currently being used as a noticeably expensive option (part of a \$6,000 plus package) on heavy-



duty Chevrolet and GMC trucks. QuadraSteer turns the rear wheels the opposite direction of the front wheels at low speeds and the same direction as the front wheels at highway speeds to greatly improve maneuverability.

■ **Chrysler** plans to be competitively priced on its new 300 models. The base model, with a 200-hp V-6 engine, starts in the \$26,000 to \$27,000 range, so it should compete with Toyota Camry and Honda Accord. The top-of-the-line 300C with its 340-hp Hemi engine comes very well equipped for less than \$35,000.

■ **Subaru** will likely drop the Baja pickup after the 2006 model year unless sales improve. Introduced in September 2002, the small four-door, four-wheel drive pickup has sold less than half the projected numbers, even though the price has been cut by \$2,000 and a turbocharged performance model was added.

■ Toyota's new larger **Tacoma** pickup will feature a high performance model called the X-Runner Access Cab. It has suspension enhancements, a reinforced frame, six-speed manual transmission, antilock brakes and a 240-hp 4.0-liter V-6 engine. Toyota says the X-Runner accelerates from 0 to 60 mph in about 7 seconds. A supercharger will also be offered to boost horsepower to 300. Other options include stability control and side curtain airbags.



■ In an effort to encourage auto manufacturers to develop hydrogen-fueled vehicles, California **Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger** is supporting the California Hydrogen Highways plan to build 200 hydrogen filling stations in the state by 2010.

■ **Mercedes-Benz** CEO Jürgen Hubbert said the company is working on another high performance vehicle to build with its racing partner McLaren. The pair recently introduced the \$400,000-plus front-engine SLR McLaren to rave reviews and at least a year's worth of buyers. The next car would be a mid-engine sports car to do battle with the likes of Ferrari and Lamborghini. Such a car would probably be powered by a naturally aspirated version of the 500-hp



AMG V-8. The price would be in the more modest \$140,000 to \$180,000 range if the makes it to market, which could be by late 2007.

■ After the 2003 model year the giant **Ford Excursion** was rumored to be on the 2005 extinction list due to much lower than projected sales figures. Ford has evidently reconsidered and plans to continue building the big SUV along with the F-250 and F-350 heavy-duty pickups. Now that all the development costs have been paid for, the highly profitable vehicle is even more profitable, even at lower production levels. The Excursion is available with gasoline V-8 and V-10 engines or a diesel V-8 engine.

■ The upcoming **BMW 1 Series** has been spotted doing winter testing in Sweden. The car is expected to make a debut late this year. The first model will be a five-door hatchback, followed by a three-door model about six months later. The 1-series is designed to compete with cars like the Volkswagen Golf. Power will come from gasoline and diesel engines in Europe, but the US models will likely be all gas, at first. Watch for BMW to introduce a 2-series coupe at some future date.

■ **Porsche's** next generation 911 (the 997) is scheduled to debut in September. Spy photos show the evolutionary design once again using round headlights in a redesigned front end and a new rear styling with larger taillights. The most significant change is the 3.8-liter water-cooled flat-six engine, which is expected to have about 350 horsepower. The coupe will be introduced first, followed by a cabriolet and a turbo version. ■

Briefs & Rumors is a summary of auto news from industry sources, trade journals and consumer magazines compiled for *Arizona Driver Magazine* by **BILL & BARBARA SCHAFFER** of *Auto Digest*.

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UPCOMING FEATURES

Sedans : BMW 525i, Jaguar X-Type, Lexus LS430, Kia Amanti



In a world of sports cars and SUVs, it's easy to overlook the venerable 4-door sedan, but we will bring you results of our tests in the above four, offering a truly wide range of choice.

Ford Escape Hybrid



The world of alternate fuels is starting to heat up, and the gas-electric hybrid has taken such a foothold that you probably see them every day and don't know it. Here, the first hybrid SUV.

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