

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 5 NUMBER 3
MAY-JUNE 2006

Fuel of Dreams

Convert one classic Mercedes-Benz...
add plenty of used grease...
stir in lots of baseball...

**The Bionic Gloves
Veggie Power
Ballpark Tour**

launches its
nationwide tour
in Arizona



And we test drive the
Honda Civic Hybrid
... which seems downright
conventional by comparison

Monterey

AUGUST 18-19

CONSIGNMENTS INVITED

- 2 FULL NIGHTS
- OVER 150 CARS



1937 CHIP FOOSE
CUSTOM BOATTAIL
ROADSTER

1956
MERCEDES-BENZ
300 SL GULLWING

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HISTORIC RACES WEEKEND

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

THURSDAY AUGUST 17TH

10:00am to 6:00pm
General preview on Calle Principal

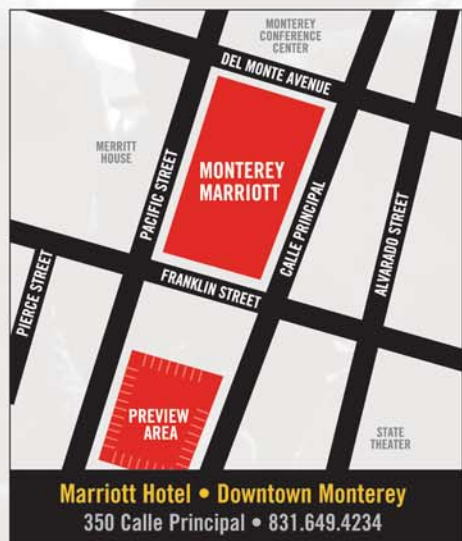
6:00pm to 9:00pm
Charity Cocktail Reception and Silent Auction
at the Preview Area

FRIDAY & SATURDAY AUGUST 18TH - 19TH

10:00am to 5:00pm
General preview on Calle Principal

3:00pm to 5:00pm
VIP Registration Reception,
2nd floor of the Marriott Hotel

5:00pm to 11:00pm
Russo and Steele Collector Automobile Auction
2nd floor of the Marriott Hotel



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1969 LAMBORGHINI MURIA
UNRESTORED ORIGINAL



1954 BUICK SKYLARK
CONVERTIBLE



1922 DEUSENBERG
RACE CAR



1939 LINCOLN ZEPHYR
STREET ROD



1936 AUBURN BOATTAIL
SPEEDSTER CUSTOM



1966 PONTIAC GTO CONVERTIBLE
4-SPEED TRI-POWER



1968 OLDSMOBILE 442 CONVERTIBLE
OLDEST IN EXISTENCE



1948 CHRYSLER TOWN & COUNTRY
CONVERTIBLE



1939 MG WA DROPHEAD
TICKFORD



1961 CORVETTE TOP FLIGHT
DUNTOV SIGNATURE



1950 FORD WOODY
CUSTOM



1961 MG A
ROADSTER

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

CONTENTS

MAY-JUNE 2006

SPECIALTY VEHICLE TOUR

The Bionic Gloves Veggie Power Ballpark Tour.....18

Everybody's talking about alternative fuels, but we're doing something about it. Take one classic Mercedes, convert to run on biodiesel, take a comprehensive tour of baseball spring training, and meet a lot of french fry chefs along the way.
By Joe Connor

TEST DRIVE

New Chevy Tahoe26

The Tahoe has been incredibly popular, covering family fare to bling machine with equal ease. With gas prices soaring... they enlarge it and increase fuel economy.
By Barbara and Bill Schaffer

VEHICLE INTRODUCTION

New GMC Yukon and Yukon Denali28

You'll find we were amply impressed with the above-mentioned new Tahoe. Sonofagun if GM doesn't release a new Yukon right on the heels of the Tahoe.
By Bill Schaffer

TEEN DRIVERS

VW Challenges Teens on Seat Belt Use30

Volkswagen teams with Scholastic to motivate teens to use their seat belts, working with a tool already in play: peer-to-peer influence, aka peer pressure.

EQUIPMENT

Honda Civic Hybrid32

Honda moved into the mainstram (compared with the Insight) with the original Civic Hybrid. Now they have given it a complete update. Find out why our test vehicle needs another complete update.
By Barbara and Bill Schaffer, and Joe Sage

MOTORSPORTS

Buy NASCAR NEXTEL Cup Tickets from the Drivers35

Information on a range of upcoming NASCAR events at Phoenix International Raceway, including a chance to buy tickets from several stars in person, June 22.

MOTORSPORTS

Wish List Machines38

BMW M5, Corvette Z06, Dodge Viper SRT10, Mercedes-Benz CLS55 AMG. These are wicked high-end machines you see regularly in these parts. Here you can see them all in one place, all the easier to dream of owning one.
By Barbara and Bill Schaffer

DEPARTMENTS

FROM THE PUBLISHER : START YOUR ENGINES4

CAR SMARTS : QUIZ7

AUTO NEWS UPDATE10

DESTINATION DIRECTORY17

MOTOR RESOURCES DIRECTORY24

THE INSIDE TRACK: BRIEFS & RUMORS36

UPCOMING FEATURES42



COVER: Joe Connor has had this 1984 Mercedes-Benz converted to run on biodiesel (or conventional fuel). Photo by Joe Sage.



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Spring is in the air here as we put this issue together, and green seems to be the theme as we visualize the crocuses soon popping up through the snow in northern climes. Another sure sign of spring is baseball, as spring training gets underway once again across the Sonoran Desert. And another sure sign of green is the booming interest in alternative fuels vehicles. So how does it all tie together at the offices of Arizona Driver magazine? Easy!

Our colleague Joe Connor, head of modernbaseball.com in San Diego, has tied it together for us. Obviously an avid and knowledgeable baseball fan, and a bit of a car buff as well (Joe's original business portrait showed him at the controls of the startlingly diminutive Corbin Sparrow personal transportation module). With credentials like that, and one finger always on the pulse of impossible adventure, Joe is embarking upon a tour of every Major League Baseball park, all season long, a new one almost every day, starting of course with the first pitch of spring training at Tucson Electric Park, and ending in Anaheim on October 1 with the last game of the regular season. In between, not only will Connor be meeting, greeting, absorbing (and creating) statistics wherever he goes, as always but he will be covering the miles behind the wheel of a 1984 Mercedes-Benz that's been converted to run on vegetable oil (or quite a few other things, as the need arises). We were able to spend quite a bit of time with Joe and the car. The story unfolds within.

And just to keep things green, we report on the nicely revised Honda Civic Hybrid.

Enjoy the drive.



Joe Sage
Publisher/Executive Editor

ARIZONA DRIVER

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THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL



Where
the roads
are dry
and
the cars
are slick.

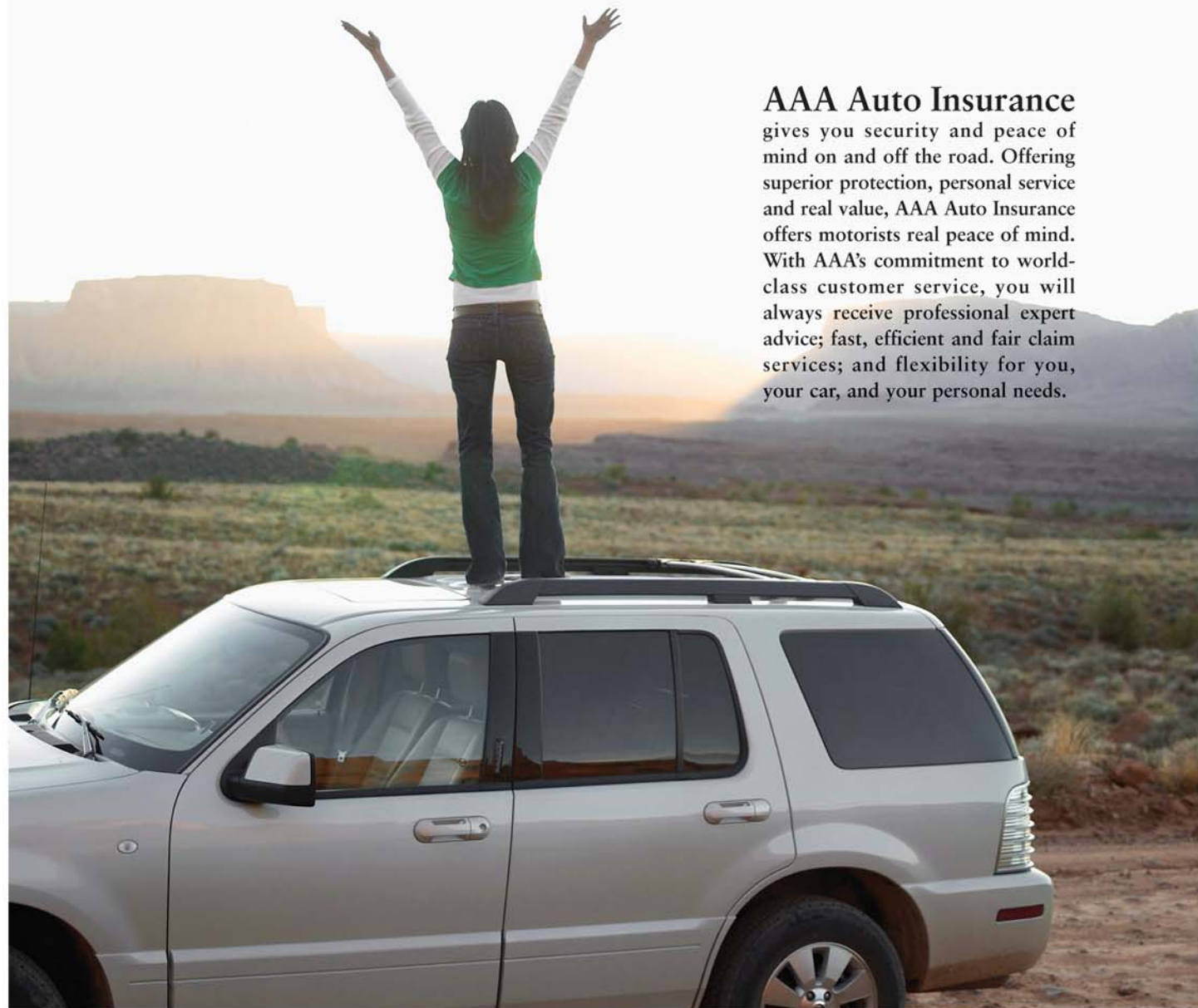
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QUIZ : CAR SMARTS



- How many 2005 model vehicles were considered crossovers?
 - 14 crossovers
 - 28 crossovers
 - 41 crossovers
 - 57 crossovers
- How many vehicles were recalled in 2005?
 - 5 million
 - 11 million
 - 17 million
 - 31 million
- Which auto company gave its shareholders the largest percentage of return on their investments for 2005?
 - Hyundai
 - Toyota
 - Suzuki
 - Honda
- How old is Robert Lutz, the General Motors product chief?
 - 68-years old
 - 71-years old
 - 74-years old
 - 77-years old
- When was the first satellite radio installed into a vehicle?
 - 2000
 - 2001
 - 2002
 - 2003
- Which car will the new James Bond drive in the latest 007 movie, *Casino Royale*?
 - Aston Martin DBS
 - Morgan Aero 8
 - SLR McLaren
 - Panoz Esperante
- When was the first drive-in movie theater opened?
 - 1923
 - 1933
 - 1943
 - 1953
- What percentage of individuals replacing their wiper blades does so as part of a preventative maintenance program?
 - 3 percent
 - 9 percent
 - 18 percent
 - 22 percent
- What year was the first Dodge Challenger produced?
 - 1970
 - 1972
 - 1974
 - 1976
- How many Volkswagen Golfs are sold daily around the world?
 - 200
 - 600
 - 1300
 - 2200
- How many vehicles does the average person buy in a lifetime?
 - 8 vehicles
 - 13 vehicles
 - 20 vehicles
 - 27 vehicles
- How many "flex fuel" vehicles (vehicles that can burn either regular gasoline or E85 Ethanol fuel) are currently operating in the United States?
 - 1 million
 - 4 million
 - 8 million
 - 12 million
- What is the horsepower rating of the all-new Toyota RAV4 3.5-liter V-6 engine?
 - 195 hp
 - 222 hp
 - 240 hp
 - 269 hp
- What is the horsepower rating of the new naturally aspired Porsche engine (the most powerful naturally Porsche engine ever) unveiled in Geneva in February?
 - 350 hp
 - 375 hp
 - 415 hp
 - 450 hp
- Which was the first production car to have a V-12 engine?
 - Lincoln
 - Cadillac
 - Maybach
 - Mercedes-Benz
- How many people died from airbag induced injuries in 2005?
 - 2 died
 - 9 died
 - 15 died
 - 24 died
- What vehicle is featured in Harrison Ford's new movie *Firewall*?
 - Ford Mustang GT
 - Pontiac GTO
 - Chrysler 300C
 - Chevrolet Impala
- Which car manufacturer exported 5,000 tons of organic soybeans grown on the company land where one of the factories is located?
 - General Motors
 - Honda
 - Ford
 - Toyota
- How many of the nation's 170,000 service stations currently offer E85 fuel?
 - 608 stations
 - 1,587 stations
 - 4,512 stations
 - 9,508 stations
- What percentage of Rolls-Royce owners drive their own cars, as opposed to having a driver?
 - 65 percent
 - 75 percent
 - 85 percent
 - 95 percent
- What does BMW's free maintenance program cost the company annually, per car, for the 5 Series sedan?
 - \$598
 - \$1,285
 - \$2,339
 - \$3,417
- What was the first manufacturer to offer a Bose audio system in their vehicles?
 - Porsche
 - Honda
 - Ford
 - General Motors
- What is the average payroll of a US auto dealership?
 - \$875,000
 - \$1.45 million
 - \$2.33 million
 - \$4.81 million
- What was the average pre-tax profit for new car auto dealerships in 2005?
 - \$284,569
 - \$531,033
 - \$947,996
 - \$1,724,112
- What percentage of Taco Bell's business is from drive-thru customers?
 - 25 percent
 - 40 percent
 - 55 percent
 - 70 percent
- According to a recent study, how many vehicles are purchased by a family after the head of household turns 50 years old?
 - 3 vehicles
 - 5 vehicles
 - 7 vehicles
 - 9 vehicles
- In what city will the new NASCAR Hall of Fame be built?
 - Talladega, AL
 - Nashville, TN
 - Charlotte, NC
 - Daytona, FL
- What is the minimum height at which a child no longer needs a booster seat when riding in a car?
 - 4 feet
 - 4 feet 3 inches
 - 4 feet 6 inches
 - 4 feet 9 inches
- What is the least important decision-making factor customers cite when shopping for a new car?
 - Fuel efficiency
 - Insurance cost
 - Vehicle color
 - Safety features
- On average, what does one minute of stopped production time cost a company producing automotive vehicles or parts?
 - \$200
 - \$1,200
 - \$12,000
 - \$22,000

ANSWERS ON PAGE 8 >>

>> ANSWERS (quiz on page 7) >>

1. Answer: c. According to *Automotive News* there were 41 crossover vehicles in the US market in 2005 and several new models have already been introduced for 2006. In 2000, there were 14 crossovers.
2. Answer: c. There were 17 million vehicles recalled in 2005. That's significantly down from the 30.8 million recalled in 2004.
3. Answer: a. Hyundai investors received a 79.5 percent return on their investments in 2005 and 328.5 percent over the last three years. Toyota 29.6 percent. Suzuki 29.0 percent. Honda 11.5 percent. The industry average was 9.4 percent.
4. Answer: c. Robert Lutz, the General Motors product chief is 74 years old. He is still an active pilot and has a Czech Aero L-39 Mach 0.8 jet fighter trainer.
5. Answer: b. XM Satellite Radio was first installed in a vehicle in 2001. The unit was made by Delphi, who has since sold more than 6 million satellite units.
6. Answer: a. The new James Bond, actor Daniel Craig, will drive a new model Aston Martin named the DBS. The movie, *Casino Royale*, will be in theaters in November 2006.
7. Answer: b. The first drive-in theater opened in Camden, New Jersey in 1933, but closed in 1935. It was followed by Shankweiler's Drive-in, which opened in 1934 in Orefield, Penn., and has remained open ever since. See more on the theater at shankweilers.com.

8. Answer: c. www.aftermarketbusiness.com says that 18 percent of the individuals replacing wiper blades are doing so as part of a preventative maintenance program. On the other hand, 77 percent replace their wiper blades because they are performing poorly.
9. Answer: a. The Dodge Challenger was introduced as a 1970 model and more than 83,000 were sold that year. It was discontinued after the 1974 model year. Dodge is showing a new Challenger concept that is expected to be built in the next year or two.
10. Answer: d. According to Steve Keyes, Director of Communications for Volkswagen of America Inc., there are 2,200 Golfs sold daily worldwide.
11. Answer: b. According to Jim Press, Toyota CEO, the average person buys 13 vehicles during their lifetime.
12. Answer: b. According to the San Jose Mercury there are currently about four million "flex fuel" vehicles operating in the US.
13. Answer: d. The all-new 2006 Toyota RAV4 has a best-in-class 269 horsepower 3.5-liter V-6 engine.
14. Answer: c. To power the 2007 911 GT3, Porsche introduced a new naturally-aspirated 3.6-liter engine that produces 415 horsepower.
15. Answer: c. In 1929 Maybach introduced the first standard-production V-12 engine.
16. Answer: a. Thanks to safer airbags, no adults and only two children died from airbag induced injuries in 2005. In 1997 54 people died. For 1990 to 2005, 264 died as the result of airbag injuries.

17. Answer: c. The Chrysler 300C sedan is the car that Harrison Ford drives in his new movie *Firewall*.
18. Answer: b. Honda owns 8,500 acres of fertile Ohio farmland where one of their manufacturing plants is located. Last year the company grew organic soybeans on the farmland and harvested 5,000 tons, which were exported to Japan. That makes Honda one of the largest US exporters of organic soybeans.
19. Answer: a. According to *Automotive News*, only 608 of 170,000 US service stations offer ethanol fuel.
20. Answer: d. Rolls-Royce says 95 percent of the Rolls-Royce owners drive their own cars rather than having a driver.
21. Answer: c. According to Edmunds.com estimates, the BMW bumper-to-bumper free maintenance program costs \$2,339 annually for a 5 series. The generous program includes oil changes, windshield wipers, and brakes - everything except tires.
22. Answer: d. According to Dawn Geary, Bose media marketing manager, the first automotive audio systems were installed in 1982 in the Cadillac Seville, Oldsmobile Toronado and the Buick Riviera.
23. Answer: c. According to the National Association of Auto Dealers NADA, the average car dealership has a payroll of \$2.33 million.
24. Answer: b. According to a survey done by the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA), the average net pretax profit for an auto dealer was \$531,033 in 2005. That's 1.6 percent of total sales and at the lowest level since 2000.

25. Answer: d. Bill Pearce, chief marketing officer of Taco Bell Corp. says, 70 percent of their business is drive-thru. With that in mind, to help reduce the mess caused by eating in a vehicle, they have created the Crunchwrap Supreme, which is designed to be "able to eat it, not wear it."

26. Answer: c. According to a recent Auto Pacific (an automotive researching company) survey, an average American family buys seven more vehicles after the head of the household turns 50. The typical family buys 13 vehicles over a lifetime.

27. Answer: c. NASCAR selected Charlotte, NC for the home of the new NASCAR Hall of Fame. The current facility is in Talladega, Alabama.

28. Answer: d. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration children less than 4 feet 9 inches should be on a booster seat when riding in a car. Thirty-four states now have laws requiring the use of a booster seat. For more information go to boosterseat.gov on the Internet.

29. Answer: b. According to The Progressive Group of Insurance Companies' online survey of visitors to NADAguides.com, the factor least important to people shopping is the cost of insurance (40 percent). Color 28 percent. Fuel efficiency 11 percent. Safety was listed by 7 percent of the respondents as least important.

30. Answer: d. According to a survey of 101 manufacturing executives in the automobile industry commissioned by Advanced Technology Services, Inc. and conducted by Nielsen Research, the average cost of stopping production for one minute is \$22,000. At that rate, an hour of down time would cost \$1,320,000. ■

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*.

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CHANGES COMING TO THE JEEP WRANGLER

The Jeep Wrangler has evolutionary sheetmetal changes for 2007, but retains its classic Jeep off-road advantages of solid axles, folding windshield, removable doors and other body panels, but with some interesting new touches. The engine will be a 3.8-liter (205-hp) V-6 to replace both the previous 4- and 6-cylinder in-line engines. The removable doors will have power windows, thanks to a detachable coupling, and the top is modular with separate panels for each side. The front stabilizer can be electronically disconnected to provide extra suspension travel. Also, watch for a new four-door version to appear later this year. Both models will be at dealers this fall. ▼



Jeep Wrangler



Lexus ES 350

The popular Lexus front-driver ES strikes an elegant yet wicked pose as the sun sets on the desert but rises on the new generation from Lexus.

FIFTH GENERATION LEXUS ES

▲ Lexus introduced their all-new entry level Lexus ES 350 claiming that it's faster, quieter and more powerful than the first LS. As the fourth new Lexus designed with the company's new L-finesse design, the more sculpted ES shows a strong family resemblance. The front-wheel-drive ES has a new 272-hp 3.5-liter V-6 with six-speed automatic transmission which produce 0 to 60 mph times of 6.8 seconds. Standard features include SmartAccess keyless entry with push-to-start ignition. Safety features include stability control with traction control and eight airbags with available rear-seat side airbags. Navigation, full-length panorama glass roof, vented front seats, high intensity discharge headlights with adaptive front lighting and radar cruise control are options.

THE FUELING SMORGASBORD

The road to improved fuel economy and independence from foreign fuel sources takes many routes, especially when it comes to the fuels. Recent concept vehicles have shown a smorgasbord of fuel possibilities including the regular three grades of gasoline we currently use and

ethanol, which is currently on sale in some stations in the Midwest. Compressed fuels powering concept vehicles have included compressed natural gas, liquid hydrogen and gaseous hydrogen. Diesels have been popular with some manufacturers and are designed to run on low sulfur diesel (reaching pumps this fall), a higher-octane premium diesel with no sulfur and biodiesel made from vegetable oil and other natural substances.

TWO-MODE HYBRID TRANSMISSION

A consortium including General Motors, DaimlerChrysler and BMW Group have developed a two-mode hybrid transmission that uses a variable transmission with two electric motors. One motor is for low-speed driving, while the second motor improves efficiency when the vehicle is at higher operating speeds. The two-mode system has the advantage of being less than half the size of single-mode systems. It works similarly to other hybrid systems, capturing electrical energy through regenerative braking, shutting the engine off during idle and deceleration, and providing an all-electric launch and drive capability. General Motors is making the first application of

the system on the new Chevrolet Tahoe and GMC Yukon before being expanded to other vehicles. GM officials say when mated with the Vortec V-8 engine with Active Fuel Management™ there will be at least a 25 percent gain in fuel efficiency. GM also is offering the new technology to other auto companies. The system, which works with both two- and four-wheel drive vehicles, will also be going into the Dodge Durango, as well as into unnamed Mercedes-Benz and BMW vehicles.

ACURA OPENING NEW DESIGN STUDIO

Acura plans to distance itself more from parent company Honda's brands in the future by opening its own design studio to establish a more distinctive look. The idea is to make Acura more of a luxury and performance brand in the same vein as Lexus and Infiniti. Dick Collier, executive vice president of sales at American Honda Motor Co., says there are still no plans for a V-8 engine, though the NSX sports car will be powered by a 10-cylinder engine. They also suggest that there is a leaning toward all-wheel drive in more of the Acura vehicles.

KEEP RIGHT >>

TOYOTA IN FULL-SIZE TRUCK MARKET

In an effort to appeal to "True Truckers," Toyota pulled the wraps off the 2007 full-size Tundra pickup at the Chicago Auto Show in February. The new masculine design is bigger and more powerful than the last generation and has features that could challenge the supremacy of American brand trucks. Built in Texas and Indiana, the Tundra will tow more than 10,000 pounds using a new 5.7-liter V-8 engine with six-speed automatic transmission. It's ten inches longer, five inches higher and four inches wider than before, making the final size near its three major competitors. With three cab configurations, three trim levels and three engine choices, it will be offered in more than 30 different models, doubling the current lineup. Typical of Toyota, the Tundra has innovative features like dampeners on the tailgate for easier opening and anti-bounce along with a wide-screen backup camera. The new Tundra arrives at dealerships early in 2007. ▼



Toyota Tundra Crew Max

Volvo S80



As Volvo's lineup continues to evolve away from the box, more toward the sleek and fast, the new S80 is worth a new look, both inside and out.

>> AUTO NEWS UPDATE - cont'd

VOLVO UNVEILS NEW S80 FLAGSHIP

▲ When Volvo unveiled the first generation S80 in 1999, it suggested a dramatic change in the future styling of the entire brand. Gone was the iconic boxy shape, replaced by a car with strong shoulders and unique front and rear fascias. The second generation, which debuted recently in Geneva, starts from that point and looks even more sophisticated and polished than the first. Powertrains are expanded on the new model with the addition of the advanced Yamaha design V-8 engine (311 hp) which first appeared in the XC 90 SUV a year ago. The base engine is an all-new small format in-line six-cylinder rated at 232 hp. Both engines are mated to a six-speed automatic transmission. All-wheel drive will be available with the V-8 engine. Luxury will be the hallmark of the S80, with a more refined interior including a slim new console styling. Volvo safety features include stability and traction control, tire pressure monitoring, active cruise control, active Bi-Xenon headlights and a world-first Personal Car Communicator that allows the driver to check security status

of the car even before it is unlocked. The audio system is state-of-the-art Alpine with DynAudio of Denmark speakers. The S80 goes on sale this fall.

CHANGE THE SOUND YOUR CAR MAKES

The sound your car makes can have a lot to do with how you feel about your car and how others "see" it. To that end, a San Francisco company has created a product called the VroomBox. When attached to your car, the VroomBox can make your car sound like a GTO, Corvette, Cobra or a dozen others. The VroomBox includes 15 standard sounds including classics, even a Harley-Davidson motorcycle or Vespa scooter, plus enough memory to hold 30 additional sounds (extras cost \$5 each). The system is hooked up to your engine, so the sound mimics what the vehicle is doing: revving the engine, accelerating, shifting, etc. It can be played back through your stereo system or you can mount speakers outside the car to share the effects with the world. Sounds are controlled and selected by a dash-mounted button or by a special key fob unit. The VroomBox is priced at \$159 and is available at VroomBox.com.

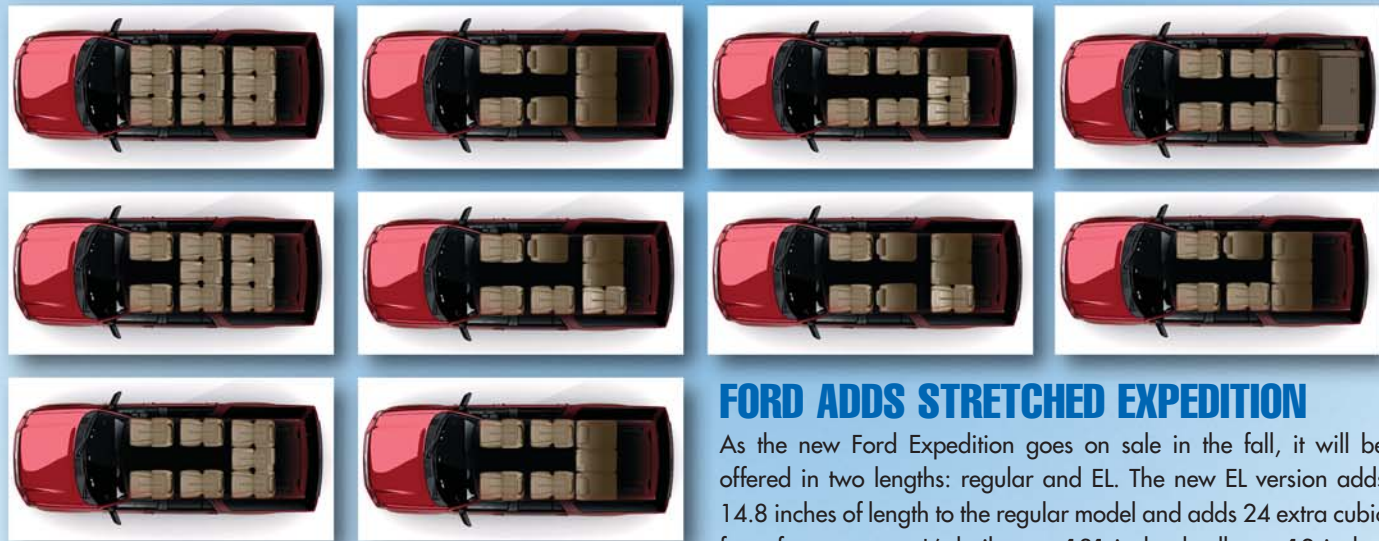
BMW'S TURBOSTEAMER

BMW has developed a steam system to help boost power and fuel economy. Using a two-fluid circulating system, BMW engineers have developed a way to capture heat from a conventional gasoline-powered engine and convert it to mechanical energy, which helps drive the engine. The company claims their TurboSteamer converts more than 80 percent of the heat energy in the exhaust into usable power. The biggest challenge with the system is the sheer size of components, but the company says it will be mounted mostly on the underside of the vehicle so the only loss is ground clearance. Company officials say if testing proves successful, they could apply the TurboSteamer to production vehicles in as few as 10 years.

BMW ADDS NIGHT VISION

BMW 5 Series sedans and sport wagons as well as 6 Series coupes and convertibles now have optional night vision systems. The new infrared technology incorporates a thermal imaging camera to more easily "see" hazards, people or

KEEP RIGHT >>



FORD ADDS STRETCHED EXPEDITION

As the new Ford Expedition goes on sale in the fall, it will be offered in two lengths: regular and EL. The new EL version adds 14.8 inches of length to the regular model and adds 24 extra cubic feet of cargo area. It's built on a 131-inch wheelbase, 12 inches longer than the standard model. The 2007 Expedition has new rugged styling and a modified powertrain, with a 5.4-liter V-8 rated at 300 horsepower attached to a six-speed automatic transmission. Another important new feature is four-wheel independent suspension. A new wide range of seating options includes a split second row seat, using one lever to flip and fold the outboard seats for easy access to the optional third row seat. The center section of the second row can move forward up to 11 inches to allow easier access to a child seat. ▼



Ford Expedition EL



Audi Shooting Brake concept

The Audi Shooting Brake concept car gives clues to the future, from the general form of the new TT, to the evolution of grille and headlight treatments.

>> AUTO NEWS UPDATE - cont'd

animals in the darkness ahead, up to 1,000 feet. The system is not distracted by oncoming traffic, traffic lights, etc. The driver views a high-contrast black-and-white night image on the control display in the middle of the instrument panel. BMW engineers say checking the system is comparable to glancing into the rear-view mirror. Night vision will cost \$2,200 in the 5 Series.

CROWER'S SIX-STROKE ENGINE

75-year-old performance parts manufacturer Bruce Crower (noted for his famous Crower Cams and Equipment Company) has been busy in his shop developing a new six-stroke engine. The engine, which he personally invented and patented, has a six-stroke cycle that he believes can cut fuel consumption by 40 percent while also reducing emissions. The engine adds two more strokes to a conventional four-stroke system. During the fifth and sixth strokes, which he calls the "steam stroke," water is injected into the hot cylinder. The water flashes into steam and forces the piston down a second time. When the steam is expelled, it cools

the engine. Once he has fully tested the gasoline and rainwater system, he plans to do the same process with a diesel engine. The six-stroke engine may have a long way to go before it reaches production, if ever, but it's certainly an innovative concept.

AUDI'S TT LEADS TO A FULL RANGE

▲ When Audi introduces the next generation TT sports car this fall, there will be a new body style added to the roadster and coupe lineup. The coupe and convertible will cover the luxury end of the model lineup with power coming from the 3.2-liter VR6 engine. Joining the dramatically styled pair will be a 'shooting brake' style two-door hatchback with a long roof and nearly wagon-like upper rear section. It will also offer genuine four-person seating. The shooting brake is rumored to be the new value-priced model and conversely the performance model with a 260-hp version of the turbocharged 2.0-liter engine. Lower level models will probably be powered by the 200-hp four-cylinder engine. There will likely be an S model powered by a 330-hp turbocharged four-cylinder. Styling changes are being done very

carefully to capture the drama of the original TT, but with a new elegance and sophistication, in addition to a version of Audi's new trademark grille.

TOYOTA CAMRY GETS TOTAL REMAKE

Toyota's goal for the all-new version of America's best selling family sedan was to redefine global standards for comfort, performance and design. Without challenging convention, Toyota designers upped the styling factor, safety and sophistication of the Camry. The standard 2.4-liter four-cylinder (158-hp) was made quieter and more powerful. The all-new optional 3.5-liter V-6 is 268 hp (58 horsepower larger than the engine it replaces) is mated with a new six-speed automatic transmission. Seven airbags are standard, now with one for the driver's knees. All five models, CE, LE, SE, XLE (available now) and the upcoming Hybrid (which launches in May) have a long list of standard features with base prices starting as low as \$18,270 for the CE four-cylinder with a manual transmission to \$27,520 for the six-cylinder XLE. The XLE has advance

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>> AUTO NEWS UPDATE - cont'd

features like a 440-watt JBL audio system with Bluetooth™, and Plasmacluster™ ionizer technology to help reduce airborne contaminants and odors in the passenger cabin.

PONTIAC GETS GOOD NEWS-BAD NEWS

Pontiac dealers will get a new entry-level performance coupe in 2007, but will lose the Montana SV6 minivan. The coupe will be a rebadged version of the Chevrolet Cobalt SS. Like the Cobalt SS, the small Pontiac coupe will have a supercharged engine, and it will get sporty Pontiac design elements. The price is expected to start just over \$20,000. The Montana SV6 is being dropped because it doesn't fit with the Pontiac performance image and sales have been declining. Pontiac's top performance coupe, the GTO, will also get the axe after the 2006 model year. Sales have never reached levels high enough to support the development costs for building an entirely new version.

CHINESE GEELY 2008 INTRODUCTION

If events go as planned, the Chinese Geely (pronounced JEE-lee) will go on sale in America in the fall of 2008. It's expected to sell for \$10,000 as a fully functional car complete with power windows, air conditioning and a compact disc player. John Harmer, COO of Geely USA Inc. said the cars have met some of the US and emission standards and the engineers are working to meet all the standards along with fixing quality issues. Harmer expects to start sales slowly with a target of 5,000 vehicles in 2008, but ramping up to 100,000 by 2012. He has already had franchise requests from 200 dealers.

REALLY BIG PICKUP TRUCKS

After already dwarfing big Dodge, Ford and General Motors trucks with its CXT, International Truck and Engine Company has introduced its third big truck, the new MXT™ 4x4 pickup. As the smallest of the International trucks, the MXT boasts a 16,000 pound towing capacity, 300 hp, 530 lb.ft. of torque diesel engine and five-speed automatic transmission. Built with many of the same specs as familiar 18-wheeler tractors, the MXT is 8 feet wide, 7.5 feet high and nearly 21 feet long. On

the back is a seven-foot pickup bed with a two-ton payload capacity. The plush four-door crew cab has Cab Air Suspension System, available leather seating for five, with driver and passenger air suspension seats. It also has keyless entry, power windows and tilt wheel. The MXT joins the larger capacity RXT and CXT which can be configured to tow up to 20 tons. The new MXT is priced from \$69,900 to \$85,000, with the other models going for as much as \$135,000. In the works is an RXT model design specifically for fifth-wheel towing.

NEW DIESEL TECHNOLOGY

Beru, a German automobile parts supplier, in collaboration with Siemens VDO/Federal-Mogul, is developing a new glowplug system for diesel engines. The pressure-sensing glowplugs will provide dramatic reductions in nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions, possibly even allowing designers to eliminate bulky and costly exhaust treatment systems. They claim the system will be able to meet strict new diesel emission laws in Europe and the US and maintain the performance for up to 120,000 miles. The new glowplugs are expected to be on diesel engines of a major, but yet to be announced, manufacturer by mid 2007.

FORD BACK WITH SPORT TRAC

Ford's SUV-style truck gets a total remake for 2007 picking up some length, safety equipment and a V-8 engine with 6-speed automatic transmission. The all-new Sport Trac has a 17-inch longer wheelbase than the previous model and boasts a 4.3-foot-long composition bed. The four-door truck shares a great deal of equipment with the new Ford Explorer SUV including four-wheel independent suspension, stability and traction control systems (to keep it upright) plus front, side and curtain airbags. The base engine is a 4.0-liter 210-hp V-6 with 5-speed automatic while the new 4.6-liter 292-hp V-8 with 6-speed automatic is an option. Prices are expected to start at about \$27,000 when it arrives at dealerships about now. ■

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*.

ARIZONA DRIVER

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Grand Canyon National Park
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923-638-7888 Visitor Info Recorded Message

Lake Havasu State Park
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928-855-2784

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument
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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

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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

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800-777-8642 - www.coloradoinfo.com

MOTOR MUSEUMS

Shelby American Collection
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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
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8380 Cerrillos Rd. Suite 302 • Santa Fe NM 87507
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Chihuahua State Tourism Office
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Edificio Agustin Melgar, 1er Piso
CP 31000 Chihuahua, Chihuahua
(14) 29-3421

Sinaloa State Tourism Office
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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

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Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village
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www.hfmgv.com • 313-271-1620

Imperial Palace Auto Collections
(see Nevada listings)

Motorcycle Hall of Fame Museum
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National Automobile Museum
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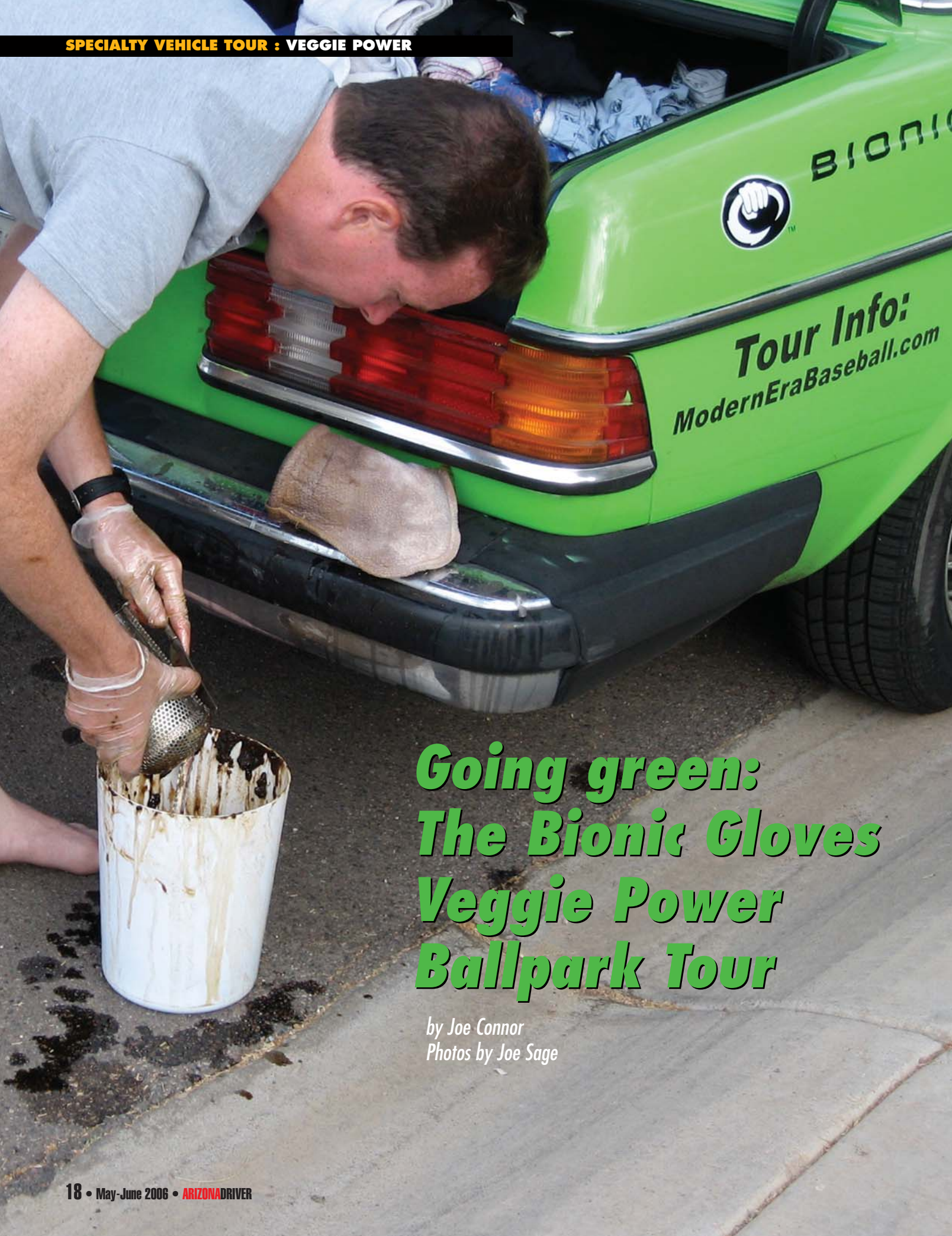
National Corvette Museum
350 Corvette Drive • Bowling Green KY 42101
www.corvettemuseum.com • 800-53VETTE

Petersen Automotive Museum
(see California listings)

Shelby American Collection
(see Colorado listings)



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Going green: The Bionic Gloves Veggie Power Ballpark Tour

by Joe Connor
Photos by Joe Sage

What do you get when you take a 1984 Mercedes 300 D Turbo Diesel whose owner is a baseball traveling diehard living on a lowly, freelance writer budget? With the ridiculously high gas prices, you get innovative, especially if you want to crisscross the country all season long and visit all of the Spring Training ballparks in the Grand Canyon State, too.

Matter of fact, you convert your 1984 Mercedes to run on vegetable oil. Vegetable oil? Yep, you got it—grease is the word.

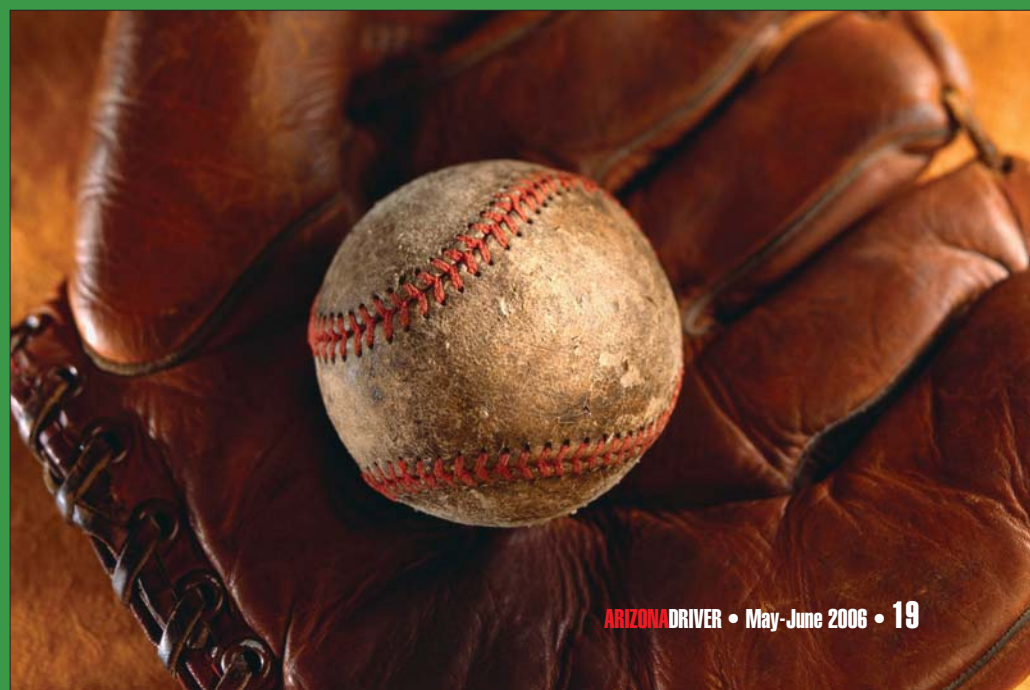
On March 1, I left my home in San Diego, California at 4 am, to embark on the ultimate baseball fan's trip of a lifetime: seven months of baseball, at least one game in every different state in the lower 48 of the fruited plain. And the first nine days would be in Arizona, beginning March 1 in Tucson and ending March 9 in Peoria. And the car's exhaust would smell a lot like French fries.

About six months prior to departure, I was at home one night, abusing my television remote control, when a story on a channel I still don't remember caught my fancy. But I do vividly remember the content—it was about how diesel-fueled vehicles can be converted to run on used frying oil, the same oil most restaurants must pay to dispose of. I was immediately hooked, and then the light bulb really went off in my head—what if I could drive a car around the country promoting this alternative fuel while at the same realizing one of my dreams?

Ever since I was a little boy growing up in West Hartford, Connecticut as a fan of the Boston Red Sox, I had always dreamed of visiting every professional ballpark. My parents had married in the 1960s and were free spirits, encouraging me and my younger brother to see the country and the world. My late father had been a pilot in the US Air Force and traveled all over, and he would share stories, not to mention his boyhood fascination with baseball Hall-of-Famer Mickey Mantle.

At 34 years old, living the single life as a freelance writer in San Diego with no mortgage payment or personal or financial obligations that would tie me

KEEP RIGHT >>





Louisville Slugger, Arizona Driver Magazine, groups like that—plenty of key entities were happy to sign on as sponsors for the Tour.

>> CONT'D



down, I decided to make my dreams since boyhood reality. I logged on the Internet to learn more about what I had seen on TV, and I also realized I would need to secure sponsorships. That's because you don't become a freelance baseball writer for the money—you become a freelance baseball writer because you know how to write and love the game, and want to be as close to the game as possible if you can't actually be on the field.

Fortunately, I can also be a pretty good salesman. I convinced a small Massachusetts-based company to lend me a 13-gallon tank in exchange for a logo on my car, and paid a local mechanic to install it in the trunk where the spare tire usually goes. Hoses are run from the car's radiator to the trunk tank to heat the vegetable oil via a heat exchanger. At start-up, the car runs on diesel while the radiator fluid does its work heating up the vegetable oil tank. By the time the internal temperature of the car is between 80-100 degrees, the viscosity of the vegetable oil has been reduced to the point where it can run as a fuel.

The mechanic installed a switch underneath

my car stereo, so I could go from running on diesel to running on fryer fat.

So as the sun rose over Yuma as I crossed into Arizona on Interstate 8 on the first day of March, I was burning vegetable oil—and feeling like a king. Some three hours later, I was seated at Tucson Electric Park, Spring Training home of the Arizona Diamondbacks and Chicago White Sox. On an overcast day, I witnessed Chicago lose to the visiting Colorado Rockies, but I felt like a winner—or shall I say, on cloud nine. In just six months, I had gone from being uninformed about alternative fuels to being an unofficial spokesperson. Despite countless rejections, I had managed to secure close to \$25,000 in sponsorship for my journey, and I wasn't going to let a few obstacles get in my way.

Obstacles? There are two key notes about running a car on vegetable oil I soon learned. Number one, it isn't always a picnic securing used frying oil from restaurants, and number two, no matter how you slice and dice it, your arms, clothes and your car's body are going to get greasy—literally. Translation: sometimes very time consuming and prepare to get messy. Both can be primarily avoided if you go to your neighborhood Costco or Sam's Club and purchase five-gallon drums of straight vegetable oil. But since you have to pay at least \$30.00 to do, financially you'd just be better off sticking exclusively with diesel.

Used vegetable oil is the way to go. And that's the choice I made. Following my tour's inaugural game, I went hunting for grease.

Restaurants that use a non-hydrogenated oil, such as straight vegetable oil, soybean oil, canola oil, peanut oil or corn oil, are best because they have a lower gel point. On the other hand, restaurants that cook their food using shortening or partially-hydrogenated oil results in thicker grease, and that's not good.

In addition to a tank, I also had a filter installed in my trunk to block bacon bits from going into my engine. This filter gets heated with the radiator fluid, too, and is a lifesaver but it also clogs easily, which means I learned I had to get my hands dirty and clean it out. And that meant drips of grease here, there and everywhere—from my clothes to my journalist notebooks.

After striking out at a few Tucson restaurants that either didn't use the right oil I was looking for or wouldn't let me take any, I hit a home run after about 30 minutes of hunting, just before happy hour, when I walked into Famous Sam's, an Arizona sports bar institution since the early 1960s. The manager of the famous Grand Canyon State franchise was happy to help, and my timing couldn't have better. Later that night, he was going to be cleaning out his fryers, and he told me to come back the next day when he would have at least five to 10 gallons ready to go. Bingo.

I headed off to my hotel for some rest, and "flushed" my vegetable oil, which is to say I ran diesel back through the lines, making sure the vegetable oil was purged from the fuel line and injectors so it wouldn't become clogged at the next start-up when the engine is cold. The same switch the mechanic installed was all I needed to do the 30 second trick.

The next morning, I went to Yokohama Rice Bowl in Tucson and filled up my tank with at least five gallons before heading over to the city's historic Hi-Corbett Field, the Rockies Spring Training home. The Yokohama oil was needed because my plan was to hit the road for Phoenix post-game, after stopping by and filling up at Famous Sam's. The young and exciting Rockies put another whooping on the White Sox at the oldest ballpark in Arizona on a glorious sunny desert after-

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This gig meant a lot of late nights for the author, in search of used veggie oil, and a lot of early mornings to wow 'em on local TV.

>> CONT'D

noon. Hi-Corbett has been hosting baseball since the 1920s, and even was featured in the movie *Major League*, starring Charlie Sheen.

With two games in the books and plenty of vegetable oil in the car, the early evening drive up to the Valley of the Sun was a pleasant one. On the morning of March 3, I rose at the crack of dawn to be a guest on live local television, showcasing the Veggie Power Mobile. I was nervous but the interview went off without a hitch, and a few hours later I was on the fresh cut grass of Chase Field, aka, The BOB (named after its former namesake, Bank One Ballpark). Team USA was on the field for its first practice in preparation for the World Baseball Classic, an inaugural, 16-country tournament featuring Major League players representing their nations.

I had secured a media credential for the tournament because I was writing a story about the event for *Padres Magazine*, the San Diego Padres game program. I had also written team profiles of the 16 countries participating in the World Baseball Classic for ESPN.com.

I felt like a kid in a candy store. Derek Jeter was warming up in front of me along the first base line. Alex Rodriguez was

posing for pictures in the dugout. One of my favorite Red Sox, Jason Varitek, was kind enough to grant me a one-on-one interview.

I was in heaven.

Actually, I was soon off to Tempe, where the baseball gods apparently were with me. I saw the home-team Angels whoop the Padres silly at Tempe Diablo Stadium, and not only that, I caught a foul ball! Would you believe it was the first foul ball I had ever caught, even though I had probably been to literally thousands of games?

Believe it.

The Padres' Khalil Greene swung late on a Jared Weaver pitch and the ball sailed down the first base line, bounced off a couple of fans' hands—and right into mine. Later that night, I saw the Arizona State Sun Devils whoop the Auburn Tigers silly at Packard Stadium in Tempe. It was 13-0 Sun Devils by the seventh inning!

My final six days in the Phoenix area would be even better than my first three in the Grand Canyon State. From Maryvale Ballpark in West Phoenix, Spring Training home of the Brewers, to HoHoKam Park in Mesa in the East Valley, Spring Training home of the Chicago Cubs, I had yet to get off cloud nine.

Sure, there were times over the next week when I got frustrated, especially when I'd visit multiple restaurants in the Valley to secure used vegetable oil and get rejected because the manager was only looking to time out, not to help someone. And there were times when I got

frustrated changing my filter, especially in the hot Arizona sun of March.

But running on vegetable oil certainly did wonders to my wallet—like keep more money in it! During my time in the Valley of the Sun, I tried to keep a quarter of a tank of diesel (for start-up) and the rest of my weight dedicated to burning vegetable oil. I got about the same fuel economy on the vegetable oil as I did on the diesel, only I wasn't getting great mileage overall because I had packed up the car pretty good with clothing for the seven-month jaunt. Most folks also have a filtration system set up in their garage, not trunk.

The highlight of the last week in the Phoenix area, though, was definitely the World Baseball Classic, and the enthusiasm and energy from the crowds at Chase Field and Scottsdale Stadium.

By March 10, I was out of the state—and still completely out my mind to most folks. Six months and three weeks later—on October 1—I made it back home to San Diego. I had crisscrossed the country and driven more than 50,000 veggie miles, seeing 272 games in 215 days (yep, a lot of double-headers).

It was the trip of a lifetime. But as one of my sponsors recommended, "Now, Joe, get some rest!" I retired to the couch and watched the baseball playoffs on television through October. And during the commercials that ran between innings, I couldn't help but think back to the first great days of the trip, which all started in the baseball heaven of Arizona. ■

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GM gets it really right

by Barbara
and Bill Schaffer



General Motors is spending time lately getting it right! We just got out of the phenomenal all-new 2007 Chevrolet Tahoe (along with the Corvette Z06) and we just went to the introduction of the new and much improved GMC Yukon, Yukon Denali and Cadillac Escalade. These are all vehicles that GM "got right." They appear to be on an incredible roll.

The previous generation Tahoe was good and sold well up until the gas crunch last year. When fuel economy started dictating buying habits, GM rushed ahead and brought out the newest generation of their highly profitable full size SUVs. The impetus for the earlier introduction was their improved fuel economy, which they anticipate being the best in the segment, but that's only the tip of the iceberg of the improvements and refinements.

With the new leaner exterior design the Tahoe expresses a more sporty and agile look. It features large wheels and a wider track that offer a more powerful and capable stance. Improved aerodynamics

also contribute to the sleek look, and the raked windshield and smoother roofline accentuate its new length. Adding to the sporty look are standard 17-inch and optional 20-inch wheels.

The entirely new interior is filled with high quality materials and an excellent fit and finish. Six gauges fill the instrument pod that sits below the arched dash. The center stack is well organized with the most used navigation screen and audio controls mounted on top over the climate control. The bottom row of buttons includes controls for the adjustable pedals, a shut-off for the backup warning system and other controls not used as often. There are also dual plugs in the dash for cell phone or iPod chargers.

The heart of the new Tahoe is the latest generation small-block V-8, which now includes an advanced Active Fuel Management system that shuts off four cylinders during low engine load conditions, in addition to many other refinements. The two-wheel-drive version is rated 16 mpg

for city driving and 22 mpg on the highway. In combined driving, we averaged 18.7 mpg, which we thought was good for a 5300-pound vehicle and with our less than economical driving style; however we would probably average 22 mpg if Barbara were the only driver.

The 5.3-liter V-8 produces a robust 320 horsepower and 340 lb.ft. of torque. The transmission in our rear-wheel drive test vehicle was a four-speed automatic. Later in the model year, the standard engine for the two-wheel drive will be a 290-hp, 4.8-liter V-8, but without the cylinder deactivation.

As expected, the acceleration levels of the new engine were significantly improved with 0 to 60 mph times of 8.5 seconds. We recorded 76 mph in our unofficial acceleration test, which runs about one-eighth mile. That makes the Tahoe one of the best accelerating full size SUVs we've driven, except for some of the new near 400 horsepower models that have popped up recently.

General Motors is encouraging the use of



The Chevrolet Tahoe has a standard electronic stability control system that uses brake controls to help the vehicle maintain control in the event of a potential skid. The system also uses software algorithms to predict vehicle "tip-up" on a flat road and again applies the appropriate brakes to mitigate the chances for a rollover.

E85 fuel (E85 comprises 85 percent ethanol, which is a renewable resource fuel produced in the United States) and our vehicle had the \$1,000 flex fuel option.

Even the two-wheel-drive LS model (\$33,990 including destination charge) has a long list of standard features including dual zone climate control, cruise control, StabiliTrak (stability control), tire pressure monitoring and more.

We drove the top-level LTZ model (\$44,015), which adds features like leather, four heated seats, remote starter, Bose speakers, XM Satellite radio, power rear liftgate, Autoride Suspension, 20-inch polished wheels; heated washer fluid system, rain sensing wipers and much more. Our test vehicle also had a very good navigation system (\$2,145), rear view camera (\$195), and rear seat entertainment system (\$1,295), taking it to a lofty \$48,140. However, it's a very impressive vehicle.

The Tahoe is new from the ground up, with a new frame and a choice of three different suspension systems. The standard system is called Premium Smooth Ride, while the LTZ we drove comes with the Z55 system with Autoride. For drivers that go off road, the Z71 (available later in the model year) will be the best choice.

If we were blindfolded, we doubt that we could tell the difference between the Tahoe and one of the town cars that transport people to the airport. It's that smooth and that quiet. The Autoride system in our test vehicle takes the handling to a new dimension with real-time damping to reduce body motion and the dip and dive of acceleration and braking. Autoride also incorporates an air-lift/auto-leveling system that automatically raises the vehicle's ride height when carrying passengers or heavy payload.

The other driving elements of the Tahoe include a precise rack and pinion steering system and large four-wheel disc brakes. The brakes have a strong positive feel with none of the mushy pedal feel of previous models.

For a daily driver or on a road trip, we enjoyed everything, except for the fuel economy, about the Tahoe. We especially appreciate the features like the backup camera, heated seats, DVD system to entertain the kids, and the navigation system. In addition, it's very comfortable and easy to drive.

Chevrolet planners have done an excellent job on the new Tahoe. It reaches a new level of refinement, not seen before on Chevrolet cars or trucks. ■

Chevrolet Tahoe LTZ

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

20-inch polished aluminum wheels, Heated front and second row leather seats; Power liftgate; RainSense wipers; Heated washer fluid; Autoride suspension; Power release on second row seats; All power, Cruise; XM Satellite Radio; Power adjustable pedals; Remote vehicle start; Ultrasonic rear parking assist; Sunroof; Tire pressure monitoring system; and much more.

Base Price: \$43,140
Options: Second row bucket seats....\$49
Navigation/radio\$2,145
Rear view camera\$195
Rear seat entertainment\$1,295
Total Options\$4,125
Freight\$875
Price as Tested.....\$48,140

DIMENSIONS

EPA SizeSpec. Purp
Weight.....5,233 lb.
Wheelbase116.0 in.
Length.....202.0 in.
Width.....79 in.
Height76.9 in.
Fuel Capacity26 gal.
Cargo Capacity16.9 to 108.9 cu. ft.

MECHANICAL

Engine.....5.3L V-8 Flexi Fuel
Horsepower320@5300
Torque340@4200
Transmission4-Spd. Auto
DriveRear wheel
BrakesDisc ABS
Tires275/55R20

PERFORMANCE

0 to 60 mph.....85 sec.
Top speedLimited 112 mph
EPA economy rating16/22 mpg
Our actual fuel econ18.7 mpg

COMPETITORS

Ford Expedition, GMC Yukon, Hummer H2, Infiniti Q56, Nissan Armada, Toyota Sequoia

And right on the heels of the Tahoe...

by Bill Schaffer

First out of the box was the fantastic new Chevrolet Tahoe. Now the General Motors truck company GMC has the Yukon and upscale Yukon Denali.



New from the ground up, the Yukon styling takes an evolutionary approach with a tighter-looking trimmed design that just happens to be a little larger. Up front, the attractive trademark GMC grille is squared-off in the upper corners and now resembles the silhouette of claw foot bathtub without legs. The Denali grille is the traditional chrome honeycomb design, while the Yukon is in black. The grille is flanked by large crystal-looking light modules. The smooth sides have a smooth raised bumper strip that corresponds to the top of the bumpers. The Denali is distinguished in the rear by tall clear taillight lenses, while the Yukon's are a more traditional red.

The interior includes a high level of quality materials and excellent fit and finish. I preferred the decor of Yukon because it used less wood trim and instead accented the center console surround with a clean aluminum look.

The best features of both new Professional Grade GMC trucks are their on road operation. The solid, quiet ride combined with big plush seats rivals the comfort of many luxury sedans.

Performance was impressive, too with a standard 5.3-liter (320-hp) V-8 engine and four-speed automatic transmission. The new engine is enhanced by GM's 5.3L V-8 with Active Fuel Management™ fuel-saving technology. When the driver doesn't need the extra horses, four of the cylinders shut down to save fuel. When power is needed for passing or pulling the grade, the V-8 is instantly active providing the full force of the powerful V-8. The result is best in class EPA fuel economy ratings of 16 mpg for city driving and 22 mpg on the highway for the two-wheel drive version. The four-wheel drive eats up one mpg on both numbers. Later in the model year, the standard two-wheel drive engine will become a 290-hp 4.8-liter V-8. The 5.3-liter engine is also offered with the Flex Fuel option that allow the engine to use E85 ethanol based fuel made from renewable farm products.

The Yukon Denali gets a more substantial 380-hp 6.2-liter V-8 engine with a new six-speed automatic transmission with an exclusive tap up/down control for manual shifting located on the face of the column mounted shifter. The pair produces and

unbelievable 0 to 60 mph time of 6.2 seconds. That means this 5,500-pound hauler accelerates at the same rate as cars like the Audi A6 4.2 V-8, Mercedes-Benz E350 and Volvo S60R. Roll the window down and the V-8 has a beautiful deep-throated V-8 exhaust rumble. Denali also gets a sophisticated Z55 Autoride suspension with real-time shock dampening to maintain a flatter, more controlled ride.

The Yukon rides on standard 17-inch wheels, while the Denali gets 18-inches. Both have available 20-inch wheels and tires. All models have an abundance of safety equipment include the StabiliTrak stability control system and tire pressure monitoring.

The two-wheel drive Yukon SLE starts at \$34,690, while the upper level and very well equipped four-wheel SLT goes for \$41,670. The top-of-the line full-time all-wheel-drive Denali starts at \$47,990. A moonroof, rear entertainment system and DVD-based navigation system add about \$4,500 to the SLT or Denali price. All three models are at dealerships now. The XL version, which is 20.4 inches longer, will be available later in the model year. ■



Fasten Your Seat Belt...Go Far!

VOLKSWAGEN CHALLENGES TEENS TO GENERATE A POSITIVE TREND FOR SEAT BELT USE, SAVING LIVES

Education program developed with Scholastic encourages students to create PSA; Eight winning entries to be nationally broadcast

Volkswagen of America is launching its award-winning *Fasten Your Seat Belt...Go Far!* program for the fourth consecutive year.

The program challenges high school students to create their own public service announcements encouraging their peers to buckle up. Vehicular accidents are the leading cause of death among teenagers, killing more than 5,000 young people every year. Many of these deaths could be prevented, as more than half of the teens involved in fatal crashes are not wearing seat belts. This supplementary education program, developed with Scholastic, the global children's publishing, education and media company, arrived in 7,000 classrooms in 150 cities across the country during the past two weeks.

Fasten Your Seat Belt...Go Far!, a joint educational effort between Volkswagen and Scholastic, provides interactive educational materials that teaches high school students how to use their communication and language arts skills to affect change and influence their peers through positive messaging. As part of this program, participating students compete to develop PSAs that encourage teens to wear safety belts. Specifically, lesson plans and activities help teens build language and literacy skills, practice oral and written communication skills, and use creative expression. The resulting PSA announcements feature a wide variety of creative storylines and styles,

but a singular message: "Buckling up is cool." An informal study conducted by Volkswagen revealed the top reason teens don't wear a safety belt is because they believe it is "uncool."

"*Fasten Your Seat Belt...Go Far!* uses a very powerful tool – peer-to-peer influence – in a positive way to change teens' attitudes about safety," said Adrian Hallmark, executive vice president, Volkswagen of America, Inc. "The program teaches kids that it's not cool to lose their chance to go far in life. Importantly, kids learn that they have an opportunity to make a difference in their peer group and save lives by getting this critical message out to their friends."

"*Fasten Your Seat Belt...Go Far!* program offers an engaging way to infuse this critical topic into classroom discussions across the country," stated Shelley White, editorial director of Scholastic Marketing Partners. "The program not only teaches positive messages and important communication skills to teens, but ultimately can help save their lives."

Volkswagen and Scholastic will select eight finalists, whose PSAs will appear on a national television broadcast. A grand prize winner will win a \$12,000 U.S. Savings Bond; the runner-up will receive a \$6,000 U.S. Savings Bond; two second-place winners will each receive a \$600 U.S. Savings Bond; and four third-place winners will each receive a \$300 U.S. Savings Bond for a total of over \$20,000 in prizes. The first 500 students to enter

the contest will receive a Volkswagen baseball hat.

The teacher of the grand prize winner will receive a \$1,000 Scholastic gift certificate and a digital video camera; the teacher of the runner-up will receive a \$500 Scholastic gift certificate and a digital video camera; the teachers of the second-place winners will each receive a \$250 Scholastic gift certificate and a digital video camera; and the teachers of the third-place winners will receive a \$100 Scholastic gift certificate.

Fasten Your Seat Belt...Go Far! earned a Halo Award in 2005 from the Cause Marketing Forum in the "Best Joint Message Promotion" category.

ABOUT SCHOLASTIC

Scholastic Corporation is the world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books and a leader in educational technology, including children's books, magazines, technology-based products, teacher materials, television programming, film, videos and toys. The Company distributes its products and services through a variety of channels; see www.scholastic.com.

ABOUT VOLKSWAGEN

Volkswagen of America is a subsidiary of Volkswagen AG, of Wolfsburg, Germany. Volkswagen is one of the world's largest producers of passenger cars and Europe's largest automaker, with more than 600 independent US dealers. ■



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DrivingMBA programs reduce the risk and magnitude of death, injury and property damage caused by teenage drivers. We accomplish this through the use of state-of-the-art simulators to teach students how to drive through experience in a no-risk environment. Our students develop:

- A better understanding of the mental skills required to be safe, responsible drivers
- Safe driving habits
- Better decision making skills, particularly in hazardous or dangerous situations
- A better understanding of personal and vehicle limitations

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DrivingMBA's primary objective is to keep teen drivers and all of us safer on the road. Stories about teen drivers continue to be featured in newspapers and publications across the country. **DrivingMBA** is the only driving school in Arizona that uses state-of-the-art driving simulators to train its students. The airline industry has been using this type of technology for decades to train pilots. The military also uses this type of technology to train soldiers, AND **DrivingMBA's** equipment is the same equipment that is being used by police academies throughout the country, including here in Arizona, for its advanced driver training. The effectiveness of this type of driver training is indisputable, and **DrivingMBA** has documented results that prove its driver education program works.

Whether your teen has never been behind the wheel, has driving experience or has their driver's license, **DrivingMBA** is the only driving school with a driver training program to meet their specific needs. Don't let your teen get their driver training through trial and error. The errors are costly. They not only cost you in insurance rate increases, vehicle damage, but the most significant cost, the loss of life. Whether it is you, your teen, friends or family, even someone you don't know, a car collision can change lives forever. Make sure your teen is prepared to handle all types of driving situations.

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Totally on track

by Barbara and Bill Schaffer



The 2006 Honda Civic has dominated the awards this year with its suite of sedans and coupes. With its unique Integrated Motor Assist (IMA) and Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT), the Hybrid is capable of 49/51 mpg city/highway making it one of the most fuel stingy cars available in the US.

Powered by a highly-efficient 1.3-liter (110-hp) four-cylinder gasoline engine with 20-hp electric motor assist, the Hybrid maximizes fuel usage on the road. When it's stopped, the gas engine shuts down to save fuel, plus it benefits with other fuel-saving features like electric-assist power steering. When the car starts off again, the electric motor assists, as it does when more power is needed for, say, passing. The electric motor also doubles as the starter, and it assists in charging the battery. The battery is also charged from regenerative braking and when the car coasts. Unlike electric vehicles, the hybrid does not need to be plugged in.

Driving the Civic Hybrid is no different than driving any other car, other than it's not necessary to start it, in the traditional sense. Once the ignition is on, and the CVT is in gear, the driver simply presses the accelerator and the vehicle moves the appropriate direction with the gasoline engine starting. The entire engine starting and stopping process is done silently and seamlessly with no driver intervention. Often the only way the driver can tell what is happening is by looking at the charge-assist gauge and the tachometer in the lower instrument pod.

The Civic Hybrid accelerates at a respectable rate, producing 0 to 60 mph times of 10.8 seconds. EPA fuel economy estimates are 49 mpg for city driving and 51 mpg on the highway. Our actual mileage during a week of combined driving averaged 41.7 mpg.

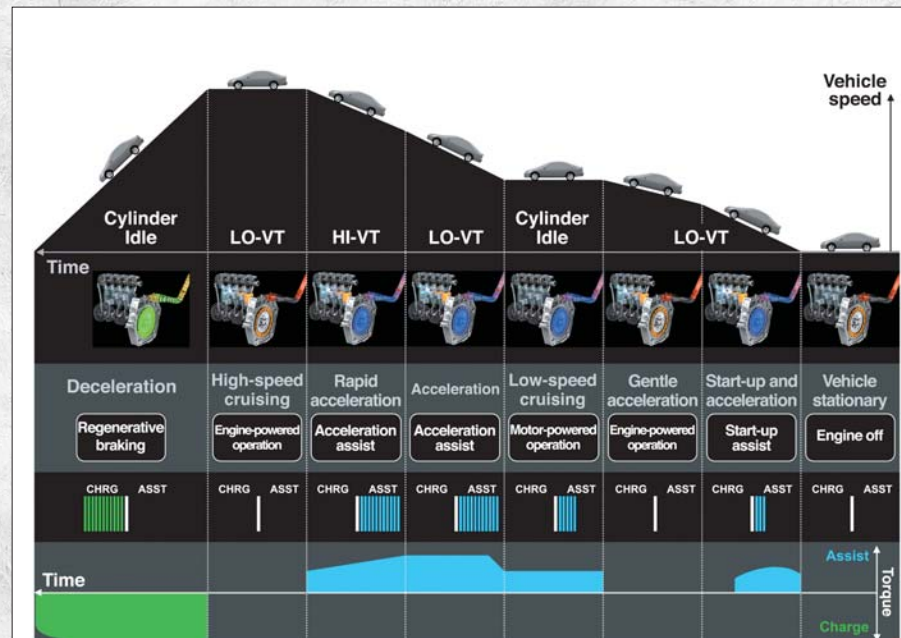
Civic Hybrid prices start at \$22,700. With the DVD navigation system (the only option), the price goes to \$24,200. ■

OUR DRIVE

Besides the Civic Hybrid Barbara and Bill tested for a week on the coast, we received one here at headquarters and certainly looked forward to it. We were quite impressed with the original Civic Hybrid (see *Arizona Driver*, March/April 2005), so much so that we actively anticipated the Accord Hybrid that followed (see *AZD*, May/June 2005). So a new Civic Hybrid? Full of improvements and a year's new technology in this rapidly changing realm? Bring it on! And bring it on, they did. Honda delivered us the new Civic Hybrid on a beautiful late March afternoon.

We oriented ourselves to its fundamentals, and the next day we drove it halfway across the Valley to a meeting. Having learned "defensive parking" as well as defensive driving long ago, we eyed a nice spot, in full view, nothing much in front, behind, or side-to-side, and plenty of room for others' maneuvers through particularly wide lanes. During our meeting, someone came at the door and asked, "Is that your Honda outside?" Gee, we're in a meeting, not a great time to discuss hybrid technology... but... "Yes, that's ours." Well, the gentleman was obviously quite honest, but he wasn't there to learn about hybrids—he was there to let us know he hadn't seen it as he got in his full-size pickup from the other side, then backed right into it. We were devastated—it's not our car, it's brand new, it's on the rare side, it's full of technology that might not take well to a good whack, and so on. We set up the accident report steps and drove back.

We weren't too focused on the hybrid aspects by then, but we can say they were as transparent as the situation probably warranted. We were more focused on whether the car would track well at freeway speeds and generally hold together. Well, this little magic Honda is built very soundly. Despite high side winds, we tracked and maneuvered at normal speeds, all the way back to the office. Honda could not have been nicer about it all, but we certainly are disappointed. ■





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The Chase is On- NASCAR NEXTEL Cup Drivers to Sell Tickets



Phoenix International Raceway President Bryan R. Sperber has announced that NASCAR NEXTEL Cup stars Kasey Kahne, JJ Yeley and Joe Nemechek will join the PIR staff, selling tickets for the Checker Auto Parts 500 at the PIR Ticket Offices from Noon - 2 p.m. on Thursday, June 22.

"This is a unique opportunity for NASCAR fans to purchase their tickets to the Checker Auto Parts 500 Weekend directly from some of the top drivers in NASCAR," said Sperber.

Fans looking to secure tickets for NASCAR's Semi-Final Showdown Weekend at PIR can purchase their tickets directly from drivers beginning at Noon. Driver interaction is limited to selling tickets and they will only be signing autographs on purchased tickets. The PIR Ticket Office is located in Avondale, at 125 S. Avondale Blvd., Suite 200. Ticket windows are open Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm.

Kahne has captured four career NASCAR NEXTEL Cup victories, three of them during the current 2006 season (Atlanta, Texas, Charlotte). The 2004 Raybestos Rookie of the Year is currently fifth in the NASCAR Point Standings and is expected to be a contender in NASCAR's Chase for the NEXTEL Cup.

Yeley, a native of Phoenix, is currently running his first full season in the NASCAR NEXTEL Cup series and is in contention for the Raybestos Rookie of the Year award. Driving the #18 Interstate Batteries Chevrolet for Joe Gibbs Racing in the NEXTEL Cup Series, Yeley is also running full-time in the NASCAR Busch

series where he sits in sixth place in the point standings.

Driving the #01 US Army Chevrolet, Nemechek has captured four wins, 18 top-5's and 59 top-10s throughout his 12-year career in the NEXTEL Cup series.

It's the playoffs - NASCAR Style - this November at Phoenix International Raceway. Semi-Final Showdown Weekend at PIR roars into action Thursday night, November 9th with the Phoenix 125, NASCAR AutoZone Elite Division, Southwest Series race. Friday features NEXTEL Cup Series qualifying and then the sparks will fly under the lights in the Casino Arizona 150, NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series race followed by the PIR After Dark fan festival Friday, November 10th. The best of the Busch Series battle it out on Saturday, November 11, in the ARIZONA.TRAVEL 200, NASCAR Busch Series race. Sunday, November 12th a champion could be decided in the Semi-Final race in the Chase for the NEXTEL Cup, the Checker Auto Parts 500 Presented by Pennzoil, NASCAR NEXTEL Cup Series race.

Tickets and information for these events can be found online at www.phoenixraceway.com or by calling either 602-252-2227 or 1-866-408-7223. ■



THE INSIDE TRACK: BRIEFS & RUMORS

■ **Ford** has developed a supercharged V-10 engine for possible use in their F-Series trucks. The engine is called the "Super Chief tri-flex" and is designed to run either on gasoline or E85 (ethanol/gasoline mixture), plus it's capable of running on hydrogen. Ford says the ability to use more than one fuel enables it to cruise for about 500 miles before refueling. No announcement was made about actual production or dates.



Ford Super Chief V-10

■ **Dodge** SRT engineers have already put their stamp on the new

Caliber five-door, even before the original arrives at dealerships. The high performance Caliber SRT4 debuted at the Chicago Auto Show powered by the first turbocharged application of Chrysler's new global 2.4-liter four-cylinder engine, which is attached to a six-speed manual transmission. The result is an impressive 300 hp and 260 lb.ft. of torque capable of a 5.9 second 0 to 60 mph run. It goes on sale in the spring of 2007.



Lincoln Zephyr (MKZ)

■ Rumors out of Detroit have **Ford** working on a crash program to develop a high-volume rear-wheel drive four-door sedan. According to *Motor Trend* magazine, it is being developed from a Mustang platform, and would have a V-8 engine. Such a vehicle would probably replace the slow-selling Five Hundred.

■ **Chevrolet** has an all-new Avalanche based on the new full-size truck platform. With its new cleaner look, the sporty four-door truck is powered by a standard 5.3-liter V-8 with an optional 355-hp 6.0-liter

V-8 coming later in the year. It's loaded with great new features like a locking tailgate controlled by the key fob and a backup camera to see what's behind and to make aligning the hitch with a trailer tongue much easier.

■ **Volkswagen** will build a sleek "coupe style" sedan, emulating the Mercedes-Benz CLS. Based on the Passat sedan, the coupe will be offered for far less than the CLS and with a choice of engines ranging from a 150-hp four-cylinder to a 3.6-liter (280-hp) VR6 up to a 400-hp turbocharged VR6. A hybrid version is also expected. The 2008 model should debut at the 2007 Frankfurt motor show.

■ **Lincoln's** Zephyr will be short lived, at least by name. Lincoln says it will change the name to reflect the company's new alphabetic naming scheme when the 2007 model debuts this fall. Henceforth, the Zephyr will become the Lincoln MKZ or 'Mark Z' as they hope it will be called. The MKZ will get a mild facelift and a larger 250-horsepower engine to differentiate it a little more from siblings, the Ford Fusion and Mercury Milan.



Corvette Z06

■ **Volvo** may be planning a minivan style vehicle in the near future according to insider information. Reportedly, someone familiar with the program said the vehicle is going through cold weather testing in northern Sweden. The unidentified source said the vehicle shares components and architecture with the upcoming Volvo S80 sedan replacement, Ford Galaxy minivan and Ford S-Max crossover shown recently in Geneva. Power would likely come from the same 3.2-liter inline six-cylinder that drives the S80. Volvo officials deny the project.

■ **Nissan** fixed the Quest for 2007 by making major changes to the unique, but slow selling minivan. The most significant change makes the futurist-looking interior more conventional. The exterior is freshened with a new Nissan-signature grille and stronger shoulder line. Available features include a 7-inch display screen for navigation and RearView camera, rear sonar backup warning system, DVD entertainment with one or two screens and power rear and side doors.

■ Rumors are circulating once again about a higher-performance version of the **Chevrolet** Corvette Z06. The so called Blue Devil has a supercharged 7.0-liter V-8 engine producing upward of 600-hp. If the rumors are true, the car would be fitted with lightweight carbon fiber body parts to reduce the weight to near 2,900 pounds. The rumored price is around \$100,000.

Honda Civic Si Sedan



■ **Honda** has added an Si performance version of the highly acclaimed new Civic sedan. Along with 18-inch cast aluminum wheels and four-wheel Brembo disc brakes with cross-drilled rotors, the Si sedan gets a 197-horsepower i-VTEC engine and six-speed manual transmission. Supplementing the the Civic Si coupe, this is the first time Honda will offer two body styles of the Si.

■ **Porsche** is rumored to be bringing back the front-engine 928 in an updated version, which looks more sleek and flat than the original. It will likely be derived from the upcoming Panamera luxury sedan platform with rear- or all-wheel drive driven by the V-8 engine from the Cayenne SUV.

■ The **Lincoln** LS replacement, due in 2007 and now showing as a concept, is the striking new MKS. Built on the same platform as the Volvo S80 and XC90, the MKS should get the same transverse-mounted 315-hp Yamaha V-8 engine, with a six-speed automatic and all-wheel drive. The MKS has lots of chrome, a prominent grill and rakish profile. The interior is contemporary with no fake wood.

■ The **Dodge** Hornet concept first introduced at the Geneva auto show has some unusual proportions. The five-door hatchback is 8.3 inches longer than the Mini Cooper and 2 inches wider than the Chrysler 300 sedan. The rear doors are rear-opening, and only when the front doors are open, as in many of the extended cab trucks. The concept engine is a 170-hp supercharged four-cylinder. Dodge did not indicate if the Hornet would be the next entry level model below the recently announced Caliber hatchback.

■ **BMW** announced they will once again use turbochargers on a large scale for their 6-cylinder engines. The upcoming bi-turbo engines will use an innovative direct injection system called High Precision Injection with a fully variable camshaft control. The turbochargers are made from a highly heat resistant material from space technology.

■ **Mazda** unveiled another cog in their Mazda Performance Series (MPS) at the Geneva Motor Show. This time, the

performance upgrade goes to the Mazda3. Power will come from the same turbocharged 2.3-liter four-cylinder engine that powers the MazdaSpeed6, but with selective detuning to make the extra power more manageable with the front-wheel drive configuration. (The MazdaSpeed6 is all-wheel drive.) Prices will be forthcoming.

■ A **Dodge** concept that should be built is the Rampage that showed first at the Chicago Auto Show. The unibody four-door truck has sliding rear doors, a flexible mid-gate between the cab and cargo bed,

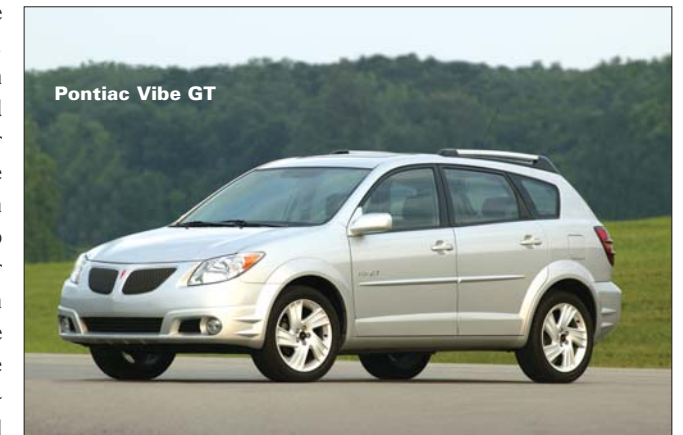


Dodge Hornet concept

a drop-down tailgate that doubles as a loading ramp and a compartment under the bed that can stow up to seven sheets of 4x8 building materials out of the weather. Yes, the Rampage gets the Hemi.

■ **Nissan** is considering the production of a full-size van to compete with those made by Ford and General Motors, which currently control 95.5 percent of the market. Discussions are centered on a van based on a platform being developed for the next generation Nissan Titan and Armada. If Nissan goes ahead with the project, it would probably debut in 2009. In January, Nissan announced it would create a division to sell light commercial vehicles in North America.

■ **Pontiac** may be dropping the GT and all-wheel-drive versions of the Vibe hatchback. According to Reuters News Service, slow sales and an expensive refit



Pontiac Vibe GT

needed to bring the engine up to new emission standards are behind the move. The Vibe is built in GM's joint-venture NUMMI plant in Fremont, Calif. It's still possible the performance and AWD versions will be added back into a future generation.

■ **BMW's** next generation M3 should arrive with a 4.0-liter V-8 engine developed from the new V-10 that powers the M5. Look for 415-horsepower driving a BMW's 7-speed SMG sequential shift manual or the six-speed manual. There's also a rumor of a DSG-style twin clutch, like the one in the Volkswagen and Audi. The M3 should arrive at US dealerships sometime in 2007. ■

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*.

Wish List Machines

by Barbara
and Bill Schaffer



BMW M5

The V-10 engine in the BMW M5 uses one throttle for each cylinder to provide the highest level of "breathing" and to eliminate a lag time.

Nearly everyone has a dream car, something they would buy if they won the lottery, most likely fast and expensive. You see them every day in many parts of Arizona, but you may not be ready to walk out and buy one.

We recently had a chance to drive four such cars that ranged in price from about \$68,000 up to \$98,000. Two of the cars were American icons: sport cars synonymous with speed and exotic design. The other two were state-of-the-art high-performance German sedans: sophisticated, loaded with new technology, extremely fast and comfortable. Combined, these four cars had 1,984 horsepower; their average 0 to 60 mph acceleration time was just over 4 seconds.

BMW M5

As one of the most anticipated BMW offerings ever, the BMW 5 Series M5 comes from a long line of "M" cars that have pushed the already impressive BMW cars to new levels of performance.

The M5 may start life with all the great attributes of a basic 5 series sedan, but it adds about \$22,000 of performance and safety equipment over the top level BMW 550i.

The heart of the M5 is the all-new 5.0-liter V-10 engine (a first for BMW) developing 500 horsepower and 383-lb.ft. of torque. Elmar Schulte, head of engine development for

BMW, explained why the V-10 configuration was chosen, "We wanted five liters. The ideal cylinder displacement is 0.5 liter. To get five liters, we needed 10 cylinders."

Unlike some engines that use high torque as the brute force to develop the power, BMW chose to extract its performance by "revving" the engine. As such, the V-10 has a redline of 8250 rpms allowing the engine to use relative light, low-mass reciprocating components to keep the weight down and the vehicle balanced.

Performance levels have 0 to 60 mph times of 4.2-seconds and a top speed limited to 161 mph (but it would go far beyond that speed without a governor). Fuel economy is rated at 12 mpg in the city and 18 mpg on the highway. Those EPA numbers require the buyer to pay a \$3,700 Gas Guzzler tax. We averaged 15.3 mpg during our driving.

Initially, the M5 is only available with a seven-speed Sequential Manual Gearbox (SMG), but a six-speed manual will be available in the fall of 2006. The SMG uses Formula 1 racing technology to maximize the full performance but we found it awkward to drive around town even in the automatic mode. It was easiest to shift using the wheel-mounted paddles or the console mounted shifter to shift manually, but without the use of a clutch. We felt as if we were just learning to drive when it was in the

automatic mode because the shifts seemed slow and rough even after experimenting with the console-mounted adjustments and the iDrive settings. The only way it shifted smoothly and quickly, for us, was under full acceleration, but those were momentary bursts because 100 mph arrives before you can count to 10 slowly.

We equated the SMG to operating a sophisticated single lens reflex camera that can be finitely adjusted to the most precise setting, or it could be operated in a point and shoot mode. Unfortunately, we were not comfortable, or smooth, in either mode. Getting the most out of the camera, or the M5, requires a lot of practice and experimentation.

The other distraction for the M5 is the iDrive that controls audio, climate, entertainment, and other functions via a large knob on the console with choices displayed on the navigation screen. It's too complicated and often requires several steps to do a simple task. We concede that over time, the iDrive will become more intuitive, but the learning curve is high.

Along with the sophisticated engine and transmission, the M5 is fitted with an electronic dampening control that seamlessly controls the shock absorbers between soft and hard to adapt to road and driving conditions. Another system, the M Variable Differential Lock, addresses low-



Chevrolet Corvette Z06

For nighttime driving, the Chevrolet Corvette Z06 is fitted with bright high-intensity discharge lights and fog lamps as standard equipment.

and split traction situations to provide the best traction.

The M5 is fitted with massive 14.7-inch front and 14.6-inch rear ventilated and cross-drilled compound disc brakes for maximum braking power and 255/40ZR19 front tires and 285/35ZR19 in the rear to hold it on the road.

The German sedan is loaded with a long list of features including stability control, park distance control, rain-sensing wipers, Xenon adaptive headlights with automatic control, all power with driver's memory and a Logic7 surround sound audio system.

The BMW M5 has a base price of \$81,895. Options include perforated leather seating (\$3,500); comfort access (\$1,000); multi-function seats (\$1,900); rear-electric sunshade (\$575); front ventilated seats (\$800); head-up display (\$1,000); satellite radio (\$595).

Chevrolet Corvette Z06

The economy car of the group is a special edition of the newest generation of the 'America's sports car'. As if the standard Corvette is not impressive enough with its 400-hp, the Z06 takes the brand to new levels of performance powered by a 7.0-liter small block V-8 engine producing 505 horsepower and 475-lb.ft. of torque. With its six-speed manual transmission, the car reaches 60 mph before shifting out of first

gear and the experience happens in just 3.8 seconds. With the right track or an extremely good road, we were told the Z06 has a top speed of 198 mph.

Two features make the Z06 the economy car of the group: (1) the \$65,800 base price and (2) the EPA rating of 16 mpg for city driving and 26 mpg on the highway. As a bonus, this also happens to be the fastest car of the group.

Engineers were able to augment performance by keeping weight down to 3,130 pounds. The Z06 is built on an aluminum and magnesium platform with carbon fiber fenders and door panels. The cast aluminum engine is filled with racing-style parts like dry-sump lubrication, titanium connecting rods and titanium intake valves. All the exhaust is expelled from the car through a pair of three-inch exhaust pipes and automated mufflers that allow a less obstructed passage during higher performance levels.

The fastest Corvette ever is fitted with monster vented and cross-drilled brakes measuring 14-inches in the front and 13.4-inch brakes in the rear. To help keep it attached to the road it has Goodyear Eagle F1 275/35ZR18 tires in front and 325/30ZR19 rear tires. The tires are Supercar Extended Mobility and can be driven up to 50 miles at 55 mph without air.

Access and egress requires some agility, but once in, the seats are comfortable and supportive, especially during hard cornering. Unlike many sports cars, the Corvette has a large cargo area with room for 22.3 cubic feet or two sets of golf clubs and luggage for a week.

We were impressed by how easy the Z06 was to drive. The clutch didn't require the leg of a shot putter to depress – it was firm but comfortable. The shift linkage was positive, with gears easy to find.

The Z06 is equipped with a head-up display system that projects the vehicles speed, engine speed, cornering G's, temperature, etc on the windshield. The system allows the driver to configure the display to his or her preference. It's a "must have" for a car that is capable of 125 mph in a quarter mile.

Bottom line for the Z06 is a base price of \$65,800 including delivery. Our test car added polished aluminum wheels (\$1,295) and special paint (\$750). Other available options include XM radio and a DVD based navigation system. Missing from the Z06 is the Gas Guzzler tax that usually plagues high performance cars.

Dollar for dollar, the Corvette Z06 is the best performance value available and in the Velocity Yellow Tintcoat color, it's a head-turner.

KEEP RIGHT >>



Dodge Viper SRT10 Convertible

Once again the iconic Dodge Viper is available in both convertible and coupe configurations. The hardtop version was created because some racing series required the cars to have a top.

Dodge Viper SRT10 Convertible

Just like the kid who moves to a town, goes to a new school, gets into fights and earns a reputation as the toughest kid in school, the Dodge Viper has accumulated a reputation as one of the fastest cars around. The notorious Viper name and the dramatic styling contribute heavily to the tough car persona, too.

With its 8.2-liter V-10 engine producing 510-hp and 535 lb.ft. of torque, the spartan two-seater is a brute producing statistics like 0 to 60 mph in just 3.8 seconds, 0 to 100 to 0 in the mid-12 second range and top speed of 190 mph.

Even though the latest generation Viper is a bit more civilized than the original, it is still basically a street-ready racecar. Bold styling includes the signature Dodge crosshair grille, deep-cut side scallops, swept-back fenders and lowered hood lines. It's built on a tubular (racecar style) space frame with separate cowl structure composition. The body is made from resin injection molded components and sheet-molded composite panels that keep the weight at a trim 3,410 pounds.

Climbing into the Viper is a chore, as the driver and passenger have to slip over a wide exterior sill and drop into supportive leather bucket seats. The aluminum-look center console is wide and high with the shift linkage, a single drink holder and hand brake on the

lower level. The aluminum look continues up the center of the dash where four instruments are stacked on the left hand side and the climate control and audio are on the right.

Turn the key in the ignition; press the red starter button and the V-10 roars to life with massive exhaust pipes blaring from both sides of the Viper just in front of the rear wheel wells.

On the road, the ride is rough with the big 275/35ZR18 front tires and 345/35ZR19 rear tires seemingly transferring the bump of every pebble to the cockpit through the aluminum suspension. The roughness pays great dividends, though, in the form of remarkable handling, just like a racecar.

At speed, the thin top serves only to keep the wind out of your hair and does little to cut the noise. People don't buy a Viper for comfort; they buy it for the emotion and exhilaration of driving a racecar. Under full acceleration, you can actually feel the skin on your face pull back.

To get the full feel of the power, try accelerating from 0 to 100 mph and then dynamiting the brakes to bring it back to a stop. If you have the guts and a safe place to do it, the exercise takes less than 13 seconds and less than a quarter mile. We didn't...

The Viper SRT10 convertible has a base price of \$82,745 plus a \$3,000 Gas Guzzler tax. Notable standard comfort and convenience features include air conditioning, alarm,

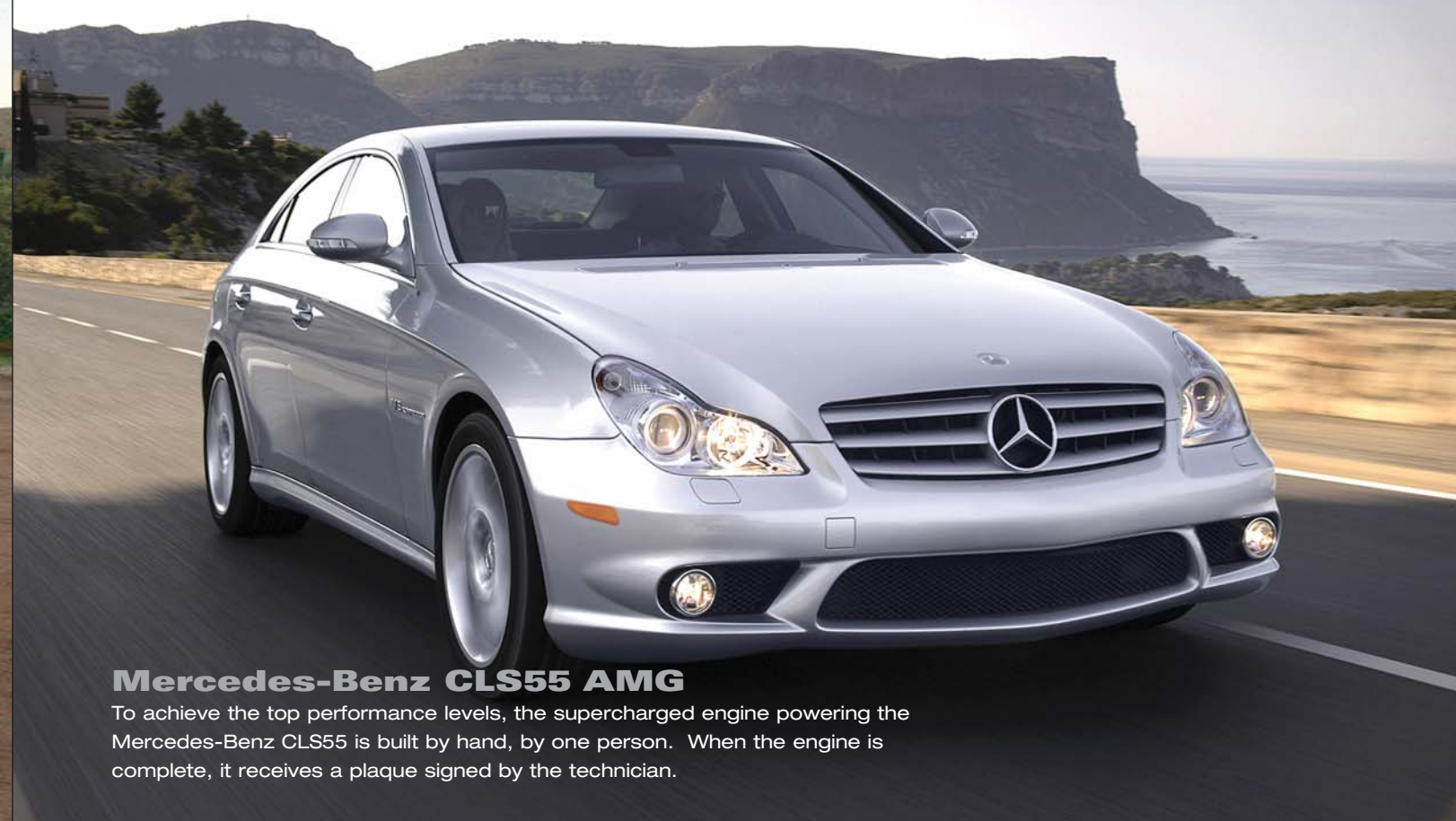
AM/FM stereo with 6-disc CD changer, keyless entry, leather seats with suede insets, Xenon lights and aluminum wheels. Options are limited to stripes, polished wheels, Sirius radio and a choice of six colors.

Mercedes-Benz CLS55 AMG

When first introduced in early 2005, the CLS surprised the public and quickly claimed our personal "best looking car" rating. Breaking from the traditional conservative Mercedes-Benz styling the CLS looked more like an exotic Italian coupe with its sleek low design, than a four-passenger sedan. Closer examination shows that it actually has four doors and so the four-door coupe nomenclature was started. In the short time since that introduction several other manufacturers have announced plans to build their own version of the four-door coupe.

A year later, the CLS received its AMG wings when the CLS55 was rolled out. AMG engineers developed a stiffer sport suspension based on the Mercedes-Benz semi-active air suspension. Eight-piston 14-inch disc brakes were added to the front with 13-inch discs in the rear.

In the engine compartment the 5.0-liter V-8 was replaced by a supercharged 5.5-liter V-8 developing 469 horsepower and 516 lb.ft. of torque. It was tied to the rear wheels by a redesigned five-speed AMG Speedshift



Mercedes-Benz CLS55 AMG

To achieve the top performance levels, the supercharged engine powering the Mercedes-Benz CLS55 is built by hand, by one person. When the engine is complete, it receives a plaque signed by the technician.

automatic transmission. The special supercharger is designed not to be spinning all the time, rather, depending on the load and speed, it is engaged and disengaged by an electromagnetic clutch as needed for more power or better fuel economy.

The modified Mercedes-Benz transmission shifts 35 percent faster than the standard unit, and is designed to handle the heavier torque load. Unlike the standard model the AMG transmission is designed to hold the gears without up- or down-shifting automatically to allow the driver better control of the shifting process.

The CLS55 is something like a top fashion model that just happens to run the mile in

under 3-minutes and 50-seconds. The CLS just happens to accelerate from 0 to 60 mph in 4.2 seconds. The top speed is limited to 157 mph, but ungoverned it should be capable of speeds in the 180-190 mph range.

The CLS55 is easily the most civilized of the four cars featured here. It's remarkably user-friendly and comfortable. The cabin has easy access for four adults and treats them like the passengers of a private business jet. The driver need only start the car and put it into drive before enjoying performance levels similar to the jet (before it takes off).

Like most Mercedes-Benz vehicles, the CLS55 is loaded with high-tech goodies that add to the comfort and convenience of the

passengers and driver. For example, standard equipment includes four-zone climate control, leather seating, sunroof, Smart Key keyless entry and start, Harman/Kardon audio and rain sensor wipers for the base price of \$87,320. Options on our test car included: Distronic (radar-based cruise control that maintains distance from the car in front) (\$3,130); Lighting package (bi-Xenon headlights with active Curve Lighting and washers) (\$1,220); electronic trunk closing (\$550); Premium package (ventilated front seats, Drive Dynamic seats, power rear-window sunshade, DVD COMAND navigation system and 6-disc CD changer) (\$3,900). With the \$1,700 Gas Guzzler tax the total price was \$97,780. ■



	BMW M5	Corvette Z06	Viper SRT10	CLS55 AMG
Base price.....	\$81,895	\$65,800	\$82,745	\$87,320
Price as tested.....	\$94,965	\$67,845	\$85,745	\$97,780
Horsepower.....	500@7750	505@6300	510@5600	469@6100
Torque.....	383 @6100	470@4800	535@4200	516@2650
0 to 60 mph.....	4.2 sec.	3.7 sec.	3.7 sec.	4.2 sec.
Weight.....	4,110 lbs.	3,121 lbs.	3,410 lbs.	4,324 lbs.
Cargo capacity.....	14 cu. ft.	22.3 cu. ft.	2.25 cu. ft.	15.8 cu. ft.
Passengers.....	5	2	2	4
EPA fuel economy.....	12/18 mpg	16/26 mpg	12/20 mpg	14/20 mpg



UPCOMING FEATURES

Honda Fit



The Honda Fit Sport will be in our test fleet in a couple of months. We look forward to just how well Honda is adapting one of their smaller domestic vehicles to the US market.

Audi Q7



We're just back from the launch drive of this spectacular beast as this goes to press, but stay tuned for our experience driving it up the rough side and down the slick side of Mt. Palomar.

Porsche Cayman



Porsche is bringing the Cayman to us this month, so we'll have a good hands-on look, as well as a chance to talk to their engineers about the whole program. More next issue!



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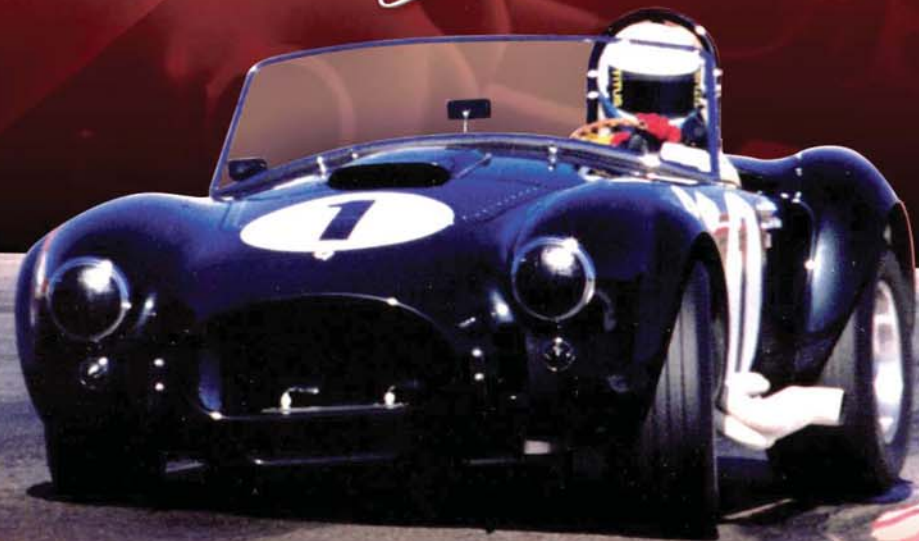
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