

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 4 NUMBER 4
JULY-AUGUST 2005

MINI Cooper S Convertible

Also... **HONDA
RIDGELINE**
Honda reinvents the pickup truck

ARIZONA DRIVER

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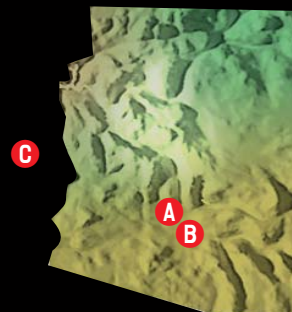
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COVER: MINI Cooper S Convertible.
Photo courtesy BMW of North America, LLC.



Size matters! So they say. So this month we have a couple of vehicles to report on, each of which has a size factor of sorts. The MINI speaks for itself—small. However, any convertible adds hundreds of pounds compared to a vehicle's hardtop weight, with the frame and body member adaptations necessary to make up for the missing rigidity of a roof, so this MINI—the Cooper S Convertible—is a new MINI that may look as diminutive as any, and even light and airy with its open top, but in fact it's going to add a few pounds to the small car. Does that matter? Well, in this case, we have the Cooper S model, so that already makes up for some of it.

Then we have Honda, the inventor of the modern small-car consciousness in America, one might say. Honda is a very small family-owned company, so they don't take lightly to inventing a whole new product in their lineup. And what size? They take on the mightiest traditional beast on the American road, the large pickup. We don't dare say "full size," and we hesitate to say "pickup," as they have quite thoroughly reinvented the vehicle classification. But it is a big Honda, and it does make the manufacturer's lineup grow, exponentially.

Let's see how they drive!



Joe Sage
Joe Sage
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ARIZONA DRIVER

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DESIGN & PRODUCTION: AdZoneAZ

ADVERTISING SALES: 480-948-0200

ARIZONA DRIVER MAGAZINE

PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY BY ADZONE ARIZONA LLC

Arizona Driver Magazine

PO Box 13387 - Scottsdale AZ 85267

www.azdrivermag.com

Arizona Driver Magazine and
Arizona Rider Magazine are registered
tradenames of AdZone Arizona LLC.

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1. What percent of new vehicle buyers in 2004 bought an extended service contract?
 - a. 8.8 percent
 - b. 13.8 percent
 - c. 20.8 percent
 - d. 25.8 percent
2. How long does it take Nissan to develop a new vehicle off an existing platform using digital technology?
 - a. 10.5 months
 - b. 14 months
 - c. 18.5 months
 - d. 22 months
3. Vehicles made up what percentage of total 2004 California retail sales?
 - a. 6 percent
 - b. 11 percent
 - c. 15 percent
 - d. 20 percent
4. What is the estimated extra cost for a company to build a hybrid vehicle?
 - a. \$2,500
 - b. \$3,500
 - c. \$4,500
 - d. \$5,500
5. Which material, used in the production of vehicles, had the largest price increase in 2004?
 - a. Aluminum
 - b. Copper
 - c. Plastic
 - d. Steel
6. For every dollar invested in magazine advertising, how much do automakers get back in sales?
 - a. \$4.17
 - b. \$8.23
 - c. \$12.87
 - d. \$15.51
7. Where was the stainless-steel bodied DeLorean sports car built?
 - a. Canada
 - b. United States
 - c. Sweden
 - d. Ireland

8. According to Bentley, the typical buyer of a new Continental GT fits into which of the following categories?
 - a. Net worth \$3 million, owns 5 cars
 - b. Net worth \$8 million, owns 6 cars
 - c. Net worth \$20 million, owns 7 cars
 - d. Net worth \$30 million, owns 8 cars
9. How many new diesel-engine passenger vehicles were registered in the US in 2004?
 - a. 269,000
 - b. 344,000
 - c. 470,000
 - d. 586,000
10. What year did BMW make ABS (antilock brakes) standard on all models?
 - a. 1982
 - b. 1986
 - c. 1990
 - d. 1995
11. What was the average price of the 900 cars sold at the Barrett-Jackson auction in Scottsdale in January 2005?
 - a. \$44,000
 - b. \$53,000
 - c. \$68,000
 - d. \$89,000
12. What percentage of people buy their tires from the first retailer who recommends new tires are needed?
 - a. 23 percent
 - b. 44 percent
 - c. 59 percent
 - d. 78 percent
13. What kind of business did Rita Ghosn, wife of Nissan CEO Carlos Ghosn, recently open in Tokyo?
 - a. An art galley
 - b. A Lebanese restaurant
 - c. A Nissan dealership
 - d. A multi-language bookstore
14. Which of these low volume vehicles sold the most cars in the US during 2004?
 - a. Bentley
 - b. Aston Martin
 - c. Maybach
 - d. Maserati
 - e. Rolls-Royce
 - f. Lamborghini
 - g. Ferrari
15. Which cars have the most frequent number of vehicle crashes?
 - a. Those with less than 200 hp
 - b. Those with 200 to 250 hp
 - c. Those with 250 to 300 hp
 - d. Those with more than 300 hp
16. Crude oil makes up what percentage of the price of a gallon of gas sold in the US?
 - a. 38 percent
 - b. 54 percent
 - c. 66 percent
 - d. 75 percent
17. How many of the 30,594 dealerships selling US brand cars sell exclusively one brand?
 - a. 3,275
 - b. 7,077
 - c. 10,582
 - d. 13,339

18. How many accidents are caused annually by drivers falling asleep at the wheel?
 - a. 20,000
 - b. 50,000
 - c. 75,000
 - d. 100,000
19. Which Chrysler Group vehicle offering the optional Hemi V-8 has the highest percentage of vehicles sold with that engine?
 - a. Chrysler 300
 - b. Dodge Magnum
 - c. Dodge Durango
 - d. Jeep Grand Cherokee
20. What share of Mustangs being sold is the V-8 powered GT?
 - a. 24 % are GTs
 - b. 38 % are GTs
 - c. 47 % are GTs
 - d. 56 % are GTs
21. Among worldwide automakers, what is Hyundai's rank in sales worldwide?
 - a. 5th
 - b. 7th
 - c. 9th
 - d. 11th
22. What is the average age of a Toyota buyer?
 - a. 45 years old
 - b. 50 years old
 - c. 55 years old
 - d. 60 years old
23. What percentage of new cars have screens for viewing DVDs or data?
 - a. 5 percent
 - b. 9 percent
 - c. 12 percent
 - d. 16 percent
24. Who drove the Chevrolet Corvette Pace Car at the 2005 running of the Indianapolis 500 race on Memorial Day?
 - a. Roger Penske
 - b. Jay Leno
 - c. Colin Powell
 - d. Robert Lutz
25. How many traffic deaths are caused annually by tire blowouts?
 - a. 200
 - b. 400
 - c. 600
 - d. 800
26. What percentage of SUVs sold in US are built by Ford, GM and Chrysler Group?
 - a. 32.7 percent
 - b. 46.5 percent
 - c. 58.4 percent
 - d. 65.4 percent
27. How many brands have sold one million or more vehicles in the US in one year?
 - a. Six
 - b. Seven
 - c. Eight
 - d. Nine
28. Which type of vehicle has the lowest driver fatalities per vehicle-miles rate?
 - a. Large pickups
 - b. Large 4-door SUVs
 - c. Large 4-door cars
 - d. Minivans

>> ANSWERS (quiz on page 7) >>



1. Answer: c. According to Power Information Network LLC, 20.8 percent of new vehicle buyers purchased extended service plans in 2004.
2. Answer: a. Nissan says they can develop a new vehicle off an existing platform using digital technology in just 10.5 months.
3. Answer: d. According to Automotive News, 20 percent of California's retail sales were vehicles.
4. Answer: b. According to Energy and Environmental Analysis Inc. hybrids cost about \$3,500 more to produce. The costs break down like this: Batteries, cooling system and battery controller (\$1,400), Electronic controls and inverter (\$1,400), Electric motor 50kW (\$600) and Harness, safety circuitry and AC-DC converter (\$600). Savings on the transmission amounts to \$500, which brings the final cost to \$3,500.

5. Answer: d. According to Wardsauto.com steel has the largest price increase in 2004 – 80 percent. Copper 60 percent. Plastic 50 percent. Aluminum 20 percent.

6. Answer: b. According to a 2003 study the Publisher's Information Bureau, automakers had sales of \$8.23 for every dollar they invested in magazine advertising.

7. Answer: d. The ill-fated DeLorean sport car was built for its short life at a plant near Belfast in Northern Ireland.

8. Answer: a. According to Bentley, the typical buyer of a Continental GT has a net worth of \$3 million and owns about 5 cars. For the ultra luxury segment of cars like a Rolls-Royce Phantom, Maybach or Bentley Arnage, the typical buyer typically has a net worth of \$30 million and seven or more cars.

9. Answer: c. According to J.D. Power and Associates there were 470,000 passenger vehicles (cars, trucks & SUVs) registered in the US in 2004. That is up 56 percent over 1999 when 310,000 were registered.

10. Answer: b. BMW made ABS brakes standard on all its models sold in the US in 1986.

11. Answer: c. In January the annual Scottsdale Barrett-Jackson auction sold 900 for about \$61 million making the average price just under \$68,000 per car.

12. Answer: d. According to General Motors, 78 percent of the consumers purchase tires from the first retailer who recommends the need for them.

13. Answer: b. Rita Ghosn, wife of Nissan CEO, Carlos Ghosn's, recently opened a Lebanese restaurant called My Lebanon in Tokyo.

14. Answer: a. Bentley was the top selling vehicle of the low volume cars (mostly exotics and ultra luxury models) for 2004 with total sales of 2,393. Ferrari 1,176. Maserati 1,055. Lamborghini 653. Aston Martin 600. Rolls-Royce 413. Maybach 244.

15. Answer: d. According to the Progressive Group of Insurance Companies, vehicles with over 300 hp have 33 percent fewer crashes than cars with less than 200 hp. Cars with 200-250 hp have 13 percent fewer crashes than the under-200-hp cars. Cars with 250-300 hp have 22 percent fewer crashes than those under 200 hp.

16. Answer: b. According to the US Department of Energy, crude oil makes up 54 percent of the cost of a gallon of gas.

17. Answer: b. According to Automotive News there are 7,077 exclusive car dealerships selling only one US brand in the US. The largest is Ford with 2,458 dealers selling only Fords.

18. Answer: d. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, drivers falling asleep at the wheel cause 100,000 automobile accidents annually.

19. Answer: c. 53 percent of the Dodge Durango's sold are equipped with the Hemi option. Magnum – 46 percent. Chrysler 300 – 41 percent. Jeep – 19 percent. Dodge expects 60 percent of the new Chargers to have the Hemi engine.

20. Answer: b. According to Ford, 38 percent of the new Mustangs sold so far have been the V-8 powered GT model. That compares with 33 percent for the previous generation.

21. Answer: b. Hyundai is the 7th largest automaker in the world (by sales volume). It fits between 6th place PSA/Peugeot-Citroen and eighth place Nissan.

22. Answer: b. According to Toyota, the average age of a Toyota buyer is 50 years old. The average age of a Lexus owner is 55.

23. Answer: c. According to Alpine Electronics, as reported by Business 2.0 magazine, nearly 12 percent of the new vehicles have screens for viewing DVDs or data, and that number is expected to increase to 50 percent in just 5 years.

24. Answer: c. Former Secretary of State Colin Powell, a new Corvette owner himself, drove the pace car at the 2005 Indianapolis Memorial Day Race.

25. Answer: b. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration there are over 400 deaths and 10,000 disabling injuries each year due to tire blowouts.

26. Answer: c. The Big 3 automakers (Ford, GM and Chrysler Division) sold 58.4 percent of the new SUVs the US in during the first quarter of 2005. That compares with 71.0 percent of the SUVs sold in the US in the first quarter of 2000.

27. Answer: a. Nissan recently sold more than one million vehicles in one year to join the exclusive club of six automakers reaching that milestone. Nissan's one million was recorded for their fiscal year which runs April through March. The other companies include GM, Ford, DaimlerChrysler, Toyota and Honda.

28. Answer: d. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, minivans have the lowest driver fatalities per billion vehicle miles – 2.76. Large 4-door cars 3.30. Large 4-door SUVs 3.79. Large pickups 4.07. Very small cars have the highest fatality rate per billion vehicle miles – 11.56.

The Car Smarts quiz includes news and trivia from industry sources, trade journals and consumer magazines compiled for *Arizona Driver* by **BILL & BARBARA SCHAFFER** of *Auto Digest*.



BMW 3 SERIES MOVES TO NEXT LEVEL

The all new 2006 3 Series moves BMW's best-selling car to a new level with all-new engines, suspension and improved interior space for rear seat passengers and cargo. The new more rigid body conveys the BMW look without pushing the envelope too far. Power still comes from ultra smooth inline six-cylinder engines, but they employ magnesium/aluminum composites, three-stage variable induction and other technological innovations to boost the 330i's horsepower from 225 to 255hp along with more torque and higher RPMs. The resulting engine also weighs 22 pounds less, is more compact and gets 12 percent greater fuel economy. A 6-speed manual transmission is standard with an optional 6-speed Steptronic automatic. An enhanced version of the iDrive audio and climate control system is optional. It also has an available Comfort Access system to unlock the door or start the engine while the remote key remains in a pocket or purse. The new 3 Series will be at dealerships later this year. ▼



BMW c-Series coupe



Hyundai Azera



The new Hyundai Azera brings significant evolution, abandoning distinctly unusual style points from the XG350, going mainstream and doing it well.

AZERA REPLACES HYUNDAI XG350

▲ Hyundai is moving its flagship up in scale and size with the introduction of the Azera and replaces the XG350. Hyundai claims the new luxury sedan has more interior room than the BMW 760i and Mercedes-Benz S-Class. The standard engine, and probably only engine, is a 3.8-liter V-6 rated at 265-hp. Even with an abundance of new luxury features, generally seen only on high-priced luxury vehicles, and segment-leading safety features the Azera should be priced in the \$25,000 to \$30,000 range when the 2006 model arrives at dealerships.

VEHICLES AS TRAFFIC SENSORS

Imagine there has been a traffic accident around a corner that you are approaching and your car automatically slows down before you round the corner and see the accident. BMW and DaimlerChrysler are currently testing vehicles in Europe with telematics systems that may be used to turn the vehicles into mobile sensors that automatically report road conditions to a traffic control center. The system gathers information like location, direction of travel, speed and along current driving conditions. With that information gathered from a significant number of vehicles it is possible to create a system

that will provide reliable incident detection and route guidance. The technology is all in place, but it will require collaboration between the automakers to develop a common basis to make the systems work. BMW and DaimlerChrysler are working on the system as part of a new Car2Car Communications Consortium, including Audi, Fiat, Renault and Volkswagen.

MICROSOFT TBOX

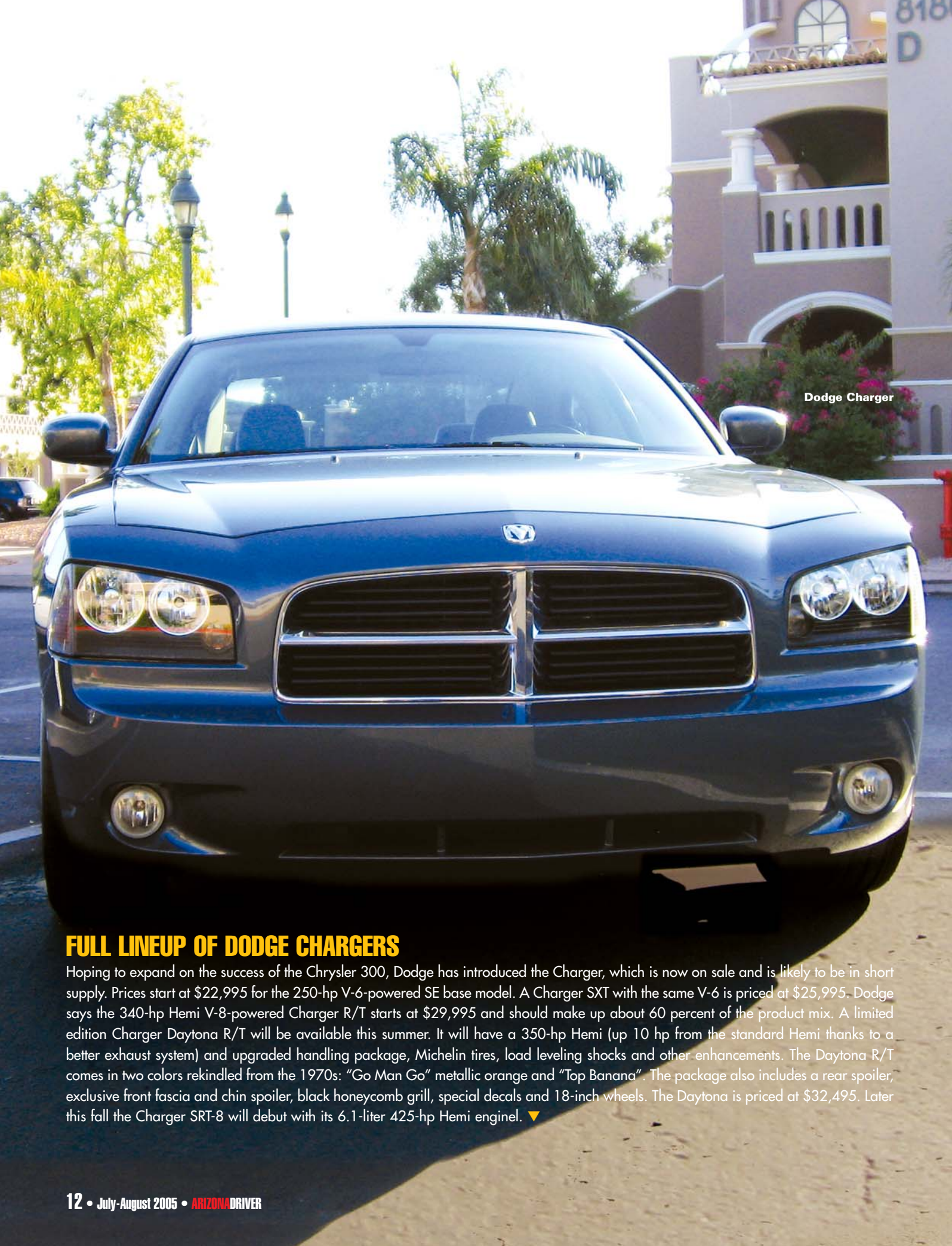
Microsoft wants to get into your car with a simple device that provides directions, plays digital music and makes hands-free phone calls. The simple two-button system, called the TBox, has no screen but links via Bluetooth wireless technology to personal digital assistants (PDAs), cell phones, iPods and other similar devices. Once activated, by pushing one of the two buttons, the TBox will be controlled by voice commands. The system will be capable of offering navigation information, remote vehicle diagnostics and electronic yellow pages. Unlike the current factory installed navigation systems that cost \$1,500 to \$2,000, the TBox could be available for as little as \$200 or \$300. Microsoft is currently trying to sell the systems to automakers.

PORSCHE PANAMERA

It appears the cat is out of the bag on the anticipated fourth Porsche model. The company recently registered the name Panamera for coupe-looking four-door sedan which is expected to debut at the Frankfurt motor show in September. It's designed to carry four adults and compete with cars like the new Mercedes-Benz CLS and the Maserati Quattroporte. Rumors suggest the platform might be something shared with Volkswagen's Phaeton and Passat, after the success of the last VW/Porsche collaboration, which spawned the Porsche Cayenne and Volkswagen Touareg. Power will probably be the same 4.5-liter 340-hp and 450-hp twin turbo V-8s used in the Cayenne.

2X FUEL SAVINGS: PLUG-IN HYBRIDS

Watch for hybrid vehicles to take a new turn in the future. There is a great deal of discussion going on in the auto industry about future use of plug-in hybrids. Rather than just getting in and driving with the vehicle recharging itself, the plug-in hybrids would have to be plugged in to recharge the larger batteries. The advantage is they can run much longer than regular hybrids in an all-electric



Dodge Charger

FULL LINEUP OF DODGE CHARGERS

Hoping to expand on the success of the Chrysler 300, Dodge has introduced the Charger, which is now on sale and is likely to be in short supply. Prices start at \$22,995 for the 250-hp V-6-powered SE base model. A Charger SXT with the same V-6 is priced at \$25,995. Dodge says the 340-hp Hemi V-8-powered Charger R/T starts at \$29,995 and should make up about 60 percent of the product mix. A limited edition Charger Daytona R/T will be available this summer. It will have a 350-hp Hemi (up 10 hp from the standard Hemi thanks to a better exhaust system) and upgraded handling package, Michelin tires, load leveling shocks and other enhancements. The Daytona R/T comes in two colors rekindled from the 1970s: "Go Man Go" metallic orange and "Top Banana". The package also includes a rear spoiler, exclusive front fascia and chin spoiler, black honeycomb grill, special decals and 18-inch wheels. The Daytona is priced at \$32,495. Later this fall the Charger SRT-8 will debut with its 6.1-liter 425-hp Hemi engine. ▼



Chevrolet Equinox

Expect to see the look of this Chevy Equinox's front end bodywork applied to Chevrolets throughout the lineup, from the smallest hatchback on up.

>> AUTO NEWS UPDATE - cont'd

mode. That means fewer emissions, and a significant increase in fuel economy. The down side is they would need to carry larger, more expensive batteries and be plugged in, but the upside is the battery would not limit the travel distance.

IT LOOKS LIKE A CHEVROLET

▲ General Motors plans to unveil a new look that will carry over to all its North American products from the Daewoo-built cars to full-size Chevrolet pickups. GM plans to make Chevrolet the company's mass-market brand worldwide with products sold in North America, Europe and Asia all having the same recognizable "look." According to David Lyon, executive director of Asia Pacific Design at GM Daewoo Auto and Technology Co., the front ends will have "a little bit of a truck influence." There will be a large grille opening with no metallic grillwork visible. About one-third down from the top of the opening, a horizontal bar bearing the Chevrolet bow-tie logo extends across the grille area. The bow tie will vary in size depending upon the vehicle. Lyon stressed that there will not be a cookie cutter look, but rather it will be a consistent look for a broad lineup.

MUSTANG COBRA COMING BACK FAST

Ford is bringing back the Shelby Cobra GT500 for 2007 and it promises to be one of the most potent Fords ever sold. Developed by the Ford SVT team, the new Cobra is powered by a supercharged 5.4-liter V-8 engine producing in excess of 450 horsepower. The car will carry SVT badging, but the SVT will be dropped as part of the official name. The new car is moving back from independent rear suspension to a solid rear axle to cut the weight by 180 pounds. The price is expected to be around \$40,000.

STRETCHED AND HYBRID LEXUS LS

As Lexus introduces the next generation LS in the fall of 2006 it will offer a stretched version of the brand's flagship sedan. Currently the LS offers the shortest wheelbase version currently available on luxury sedans, but starting with the 2007 models there will be a regular length and a longer model offered to compete with the stretch versions of Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Jaguar and Audi. The new LS 460 will also get a larger 4.6-liter engine, up from the current 4.3-liter. Later in the model year the LS will be offered in a gasoline/hybrid version called the LS 600hL. By adding the electric motor assist, the first hybrid luxury car will have

the equivalent power and performance to a 6-liter engine (hence the 600 nomenclature). The stretched version will be offered with the hybrid drive, too.

TIRE PRESSURE MONITORS REQUIRED

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has mandated that all new vehicles have a tire pressure monitoring system. The new regulation, which will be phased in through the 2006 through 2008 model years, says each vehicle must have a warning light activate if any of the tires pressure falls 25 percent or more the recommended cold-inflation pressure. The ruling applies to all cars and trucks less than 10,000 pounds gross vehicle weight. The systems will cost automakers as much as \$70 per vehicle.

SMALLER MERCEDES-BENZ SUV

Mercedes-Benz is expected to build a small sport utility vehicle called the X-Class. Smaller than the M-Class, the X-Class will compete with the BMW X3 and Land Rover Freelander. According to AutoWeek magazine, it will be developed on the next-generation C-Class chassis. Initial speculation is that it will have two rows of seats with a rear bench that will

KEEP RIGHT >>

LEXUS BIDS FOR KING OF MOUNTAIN

The new Lexus IS has its sights set on knocking the BMW 3 Series off its King of the Mountain perch. Starting with a dramatic new styling the IS gets a new aluminum suspension, electronic-assist steering and variable ratio variable brakes designed to offer a more progressive feel. A diesel engine will be available on European models, but the US cars will get gas only. The IS 250 gets a 201-hp 2.5-liter V-6, while the upper level IS 350 has a new 300-plus-horsepower 3.5-liter V-6. The 3.5-liter engine is said to produce 0 to 60 mph acceleration times in the low 5-second range. Both models are rear-wheel drive, with all-wheel drive as an option. Transmissions include a 6-speed manual or 6-speed automatic. Lexus claims to have the world's most advanced and fastest recalculating navigation system ready for this car. The system also includes Bluetooth technology plus a six-disc CD changer that also handles MP3 and WMA files. ▼



Lexus IS



Jeep Compass concept

The Compass concept vehicle brings a new niche to the Jeep lineup, but purists may object strongly... it's the first-ever Jeep without off-road ability.

>> AUTO NEWS UPDATE - cont'd

slide back and forth and possibly be removed to expand cargo capacity. Engines could include a 2.2-liter four-cylinder, and several V-6s from 230 hp to 270 hp, along with a 326-hp 4.7-liter V-8 in the US. The X-Class is expected to go on sale in Europe in 2007 with rear- and all-wheel drive versions and would likely be available in the US a year later. An official announcement is expected later this year.

WATER DISPLACEMENT 40

According to the company history, WD-40 inventors were trying to create a line of rust-prevention solvents and degreasers for use in the aerospace industry, when they developed the formulation for the current WD-40 lubricant. The name was created from the inventor's notes — WD stands for Water Displacement and the 40 stands for the fact that the product was created on the 40th attempt.

ELIMINATING THE GAS CAP

Illinois Tool Works, Inc. has designed a new direct fill fuel system that eliminates the need for a gas cap. To fill the tank the driver opens the fuel door and inserts a refueling nozzle into the guided fuel filler. The system then seals automatically when

the nozzle is removed and protects against splash back and contamination of the fuel system. It also eliminates the occasional "check engine" light, which is activated when the fuel cap is not tightened correctly on some vehicles. The system is designed reduce fuel vapor emissions during refueling, too. Without the cap, the fueling door can be made smaller allowing manufacturers more design flexibility. To date the Ford GT sports car is the only vehicle with the new Direct Fill system.

JEEP STRAYS FROM OFF-ROAD

▲ Jeep plans to build the four-wheel drive Compass crossover introduced originally as a concept in 2001. The Compass will fit into the Jeep lineup just south of the Wrangler. The five-seater will compete with vehicles like the Toyota RAV4, Honda CR-V and Land Rover Freelander at a price in the \$20,000 range. As a crossover the Compass is a dramatic departure for Jeep, whose mission has always been to build versatile off-road vehicles. Look for it in dealerships next year as a 2007 model.

BENTLEY MAY CONSIDER SUV

Bentley may have a high-end SUV in the works, according to information obtained by AutoWeek magazine. It will be based

on the upcoming Audi Q7, which is a derivative of the Volkswagen Touareg (Volkswagen owns Audi and Bentley). The idea behind the high level SUV stems from the 6.0-liter 450-hp W-12-powered Touareg that was produced in a limited edition of 500 and at a price of \$100,000. All 500 were sold out in just one month. With Bentley styling cues and an interior filled with super luxury appointments it's possible a Bentley SUV could be reasonably priced at \$200,000.

AIR FRESHENER MAY BE SAFETY DEVICE

A recent study by researchers at Wheeling Jesuit University suggests that a simple solution to curb falling asleep at the wheel may be using a car air freshener. The study that showed drivers were more alert and experienced less fatigue when a pine scent was added to the car interior. The study further indicated that drivers also demonstrated a decreased level of anger and improved overall driving performance when exposed to strawberry and pine scents. AroMetrics™, a new auto fragrance system owned by Eagle One appearance products and Valvoline commissioned the study. The

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new AroMetrics car fresheners have an adjustable release mechanism so the fragrance level can be controlled while lasting up to 45 days. The \$2.99 device is available in 15 fragrances including "fresh & clean", "crisp cotton", "new car" and "white caps" along with a dozen more tradition scents. It was not noted if scents, other than pine and strawberry, would affect driving functions.

HYUNDAI SETS SIGHTS HIGH

Hyundai's goal is to reach 1 million annual sales by the end of this decade and to make that plan work it has seven new products scheduled to arrive at dealerships by the end of 2006. The latest entry is the Sonata that takes a direct shot at Honda Accord and Toyota Camry. The Sonata is nearly identical in size and power to both of those high volume cars. The increased dimensions of the Sonata jump it to the next level so is now rated as a "large" sedan by EPA designations. Even with the base price of the Sonata, with a 162-hp four-cylinder engine, going up \$1,451 to \$18,495 the equipment levels have grown dramatically to include stability control, traction control, front, side and curtain airbags, cruise control and, four-wheel antilock disc brakes. The base price also includes air conditioning, CD player, all power, 16-inch wheels, tilt wheel and keyless entry with alarm. The upper level Sonata has a base price of \$21,495 and is powered by a 235-hp 3.3-liter V-6 engine with a five-speed automatic transmission.

THE NEXT GENERATION AUDI ALLROAD

Just a year after Audi gets into the SUV business with its upcoming Q7, which is a derivative of the Volkswagen Touareg, it will present the next generation allroad (Audi spells allroad with no capital letter). Audi describes the allroad as a vehicle for mature, sophisticated driver's tired of the truck-base SUVs. Coming to market for the 2008 model year, the new allroad will get an optional 4.0-liter commonrail turbodiesel V-8 rated at 282 hp and producing 479 lb.ft. of torque. Innovative technology in the works includes light-emitting diode headlights and optical sensors that read road conditions and

warn the driver of gravel, black ice or other hazards while adjusting the stability control and adaptive cruise control automatically. There will also be a lane change assistance system that will vibrate the steering wheel to warn the driver that he has left his lane. A side view assist system uses radar sensors to warn the driver of a vehicle in the blind spot to the side and behind the driver's field of vision.

DODGE BACK IN POLICE BUSINESS

With the introduction of the new Charger, Dodge is planning to get back into the law enforcement business. The full-size rear-wheel drive sedans are available to police departments with the 250-hp 3.5-liter V-6 engine or the 340-hp HEMI V-8. Police vehicles will be equipped with Electronic Stability Program with Emergency Brake Assist, all-speed traction control and four-wheel antilock brakes. The package includes a long list of heavy duty electronic and drivetrain equipment to handle the extra demands placed on the vehicles. There will also be optional all-wheel drive versions available for added traction. Watch out for the trademark Dodge crosshair front grilles to start appearing in your rearview mirrors as early as the fall of 2005.

HYUNDAI AND KIA HYBRIDS IN 2006

Gasoline/hybrid powered versions of Hyundai Accent and Kia Rio will be offered probably by the second half of 2006 says Lee Hyun Soon, senior executive vice president of powertrains. The systems will use a high-efficiency internal combustion engine and one or more electric motors to power the wheels. Larger hightbred vehicles from the Korean manufacturers will probably come to the US market in 2008 or 2009. Hyundai has developed its own hybrid systems, but is buying the batteries from Panasonic EV Energy Co., which supplies the Toyota Prius Hybrid. Hyundai is also investing heavily in hydrogen-powered fuel cell research.

JAGUAR TO LIGHTEN ITS LOAD

Jaguar is showing an Advanced Lightweight Coupe concept that should be a close facsimile of the next generation XK coupe. The concept is built on the same family platform that debuted recently with the XJ sedan. The aluminum-

Bugatti Veyron



One picture is just a start, with the Bugatti Veyron, and we wish we had room for a thousand words. This supercar is pretty much off the charts.

intensive construction of the sedan will carry over to the coupe, and will likely also be used on the next generation S-Type sedan. If the entry-level X-Type survives it will more than likely continue to use a less expensive Ford platform.

BUGATTI VEYRON OK FOR PRODUCTION

▲ The Bugatti Veyron is not a car that many of us will ever see, let alone ever drive, but it's certainly a car that dreams will be made of. Imagine 1,001 horsepower coming from an 8.0-liter quad-turbo W-16 engine producing a 0 to 60 time of 3.0 seconds and a top speed of 252 mph. Or for another perspective how about 0 to 186 mph in 14.0 seconds! VW boss Bernd Pischetsrieder has approved the production of the Bugatti Veyron ultra supercar. Development of the world's fastest production car has not been without difficulties. Tires and high-speed stability have been a problem, but engineers are making progress. Michelin is the only tire company brave enough to try to meet tire speed and durability requirements. Early estimates list a price in the \$1 million range.

CHEVROLET'S NEXT BIG TRUCKS

The first wave of the next generation full-size Chevrolet trucks will arrive at dealerships starting in the first quarter of 2006. First up is the Tahoe. The Suburban is due in the second quarter of 2006 followed by the Avalanche in the third quarter. The Silverado 1500 pickup is scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2006, with the heavy-duty 2500 and 3500 models coming in the first quarter of 2007. According to Automotive News Cadillac and GMC brands, which share components with the Chevrolets, will follow a similar timetable. All the sheet metal will be new, but the styling will be more evolutionary, than revolutionary.

AUDI'S NEW-GENERATION QUATTRO

Audi's quattro all-wheel drive system has traditionally had a 50/50 front/rear torque split under normal driving conditions. The new generation now has a 40/60 front/rear split to give it a rear axle bias to better compete with the rear-wheel drive vehicles. Audi engineers claim this will give the quattro vehicles handling more like the rear-wheel drive vehicles while

retaining the stable chassis dynamics and all-weather traction ability. The new system debuts in Europe on the high performance RS4, which is scheduled for North American models in 2006. The first car to get the rear-bias system was the V-8-powered S4. In mid-2006, all 2007 model quattro-equipped vehicles will get the new system.

THE NEXT PORSCHE 911 TURBO

The next generation Porsche 911 Turbo should roar into dealerships early in 2006 pumped up to 480 hp from the previous 444-hp version. The new Turbo will be the first mass production Porsche model available with the new double-clutch gearbox, which is similar to the Audi DSG automatic that shifts faster than a manual. The other Porsche turbo, the twin-turbo Cayenne SUV, will get a second engine choice producing around 540-hp, up from the base 450-hp. ■

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*.

How much fun is this?!

Here is why you want to become the best driver you can...

BMW DRIVER TRAINING: ADVENTURE TRAININGS AND ADVENTURE TRIPS 2005



You may have a taste for some adventure behind the wheel, and you may find these are just the vehicles to do it in. You may even be driving these vehicles now. But before you can take on something as fun as all this, you need to get the training. That doesn't mean it isn't fun! You may not be headed off to Europe this year ... or maybe you will ... but a quick look at this program shows there is a lot of fantastic experience out there for the trained driver, or the driver willing to be trained.

The real experience is the process of getting there. BMW Adventure Trainings and Adventure Trips enrich the actual training experience by another essential factor: These events combine exclusivity with individual style, a team experience with a club ambience, the thrill of traveling with mastery in controlling one's car, and, not least, the joy of discovery with the experience of learning anew.

BMW Winter Training: Elegant Pirouettes on Snow and Ice

These start each year in early December. The training locations are in Sölden, Austria and in Åre, Sweden and offer a unique combination of successfully learning in mastering your car on snow and ice with truly outstanding fun and a great experience.

BMW Z4 Roadster Adventure Trips: Driving "Topless" through Europe

In spring and summer, lower the top and travel through the most beautiful countryside in Europe. Just two of the many destinations, by way of example, are the Tuscany Region in Italy or the Ticino Canton in Switzerland. Cruising in their Z4s, participants spend four wonderful days enjoying serpentine roads in the Italian part of Switzerland, in the Engadin Region, and in Italy itself.

BMW X5 Adventure Trips: A Far-Out Experience for Man and Machine

This trip through Namibia, south of the equator, is certainly a unique way to combine driving pleasure with a truly unusual trip: this nine-day offroad adventure takes participants to one of the most beautiful and wildest regions in the world. Covering a distance of approximately 1,200 km or 750 miles, participants will experience downhill gradients of up to 11 %, gravel, sand, rocky tracks and a lagoon only accessible during low tide - these are the challenges you have to brave. On this exclusive safari, participants also learn how to navigate with an offroad GPS system and the roadbook, they practise the exact handling of their car in the dry moonscapes and mountainous sand dunes of the Namib Desert.

Nürburgring Nordschleife: M3 Circuit Training and M5 "Taxi"

The aficionado of high-speed driving will be simply thrilled by a unique race track experience on the labyrinth of the "Green Hell," as the Nordschleife is called. Participants experience the BMW 330i and M3 precisely where they are fine-tuned by BMW's engineers and suspension specialists in the development process. Apart from the theory of driving dynamics, the programme comprises Section Training making participants aware of the particular challenges of this demanding track. The highlight of this two-day course is the completion of several guided laps round the track almost 21 km or 13 miles in length, following a pace car setting the right standard. In the process the instructors ensure absolute safety: The focus is on safe driving on the ideal line, not on the fastest lap times, which are not measured, anyway.

Visit the BMW German website at www.bmw.de/fahrertraining (with link to English) for dates, pricing and detailed information on these BMW Adventure Training and Adventure Trips. ■

Delivering the driver's edge to teen drivers.

Traditional driver's education has focused on the skills needed to pass a driving test, with classroom lectures and some behind-the-wheel "on-the-job training." The DrivingMBA™ program goes beyond this, bringing high-tech simulators to everyday drivers.



The DrivingMBA™ Comprehensive Driving Tutoring Program

These components are available as a discounted package or individually:

- **Rules of the Road® DVD** : Award-winning interactive DVD tutorial for home use.
- **Pre-Permit Driving Simulation Course** : 5 hours total computer simulated driving experience gives teens a solid foundation in fundamentals before they get behind the wheel.
- **Safe Young Drivers** : A book to supplement your own in-vehicle training.
- **Advanced Decision Skill Building** : The same high-end simulator used by police and other professionals to improve behind-the-wheel decision-making skills.
- **Profiler™** : Assesses your skills against a pro database (included with Advanced Decision Skill Building).
- **DUI** : Students in both simulator courses experience the negative impact upon vehicle control of driving while impaired.



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MINI to the MAX

Take one fun MINI
Add Cooper
Add S
Drop the top
Anything missing?

by Barbara
and Bill Schaffer



MINI likes their name spelled in all caps (though not all comply). Could they have a complex? Good things come in small packages, and this is one.

We watched *The Italian Job* again recently, knowing that we were going to get the MINI Cooper S Convertible the following week. Thank goodness by the time we got it our enthusiasm for extreme driving was out of our systems. But regardless, we had a great time running around in it for a week.

Driving the MINI Cooper is a liberating experience. Unshackled from normal automotive bulk and convention, the MINI entices a driver with a kind of spiritual experience. The sensation is enhanced, especially when driving the S model, with the ability to accelerate, turn, stop and all the other driving functions—quickly and with a smile on your face. The entire experience is not unlike driving a go-cart, and if you've driven one of those, you'll always remember how much fun that was!

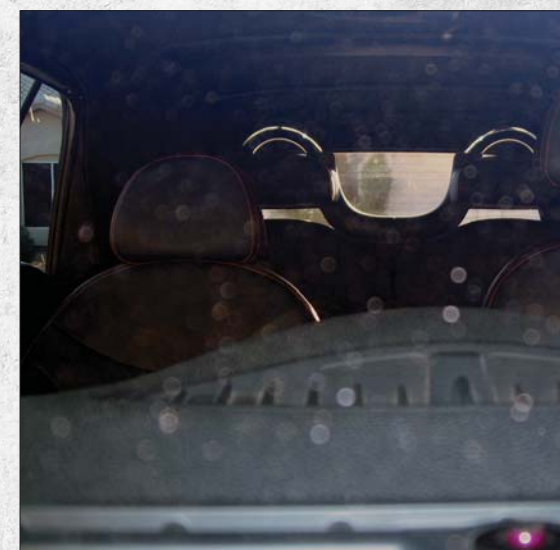
The MINI maximized the driving experience recently with the advent of the convertible—now you can have the sensation of the MINI and with wind through your hair, too. There is probably no more distinctive vehicle in the world than the MINI Cooper. The whimsical-looking vehicle still brings a smile to our faces when we see it on the road and causes a big grin when we're driving it.

The convertible has a redesigned three-slat grille, and the headlights have a new reflector and bezel under the crystal. The front bumper has been enhanced with chrome accents, which along with the newly integrated fog lamps, doesn't lose the MINI signature bulldog look.

The interior is most distinctive with its oversized speedometer mounted in the center of the dashboard. Front seats are supportive, with manual front, back and height adjustments. Contoured sport seats are available on the convertible.

There is one drawback to the convertible—visibility. When the top is up, the rear view is limited to the side mirrors and a small gap out the rear between the rear roll bars. Drop the top, and it's better, but still with some obstructions. MINI engineers conveniently provided help for this handicap by installing a Park Distance Control system as standard equipment on all MINI convertibles.

Once you read the instructions, dropping the top is easy, and it can even be done from outside the vehicle by a series of presses on the key fob. The unique top makes this the only convertible we know



KEEP RIGHT >>



The MINI Cooper S Convertible comes with runflat tires and tire monitoring system. It can continue up to 90 miles at speeds of up to 50 mph with no air.



of that opens in stages, first to provide a sunroof over the front seats, and then to drop entirely behind the rear seats for the full open-air experience.

The MINI convertible comes standard with fully automatic power top with sliding sunroof, power windows, central locking with remote control, Park Distance Control, heated glass rear window, tire monitoring system and more for the base price of \$21,450. The S version is priced at \$25,450 including shipping. The MINI Cooper hardtop starts at \$16,950.

Packages and options available include a Navigation system, rain sensor wipers, Xenon headlights, wind deflector, automatic climate control plus other favorites. A 1.6-liter supercharged four-cylinder engine powers the MINI S Convertible, producing 168-hp compared to 115 horsepower for the standard model. Our test car was equipped with the 6-speed manual Getrag transmission with a shift linkage that required little more than a flip of the wrist to shift. It's also available with an optional 6-speed automatic transmission.

To keep with the go-cart emulation, the MINI is equipped with a quick ratio electro-hydraulic power-assist rack-and-pinion steering system. It takes just 2.5 turns to go from lock-to-lock, giving it

nearly the same sort of steering feel as a go-cart. The steering system is also designed to eliminate virtually all the torque steer characteristics that often plague front-wheel drive performance cars.

The MINI Cooper Convertible comes standard with four airbags—two front-mounted and two side airbags. It also comes with high strength aluminum rollover hoops behind the rear seats, along with a reinforced A pillar windshield surround that will help to protect occupants in the event of a rollover.

The MINI S Convertible accelerates from 0 to 60 mph in just 7.0 seconds, but it feels even faster in the small car. It also has a top speed of 134 mph. Our fuel economy averaged a combined 29.8-mpg, as compared with EPA estimated mileage of 25 mpg for city driving and 32 mpg on the highway. Young kids complained that the MINI convertible was “too small,” but we think it’s “too cute” and “too fun.” Now who are you going to believe, whining kids or an adult who loves to drive and have a good time?

The MINI Cooper convertible—and the coupe—both fall into that category of cars we really like: they are “keepers.” It’s just so much fun and convenient to drive; we can’t help but love it. ■



MINI Cooper S Convertible

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

- Air conditioning, AM/FM/CD stereo
 - Power automatic soft top
 - Tire monitoring system
 - Heated rear glass window
 - Park Distance Control
 - Remote keyless entry
 - Electric windows
 - 16-Inch alloy wheels
 - Sport suspension
 - Automatic Stability Control + Traction.
- Base Price: \$24,900

Options:

- Premium package (Automatic air conditioning, Steering wheel controls, On board computer & speed control, Harman Kardon premium audio). \$1,350
 - Sport package (Sport seats, Dynamic Stability Control, Fog lights, 5-Spoke Bullet Alloy Wheels and HID headlights)\$1,850
 - Leather trim\$1,300
- Total Options\$4,500
 Freight.....\$550
 Price as Tested.....\$29,950

DIMENSIONS

EPA Size	Mini compact
Weight.....	2,844 lb.
Wheelbase	97.1 in.
Length.....	143.9 in.
Width.....	66.5 in.
Height	55.5 in.
Fuel Capacity	13.2 gal.
Cargo Capacity	4.2 to 21.4 cu. ft.

MECHANICAL

Engine.....	1.6L Supercharged 4-Cyl
Horsepower	168@6000
Torque	162@4000
Transmission.....	6-Spd. Man.
Drive	Front wheel
Brakes.....	Disc ABS
Tires	205/45R17

PERFORMANCE

0 to 60 mph.....	7.0 sec.
Speed to mailbox.....	78 mph
Top speed	134 mph
EPA economy rating	25/32 mpg
Our actual fuel econ	29.8 mpg

COMPETITORS

PT Cruiser convertible, Mitsubishi Eclipse Spyder, Toyota Camry Solar convertible, Volkswagen New Beetle Convertible

OUR DRIVE

Whereas a lot of small cars have had a limited audience and/or some stigma attached to them (outside the tuner set), the MINI has done very well with a broader audience, as it has panache from its heritage versions and the current models as well. We wondered, though, how this might carry forward into the Convertible. A Cooper S version is a good place to start, but might this be a less-than-manly vehicle, along the lines of the VW Cabriolet? (Of course, that only matters to half of us.) To drive it, we'd have to say no. We checked with MINI's corporate communications people, to see what the gender split is, on the hardtop and the new convertible, but they didn't provide any data. At any rate, nobody seemed to be making fun of us for driving it.

Front-wheel drive can be notorious for torque steer (and some other undesirable characteristics), unless the engineers really do their work. MINI's engineers have done their work since day one, and this little car handles quite confidently and precisely for a front-driver, though some characteristics remain. There are a few concerns with a convertible version of most anything, too. First is that the chassis stiffening required by the lack of a roof will always add weight to the car. In the MINI's case, it's only about a 122-pound gain; still that demands a fun-vs-performance tradeoff. Second is loss of trunk space, and with the MINI, that statistically means its impact on a small rear storage hatch and the back seat volume; the difference is negligible. Third is half-related to the second: if the top doesn't drop into the trunk or storage area, does it pile up and block your rear vision, as with an old VW bug convertible? This is somewhat the case with the MINI, although it doesn't add that much blockage behind what the rear seats and roll hoops already block. The other half of that equation is visibility with the top up, and this is less than ideal.

Anything fast, fun and top-down is going to appeal to us. Small fits well, too. So with MINI, would we opt for the convertible? Maybe. It's a lot of fun! But the hardtop is surely the purist's iteration. ■

Arizona

ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

Chiricahua State Park

HCR 2, Box 6500 • Willcox AZ 85643
520-824-3560

Grand Canyon National Park

PO Box 129 • Grand Canyon AZ 86023
923-638-7888 Visitor Info Recorded Message

Lake Havasu State Park

699 London Bridge Dr. • Lake Havasu AZ 86403
928-855-2784

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument

10 Organ Pipe Drive • Ajo AZ 85321-9626
520-387-6849 Visitor Information

Petrified Forest National Park

PO Box 2217
Petrified Forest National Park AZ 86028
928-524-66228 Visitor Information

Saguaro National Park

3693 South Old Spanish Trail
520-733-5153 Visitor Info Rincon Mtn District

Sport Compact Drag Racing

Every thursday at Firebird Raceway
www.dragracing.com/phx

Wupatki National Monument

Flagstaff Area National Monuments
6400 N. Hwy 89 • Flagstaff AZ 86004
928-679-2365 Visitor Information
928-526-1157 Visitor Information, HQ

California

ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

Palm Desert Visitor Information Center

72-990 Highway 111 • Palm Desert CA 92260
800-873-2428 • www.palm-desert.org

MOTOR MUSEUMS

Petersen Automotive Museum

6060 Wilshire Blvd. (at Fairfax) • LA CA 90036
323-930-CARS • www.petersen.org

Colorado

ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

Colorado Activity Centers, Inc.

737 N. Tenmile Drive - Suite 35
PO Box 129 • Frisco CO 80443
800-777-8642 - www.coloradoinfo.com

MOTOR MUSEUMS

Shelby American Collection

5020 Chaparral Court
PO Box 19228 • Boulder CO 80308-2228
www.shelbyamericancollection.org
303-516-9565

Nevada

ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

Las Vegas Tourism Bureau

6120 W. Tropicana Ave. • Las Vegas NV
www.lasvegastourism.com

MOTOR MUSEUMS

Imperial Palace Auto Collections

Fifth floor parking facility of Imperial Palace.
702-794-3174
www.imperialpalace.com/auto.html

National Automobile Museum

The Harrah Collection
10 Lake Street South • Reno NV 89501
775-333-9300 • www.automuseum.org

New Mexico

ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

New Mexico Department of Tourism

800-733-6396 x 0643 • www.newmexico.org

Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 1928 • Santa Fe NM 87504
8380 Cerrillos Rd. Suite 302 • Santa Fe NM 87507
505-983-7317 • www.santafechamber.com

RESORTS / LODGING

Inn on La Loma Plaza

315 Ranchitos Road • Box 4159 • Taos NM 87571
800-530-3040 • www.VacationTaos.com

Inn on the Alameda

303 East Alameda • Santa Fe NM 87501
505-984-21221 • www.innonthealameda.com

Utah

ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

San Juan County Tourism

117 S. Main Street • Monticello UT 84535
800-574-4386 • www.southeastutah.org

Southern Utah Scenic Tours

PO Box 1113 • Cedar City UT 84720
888-404-8687 • www.utahscenicstours.com

RESORTS / LODGING

Desert Rose Inn & Cabins

701 W. Highway 191 • Bluff UT 84512
888-475-7673 • www.DesertRoseInn.com

Mexico

RESORTS / LODGING

Puerto Peñasco Mexico Online

Beachfront home rentals in Rocky Point.
623-935-0507 • www.puerto-penasco.com

ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

Baja California State Tourism Office

Blvd. Diaz Ordaz s/n
Edificio Plaza Patria Nivel 3
CP 22400 Tijuana BC
(66) 81-9492

Chihuahua State Tourism Office

Calle Libertad No. 1300
Edificio Agustin Melgar, 1er Piso
CP 31000 Chihuahua, Chihuahua
(14) 29-3421

Sinaloa State Tourism Office

Av. Camarón Sabalo esq. Tiburon
Edificio Banrural 4 Piso
CP 82100 Mazatlán, Sinaloa
(69) 16-5160

Sonora State Tourism Office

Centro de Gobierno
Edificio Estatal Norte 3er Nivel
Comonfort y Paseo Río
CP 83280 Hermosillo, Sonora
(62) 17-0076

Of national interest

MOTOR MUSEUMS

Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village

20900 Oakwood Blvd. • Dearborn MI 48124
www.hfmgv.com • 313-271-1620

Imperial Palace Auto Collections

(see Nevada listings)

Motorcycle Hall of Fame Museum

Pickerington OH 43147
www.motorcyclemuseum.org • 614-856-2222

National Automobile Museum

(see Nevada listings)

National Corvette Museum

350 Corvette Drive • Bowling Green KY 42101
www.corvettemuseum.com • 800-53VETTE

Petersen Automotive Museum

(see California listings)

Shelby American Collection

(see Colorado listings)



Information is derived from a variety of sources and may not be final or accurate; check all info. Listings do not necessarily represent any specific affiliation with nor endorsement by *Arizona Driver* magazine.



HONDA REINVENTS THE PICKUP TRUCK

by Barbara and Bill Schaffer



Caption: Safety equipment on the Honda Ridgeline pickup includes driver and passenger airbags, front seat side airbags and side curtain airbags with rollover sensor. It's also the first four-door pickup to earn the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration 5-Star safety rating for both frontal and side impact crash test performance. A major distinguishing set of features centers around innovative storage, access and utility in the pickup bed area.

Over the years we've driven hundreds of trucks, and with a few exceptions they leave us wanting more. We want more precise handling, stronger performance and a smoother ride. We want the truck to be quieter and more civilized. It appears what we've been waiting for is the Honda Ridgeline.

The 2006 Ridgeline is a real truck built new from the ground up. It will do nearly anything the big name trucks will do, and often better. We're talking about hauling a 1,200-pound load, pulling a 5,000-pound trailer or climbing a 24-degree loose dirt hill. We're talking about loading five adults in a quiet comfortable cab, hauling a couple of dirt bikes or 4-by-8-foot sheets of building material. And those are just the routine things the Ridgeline will do.

Beyond its conventional truck characteristics, the Ridgeline starts to pull away from the rest of the massive pickup fleet with carlike handling, performance and ride. Then there are the standard safety features like Vehicle Stability Assist (VSA),

traction control, anti-lock brakes, Electronic Brake Distribution, side curtain airbags with rollover sensor and front side airbags.

With features like this, the Ridgeline is unique, but then Honda designers took a major leap over the competition with a rugged integrated cab and bed design, riding on a fully integrated closed box frame with unit body construction. Then, to top it off, the Ridgeline became the first truck with four-wheel independent front and rear suspension—plus it's only one available with an advanced four-wheel drive system (VTM-4WD).

But the coup de grace is the trunk. In the rear half of the five-foot composite and steel bed, there is a hatch that covers an 8-cubic-foot in-bed trunk. The water- and dust-tight double-sealed compartment is large enough to carry up to three sets of golf clubs, or several large pieces of luggage. For tailgate parties, the trunk can even be filled with ice and beverages, and when the ice melts, the water can be drained through a convenient drain plug in the floor. The trunk automatically locks

and unlocks with the cab doors, and it has an interior emergency latch—just in case.

So, have you been hankering for a pickup, but hesitated because it wasn't a practical family vehicle, and you really didn't want to be driving one of those double cab monsters? Or have you thought instead about a sport utility vehicle, but rejected it because there was no place to haul the topsoil, bark and trees you were planning to buy for your backyard project? If you can answer "yes" to either or both of these questions, do we have a truck for you: the 2006 Honda Ridgeline pickup.

With truck sales (including SUVs) exceeding 54 percent of the new vehicle market, Honda needed to expand beyond its current three truck offering (Pilot, Element and CR-V) to offer a real truck that could actually haul things.

Honda engineers and designers, not content just to copy an existing truck, wanted to reinvent the truck and make it

KEEP RIGHT >>



HONDA RIDGELINE RT

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

HD Transmission cooler; Electronic brake distribution; Brake assist; Vehicle Stability Assist; Tire pressure monitoring system; Keyless entry; AM/FM/CD audio; Air conditioning; Driver's seat height adjustment; Split folding rear seat; Power windows & door locks; Power sliding rear cabin window; Cruise.

Base Price..... \$27,700
Optionsnone
Freight.....\$515
Price as Tested.....\$28,215

DIMENSIONS

EPA SizeStd. pickup
Weight.....4,503 lb.
Wheelbase122.0 in.
Length.....206.8 in.
Width.....76.3 in.
Height70.3 in.
Fuel Capacity22.0 gal.
Cargo Capacity.....8.0 cu. ft.

MECHANICAL

Engine.....3.5L SOHC V-6
Horsepower25@5750
Torque252@4500
Transmission5-Spd. Auto
Drive.....Four wheel
Brakes.....Disc ABS
Tires245/65R17

PERFORMANCE

0 to 60 mph.....8.6 sec.
EPA economy rating16/21 mpg
Our actual fuel econ17.7 mpg

COMPETITORS

Chevrolet Avalanche, Chevrolet Silverado, Dodge Dakota, Dodge Ram, Ford Explorer Sport Trac, Ford F-150, GMC Sierra, Nissan Titan, Toyota Tundra

better. The result is the Ridgeline.

The Ridgeline started as a totally new design, without pulling together elements from existing products. It has a strong masculine appearance to appeal to traditional truck buyers, and it has a certain resemblance to Chevrolet's Avalanche because of the rear sloping C-pillar. The design looks even stronger as it replaces the traditional separate cab and bed construction with one continuous body without the break. The bumpers are also integrated into the body design to augment the one-piece look. The long hood and strong grille and flared fenders continue to enhance the rugged one-piece. The result is the largest Honda vehicle ever built.

The Ridgeline is about the size of a compact or mid-size truck, but inside it has space equivalent to most of the full-size pickups. The innovative five-passenger interior packaging includes large masculine controls, an abundance of storage areas, and an excellent fit and finish. There's even enough space under the split rear seat to carry a set of golf clubs. With its 112 cubic feet of interior capacity, the cab of the Honda Ridgeline pickup has the same interior space as a Lincoln Town Car.

Unlike most pickups, the four-door

Ridgeline is built using a heavy-duty unibody construction with a lower ladder frame for added strength. Shunning the traditional solid rear axle, engineers used a heavy-duty four-wheel independent suspension for better handling and ride. Standard equipment on all models includes Vehicle Stability Assist with traction control, four-wheel disc brakes and Electronic Brake Distribution with brake assist.

A 255-horsepower 3.5-liter Honda V-6 engine powers the Ridgeline, and generates 0 to 60 mph acceleration times of 8.6 seconds. The engine has Honda's Variable Valve Timing and Lift Electronic Control (VTEC) along with a drive-by-wire throttle system, direct ignition and a 105,000-mile tune-up interval. Also standard is a five-speed automatic transmission with cooling system and fully automatic four-wheel drive system.

The EPA rates the fuel economy of this Honda at 16 mpg in the city and 21 mpg on the highway. Our combined average was 17.7 mpg.

The Ridgeline is available in three model designations: entry level RT priced at \$28,215 including shipping, RTS at \$30,590, and the top of the line RTL at \$32,005. For \$1,150 a moonroof and XM



Satellite Radio can be added to the RTL, and for \$2,000 more the RTL gets a DVD-based navigation system.

Standard equipment on the RT model we drove included a power sliding rear window with reminder chime, keyless entry, automatic heated wipers zone to keep wipers from freezing, privacy glass, power locks, power windows, cruise control, air conditioning, and AM/FM/CD audio system. The RTL adds features like leather seating, eight-way power seats, front seat heaters, six-disc CD changer and much more.

Secured storage is always a problem with open bed pickups, but Honda has solved it by installing an eight cubic foot "trunk under the rear portion of the cargo bed. The compartment is easily reached by opening the tailgate, which folds down like a conventional tailgate, or sideways like a door. The compartment is sealed from the weather and provides space for luggage, camping gear, tools or it can even be filled with ice and beverages thanks to a drain hole in the floor.

The steel-reinforced molded composite cargo bed is dent and corrosion resistant and eliminates the need for a bed liner. The five-foot long cargo bed extends to 6.5 feet long with the tailgate down and

can accommodate objects as wide as 49 inches between the wheel wells. It's designed to accommodate two motorcycles or a full-size ATV and has six 350-pound capacity cargo hooks, as well as a bed tailor-made for these to fit securely. The heavy-duty tailgate is one of the strongest in the industry with a 300-pound dynamic load capacity.

The Honda Ridgeline is the most un-truck like truck we've driven and therefore a favorite in our book. With its spacious, well-organized, interior smooth ride and trademark Honda efficiency it makes a great truck for someone who doesn't especially want a truck but needs one occasionally.

At the introduction earlier this year, we drove the Ridgeline pulling a 5,000-pound trailer, and it did a good job. It also easily carried a 1,550-pound payload without seriously affecting its handling characteristics. For someone who needs heavy duty hauling and cargo carrying capacity, the Honda Ridgeline won't work. But for someone that wants to pull a boat, take the family shopping or haul some building materials from the lumberyard, the Ridgeline is perfect. It's the kind of truck that just might make more people want a truck. ■

OUR DRIVE

The first Honda Ridgeline we saw was at a media event (opposite page), where Honda's key engineering and development team gave us a very thorough presentation and Q&A on their new vehicle. We've often heard of products that readdress the original concept and totally reinvent the segment. This is one of those. It doesn't have the separate cab-and-box on ladder frame of the Ford, Chevy/GMC, Dodge and Toyota offerings. But it does carry, tow and transport with the best of them, at least in its own way. The differences are in the details—plenty of them—from its dedicated motorcycle hauling system, to its multifunctional tailgate, to its more carlike interior that really is more carlike (or SUV-like), to its secure storage boxes and more.

The second Honda Ridgeline we saw was in normal traffic, in the rearview mirror. What was this imposing machine, bearing down from behind? Not an Escalade or Navigator, but rather... a Honda badge?! Oh yes, it's the new Ridgeline, and it apparently does deliver a strong and aggressive persona.

The third Honda Ridgeline we saw was our test vehicle, which we drove in Arizona for a week. What did we learn? We didn't have any major pickup duties at hand, so there was no chance to compare it with, say, the F-250 4x4 in our company fleet. It can carry a 4x8 sheet of plywood, though, haul a lot of weight, tow even more, and can stow your tools or even groceries in sealed, dry, secure and very accessible compartments. These are basically some of the key things you usually give up when you buy a pickup truck as a daily driver.

Honda did set out to reinvent the pickup truck, and they have succeeded at exactly that, and executed it very well. Honda has a lot of confidence and has tackled the tough pickup market aggressively. The question remains whether a hardcore pickup buyer (and that's the best kind) will go for all the enhanced function, over the traditional style that gives the segment—and its owners—character. It will take the test of time to see whether a Ridgeline fits in at a Pro Rodeo event or building materials center, or whether a cleverly enhanced level of usefulness is just not enough to sell people a very different style of pickup truck. ■

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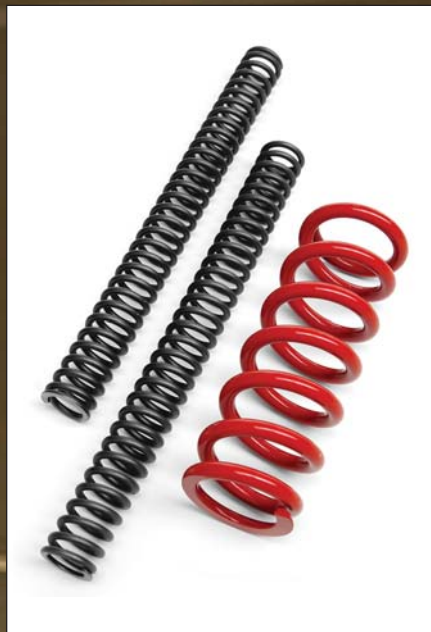


Buell XB ACCESSORIES

NEW PRO-SERIES SUSPENSION KIT FOR BUELL XB MODELS

Improve Balance and Feedback to Rider for Racing or Track Days

The new Pro-Series Suspension Kit (P/N 48083-04Y, \$76.95) from Buell Accessories is designed to enhance the handling performance of 2005 Buell XB models and provide better rider feedback than the stock suspension. Intended for use in racing applications or for riders fine-tuning a Buell XB for track-day riding, the kit includes a 12 percent stiffer rear spring and 6 percent stiffer fork springs. The Pro-Series rear spring is a single-rate spring that compresses at a constant rate throughout its travel, unlike the progressive-rate stock spring that is rather soft on initial compression to provide a smoother ride on public roads. The Pro-Series spring will deliver a stiffer ride and is not recommended for carrying a passenger. The stiffer rate of the Pro-Series spring also provides a broader range of pre-load adjustment for heavier (over 200 pounds) riders. The rates of the front and rear springs are more closely tuned than the stock springs to provide more consistent front-to-rear balance. The springs are designed by Showa, supplier of the stock suspension systems, and will work well with the existing adjustable dampers, which make this a more affordable performance upgrade. ■



Buell Lightning XB12S

KEEP RIGHT >>

NEW DETACHABLE SADDLEBAGS FOR BUELL XB MODELS

Custom-fit Carrying Capacity for Lightning and Firebolt Models

Buell owners can add touring capacity or just around-town utility to an XB Lightning or XB Firebolt model with the new Detachable Saddlebags (\$159.95) from Buell Accessories. Constructed of molded polyester, these streamlined black bags are weather- and UV-resistant, and the rigid body and lids maintain shape when empty. The bags expand two inches for additional capacity, and feature reflective trim and waterproof zippers. Detachable Saddlebag P/N 91310-04Y fits all 2003-later XB Firebolt models, and includes support brackets and reflector relocation brackets. Detachable Saddlebag P/N 91458-05Y fits all 2003-later XB Lightning models and features an easy-to-use hook-and-loop mounting system. ■



NEW DETACHABLE TRUNK BAG FOR BUELL XB LIGHTNING MODELS

Weather-Resistant Touring Luggage: Sleek Style, Custom Fit

The new Detachable Trunk Bag (P/N 91456-05Y, \$109.95) from Buell Accessories is versatile touring luggage custom-fit for all 2003-later Buell XB Lightning models. The rigid polyester body and lid hold shape when empty and are UV- and weather-resistant. Expandable side pockets offer additional capacity, and a padded handle makes it easy to carry this bag to a hotel room or office. The bag has reflective trim, an easy-to-use mounting system, and comes with a rain cover. The Detachable Trunk Bag is designed to work as a system with Detachable Saddlebags (P/N 91458-05Y, \$159.95), which must be purchased separately. ■



Buell Firebolt XB12R

THE INSIDE TRACK: BRIEFS & RUMORS

■ **Saleen** is adding twin turbochargers to its awesome S7 supercar to boost the 550-hp engine to 750-hp and torque from 525 lb.ft to 700 lb.ft. The two-seater,



Saleen S7

which weighs less than 3,000 pounds, accelerates from 0 to 60 mph, without turbochargers, in 3.3 seconds – the turbo should put that figure somewhere in the upper two-second range making it easily the fastest car on the block. Expect the \$400,000 price tag to increase, too.

■ Now with three hybrids in dealerships, **Toyota's** next products to get the gas/electric hybrid treatment include the Lexus GS 450h in 2006 and the Toyota Camry in 2007. The period from 2008 to 2010 should bring dealers the following hybrids: Lexus ES, Toyota Avalon, Sienna, Tundra and Sequoia.

■ **Acura** will launch a smaller (than the MDX) crossover in 2006 based on the compact TSX sedan. The new RDX will be the first Acura to be equipped with a factory turbocharger. In addition to the 2.2-liter 260-hp four-cylinder it will also get the new Super-handling all-wheel drive from the new RL.

■ The new updated **BMW** 7 Series have two-stage Adaptive Brake Lights. Whenever the driver applies the brakes harder than usual, motorists following behind are warned by the larger brake light area.

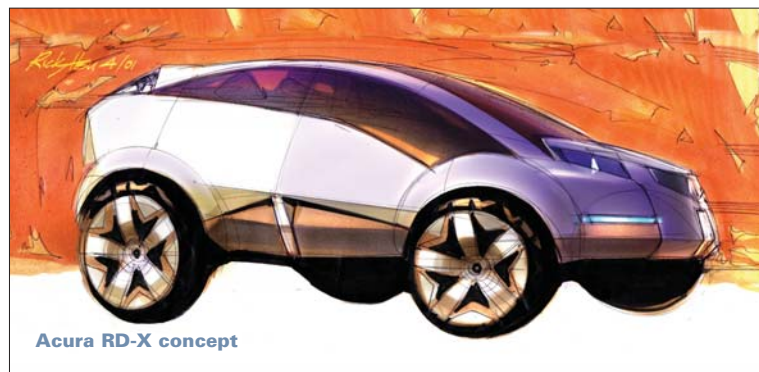
■ **Jaguar** is studying the prospects of building a four-wheel drive crossover vehicle to replace the slow selling X-Type sedan, according to British reports.

■ **Volkswagen** has a smaller five-door SUV planned for the 2007 model year called the Bedouin. It's based on parts from the Golf and Passat and will fit in a niche to compete with vehicles like the Toyota RAV4, Land Rover Freelander and BMW X3. Volkswagen also has a pickup truck in the works for 2008.

■ The replacement for the General Motors worldwide Epsilon platform currently used to build the **Saab** 9-3 and 9-5 will be reconfigured to both front- and all-wheel drive (AWD). That means it's very likely we will see AWD options for next generation 9-3 and 9-5 Saabs.

■ **Pontiac** will offer a removable hardtop option for the new Solstice roadster so that it will qualify it to be raced in Sports Car Club of America events, which require a factory hardtop. Sources say it will be available early in 2007.

■ DaimlerChrysler has again dropped plans to bring the tiny **Smart** to the



Acura RD-X concept

United States. It was determined they would have to charge too much for the cars to make a profit. But stay tuned.

■ The Hummer is not big enough or tough enough for some affluent Russians, so a Russian entrepreneur is marketing the **Kombat** T-98. The Kombat can be upgraded to withstand anti-tank rockets and machine-gun fire. But make no mistake this is not a military vehicle, because inside there is a minibar, DVD player, TV and a navigation system. Kombat designer Dmitri Parfenov is also hoping to sell it in England for about \$360,000 each.

■ **Mazda** has a new sport wagon in the works for introduction late in 2006 or early 2007. Developed from the MX-Crossport concept, which debuted at the Detroit auto show, the new wagon will use the same platform as the Mazda6 sedan. According to Mazda officials



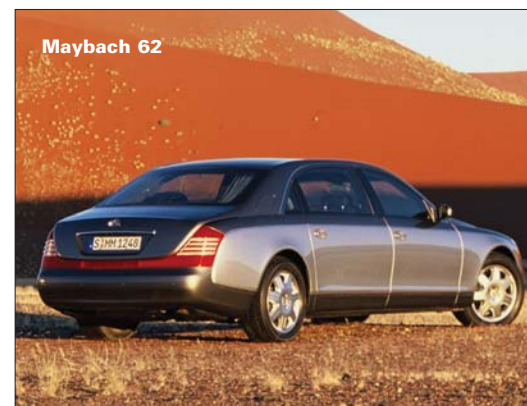
Mazda MX-Crossport concept

crossover buyers are looking for a better ride than a conventional SUV, but want more space and a higher seating position than a sedan.

■ **BMW** will offer diesel-powered models in the US as early as 2007. Most likely models will be the X5 and X3 SUV models. With new low sulphur diesel fuel available in the US at that point, the diesel engines will allow BMW to meet US emission levels, while getting high torque and better fuel economy. Currently BMW offers diesel engines in all but two of its models currently being sold in Europe.

■ Sophisticated future software may enable vehicles to travel at high speeds, in heavy traffic, without the fear of crashing. According to **Microsoft** Corp. chairman Bill Gates, in-vehicle software and cameras can be made so sophisticated and cheap that car crashes may become a thing of the past. Gates made the statements at a recent auto conference in Dearborn, Mich.

■ The shipping charge for a typical new vehicle is in the \$500 to \$700 range. The new \$327,500 plus **Maybach** ultra sedan



Maybach 62

lists a \$2,750 destination fee. The price covers shipment from Germany in a special container, as well as transport from the port to the Maybach studio in an enclosed truck.

■ **Chrysler** COO Tom LaSorda said the company is exploring the possibility of adding diesel engines to other Chrysler Group vehicles. The diesel-powered Jeep Liberty CRD is currently one of the most popular vehicles in the Jeep lineup with each vehicle selling in an average of 18 days, as compared to the 40 to 50 days for other vehicles.

■ Automated headlight dimming may be making a comeback if the new system created by **Gentex** Corporation catches on. The system uses a camera-on-a-chip semiconductor device that turns on high beams when they are needed and automatically goes to low beams when oncoming headlights or the taillights are detected on vehicles ahead. The system is integrated into an automatic-dimming rear view mirror. It is now available on the 2005 Jeep Grand Cherokee and the Cadillac STS.

■ The rumor of a future **Hyundai** truck persists, but now sources say they won't make the same mistake Toyota did by building a lightweight truck. Rather, the Hyundai truck will be a super duty model built by US truck maker International.

■ **Hyundai** is expected to introduce a rear-wheel drive luxury sedan by 2007 to test the waters for a possible luxury brand emulating

Toyota's Lexus and Nissan's Infiniti brands. Hyundai vice chairman and co-CEO, Kim Dong Jin, says the luxury car is a "higher priority" than a truck as a way to improve brand image.

■ **Volkswagen** is rumored to be working on a rear-wheel drive platform for a new car that will fit between the Passat and the Phaeton. The platform will also likely find its way into the next

Audi A8, but only with all-wheel drive configurations. It's also rumored that VW is working with an Asian company on the development.

■ **General Motors** is rumored to be working on a rear-wheel drive performance car to take the place of the Chevrolet Camaro and Pontiac Firebird. Both of the so-called "pony cars" were discontinued in 2001 due to poor sales, but with the renewed success in the original pony car, the Ford Mustang, GM

Holden VZ SS Commodore



appears to be wanting to get back in the game. Initial development may be done by GM Australian subsidiary Holden, which was responsible for rear-drive Pontiac GTO development.

■ **Mazda** is working on a high-performance version of the Mazda3



Mazda3 5-door

hatchback to be called the MazdaSpeed3. Power is expected to come from a slightly detuned version of the same 2.3-liter turbocharged engine scheduled to power the larger the MazdaSpeed6. The 6 will have a reported 256-hp, while the 3 is likely to be in the 230- to 240-hp range. The MazdaSpeed3 should debut at the Frankfurt Motor Show in September.

■ General Motors will delay the second generation **Cadillac** SRX sport wagon that was due for the 2008 model year. According to GM spokesman Pat Morrissey, the delay will only be a few months. The SRX will get a scheduled interior freshening for 2007. Earlier this year GM announced it had killed plans to build an SRX-V high performance version.

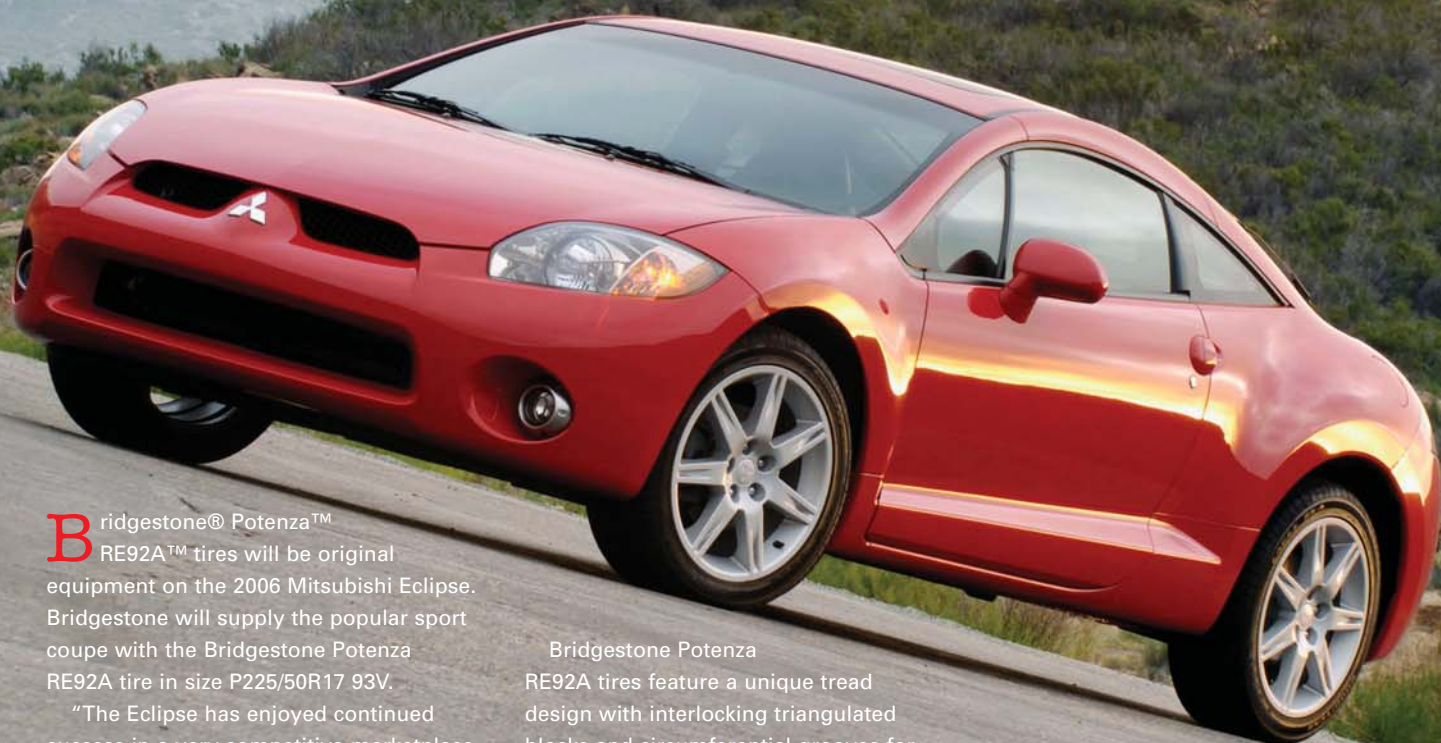
■ Watch for **Dodge** Hemi brand power tools at your local hardware store. B3 Brands, Inc. has introduced a new line of premium power tools hoping to cash in on popularity of the Hemi V-8 used in Dodge, Chrysler and Jeep vehicles.

■ With **MG Rover** going out of business, Land Rover has lost a source of engines for the Freelander SUV. As a result, they will stop shipping the Freelander to the US market and will use the remaining engines for vehicles sold in other markets where the it is more popular. The Freelander is currently being redesigned and will be shipped to the US again late in 2006. ■

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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High-performance all-season tire optimized for popular sport coupe



Bridgestone® Potenza™ RE92A™ tires will be original equipment on the 2006 Mitsubishi Eclipse. Bridgestone will supply the popular sport coupe with the Bridgestone Potenza RE92A tire in size P225/50R17 93V.

"The Eclipse has enjoyed continued success in a very competitive marketplace and we're excited to gain this original equipment fitment on another popular Mitsubishi vehicle," said Michael Martini, president, original equipment consumer tire division, Bridgestone Firestone North American Tire, LLC (BFNT). "Our Bridgestone Potenza RE92A tire is a perfect complement for the sporty and hip Eclipse. The all-season performance tread pattern was optimized to match the superior handling characteristics of the Eclipse, which delivers high performance in a vehicle that is a daily-driver."

Bridgestone Potenza RE92A tires feature a unique tread design with interlocking triangulated blocks and circumferential grooves for excellent wet, dry and snow traction. Hard rubber sidewall stiffeners resist lateral (sideways) movement to maintain tire stability, improving the vehicle's responsiveness and cornering. The Bridgestone Potenza RE92A tire in size P225/50R17 93V carries a V speed rating and a UTOG rating of 260 for treadwear, A for traction and A for temperature.

The Bridgestone Potenza RE92A fitment on the 2006 Eclipse is a result of the continuing relationship between BFNT and Mitsubishi. Bridgestone is also the

original equipment tire supplier for the automaker's 2005 Endeavor, Montero and Galant vehicles.

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Clearly not just another car

by Bill Schaffer



Life is filled with memorable firsts: your first step, first kiss, first drink... you get the idea.

Now, mentally filed with my memorable firsts is my first drive in the Porsche Carrera GT. To the unaware, it's just another car, but to car guys (and girls) it's a legend. Envision a 605-hp V-10 engine mounted in an exotic lightweight two-seat sports car. Imagine a top speed of 205 mph. Think about accelerating from 0 to 62 mph in just 3.9 seconds, or to 100 mph in 6.9 seconds.

And it's unique—just over 200 built so far, and Porsche only plans to build a total of 1,500 over the next few years. Of course, exotic means expensive. The base price is \$443,000. Load it up with all the customizing options and you're looking at a price of about \$534,000 before taxes and license.

I was spending the day at the California Speedway in Ontario with a group of west coast auto writers driving Porsche convertibles. Porsche conveniently supplied us each with a professional driving instructor. This was a great way for me to polish my driving skills, plus it was a way for Porsche to keep this group of overly exuberant auto writers under control.

My instructor, Kees Nierop, has driven at Sebring, Le Mans and all the big races. He was a great instructor, coaching me through each turn: "Brake hard first, then downshift, then turn in and then, only



then, squeeze that throttle."

I'd driven the Porsche 911S Cabriolet and the Boxster S around the 1.45-mile interior test circuit in the infield of California Speedway, was starting to feel more comfortable and was actually getting faster. Glancing down at the digital speedometer just before braking at the end of the longest straight, I saw speeds just over 100 mph before braking hard to about 35 mph for the corner. I spent about 15 minutes in each of five Porsche test cars with Kees. What a great day!

Finally it was my turn for the Carrera GT. Driving the legend is very intimidating. There is nothing normal about this hand-built car. The construction is carbon fiber, aluminum, magnesium and other lightweight materials. It even has a small 6.65-inch ceramic composite clutch

and massive 14.96-inch brakes of the same ceramic material. Someone said the clutch costs about \$8,000 to replace.

Everyone was talking about how tricky the clutch is, but Kees (after cautioning me that "this car cost more than my house" and "don't scare me") said, "let the clutch out and then give it some gas." I did, and fortunately I didn't stall, like some of the writers did.

I spent the first few laps getting the feel of the GT. It was surprisingly easy to drive. As I pushed harder the car responded with power far beyond my experience level, but it was forgiving when I needed it to be. On my last run down that long straight, I blinked down at the digital speedometer—274 kilometers/hour. Back at the press tent I made the conversion calculation. 170 mph! ■

UPCOMING FEATURES

Hummer H3



In a realm that is largely based on in-your-face size, Hummer's lineup paradoxically keeps coming out with something smaller. We'll be reporting on the newest one: the H3.

2006 New Model Year Preview



Can't wait? Neither can we. We'll bring you details on about 300 vehicles from about 50 manufacturers, spread out over two issues. Stay tuned to see what gets your blood pumping.

Ford GT



Ford's very own supercar certainly has added something to their lineup. We have early word on a special edition due for 2006. We'll bring you info on development and new rumors.



