

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 13 NUMBER 4
JULY-AUGUST 2014



2015 Subaru WRX STI

SEDONA ROAD TRIP

VERDE CANYON RAILROAD

BROKEN ARROW 4X4 TRAIL

COMPAROS AND AWARDS

NORTHWEST MUDFEST 2014

TEXAS AUTO ROUNDUP 2014

ROCKY MOUNTAIN VEHICLE OF THE YEAR

VEHICLE DRIVES

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SUBARU WRX STI | JAGUAR XJL | BMW 435i

FORD FUSION ENERGI | HYUNDAI AZERA

NISSAN ROGUE | HYUNDAI TUCSON

MOTORSPORTS

A.S.O./DAKAR TEAM AT BAJA 500

AND MORE...

LEMAY MUSEUM MCKEEL HAGERTY AWARD

ALFA ROMEO DEALERS | FORD CHARITY



What kind of vehicle to buy is an inevitable question in these circles, but it certainly has no one answer. (This is one reason there are three-car garages, after all.) It's a question akin to what kind of tool should I buy? How should I furnish my house? Where should I go on vacation? These are decisions to be made based upon your own specific (and often complex) needs and your own subjective factors and emotions.

One thing that can nonetheless be useful is a good comparo. In this issue, we have several. We travel to the Cascade Mountains in Washington state for the Northwest Automotive Press Association's Mudfest 2014, an event that pits off-pavement-capable vehicles against one another in the dirt and on the road. We have results from the Rocky Mountain Press Association's Vehicle of the Year Awards. And we have the Texas Auto Writers Association's Texas Auto Roundup, for more perspective.

If none of those appeal to you, check out a few individual drives in this issue. We flew to Monterey to drive the highly revised 2015 Subaru Legacy down Highway One, the full length of Big Sur and back. Home in Arizona, we spent time with the rally-ready Subaru WRX STI, the premium Jaguar XJL, BMW 435i coupe, Hyundai Azera, Ford Fusion Energi plug-in hybrid, and compact crossovers from Nissan and Hyundai—quite a variety.

Events in other states are fun—and they're also informative. Each locale variously shares characteristics with our own Arizona driving—mountains, mud, open plains, dust and dirt, and fast pavement. Our readers travel in these conditions near and far.

Speaking of which, **Nick Calderone** and **Rosalie Michaels** take us to Sedona in this issue, on a road trip that includes the Verde Canyon Railroad, some wine tasting and dinner surprises in Cottonwood, and Nick's first trip on the Broken Arrow 4x4 Trail—in his daily driver.

Enjoy the ride.

Joe Sage

Publisher/ Executive Editor



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McKeel Hagerty is presented LeMay—America's Car Museum Nicola Bulgari Award

Honor recognizes individuals dedicated to preserving America's automotive heritage



(L-R) David Madeira, McKeel Hagerty

LeMay—America's Car Museum (ACM) has presented its Nicola Bulgari Award to McKeel Hagerty, president and CEO of Hagerty, which offers insurance and valuation tools for classic vehicles. The award, named after jewelry magnate and classic car collector Nicola Bulgari, is given annually to an individual who makes outstanding contributions to preserving America's automotive heritage through education, restoration and collecting. Past recipients include Dr. Frederick Simeone, founder of the Simeone Automotive Museum, and Ed Welburn, GM's VP of global design.

"McKeel has been one of the most progressive and innovative leaders in the automotive industry," said David Madeira, ACM president and CEO. "He has demonstrated a deep commitment to the preservation of America's car history, founding the Historic Vehicle Association and supporting educational institutions and shop programs that are dedicated to the future of classic cars."

Hagerty took over the family business in 1995 and has grown the company from 30 employees to more than 500. He created the Collectors Foundation, awarding \$2.75 million in scholarships and grants to prepare young adults for careers in automotive preservation and restoration. It was renamed the Hagerty Education Program after partnering with America's Car Museum in January 2014. Hagerty has committed another \$1.75 million to support collector vehicle education.

"I have been fortunate to build much of my life around my love of cars," said Hagerty, who serves on ACM's board of directors. "They embody so much: freedom, beauty, technology and culture.

However, personal transportation will look very different to future generations, as autonomous cars and other technologies take the automobile from an object of desire to a mobility appliance. We must be more disciplined in protecting our automotive treasures so they can be celebrated and enjoyed by future generations."

The ceremony was held in June during the Wheels & Heels Annual Gala, which celebrated the second anniversary of the Tacoma, Washington-based museum. Titled "CARNIVALE!," the Rio-themed evening anniversary gala and dinner included live music and auctions, raising over \$425,000 to benefit the Museum. More than 300 supporters attended.

LeMay—America's Car Museum, a four-level, 165,000-sq.ft. attraction, opened in 2012 in downtown Tacoma. The largest automobile museum in North America, it explores how the automobile has fulfilled a distinctive role at the core of the American experience and shaped our society. The spacious Museum, with rotating exhibits, is designed to be the centerpiece for automotive history as well as an educational center and library. The facility, adjacent to the Tacoma Dome, also has a 3.5-acre show field, theatre, café, banquet hall and meeting facilities.

ACM holds its annual Board meeting in Scottsdale in January, during our collector car auction week. Hagerty is always here, too, as they insure a huge percentage of the vehicles traveling to Arizona and crossing the block during those events.

For more information on the Museum and its events or becoming an ACM member, visit www.lemaymuseum.org.



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MINI has a vision at Villa d'Este

German-owned MINI chose the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este 2014 in northern Italy to unveil its Superleggera™ Vision concept, an interpretation of an open-top two-seater created in partnership with Milano design and coach-building house Touring Superleggera. The car is part classic roadster—minimalist and emotional—yet boasts an electric drivetrain and modern driving dynamics. The collaboration blends classic coachwork construction with British styling. We'd love to have one if just for those great Union Jack taillights. ▼



MINI Superleggera Vision concept



2015 Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat



MOST POWERFUL CHALLENGER EVER

▲ Fresh from consolidating with the SRT brand, Dodge has introduced a new “600-plus” horsepower 2015 Dodge Challenger SRT with a Hellcat engine, along with an already potent 485-hp Challenger SRT. The announcement came just a month after the Dodge Challenger 392 HEMI Scat Pack Shaker was revealed at the New York Auto Show. The Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat features the most powerful V8 ever produced by Chrysler—the supercharged 6.2-liter HEMI V8. The all-new engine—Dodge and/or SRT’s first supercharged V8—can be mated with an upgraded 6-speed manual transmission or a beefy, new TorqueFlite 8-speed automatic—the first such gearbox ever offered in Challenger SRT’s segment. The engine features a forged-steel crankshaft with induction-hardened bearing surfaces, able to withstand firing pressures of 1,595 psi—the equivalent of five family sedans standing on each piston, every two revolutions. Its specially tuned crank damper has been tested to 13,000 rpm. High-strength forged-alloy pistons are coupled to powder-forged connecting rods with high-load-capacity bushings and diamond-like carbon-coated piston pins. Premium-grade heat-treated aluminum-alloy cylinder heads are optimized for extremely high thermal con-

ductivity. And its die-cast aluminum rocker covers are HEMI Orange. In addition to the supercharged HEMI V8 in the Challenger SRT Hellcat, the new base—if you can call it that—2015 Dodge Challenger SRT model also gets a power boost with upgrades to the 392 HEMI V8. Horsepower climbs to 485 from 470. The 392 can also be mated with a 6-speed manual or an 8-speed automatic.

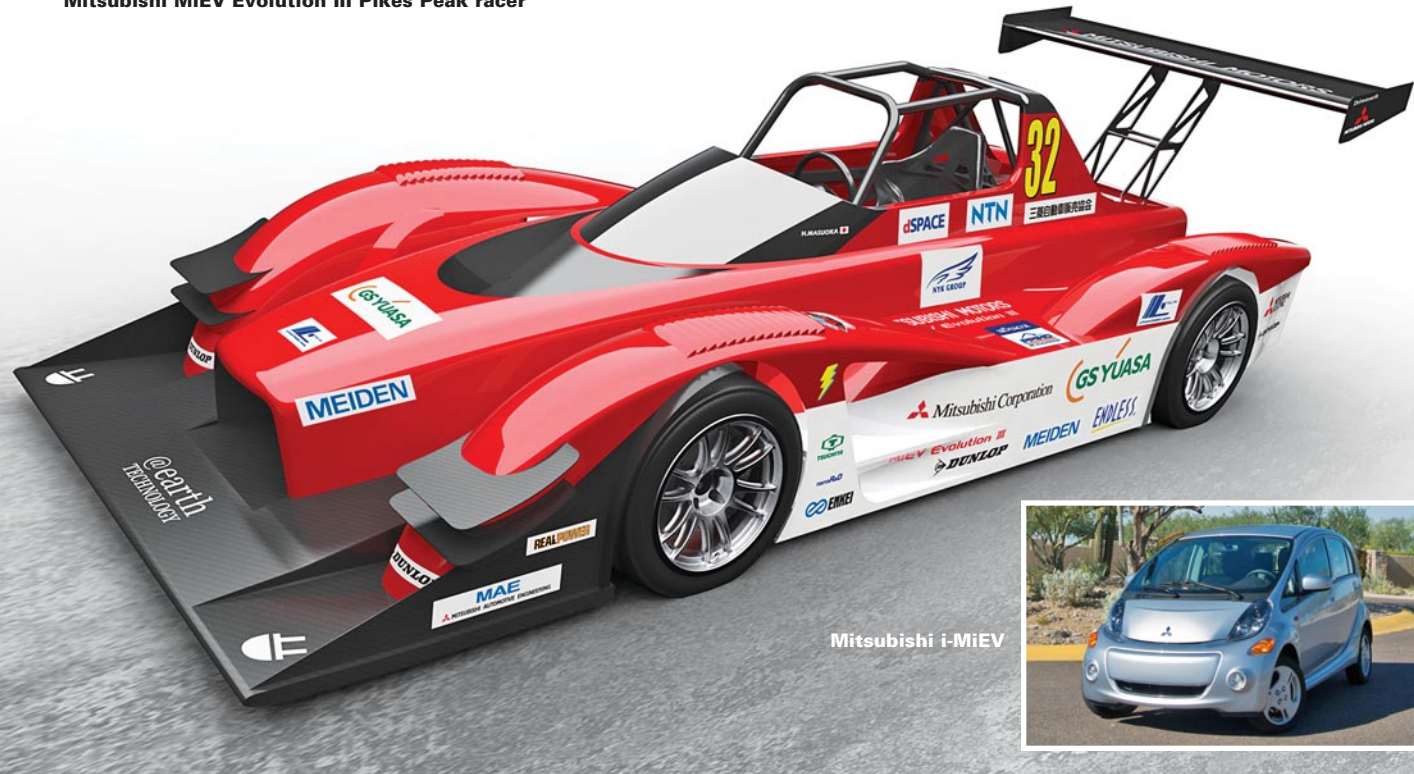
HYUNDAI BEATS HONDA AS GREENEST

Hyundai Motor Company, which has championed smaller engines, has dethroned Honda as the greenest automaker in the United States, according to a report released by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). The nonprofit scientific research group ranked Hyundai first and Honda second in its sixth evaluation of the environmental performance of the eight top-selling automakers in the US. Honda had ranked on top since the report was first published in 2000. Toyota placed third, followed by Nissan and Volkswagen. With the introduction of the 2011 Hyundai Sonata Hybrid and the 2011 Kia Optima Hybrid, the Hyundai-Kia group significantly improved its fuel efficiency since UCS’s last report. Hyundai’s top ranking was aided by the fact that, other than Volkswagen, it is the only automaker on the UCS list that doesn’t sell

fuel-thirsty pickup trucks in the US market. (The Detroit 3, which are more heavily dependent on light trucks with larger engines, each scored below the industry average, while Toyota and Nissan have their Tundra and Titan pickups, and Honda has unibody Ridgeline—each with a big SUV to match.) Hyundai-Kia topped the list even after being forced by the EPA in 2012 to scale back overstated fuel economy ratings for several models which together accounted for some 900,000 vehicles sold from the 2011-2013 model years. The companies said the ratings were mistakenly inflated, apologized and reimbursed customers for extra gas they purchased. Hyundai has also benefited from a decision to drop a six-cylinder version of the Sonata midsize sedan in favor of smaller engines, while Honda and Toyota still offer V6 engines in the Accord and Camry. The eight companies ranked in this study account for about 90 percent of light vehicles sold in the US. Automakers with smaller US sales, such as Tesla, were not included in the study. The study measures average carbon and smog-forming emissions of each automaker’s 2013 model-year fleet. In the 2014 study, global-warming emissions fell at all eight included automakers for the

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Mitsubishi MiEV Evolution III Pikes Peak racer



Mitsubishi i-MiEV

first time. GM, with its plug-in electric hybrid Chevrolet Volt and small Sonic and Spark, has improved efficiency in its small cars, but needs to improve the fuel efficiency of its light trucks and SUVs, as Ford has done with its EcoBoost engines, to gain on rivals, the scientists said.

MITSUBISHI THIRD YEAR AT PIKES PEAK

▲ Mitsubishi was set to compete in the Electric Modified Division of the prestigious 2014 Pikes Peak International Hill Climb (PPIHC) with a pair of technologically-advanced MiEV Evolution III 100 percent electric-powered purpose-built racecars in the 92nd running of the Race to the Clouds on June 29 near Colorado Springs. First run in 1916, the annual Pikes Peak International Hill Climb is a treacherous 12.42-mile, 156-corner road course through the Rocky Mountains, starting at an elevation of 9,390 feet and finishing at 14,110 feet—nearly 3 miles above sea level. The Pikes Peak race is the second oldest motorsports event in the US, after the Indianapolis 500. Last year's talented driving duo of Hiroshi Masuoka and Greg Tracy were returning for this year's effort. Finishing in second place in the EV Division at Pikes Peak last year, Masuoka is a former two-time Dakar Rally overall champion while Tracy—last year's third place EV Division finisher—is a six-

time Pikes Peak motorcycle champion. Building upon an innovative four-electric-motor drivetrain (two front, two rear), in turn based on a modified high-output version of the production Mitsubishi i-MiEV electric vehicle's motor and Mitsubishi's Super All-Wheel Control (S-AWC) all-wheel drive technology, key improvements this year include a power increase from 400 kW (536 bhp) to 450 kW (602 bhp); a redesigned tube-frame chassis with new structural materials for reduced weight; redesigned, wind tunnel-optimized front bodywork/spoiler for more downforce; and a redesign of the S-AWC system for improved handling and traction control.

REAR VISIBILITY TECHNOLOGY

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration announced in March 2014 that "rear-visibility technology" must be implemented as standard equipment in all vehicles under 10,000 pounds starting in 2018, as part of the Kids Transportation Safety Act. The move aims to reduce the number of deaths and injuries caused every year by backup accidents, most involving children or seniors. Specifically, the new law mandates that all new light vehicles sold in the US have the ability to display rear camera video within two seconds from the time that the vehicle is put in reverse gear. Many

experts anticipate that other regions around the world will follow suit by implementing similar laws. Intersil Corporation (Nasdaq:ISIL), a leading provider of innovative power management and precision analog solutions, has announced its latest generation LCD video processor—the TW8836—with both analog and digital video inputs, a built-in scaler and de-interlacer, image enhancement and On Screen Display capabilities, all delivered from a single-chip, hardware-based solution. Intersil's LCD controller family is called the most mature and market-proven product of its type. Designed for ultimate flexibility and quality, the TW8836 can be used to display rear camera video with graphic overlay in less than 500 milliseconds from the start of a vehicle, exceeding government safety regulations. This versatile device can be used in a wide array of infotainment system applications and is optimized for use with today's most popular SoCs.

EMISSION INSPECTION IMPROVEMENTS

The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) announced this spring that they are lowering Vehicle Emissions Inspection fees by more than 25 percent, from \$27.75 to \$20, for Phoenix metro

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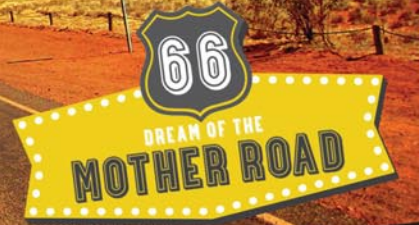
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Exhibit Now Open

Greetings from





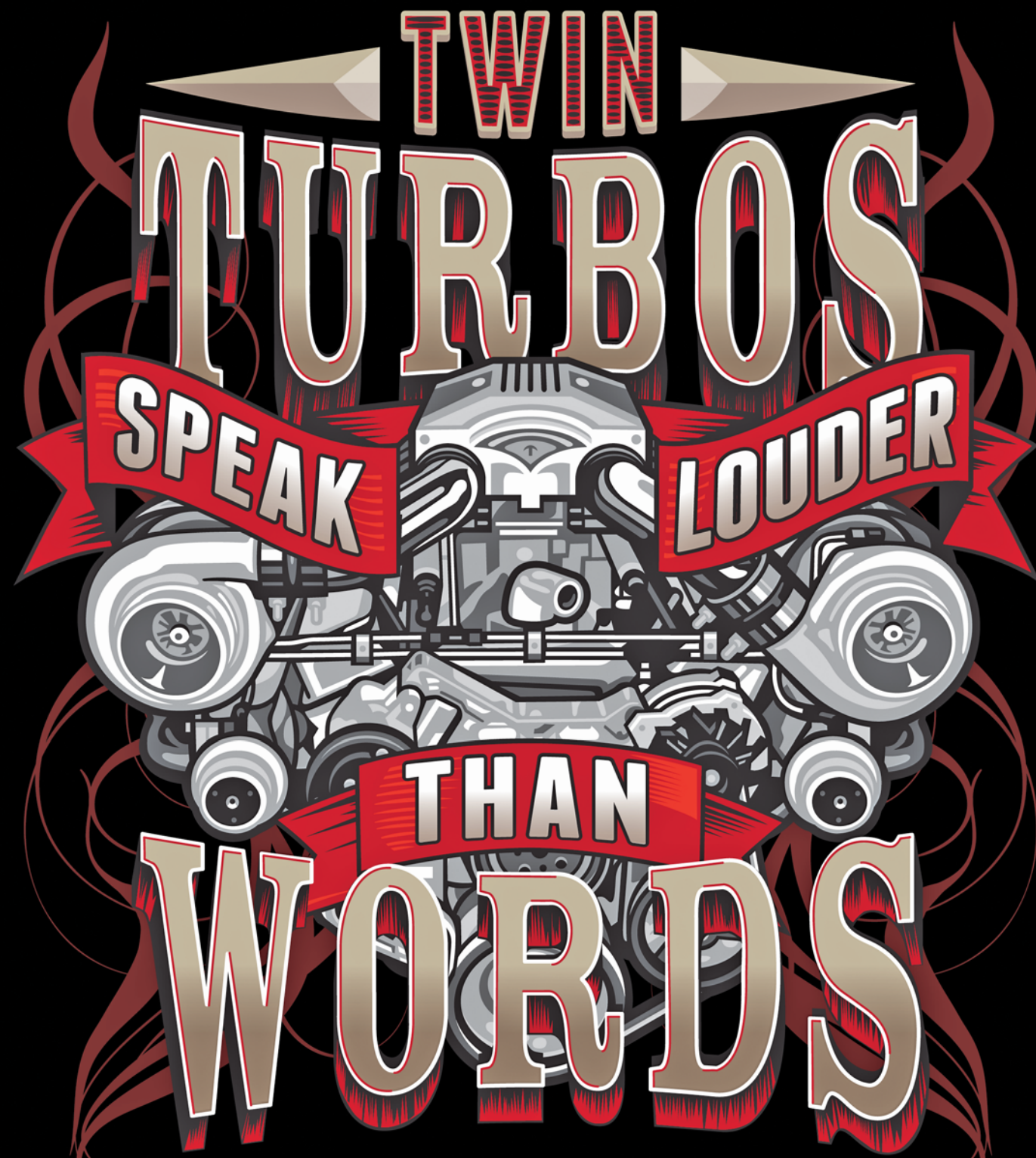
area drivers with 1981 or newer cars and light duty trucks. More than one million vehicles are tested in the Maricopa County area each year. Drivers in the Tucson area already pay less. On July 1, ADEQ is also instituting a Gas Cap Distribution Program in Maricopa and Pima counties. More than 75,000 vehicles fail each year because of a faulty gas cap. When the gas cap fails, the owner currently must leave the testing facility to purchase a replacement gas cap and then return for a free retest once the cap has been replaced. The new program will provide the vehicle owner with a new gas cap at the time of a failed inspection, eliminating the need to leave and return. If the particular gas cap size is unavailable at the testing station, a \$5 prepaid card will be offered to motorists to help cover the cost of a new cap. ADEQ figures this will immediately provide an environmental benefit by reducing emissions from gasoline evaporation from faulty caps, which has been especially aggravated as many owners have had to wait for a chance to fix and return. The program will also increase the number of vehicles that pass inspection during a single testing procedure, and reduce the frustration of waiting in line for a second test. Motorcycles were exempted from the emissions testing program in June 2013.

NISSAN 370Z NISMO SURPRISE DEBUT

▲ There was a surprise guest at ZDAYZ in North Carolina, an annual gathering of hundreds of Nissan, Datsun and NISMO owners and enthusiasts. Not announced in advance was the world debut of the new 2015 Nissan 370Z NISMO—with an expanded model selection that includes both 6-speed manual and 7-speed automatic transmissions, plus a new 370Z NISMO Tech grade. Performance enhancements include retuned suspension and co-developed Recaro seats exclusively designed for 370Z NISMO. Exterior changes include multiple fully integrated and functional GT-R-inspired aerodynamic body parts, for appearance as well as to optimize front and rear downforce. A new, deep front fascia has LED Hyper DRLs, black headlight bezels, a NISMO emblem and signature NISMO red stripe accent on the chin spoiler. The red accent continues down the side sills, on the black side mirrors and across the lower portion of the new rear fascia. The rear spoiler has been reshaped and downsized. Standard 19-inch NISMO super-lightweight forged aluminum alloy wheels by RAYS now have a twin-five-spoke design and a charcoal gray machine finish. Expect to see this car on the road any time now: the 2015 Nissan 370Z NISMO goes on sale at US dealers in July.

AGE-RELATED CAR PURCHASE TRENDS

“In the past few years we have seen a dramatic trend in the age of new auto purchasers, where adults aged 55 or older were one-quarter of that group in 2008 and now represent almost one-half,” said Nancy Walter, VP of business development at Foresight Research. “This shift has a big impact on the purchase influences and processes of buying cars. But what we didn’t expect was the implications for car service expectations.” When asked where they go for routine service, over one-third of this group take their cars to their dealership, and another quarter take them to an independent local repair shop, both significantly higher than the total population. “It is the ‘whys’ that are really interesting,” says Walter. “When asked why they chose the place they go for service, the 55 and older owners value quality and convenience.” Specifically, seniors list convenient location, quality of service, and good customer service as the top three factors in their choice. They also value technician skill/training/expertise, use of genuine parts, and loaner cars or shuttles—at a rate 20 to 50 percent higher than the total population. “Price is just lower on the list for the mature adults. It ranks fourth on why they go where they go for service, while for 18-34 year-olds, price is a definitive number one.” ■



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It's what makes a Subaru a radical Subaru

By Joe Sage

Everybody's used to seeing the STI in trademark WR Blue Pearl with gold BBS alloy wheels (standard on the Launch Edition), but when our pre-production Limited pulled up in Dark Gray Metallic, it was different. Striking. Dignified, even. A sleeper, really, since a coat of paint cannot conceal the fact that this car is potent as all get-out.

We were immediately impressed. Not even out of the driveway, we had high praise.

Of course we loved its 6-speed manual and the powerful note when you fire it up. Instruments are clean and purposeful, true to form for the brand,

LOGBOOK NOTES

Other drivers seem to be respectful of this, as if they know nobody would be driving it without a reason. People look, listen and even make way.

The pedals are pretty tight if you have size 13 feet.

with a small screen for the radio—very conventional and understandable—and up high a tidy little information screen. The console sports a controller for SI-Drive—Intelligent, Sport or Sport Sharp (note: nothing either stupid or dull here).

Less expected was its knockout interior. Fit and finish are excellent. The seats are stunning—black perforated leather with dark red trim in a reserved manner along the seat bottom bolsters, then wrapping around the upper back bolsters in a dynamic style that's echoed by diagonal stitching in the door panels. Features and controls are intu-

The STI has a fabulous throat that turns heads and makes people in Mustangs and Challengers check to see who's rumbling next to them. Not at all the sewing machine sound effect of many little tuners.

itive and effective, solid and clear—the displays, instruments, climate controls, seats, mirrors, windows and locks. It takes no time to set up and go.

Brand presence is strong but balanced, with "STI" embedded in the sill, carpets, console and wheel. Seats and doors are complemented by a dark red stitch on the steering wheel. It's a neat combination of macho and reserve that could take any boy racer and make him realize that he's now more serious than he already thought he was.

There are a number of things different with the new WRX STI. First and perhaps most obvious, it's a sedan—no hatch, at least not for now (stay tuned). The body and frame—a bit larger this year, for a roomier cabin—have increased rigidity for handling performance, with bonuses in crash testing and weight savings, enhanced further by use of aluminum for the hood and suspension components. There is a boost in aerodynamics, with a raked windshield that starts a full eight

Climate and audio knobs that spin with no end, even when you max out (or min out) annoyed us at first, but we came to like them and concluded that once you're used to them, traditional ones might annoy.



The WRX STI is tough yet stylish, powerful and precise.



inches farther forward than previously.

Everything about the Subaru WRX STI is beyond the ordinary. Power comes from a boxer turbo, of course, this one a 305-hp version of the championship rally engine. A short-throw STI shifter connects it to all-wheel drive—at the heart of any Subaru (except the BRZ). Gearing favors high torque. Three performance modes work with six differential-locking options for total control of your operation. Default torque split is 41:59, favoring rear-drive power and balance on a clear surface.

Rebels have long made up the Subaru core. Free thinkers. Smart thinkers. Practical thinkers. Impractical thinkers. We get it. We like it.

The Subaru WRX STI can enter and win any competitive event you throw at it (see Isle of Man at right and Oregon Trail Rally, next page). But it also shines as a highly capable daily driver, able to hold a strong, steady track, to dart around when need be or to shake off a little traffic. It's not a big muscle car, but it does have the same presence. The STI is scrappy and it's tough. It has cajones. It can rumble. It champs at the bit, ready to hit the road with brass knuckles. And it will have a smile on its knuckles every time it does. So will you. ■



2015 Subaru WRX STI breaks Isle of Man record at 117.5 mph

Mark Higgins, driving a 2015 Subaru WRX STI, broke his own lap record on the fabled 37-mile Isle of Man TT Course in early June, with an average lap speed of 117.510 and a time of 19 minutes and 15 seconds in a final timed run. He had already hit 116.470 mph average and 19:26 time two days prior. Both smashed the previous record of 115.36 mph, set in 2011—also in a WRX STI.

The run was completed in a US-spec 2015 Subaru WRX STI, just as we drove here, with the exception of an FIA-spec roll cage, racing seat and harness, fire suppression system, and modified springs and dampers to handle the sustained high speeds and changing conditions of the course. The Subaru WRX STI Higgins drove also featured Dunlop Direzza tires and a high decibel straight exhaust for crowd safety. The stock speed limiter was also removed from the car. ■



SPECS: PRE-PRODUCTION BUILD

ENGINE	.....2.5L 4-cyl intercooled turbo boxer w/ SI-Drive Performance Engine Mgmt
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....8.2:1
MAXIMUM BOOST	.....14.7 psi
TRANSMISSION	.....6-speed man, hi-po clutch
DRIVETRAIN	.....All-wheel drive: Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive with Driver Control Center Differential (DCCD) featuring three performance modes, six driver-selectable differential locking settings; mechanical and electronically controlled limited-slip center differential; helical limited-slip front differential and Torsen limited-slip rear differential, steering angle input sensor; nominal torque split is 41:59. Multi-Mode Driver Controlled Center Diff.
POWER/TORQUE	.....305 hp / 290 lb-ft
BODY/CHASSIS	.....4-door wide body seats 5. Unitized construction with ring-shaped frame reinforcement structure; high-tensile steel reinforcements at key structural and suspension-mounting locations.
SUSPENSION	.....4-wheel independent, high-po STI sport-tuned. FRONT: Inverted struts w forged aluminum-alloy lower A-arms w pillow ball joint mount, coil springs, 24mm stabilizer bar. REAR: Double-wishbone type w coil springs and damper units, stiffener bar, 20mm stabilizer bar.
BRAKES	.....Brembo Performance Brake System, power assisted 4-wheel disc with 4-channel, 4-sensor Super-Sport anti-lock brake system (ABS) with g-sensor; electronic brake-force distribution (EBD), brake assist and brake override. FRONT: 13.0-in ventilated with four-piston fixed position calipers. REAR: 12.4-in ventilated with dual-piston fixed position calipers.
STEERING	.....Quick-ratio hydraulic power assisted rack-and-pinion. RATIO: 13.0:1. TURN-TO-TURN: 2.5. TURNING CIRCLE: 36.0 ft.
WEIGHT	.....(base) 3386 lb
FUEL CAPACITY / OCTANE	.....15.9 gal / 91 AKI
MPG	.....17/23/19 (city/hwy/comb)
INCLUDED (PRE-PRODUCTION)	3-spoke flat-bottomed leather-wrap tilt/telescope wheel w audio/cruise controls; sport instruments and gauges, 3.5" LCD central screen plus 4.3" configurable upper screen; wide-body design, functional hood scoop, LED low-beams and tails, STI-exclusive down-force-reduction rear wing; carbon-fiber-like interior trim, performance front seats w adjustable headrests; driver's knee air-bag plus six others; standard audio w AM-FM-CD-HD, 6 spkr, MP3-WMA, RDBS, bluetooth call/audio stream, iPod-iTunes-USB compatibility, satellite radio, 3.5mm aux jack; optional 6.1" LCD nav screen, voice controls, 440-watt 9-spkr harman/kardon premium audio; Limited trim adds leather-trimmed upholstery, 8-way power driver's seat, power moonroof.
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OPTIONS[na]
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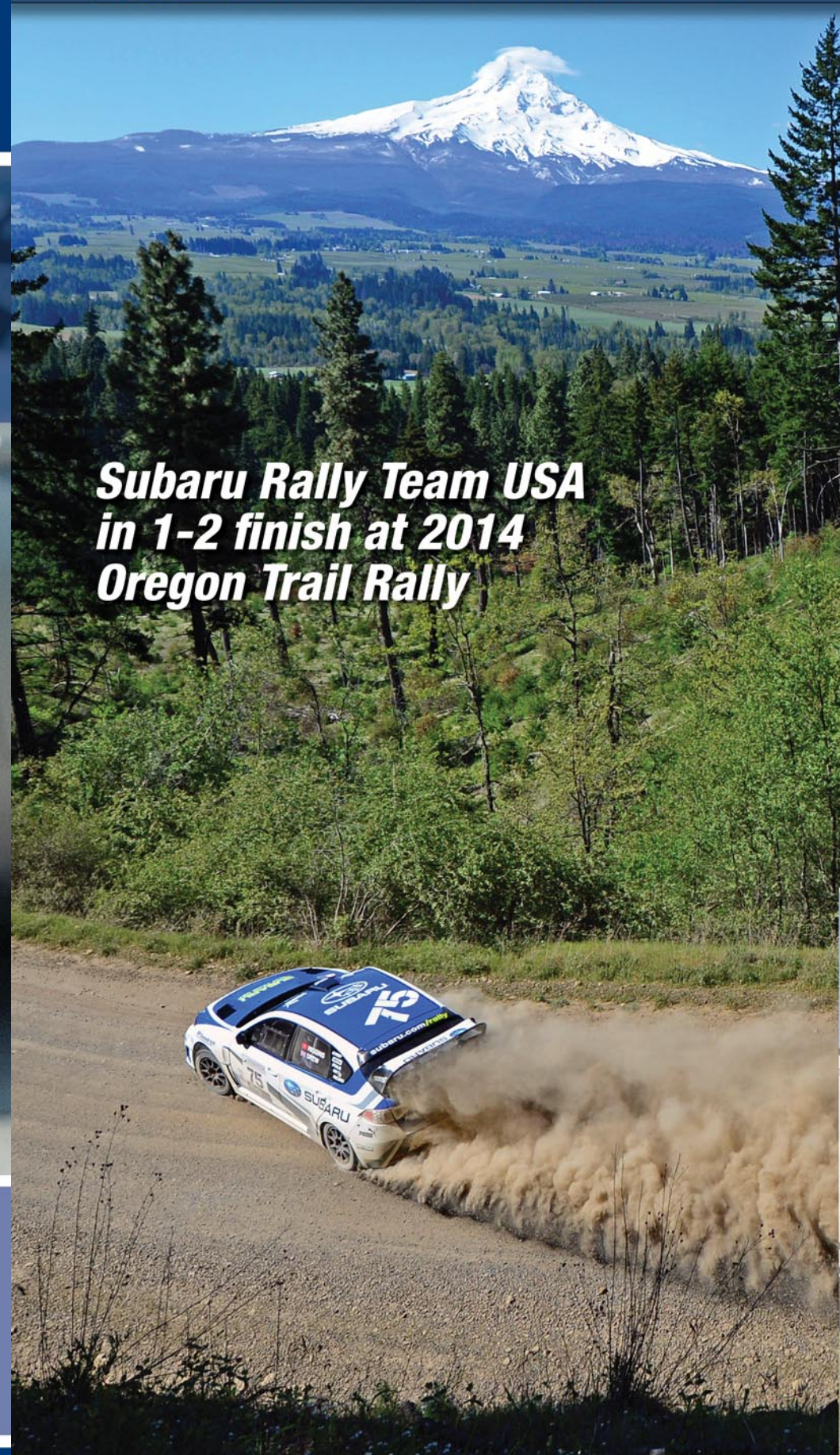
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MOTORSPORTS : SUBARU WRX STI AT OREGON TRAIL RALLY



Subaru Rally Team USA in 1-2 finish at 2014 Oregon Trail Rally

Defending Rally America Champion David Higgins won the 2014 Oregon Trail Rally over teammate Travis Pastrana, after a massive comeback that came down to the last two stages of this three-day, 18 stage event. The event began with a unique combination of mixed gravel and tarmac stages at Portland International Raceway, then moved to scenic yet challenging gravel roads around the Hood River and Dufur regions east of Portland for the bulk of the event.

Pastrana had led the Oregon Trail Rally from the first stages and held his lead through all three days of competition—until the penultimate stage, where two flat tires, combined with a hard charging David Higgins, forced Pastrana to relinquish the lead and settle for second overall.

Pastrana and Higgins drove Vermont SportsCar-prepped 2014 Subaru WRX STI rally cars in a Subaru-dominated event, with the top five finishers at the wheel of Subaru rally cars.

Higgins' supremacy in Oregon is further solidified by this being his fourth win in a row and sixth total, having won every Oregon Trail Rally he has entered. The Oregon Trail Rally represents round three of the 2014 Rally America National Championship. ■



It's what makes a Subaru a *mainstream* Subaru

First off, we should clarify what we just said. There is a certain contrast between Subaru's midsize Legacy sedan and, say, their WRX STI rally winner. But no Subaru is ever likely to be totally mainstream. Who would want that? The brand has a panache all its own. And the engine and drivetrain alone ensure the Legacy is going to be a different animal with a few advantages. But a midsize sedan is inherently a mainstream vehicle, and a brand new Legacy has just arrived.

The Legacy accomplishes its usual basic trick: fitting right in with the competition—better than ever—while at the same time delivering a Subaru personality all its own.

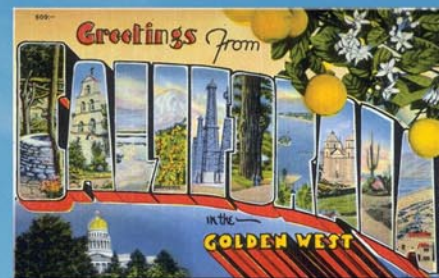
But it has a couple of other tricks. Every Legacy has Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive, an active torque split system with electronically managed continuously variable hydraulic transfer clutch. And both the 2.5-liter four and 3.6-liter six are low-slung boxer engines—the same opposing-cylinder format essential to the performance and handling capabilities of track-hugging race champions.

By Joe Sage

We ran the numbers on the Legacy and several key competitors—length, height, wheelbase, interior room, trunk capacity, horsepower, drivetrain options, weight, fuel mileage. It might take a five-dimensional holographic chart to show everything simultaneously, but in short, the Legacy is tops (or tied) for some specifications, competitive in all.

Of the five we charted—Accord, Camry, Fusion, Optima, Legacy—the Subaru is the shortest and has the shortest wheelbase. These are prime attributes if you value garage space, maneuverability or parking. It delivers these while having the most front headroom (tied with Kia), legroom in the middle of a fairly tight pack and trunk space close to the others. (A half cubic foot in the trunk means more to some than others, but is seldom the everyday benefit that tight handling is. And Legacy's cargo volume grows via 60/40 fold-down rear seats.)

Legacy is the only one with standard all-wheel drive, and Fusion is the only other that even makes it available. Base engines for all are in the 175- to 185-hp range, except for Kia at 192 (Legacy and Fusion tie at 175). Legacy achieves the best fuel mileage, except for Accord (same highway but one point better, city). Some have six-cylinder options (like the Legacy), others high-performance fours,



any of these with horsepower in the upper 200s. "Collectively, the Legacy will go up against anything," says Subaru VP Jeff Walters. "It checks all the boxes" as a competitive midsize sedan, adds Legacy product planning manager Peter Tenn.

TOUGH choices? That's the point. If Legacy was not on your shopping list, it needs to be. Subaru is the first to admit that their four-door sedan—in a lineup of vehicles that catch more attention, from Forester to Outback to WRX STI and so on—has been easily overlooked. They aim to rectify that. In fact, they've already started. In 2008/09, when the automotive market (and entire economy) tanked, Legacy sales did not drop at all. Since then, unit sales have quadrupled. And since others did drop, Legacy's market share has actually quintupled.

Share is still small—the industry overall works in very big numbers. Quintupling moved it from 0.5 percent to 2.5 percent, which represents what is on track to be somewhere between 470,000 to 475,000 vehicles this year. Their goal is to crack the 500,000 vehicle mark in model year 2016.

Peter Tenn has his eye on the ball. He sees the



outgoing Dodge Avenger's spot as beatable, at its market share of 3.9 percent. And despite its 17 percent share, he sees Camry as beatable. Legacy is in its sixth generation, and Tenn again emphasizes that "Camry is not better than Legacy." Subaru knows their brand identity has been centered on their crossovers, but reminds us that Legacy has been plying the roads for 26 years.

They are not letting aggressive sales goals get ahead of quality production. Subaru has one of the lowest inventories in the business, meaning the dealer turnaround time for their vehicles is quick. They say they can sell anything they can build.

Every Legacy sold in North America is built at Subaru's Lafayette, Indiana plant. (This plant is one of the greenest—a zero-landfill operation that has earned the National Wildlife Federation's only "backyard wildlife habitat" designation.)

When it comes to their four-door Legacy sedan, the goal is ambitious, to move from a 1.5 percent to a 2 percent market share—which is a 33.3 per-

cent gain. Walters suggests this is "a very reasonable target," since to do so, they have brought us a whole new Legacy for 2015. We have flown to California's Central Coast to get behind the wheel.

"We hope you find the car as good as we think it is," Walters tells us as he hands us the keys.

THUS for this day, we became virtual members of the family. "Joining the family" is a meme for the brand. Walters mentions that other vehicles in the lineup—notably the WRX STI in his conversation—enjoy a clublike response, with waves from other owners and others in general. With the variety of vehicles we drive, we can vouch for the fact that this is special and it is rare—we've had it while driving Corvettes and Jeep Wranglers—and we can vouch for it with the STI, as we had been driving exactly that back in Arizona that same week, with a surpris-



The Legacy cabin is clean and spacious. Its instrument panel is feature-laden yet functionally straightforward. Seats are comfortable, as well as stylish and contemporary, befitting cars at twice this price. There is ample legroom front and rear, and cargo utility can be varied via a 60/40 fold-down rear seat.



SPECIFICATIONS

TRANSMISSION	CVT
DRIVETRAIN	Symmetrical AWD
FUEL REQUIREMENT	87 octane regular
TURNING CIRCLE	36.8 ft

2015 SUBARU LEGACY 2.5i

ENGINE	2.5L 4-cylinder boxer
POWER/TORQUE	175 hp / 174 lb-ft
WEIGHT	3455-3485 lb
MPG	26/36/30 (city/hwy/comb)
WHEELS (BASE 2.5i)	17x7 steel wheels
BASE PRICE 2.5i	\$21,695

2.5i PREMIUM ADDS: 17x7.5 alloy wheels, heated seats/mirrors, wiper deicer, 7" multi-touch gesture screen, voice-activated 6-speaker audio, Sirius, text, iTunes tagging, USB ports, auto up/down windows, body-color folding mirrors, dual-zone auto climate, trim and lighting upgrades, overhead console and more.

BASE PRICE 2.5i Premium\$23,495

OPTIONS: Navigation, EyeSight system w suite of electronic driving aids, and more.

2.5i LIMITED ADDS: 18x7.5 alloy wheels, 10-way power driver's seat w 2-position memory, 4-way power passenger seat, harman/kardon 576-watt 12-speaker premium audio, upgraded infotainment, heated rear seats, rear detection and blind spot detection, lane change assist, rear cross traffic alert, turn signals in folding mirrors, rear climate outlets, fog lights, trim, perforated leather-trimmed seats and more.

BASE PRICE 2.5i Limited\$26,495

OPTIONS: Nav, additional EyeSight driving aids, keyless entry/start, power moonroof.

2015 SUBARU LEGACY 3.6R

ENGINE	3.6L 6-cylinder boxer
POWER/TORQUE	256 hp / 247 lb-ft
WEIGHT	3662 lb
MPG	20/29/23 (city/hwy/comb)

3.6R LIMITED ADDS: Six-cylinder power, high-torque transmission w paddle shifters, dual stainless exhaust tips, HID low beams w auto height adjustment, 12.4" front rotors.

BASE PRICE 3.6R Limited\$29,595

OPTIONS: Same as 2.5i Limited.

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Factory Left-Hand-Drive Example



1957 MERCEDES-BENZ 300 SL ROADSTER



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Subaru's famous opposing-cylinder "boxer" engines—flat-four and flat-six—provide a low center of gravity for road-hugging handling, the same fundamental as in a 911.

ing amount of favorable reception from the audience at large. But "family" is also part of Subaru's overall vibe—in turn built upon the four pillars of adventure, safety, versatility and longevity, which they say adds up to owners' "love" of the product.

It's funny, in a way, this emphasis on emotion, since the product itself is highly competitive, especially in a cookie cutter world—which brings us right back to their four pillars, along with style and engineering niches already mentioned.

Legacy's average buyer has a household income of \$100,000—higher than most. It's a younger, active person's brand, especially hot with newlyweds. It's also a thinking person's brand, and buyers think they like it even as they sign on: Subaru has the top industry rating for "intended loyalty."

MANY things have been updated in the new Legacy. Its sheetmetal is new—more streamlined and muscular, they say. More mainstream, we might also say, and that's welcome; the previous generation was maybe more distinctive but a bit awkward in some of its details and proportions.

A little window at the A-pillar is part of reengineering that angles a high-visibility windshield for improved aerodynamics. Aerodynamics also benefits from an active grille shutter—as on hybrids—and more fully sealed undercarriage panels.

With outside width up by just 0.7 inches, the interior gains a full 2 inches, even with a full complement of side airbags and rollover side curtain airbags. This increases hip room, shoulder room and personal space between occupants.

The boxer engine, one of our favorite elements of this and every Subaru, has been completely redesigned, providing better fuel mileage, more horsepower, quicker acceleration, less weight and reduced noise. The rally-winning block is the same, but heads, pistons and other key parts have been completely upgraded.

The CVT (continuously variable transmission) now has a step shift setting—induced shift point equivalents to eliminate the droning effect of a truly continuous power curve. You can switch to the straight smooth, shiftless curve if you prefer.

Legacy has new suspension front and rear, and active torque vectoring—always on—improves

Highway One—from Monterey through Big Sur to San Simeon—was well-matched to Legacy's attributes—with cliff-hanging twists and turns, plus flat-out straightaways, demanding the most from Legacy's steering, brakes and boxer engine stability and handling. It's also a long drive, and the car's comfort and controls rated high. The route included Bixby and Rocky Creek (shown) bridges, Hearst Castle at our southern turnaround, a beach picnic and elephant seals sunning at Piedras Blancas.

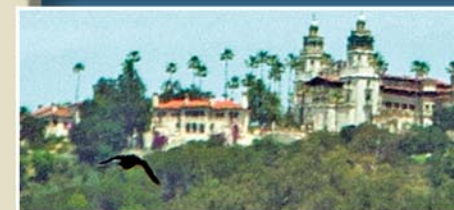
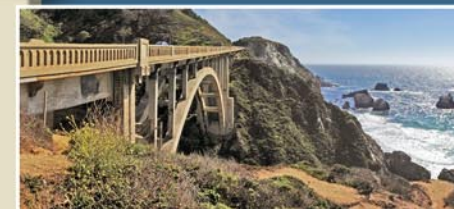
handling on curves by applying light braking to the inside wheels, for a more neutral path through the twisties.

Noise-vibration-harshness reductions come from new glass, more foam and new liquid-filled engine mounts. The chassis has 43 percent higher torsional rigidity and 35 percent better bending stiffness. Super-high-strength hot-pressed steel throughout provides weight savings and enhanced crash protection, along with its chassis benefits.

CMOS cameras have better imaging and smaller housings, giving improved backup and surround view performance in bad light or bad weather. The EyeSight handling and safety system allows you to create a personalized list of presets, including for voice commands. An electronic parking brake replaces the prior mechanical job, creating a shoe-box-sized space big enough to hold your iPad.

The list of standard feature inclusions is long, from halogen lights to turn-coordinated foglights, to a new keyless system (Limited trim). You can leave the keys locked inside, while doing pocket-less activities like swimming, then reenter with a PIN code. Options are reasonable and few (ever moreso as you move into the higher trims).

THE biggest sellers are not always the best or coolest—just look at the computer industry over the past 20 years or so. In midsize sedans, we would ignore the top few and go where there's more innovation and more excitement—to us a list of about four lower volume sellers. Subaru Legacy is one of these, and it's the only one with all-wheel drive. It also has an available manual transmission. And it's the only one on the whole full list of the entire segment with that fabulous boxer engine. ■



A DUSTY MUDFEST

Northwest Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year face-off in the North Cascade Mountains

By Joe Sage
Photos: NWAPA / Josh Mackey

The event was based out of the cliff-hanging, waterfall-hugging Salish Lodge and Spa in Snoqualmie, Washington. Photo: Joe Sage



One thing for certain: if you want mud, head to the North Cascade Mountains of central Washington state in springtime. Except for this particular couple of days.

In a spring noted for 70s one day and snow the next across much of the northern US, Washington had been plenty wet. (In fact, the tragic mudslide in nearby Oso had made news just a month prior.)

But things had dried out in time for Mudfest—the 20th run of a comparative event held variously in Oregon and Washington by the Northwest Automotive Press Association (NWAPA). Blue skies of course did not dampen anyone's enthusiasm, and some water strategically placed by our hosts at DirtFish Rally School would help out.

DirtFish is on a 300-plus-acre facility located on an old pioneering lumber mill site just outside Snoqualmie—the second all-electric lumber mill in the US, opened in 1917—at an elevation of about 600 feet, up against 4167-foot Mt Si and other peaks of the great northern Cascade Range. Much of the area is familiar to *Twin Peaks* fans.

The location gives us an unbeatable combination of dirt, gravel and paved roads, skidpad testing, dedicated water pits and mud tracks.

Also essential to the event are a couple of dozen automakers who bring a couple of dozen prime contenders up here for the challenge.

We would be testing 23 different vehicles from 16 manufacturers, grouped in five categories from compact to premium to extreme—or all of the above. (There was also a new truck category this year, but only as an exhibition class, no voting and with just two trucks—Chevrolet and Ram.)

More than 50 automotive reviewers and test-



ers participated, while most manufacturers provided key personnel to point out features or address any questions with each vehicle. Another dozen or so event staff and vehicle wranglers kept the whole affair running smoothly, along with key organizers from NWAPA.

Drivers scored each vehicle subjectively on a chart of ten attributes, including on-road and off-road handling; off-road capability; powertrain; braking; exterior; interior; and technology features. Comparisons are more objective for fuel efficiency and value. Rated on a scale of 1 to 5, there are 50 total points possible for each.

Manufacturers have some key decisions to make for such an event. Bring in a top trim model to wow us with luxury and comfort? Or a base model to wow us with price? Choose a fuel-sipping engine? Or the big powerhouse? Do they perhaps opt for a diesel or hybrid? Have they outfitted it with great highway tires, for the paved component of the event? Or all-out off-road rubber? It is a given that there are tradeoffs here, that our conclusions could be different with different variables, and that your own comparisons and decisions will vary. What seems most appropriate to the vehicle is one way to look at it, but mostly you want to look at your intended use. It is a tool.

Pavement testing started with a coned autocross course on site, followed by a relatively short route along evergreen-lined mountain roads.

Every group ran a moderate off-road course,

with plenty of ruts, gravel, dirt and water traps. The Extreme category tackled a much tougher course, with conditions that challenged locking differentials, maximum axle articulation, approach, breakover and departure angles—while comfort and features were still also considered.

Competition was often very tight, but each category did produce a statistical winner. An overall Northwest Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year was also selected. Categories and entrants (alphabetically within groups) were as follows. Most were 2014 models; others are noted here as 2015 or in one case 2013.

Compact Utility

.....\$ as tested	MPG	HP	Torque	
Ford Escape Titanium 4WD	\$35,470	21/28	240	270
Hyundai Tucson Limited AWD	\$28,700	20/25	182	177
Jeep® Cherokee Trailhawk 4x4	\$38,710	19/26	271	239
Mazda CX-5 Grand Touring AWD (2015)	\$31,760	24/30	184	185
Nissan Rogue SV AWD	\$29,215	25/32	170	175
Subaru XV Crosstrek Hybrid	\$30,120	29/33	160	163

Hyundai Tucson had the lowest price (as outfitted that day), but Nissan and Subaru were not far away, and their fuel mileage is better—45 percent better (highway) for the Subaru. Jeep Cherokee's



Top to bottom, starting with winner at top: Jeep Cherokee Trailhawk 4x4; Ford Escape Titanium; Hyundai Tucson; Mazda CX-5; Nissan Rogue; Subaru XV Crosstrek Hybrid.

KEEP RIGHT >>

price was highest (in top Trailhawk trim here), but its horsepower leaves the rest behind, although Ford Escape pumps out more torque. This is a classically complex group, and it gets deep into the “different strokes” realm for shoppers.

Subaru on the skidpad was exemplary—superb in the slalom and stopping on a dime, though it outperformed its tires a bit (easily rectified). It was slower in final acceleration (departing the cones), but its nimble weight does offset its lower horsepower. It’s smaller, lighter, less expensive—but on the off-road course we found no shortfall whatsoever. The Crosstrek ultimately outscored everything else on our tally sheet.

We would have rated the Cherokee Trailhawk above 5 in off-road, if we could—it can compete with the Extreme class here. Fuel efficiency and price knocked it down a little, although 26 MPG highway is very healthy for an off-road beast like this. Escape did well on pavement and had 5-rated braking (as did Jeep and Subaru), but its price in Titanium trim also worked against it.

Our numbers came in best for Subaru Crosstrek, with 47.5 points versus 44.5 for Cherokee and 40 for Escape. The others ranged from 38 to 39.5—still competitive. We do love the Cherokee—especially the top model Trailhawk—and note that it starts at just \$22,490, or \$24,490 with 4WD. The group overall liked the Cherokee, too.

THE WINNER: Best Compact Utility:
2014 Jeep Cherokee Trailhawk 4x4.

Premium Compact Utility

.....\$ as tested	MPG	HP	Torque
Mercedes-Benz GLK 250 BlueTEC 4MATIC (2013)	.....24/33	200	369
Volvo XC60 T6 AWD	.....17/24	300	325

This was the smallest group, just two, and definitely an interesting pairing. We’ve driven both vehicles at launch and found much to admire in each. The GLK was priciest, but both were pricey, and the GLK had far better fuel mileage (with this BlueTEC diesel option) and higher torque (ditto).

Our logbook had high praise for the Volvo, calling it “startlingly competent” on the skidpad, from braking to slalom handling, with acceleration we could push as hard as any, and fine road manners, as well. The GLK scored all 5s on the skidpad, too,

although it lost a little on final acceleration—sometimes horsepower is still as important as torque. On the paved roads, we noted the GLK was “solid, sure-footed and powerful,” handling steep stop signs and restarts well, and with high-way-caliber handling on the curves and hills.

Off-road, we rated the GLK at 4.5, to Volvo’s surprising 5, but fuel mileage gave it an edge in our final tally. We knocked a little off for the 2013 GLK’s aging styling, though it has a refresh in the works. We scored the Volvo XC60 at 42 and the Mercedes-Benz GLK BlueTEC 43. With the group overall, they had the event’s only tie score.

THE WINNER: Best Premium Compact Utility:
(tie): 2015 Volvo XC60 T6 AWD and
2013 Mercedes-Benz GLK 250 BlueTEC.

Premium Standard Utility

.....\$ as tested	MPG	HP	Torque
Acura MDX ADV ENT AWD	.....18/27	290	267
BMW X5 xDrive 35d	.....23/31	255	413
Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited 4x4 ECODiesel	.....21/28	240	420
Lexus GX460	.....15/20	301	329
Volkswagen Touareg TDI Sport	.....20/29	240	406

This is another category with a lot of variety, although ultimately any one of these could appeal to the same buyer. Though it bears a strong resemblance to its forebears, the Grand Cherokee had a major refresh for 2014, while the others are more in the tried-and-true vein. The Jeep had the best price by far (only VW came close) and shared massive diesel torque with the BMW and VW. BMW beats Jeep on fuel mileage, but that’s not the primary reason people buy in this category.

We ranked the Grand Cherokee highest, at 45 points, with BMW next at 42. As with the smaller Cherokee, we wished we could tally more than 5 points for the Grand Cherokee’s off-road handling and capabilities. VW came in third, at 38, discounted for brakes that were wondrous on the pavement but gave us disquieting slides off-road.

The BMW had issues off-road, too, easily attributed to its wide, low-profile highway tires. The Lexus GX always looks top-heavy to us, and

on the skidpad, it seemed to actually be, generating more squealing than adhesion. Our vote in this category matched that of the overall group.

THE WINNER: Best Premium Standard Utility:
2014 Jeep Grand Cherokee
Limited 4x4 ECODiesel.

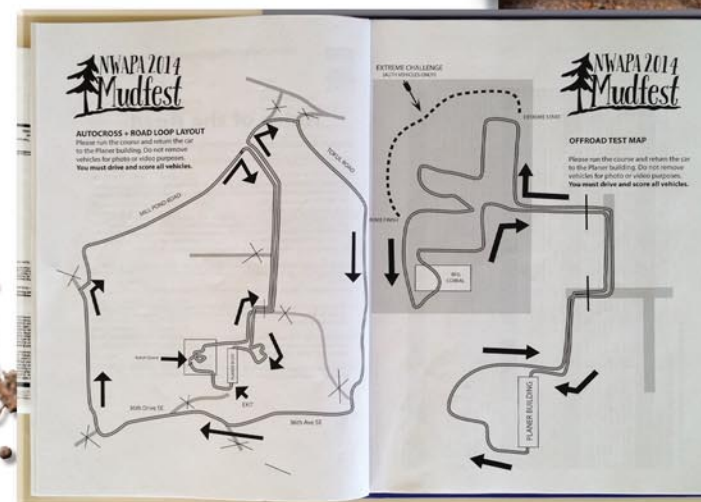
Family Utility

.....\$ as tested	MPG	HP	Torque
Chevrolet Tahoe 4WD LTZ (2015)	.....16/22	355	383
Dodge Durango Limited AWD	.....14/22	360	390
Dodge Journey Crossroad AWD	.....16/24	283	260
Honda Pilot 4WD	.....17/24	250	253
Kia Sorento SX AWD (2015)	.....18/24	290	252
Mitsubishi Outlander SE S-AWD	.....24/29	166	162
Nissan Pathfinder PLT 4x4	.....19/25	260	240

By the numbers, the Mitsubishi Outlander blows the rest away in its combination of price and fuel mileage. Its horsepower and torque are noticeably the lowest, though. But if you seek a bargain, the Outlander is very much in the game. Then again, Dodge Journey is even less expensive and has significantly more power—though you will pay for that at the pump. Figure your usage over time and do the math.

Tahoe is a perennial favorite in the marketplace, largely because it delivers so much size and capability at a Chevy price. So what do you say once Tahoe tops 70 grand? We rated the Tahoe lowest in the group, because of price, but also because of its failure to hold a track on the dirt at one point, its poor rear visibility, and a combination of ABS and shifting that just made

KEEP RIGHT >>



PREMIUM COMPACT UTILITY



Tied in this group: Mercedes-Benz GLK 250 BlueTEC 4MATIC; Volvo XC60 T6 AWD.

PREMIUM STANDARD UTILITY



Clockwise (from winner at upper left): Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited 4x4 ECODiesel; Acura MDX AWD ADV ENT; BMW X5 xDrive35d; Lexus GX460 Luxury; Volkswagen Touareg TDI Sport.

DirtFish is built on a 300-plus-acre site with gravel roads, skidpad-ready paved areas, open dirt trails and woods—easily adapted for our event’s dedicated pits and mud tracks. Outside the school are hilly, curvy two-lane blacktop roads perfect for checking out the more civilized aspects of the same vehicles we would torture within. That road course is shown on the lefthand page, at left; the off-road course on the right. The dotted line indicates the Extreme course. DirtFish instructors have backgrounds from World Rally Championship (WRC) to Formula One, but the facility’s emphasis is normally on WRC, featuring the Subaru WRX STI.

(Facing page) A stretch of dry weather gave us a Mudfest this year that was more dirt than mud—conditions familiar to those of us from Arizona. DirtFish Rally School and event personnel created mud where needed, though, such as this stretch on the Extreme course—testing articulation and traction on the beasts, with water a foot or two deep through there.

Where the roads are dry and the cars are slick.



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us glad to be finished on the skidpad. It's unfortunate because, these observations aside, we fully understand the Tahoe's huge appeal.

Honda representatives were the first to concede that their Pilot has been around awhile. And it was relatively expensive in this group, considering. It lost points for styling and technology, but we noted that its somewhat old-school approach to things was actually refreshing in some ways—it just doesn't score well. Pilot was strong on power, climbing and acceleration. We found it highly capable off-road, though its road suspension needs an update.

The Durango and Sorento hit two of the sweetests spots in this group—Kia for its purchase price and fuel mileage, Durango for its power and 7-seat capacity (at a fraction of the Tahoe's cost). Dodge Journey achieved our top tally, at 44.5 points, with Durango right behind at 43 (it rated a hair lower on value, although it's really a difference in price, not value).

Mitsubishi was third, at 39.5, owing much to its price, but also to surprisingly top-flight off-road handling. For value and capability, Outlander scores high—but it gets edged in this category by vehicles judged according to attributes that come with more cost.

The overall winner is one of our favorites, and belongs on anybody's short list, though it didn't score as high on our sheet, off-road. If you deemphasize that need, it moves well up the list.

THE WINNER: Best Family Utility:
 2015 Kia Sorento SX AWD.

Extreme Capability

.....\$ as tested	.....MPG	.....HP	.....Torque
Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Sport	.....16/20	.....285	.....260
Range Rover HSE	.....17/23	.....340	.....332
Toyota 4Runner Trail Premium	.....17/21	.....270	.....278

This is a course that only the beefiest of the beefy could handle unscathed. If you like to see how far you can tilt sideways, or how well you can drive with only three—or maybe only two—wheels on the ground, this is it. A few others in the broader group might be able to give it a try, but these are the most purpose-built vehicles we drove. Everybody knows that about the Jeep Wrangler, and price also makes it a solid choice.

The 4Runner was not top-of-mind for us in this group, and our score sheet bore this out after running it. From a chassis that seemed to run out of play, to poor handling on the skidpad, we rated it low. Off-road, it got our lowest ratings of any.

As for the Range Rover, what can you say at almost a hundred grand? It delivers the most lux-

urious style and finish, has very advanced technologies that let anyone tackle extreme conditions—although they stress an emphasis on driver control—and has the most power by quite a bit, while also delivering the highest fuel mileage ratings of the threesome—the power of aluminum. Scoring rates high due to its body and features. Yet it also scored 5s for both paved and extreme off-road performance, tallying 43.5 points.

The Wrangler was second at 37.5, though any creature comfort or feature categories it fell short in are actually exactly as intended. 4Runner was a distant third. For anyone on a remotely mainstream budget, Jeep will still win the day, but our tally sheet agreed with the group's overall choice.

THE WINNER: Best Extreme Capability:
 2014 Land Rover Range Rover HSE.

Overall Vehicle of the Year

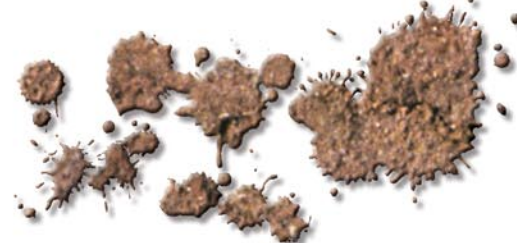
You don't buy a luxury vehicle if you concentrate on off-roading (unless you have the Range Rover's cost of entry). And you don't need a purpose-built off-roader if you only drive to the office and supermarket—though plenty of people buy them anyway and love them, of course. Think about your purpose and your budget, but ultimately of course feel free to let your emotions kick in. As they say in marketing, your heart will still always ask your head to grant permission for your decision.

Voting for the overall Northwest Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year ultimately does not have to follow everybody's score sheets—judges' own discretion and emotions are allowed to factor in. The winner is a vehicle we've been intrigued by since its earliest spy photos and have loved since we first drove it on a challenging off-road course and in the Santa Monica Mountains above Malibu, at its launch. And sales are already red hot.

THE WINNER: NWAPA Northwest Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year:
 2014 Jeep Cherokee Trailhawk 4X4.

Also throughout the year

NWAPA holds three vehicle comparative events per year. Mudfest, in spring, covers activity and off-road vehicles. Drive Revolution, in summer, covers alternative drivetrains (electric, hybrid, clean diesel). Run to the Sun, in fall, does sports cars, typically running from Portland high into the Cascade Mountains, with maybe some rafting included. ■



FAMILY UTILITY



Clockwise (from winner at upper left): Kia Sorento SX AWD; Chevrolet Tahoe LTZ; Dodge Durango Limited; Dodge Journey Crossroad; Honda Pilot; Mitsubishi Outlander SE; Nissan Pathfinder PLT.

EXTREME CAPABILITY



Clockwise (from winner at left): Range Rover HSE; Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Sport; Toyota 4Runner.

A final note: The group did not forget the nearby community of Oso, Washington, still struggling with recovery efforts from a horrifying mudslide, as we had to go about our mud business. NWAPA voted to make a significant financial donation out of event proceeds to the relentlessly hard-working K9 Search & Rescue operations involved, in support of their tremendous contribution to these efforts. Many NWAPA members reside in the Puget Sound region, not far from the disaster area.

Operation Better World

Ford's local philanthropic arm teams up with Tempe Leadership Class XXIX to provide fresh food to Valley residents in need *By Jennifer Johnson*

When Ford Motor Company's Operation Better World Phoenix committee—the company's local philanthropic arm—heard about Tempe Leadership Class XXIX's Fresh Truck Project through the website bucktruck.org, they knew it was an obvious fit.

Ford has a history of supporting food banks on both the national and local levels. Both Mesa-based United Food Bank and Phoenix-based St. Mary's Food Bank have received Ford grants over the past several years.

"Locally, Ford has given more than \$175,000 in grants and vehicle donations to hunger-related causes over the past five years and donated more than 30,000 pounds of food as part of Ford dealership-sponsored food drives," said Steve Papanikolas, Phoenix regional manager for Ford Motor Company. "When we found out about this Tempe Leadership project, we knew we wanted to get involved and help their leadership class make a difference in our community."

Tempe Leadership Class XXIX, made up of 18 people who live and work in Tempe, realized that access to nutritious fresh food is a key way to eliminate urban food deserts and increase the health of those who face hunger every day in Arizona. So the class established the Fresh Truck Project to raise money to purchase a refrigerated food truck for the United Food Bank.

Enough money was raised to purchase a previously owned refrigerated delivery truck, thanks to donations from Walmart and Allstate, and through various fundraising efforts. As a bonus to the project, Ford stepped up and donated a brand-new refrigerated Ford Transit Connect to the effort, which will enable community-based nonprofits like the Salvation Army, Tempe Community Action Agency and the Boys & Girls Clubs of the East Valley to get fresh produce to those in need. The Transit Connect, valued at \$31,000, is ideal for nonprofits that need a fuel-efficient option to transport goods to their clients.

United Food Bank will deploy these two Fresh Trucks to partner agencies across the Phoenix area that lack sufficient refrigeration. This increased capacity will allow for local and neighborhood food pantries to distribute more produce, dairy and other fresh foods instead of only distributing nonperishable packaged foods.

"The Fresh Truck Project aimed to eliminate this gap in the food supply chain here in Greater Phoenix," said Daniel Milner, Class XXIX's chairman. "Our class believed that all people deserve access to fresh, nutritious food. This is a huge step toward making that possible."

"Each class is required to complete a class project as a condition of their graduation from Tempe Leadership," said Tanya Chavez, president of the Tempe Leadership Board of Directors, "and they must see the project through from start to finish. We are thrilled with the success of Class XXIX's Fresh Truck project, and we are very proud of the class' efforts."

For more information on Ford's philanthropic efforts, visit corporate.ford.com/community. For more information on Tempe Leadership, visit tempeleadership.org.



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The Score Baja 500 results have a Dakar color to them

This year, Ensenada in Mexico has partially been oriented towards the Dakar: past winner Gerard De Rooy dazzled the fans, while two strong characters in Mike Johnson (cars) and Tony Gera (bike) managed to win the Dakar Challenge.

Mexicans have long been enjoying themselves in the demanding atmosphere of extreme sport, and they particularly love off-road events. Tens of thousands lined the route—and the start and finish—of the Baja 500 to cheer on their favorite drivers and riders, in an event that has become a must.

This year, they got excited for the first time about an unusual machine for them, an Iveco truck from Holland driven by the mercurial Gerard De Rooy. Winner of the 2013 Dakar and the first to challenge the American Pro-Trucks on their home ground at the wheel of a truck, he also took a gamble by lining up at the start just one week after an operation for appendicitis. Impatient to fulfil a dream he had been nursing for two years, De Rooy took a risk on the dusty, bumpy and sometimes winding tracks in this legendary event. Exhausted after two hours' effort, pain and even vomiting, the first truck racer of the Baja 500 finally decided to throw in the towel before reaching the finish.

After De Rooy's demonstration, the Dakar was once again very present thanks to the winners of the second leg of the Dakar Challenge.

In cars, Mike Johnson pulled off the big coup by winning in his buggy class 10, to earn his place in the Dakar. The American, who showed himself capable of clearly beating local hero Gus Vildasola, could be a likely challenger in the solo category next January.

On two wheels, it is very likely that Dakar fans will hear a lot about a new young rider. At just 19, Tony Gera has already won twice in the famous "Vegas to Reno" (Ironman class), and he surprised all his 'elders' by taking 4th place in the general ranking of the 500 (1st Ironman). The mechanic from California expects to line up in bikes without mechanical assistance next year, and will probably take part in the Desafío Inca or the Australasian Safari to get more experience as a solo rider. ▼

Resultados de una Baja 500 color Dakar

Este año, la cita de Ensenada en México ha tenido algo de sabor a Dakar: el antiguo campeón Gerard De Rooy ha causado sensación entre el público, mientras que dos pilotos con mucho fuste, Mike Johnson en coches y Tony Gera en motos, consiguen imponerse en el Dakar Challenge.

Es evidente que los mexicanos disfrutaron desde hace tiempo del emocionante mundo de los deportes extremos y vibran como nadie ante las disciplinas todoterreno. Durante todo el fin de semana, colocados en las zonas de salida y de meta de la Baja 500, decenas de miles acudieron para animar y saludar a los pilotos inscritos en una cita ya obligada.

Este año, han quedado entusiasmados ante un vehículo nunca visto en esta prueba, un camión Iveco proveniente de los Países Bajos, con Gerard De Rooy, un competidor fuera de serie, al volante. El ganador del Dakar 2013 es el primero que se atreve a desafiar a los Pro-Trucks norteamericanos en su propio terreno con un camión. Y también desafía a su propio cuerpo al presentarse a la prueba una semana después de someterse a una operación de apendicitis. Demasiado impaciente por realizar un proyecto que se llevaba gestando dos años, De Rooy, sin ningún tipo de garantías de poder aguantar físicamente, partió a la conquista de las pistas polvorientas, pero sobre todo accidentadas y en ocasiones sinuosas de esta mítica prueba. Agotado tras dos horas de esfuerzos, dolores e incluso vómitos, el primer piloto de camiones de la Baja 500 tuvo que resignarse y bajar de su cabina antes de alcanzar la meta.

Tras el recital de De Rooy, el Dakar ha recibido otro homenaje de la mano de los ganadores de la segunda prueba del Dakar Challenge.

En coches, Mike Johnson se imponía en la categoría de buggys clase 10 y se hacía con su inscripción al Dakar. El piloto estadounidense, que ha logrado mantener en jaque al héroe local Gus Vildasola, entre otros, podría ser un rival a tener en cuenta en la categoría "en solitario" el próximo mes de enero.

En dos ruedas, los aficionados al Dakar reconocerán de nuevo la impronta de los pilotos precoces. Con tan solo 19 años, Tony Gera ya se ha impuesto en dos ocasiones en la célebre "Vegas to Reno" (cat. Ironman) y ha dejado con la boca abierta a todos sus mayores al subir al cuarto puesto de la general en la Baja 500 (1er Ironman). Este mecánico californiano tiene previsto formar parte de la categoría "malles motos" el año que viene, aunque antes pondrá a prueba sus capacidades este otoño en el Desafío Inca o en el Australasian Safari. ▼



SCORE International Off-Road Racing

Photos: Floyd Hawkins / GETSOMEphoto.com [3]

The Dakar Challenge Calendar :

- April 5-12: Desafío Ruta 40 (Argentina)
- June 5-8: Tecate Score Baja 500 (Mexico)
- June 26-28: Toyota Kalahari Botswana 1000 Desert Race (Botswana)
- July 21-24: Desafío Guarani (Paraguay)
- September 11-14: Desafío Inca (Peru)
- September 14-27: Australasian Safari (Australia)

Calendario del Dakar Challenge :

- 5-12 de abril: Desafío Ruta 40 (Argentina)
- 5-8 de junio: Tecate Score Baja 500 (México)
- 26-28 de junio: Toyota Kalahari Botswana 1000 Desert Race (Botswana)
- 21-24 de julio: Desafío Guarani (Paraguay)
- 11-14 de septiembre: Desafío Inca (Perú)
- 19-27 de septiembre: Australasian Safari (Australia)

More information / más información:

www.dakar.com - score-international.com ■

Alfa Romeo US dealer network established

- Initial pool of 86 dealers in US and Canada drawn from existing FIAT and Maserati brand dealers
- Additional Alfa Romeo franchises to be awarded later this year

As the two-seat Alfa Romeo 4C sports coupe approaches its on-sale date in the US, marking the return of the brand to our shores after an almost 20-year absence, an initial group of 86 dealers have been awarded Alfa Romeo franchises in the US and Canada.

Eighty-two first-wave Alfa Romeo dealers in the US will be located in 33 states, with California, Texas and Florida having the largest concentration. There are four Alfa Romeo dealers in Canada in this first group. In the US, 79 were granted to existing Fiat dealers. Alfa Romeo and Fiat are both brands of Fiat Chrysler Automotive.

"This group of dealers represents the first phase in the Alfa Romeo dealer network selection process," said Peter Grady, VP of network development, Chrysler Group. "Each Alfa Romeo dealer

will have a unique staff dedicated to the brand's premium market clientele. We require each Alfa Romeo dealer to have their sales and technical staff go through an intensive curriculum to ensure the highest levels of customer care and proficiency on the Alfa Romeo 4C. We anticipate that the Alfa Romeo dealer network ultimately will exceed 300 franchises in North America."

Additional Alfa Romeo franchises will be awarded this year. Initially, each franchise will receive the highly-anticipated Alfa Romeo 4C Launch Edition.

Convenient to Arizona, there are two new Alfa Romeo dealers in state, two in southern Nevada and seven in Southern California (including one in Central Valley Bakersfield). All of these spin off existing Fiat dealerships of the same basic name.

Arizona

Larry H. Miller Alfa Romeo Tucson, Tucson AZ
Alfa Romeo of Scottsdale, Scottsdale AZ

California

Of 13 total in the state, these are in range:
Alfa Romeo of Bakersfield, Bakersfield CA
Orange Coast Alfa Romeo, Costa Mesa CA
Santa Monica Alfa Romeo, Santa Monica CA
Alfa Romeo of Los Angeles, Los Angeles CA
Kearny Mesa Alfa Romeo, San Diego CA
Walter's Alfa Romeo, Riverside CA
Mossy Alfa Romeo, National City CA

Nevada

Alfa Romeo of Las Vegas, Las Vegas NV
Findlay Alfa Romeo, Henderson NV ■



2015 Alfa Romeo 4C has a 240-hp 1.7L four, 6-speed automated manual transmission and rear-wheel drive. Estimates are around \$60,000.

Two-door Four By Joe Sage

The big news here is the very existence of the BMW 4 Series, introduced as a concept at the end of 2012 and in the flesh on the 2013 auto show circuit. Despite that exposure, after decades of 3 Series, it still feels new.

Over the past few years, we've had a pretty solid love affair with the 6 Series, a muscular and smooth coupe that never really made us think of any relationship to the 5 Series.

As the 4 Series is now the coupe (and convertible) equivalent of the 3 Series—a concept reinforced by the introduction of a similar 2 Series to accompany (or for now replace) the One, some people may start to think of the Six as a coupe Five. But maybe only to the unlikely degree they might think of an Audi A7 as a coupe A6, or an A5 as a coupe A4.

Conversely, we may likely witness some more evolution, whereby the BMW 4 Series becomes as distinct as the 6 Series has actually seemed all along.

Time may tell.

Lest there be any doubt the 4 Series is its own beast now, it comprises quite a lineup. There are two Coupe models—a four-cylinder 428i (starting at \$40,500) and an inline-six turbo 435i like our test car, with your choice of either an 8-speed automatic (as in this tester) or 6-speed manual (as we would wish). Either engine and/or transmission also comes in an xDrive all-wheel-drive model.

Then there are the 4 Series convertibles—either engine, and with xDrive available on the four-cylinder 428i. Again following suit to the 6 Series, there is a 4 Series Gran Coupé, again with xDrive available on the four-cylinder 428i only. The manual transmission is not offered on the convertibles or Gran Coupé.

By the way, BMW has let slip that this line-up scheme is also in line with the 8 Series.

That does not exist at this time, though some heavy (and gorgeous) hints have hit the European shows as the BMW Pininfarina Gran Lusso Coupé. If you haven't fallen in love with the even-numbered Series yet, that concept will push you directly into the camp.

The 4 Series coupe has grown from its 3 Series predecessor—wider and on a longer wheelbase—but so has the sedan. The coupe is noticeably low-slung, though, partly attributable to its roofline and partly to lowered suspension. It adds up to a great looking car.

The body continues the welcome trend of deBangling its overwrought sheetmetal, smoothing out the sides and cleaning up the rear considerably. Up front, it gets the same grille treatment as the current 3 Series, a sort of slit-mouth affair that connects to the headlights. Dead on, we've been lukewarm on this detail, but from a front side corner, it's strong, giving more punch to the grille opening.

The interior is a knockout, particularly attractive in the Venetian Beige Dakota Leather of our sample, offset by plenty of soft touch black and a bit of attractive walnut.

We were surprised our \$55,000 test sample did not include such fundamentals as sync for its dual climate controls, or a backup camera. To get the rear camera, you need a \$950 package that also includes just one e-feature, park distance control. Ubiquitous cameras are starting to regularly include side and top views, too, but to add that, you add another \$1900 for another package, which also adds lane departure warning. With so many cars now including a very complete array of driver assistance technologies standard, we were surprised. Three grand is excessive for these.

As we hit our first surface street roundabout chicane, we felt more wiggle and wobble than expected. A console switch from normal to Sport (also with Eco or Sport Plus) was most of the cure, although to do it really right, you have to dig deep into the iDrive interface to choose among chassis-plus-drivetrain, just chassis or just drivetrain sport settings. We're confident the engineers came up

with one perfect setup, and this is superfluous.

Much of the above—from the interior to the enhanced suspension—benefitted further from a \$3100 M Sport option. This is three grand well spent (see sidebar). We think this approach (seen also in Audi's S Line and Mercedes-Benz's AMG add-ons) dilutes what a real M buyer has paid for, but it does add a nice degree of M affordably.

A couple of minor but noteworthy beefs show in our logbook notes. We had a tough time keeping the interior cool at times, as temps outside climbed toward 108°. We wish we didn't have to turn the radio off each time we parked. With less than 5000 miles on the odo, we experienced an unusual collection of buzzes and rattles. (Our colleagues may have been hard on it before us, but then so may you be on yours.)

We would gladly give up most of iDrive just for a backup camera. But overall, this is our favorite BMW for quite some time, pricey 6 Series notwithstanding. The back seat even has moderately good legroom, and the trunk is enormous, so even family practicality may not keep you from putting this on your own gotta-have-it list. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	3.0L twin-turbo inline-6
POWER/TORQUE	300 hp / 300 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	8-speed automatic
.....	(6-speed manual available)
DRIVETRAIN	RWD
WEIGHT	3610 lb
MPG.....	22/32/25 (city/hwy/comb)
INCLUDED:	Electronic handling and safety features, high-po lightweight ventilated disc brakes, 18" alloy wheels, auto-leveling xenon headlights, LED accents, 8-way power front seats, walnut trim, AM-FM-CD-MP3-HD audio, bluetooth, iDrive with 6.5" screen and 8 programmable buttons, auto climate, power glass moonroof.
BASE PRICE.....	\$46,000
MELBOURNE RED METALLIC	550
M SPORT OPTION:	M sport suspension, sport seats, M steering wheel, aero kit, exterior trim, interior walnut trim, pearl trim finishers, anthracite headliner
M SPORT WHEELS:	19" alloy
M SPORT BRAKES.....	650
DYNAMIC HANDLING PACKAGE:	Variable sport steering
.....	1000
PREMIUM PACKAGE:	Keyless entry-start, lumbar support, satellite radio
.....	2200
DESTINATION CHARGE.....	925
TOTAL	\$55,325

LOGBOOK NOTES

Sport mode (which we liked on) sometimes survived a restart, sometimes not. Ditto the auto stop-start setting (we like this off).

Digging in the iDrive interface and manual ultimately revealed most mysteries of simple tasks that will still take interminable steps.

One mystery never solved was the inability to sync both sides' climate to one knob.

Keyless entry failed us many times, whether grabbing or stroking the handle. Audio volume dropped to zero when trying to turn it up. Screen once went blank for no reason.

No rear camera, at \$55k. That's \$950 more.



The new 4 Series makes it clear that four is not just three minus two doors.



Seamless (to a point) By Joe Sage

*** NOTE:** Just as we were wrapping up this issue, Ford released revised fuel mileage numbers for this vehicle, along with the hybrid and plug-in hybrid versions of C-MAX (and Lincoln MKZ), as well as for the neither-hybrid-nor-Energi Fiesta with 1.0L EcoBoost. This was done per an internal review of processes and results, not a dictate from EPA; rather, they informed EPA of the changes. If you already own any of these, you will be getting a "goodwill" payment from Ford. Our write-up here compares the value of the Fusion Energi Plug-In Hybrid with a Fusion Hybrid and a gasoline Fusion. We could have just edited this piece, but instead have footnoted it; the evolutionary info gives perspective. Tradeoffs and conclusions are the same or moreso.

Midsize sedans are the biggest selling segment. You are familiar with most of them to the point of invisibility—from top-selling Camry, Accord, Altima and Fusion (usually in that order), to Malibu, Mazda6, Optima, Passat, Sonata and more. Chrysler has just gotten (very) serious in the segment, with its new Alfa Romeo-based 200. Subaru is drawing more attention to its Legacy. For more dough, you have a list of luxury options.

Also for more dough, you have several hybrids. The first Fusion was a 2006 model, joined by a hybrid for 2010, rated at 39 MPG combined. A more innovative next generation gained a 47* MPG test rating—and sales promptly grew almost four-fold. *** NOTE:** The revised figure for Fusion Hybrid is now 42 MPG combined. Since 2013, Ford also offers the Fusion Energi plug-in hybrid driven here, bringing C-MAX Energi technology to the midsize sedan format.

The "seamless" part

The Fusion Energi plug-in hybrid bears the same 2-liter Atkinson cycle engine as the Fusion Hybrid,

but its electric motor is the big news. The Fusion Energi can run in all-electric mode at speeds up to 85 mph, and for up to 21 miles, which is much farther than the couple of no-gasoline miles you can eke out of a Prius in eco mode.

As with the Fusion Hybrid, the Energi plug-in does not go overboard with displays and calculators, though it does give fun and useful information about its systems and achievements. It does not have to become an obsession, as with some others—you can drive this quite normally.

Suspension was smooth and solid, providing a very comfortable ride. The cabin is inviting, with plenty of range of adjustment in everything. No matter how you calculate the power and torque (see specs), it's short on acceleration, but very capable overall and easy to live with—a good long-term car.

A gasoline Fusion starts at just \$21,970 and gets 34 MPG highway. Fusion Hybrid starts at \$27,480 and gets 42 MPG **(was 47)**. Fusion Energi plug-in hybrid starts at \$36,500 (\$40,500 for our Titanium test car) and is rated 38 MPG **(was 43)**.

Other than minor experiments in electric-only after startup, we drove normally. After 110 miles, but based on only an eyeball of the fuel gauge, we calculated 19.6 MPG. A lighter foot would do better.

In 2013 (with a late start), the Fusion Energi represented 14 percent of combined Fusion Hybrid or Energi Plug-in Hybrid sales. So far in 2014, this has climbed closer to 19 percent (an almost 34 percent bump). Nice. *** NOTE:** Our conclusion remains the same—or only moreso—after the restated figures.

We are impressed with the efforts and the intent, but for most buyers, we would say save the dough and get the more conventional Hybrid—or gas. ■



Fusion Energi is extremely smooth-running. If you want to make a point of hearing it switch from electric to engine, good luck, even with the windows down—it is that quiet.

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE.....2.0L Atkinson-cycle IVC T I-4 HEV
POWER:

Engine horsepower (6000 RPM)141 hp
Engine torque (4000 RPM)129 lb-ft
Electric motor (6000 RPM).....118 hp / 88 kW
Electric motor torque.....117 lb-ft
Total system power (sustain)188 hp

TRANSMISSIONECVT auto/powersplit
DRIVETRAINfront-wheel drive

FUEL ECONOMY:

Electricity & gasoline ..88 MPGe **(was 100)**
Gasoline only38 MPG **(was 43)**

TOTAL RANGE.....up to 620 miles

ELECTRIC-ONLY RANGE.....up to 21 miles

INCLUDED: 17" aluminum wheels, auto halogen headlights, rear spoiler, dual-zone electronic auto climate, capless fuel filler, fog lamps, keyless entry keypad, power fold heated mirrors, heated leather power seats, Sony premium audio, rear vents, full range of stability and handling electronics, Sync with MyFord Touch.

MANUFACTURED: Engine in Chihuahua, final assembly in Hermosillo, Mexico.

WARRANTY:

Bumper-bumper.....3 yr / 36,000 mi
Powertrain5 yr / 60,000 mi
Roadside assistance.....5 yr / 60,000 mi
Hybrid unique portion.....8 yr / 100,000 mi

BASE PRICE.....\$40,500

WHITE PLATINUM METALLIC TRI-COAT.....595

NAVIGATION SYSTEM.....795

DESTINATION CHARGE795

TOTAL\$42,685

LOGBOOK NOTES

(The "to a point" part)

You pay a price for batteries and two motors. The trunk is tiny. Clean shirts didn't even fit.

The charging cable unpacks easily, works easily, but is extremely difficult to restash.

Brakes could be lurchy, grabby—or lack-of-grabby, feeling like nothing, followed by crisis.

Pulling into a garage also made us lurch, as the transmission and brakes interact.

At a stop, we heard a dramatic thump as the inside vents shut down. No airflow till restart.

The rear area often generated some odd sound effects after shutting off. The nose wanted to bottom out when entering our driveway, no matter how careful we were.

MyFord Touch is notoriously frustrating.

Driving with a window open generates an ear-beating helicopter effect from seatbelts.

Ultimately, there's no question it's pretty cool to drive through the neighborhood in electric mode, perhaps rolling down the windows to enjoy the full effect of dead silence, nothing but the breeze blowing by.

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By Nick Calderone with Rosalie Michaels
Photos by Nick Calderone and Rosalie Michaels



Soaking it all in, beneath the shade of the open-air observation cars on the Verde Canyon Railroad

What's the most romantic city in Arizona? That's what I began to think about when my girlfriend Rosalie and I started planning a weekend trip to celebrate our second anniversary. We considered a number of destinations. Page, with the grand Lake Powell lapping at its shores? Maybe. Bisbee or Jerome with their quirky art scene and mining history? Nah. Scottsdale has great resorts and shopping, but... nope. We settled upon Sedona. The red rocks, cooler mountain air, five-star restaurants, wineries and art all come together to create a perfect weekend for two people looking to celebrate love. That's how I sold it to my girl, but secretly I was scheduling heavy doses of adventure in between the huggy kissy stuff.

I scooted out of work early Friday afternoon, and we shot up the I-17 at the limits of legal speed. Well, close to legal speed, anyway. The drive along Route 179 into Sedona never gets old. Rosalie loves the first glimpse of the red rocks as we sweep around the gentle right-hander before entering Oak Creek. I feel the same—it's like pulling back a dappled curtain of desert to reveal a vibrant, priceless oil painting. It's always breathtaking and gives the sense that you are truly someplace special.

In lieu of a big resort, we chose to rent a house—a cute, tiny one-bedroom with lots of shade, charm and a perfect patio. Nestled beneath the cover of old growth, the house lies right along the banks of Oak Creek. It was perfect. We unloaded the 4Runner as quickly as possible, set up our lounge chairs, went to work on a bottle of wine and let the babble of the creek wash away the stresses of the week. Romantic? Yup.

The landscape of Sedona is truly remarkable, and so are the surrounding canyons and towns. One of the best ways to get immersed in the nature and history of it all is a ride on the Verde Canyon Railroad. The depot is about thirty-five minutes southwest of Sedona, just off 89A in the historic mining town of Clarkdale. We chose to spring for first class tickets and, trust me, the experience is worth a few extra bucks. For starters,

we're each welcomed with a flute of champagne as we board and select our seats. The entire train is refurbished, with the first class cars getting a rustic yet plush overhaul. Deep red couches wrap us in homelike comfort, so we can relax and enjoy the ride.

We ordered a bottle of wine to sip during the 20-mile ride to the turnaround point in Perkinsville. Before we even set off, our chilled bucket of wine was at our table. There's a full bar aboard, including local beers and wine, as well as a snack buffet with sandwiches, wings and yummy brownie bites that we could not get enough of. All of it gives you a sense of yesteryear, and within the first mile you begin to wish train travel was more widely available in this country.

The view from inside the air-conditioned cars is cool and comfortable, but the experience magnifies when you step outside to ride in an open air car. History hangs from the cliffs. In just the first few miles we spot at least four Native American dwellings perched above the tracks. We can't help but wonder how many more homes or hunting outposts are out there, just out of sight. Staring at the rugged canyon, unspoiled by development, it's easy to picture the people who lived here but hard to imagine how they survived.

The Verde River is your constant companion as the train trundles along the tracks, mirroring the canyon's curves carved by the water. One corner in particular provides the best photo opportunity of the journey. My Nikon's shutter was snapping away as the train rolled across a century-old bridge that spans a large side gorge. The ground falls away, the tracks bend, and the powerful, blue locomotives come into focus against red-hued rocks beneath an azure sky. It's the picture you'll want to show all your friends and family.

Bald eagles are known to live in the canyon. Emblazoned on each hulking locomotive is their image reminding you to keep a keen eye to the sky. If you're lucky, you might catch a glimpse of one soaring above. On this day, we were fortunate, because a bald eagle came to us. Once a month, Liberty Wildlife rides the train and brings along a very special passenger. Sonora is a rescued raptor the organization has worked with for several years, and the monthly rides are part of



The Verde Canyon Railroad, rumbling back toward the depot in Clarkdale. • Sonora, a female bald eagle, broke her wing in three places while learning to fly. She's now an ambassador with Liberty Wildlife.

her enrichment. The open air and passing scenery provide important stimulation for the bird's continuing rehabilitation. We learn about the bald eagle's decline and recovery in the canyon, a point Sonora emphasized by spreading her huge wings for a photo. Riding the rails with a bald eagle over our shoulder left us breathless.

The three-and-half-hour tour is one of the best Arizona excursions you can have for the money. The train ventures deep into territory that's otherwise very difficult to experience. Scenery is spectacular, the ride is plush and you can eat and drink all you want for less than you'd spend on a Jeep tour.

So, Sunday we went on a Jeep tour. Well, not exactly. Instead of paying to be driven around in a colorful four-wheeler, we decided to have an adventure in our own truck. A few months ago, I installed an Icon Vehicle Dynamics stage-one lift kit on my 2004 Toyota 4Runner Sport. Since then, I've been anxious to put it to the test. What better place than the well-traveled yet rugged Broken Arrow Trail?

We relaxed on our patio most of the afternoon, waiting for the sun to settle low in the sky before hitting the trail. We aired down to 20 psi, set the transfer case to 4-Lo, locked the differential and rolled slowly down the dusty red trail. If I'm honest, I was nervous. The trail guide I read rated



Broken Arrow "difficult." I was confident I wouldn't get stuck; however, I wasn't sure I wouldn't damage the truck or get lost. And how would Rosalie react? I wanted her to enjoy the ride and not be scared.

We tackled the first few obstacles with no problems. The front wheels of the 4Runner gripped the rocks and climbed up with ease. Our windshield filled with the colorful contrast of sky blue over red rocks as the nose of the truck reared up, the cabin felt like a rocket ship and our weight shifted from our bums to our backs. What a cool feeling. I drive this truck every day, but this was different. I think it was just a sense of freedom, being able to get into the back and beyond in the same vehicle I drive to work.

One of the first big sights along the trail is Submarine Rock. I parked my blue 4Runner alongside a few Pink Jeeps and felt a small tingle of pride that we had gotten here without handing the reins to a

KEEP RIGHT >>



Ready to descend "The Steps," daunting for an off-road newbie

tour guide. I jumped out of the truck with schoolboy excitement. I couldn't wait to run up the spine of the Submarine and get a look around. The late afternoon sun cast shadows, adding even more dimension and majesty to the already astounding scenery. We breathed in the view, captured a few cute cheek-to-cheek iPhone selfies and hopped back into the truck.

We were nearing the end of the twisty trail. However, getting there involved climbing and crawling over more challenging but fun steps and steep rocky grades. The trail turns around at a plateau called Chicken Point, aptly named for a rock feature perched high on the cliffs that resembles a chicken head. Again, the views are quintessential Sedona and postcard perfect.

There were three other Jeeps parked here: a heavily modified Cherokee and Wrangler and a Pink Jeep. Comparing their mods to my mostly stock ride began to make me a little nervous, especially knowing that the toughest part of the trail, "The Steps," was still ahead.

Knowledge is power, so I approached the Pink Jeep driver and asked about what lay ahead. She couldn't have been more helpful. Turns out she's one of the instructors at the popular tour company. She gave me a few key bits of info and assured me that although "The Steps" may look daunting, my mostly stock SUV would make it down the most treacherous bit of trail without a problem.

Rosalie and I clicked off a few more pictures as I noticed the last of the three other Jeeps disappear into the high desert scrub. We hurried back to the truck, staying close to another off-roader felt like a good idea, in case we did find ourselves in trouble. However, I couldn't keep pace with the highly articulated Wrangler, and all I saw was dust in the distance. We were on our own.

We navigated our way back toward where we came from, following the black scuff marks from the many trucks that tackle this route every day. We were having fun, when suddenly my heart was in my throat. We had reached the top of "The Steps," and it looked impossible. My first thought was that I wouldn't walk this path, never mind take my daily driver down it. The grade was steep, the boulders rutted and tall, and the trail so worn it had become a deep channel below



Nick's 4Runner, parked with pride next to iconic Pink Jeeps. • Oak Creek babbles by the patio of a charming one-bedroom rental house. • Nick and Rosalie enjoy the view from atop Submarine Rock.

grade. The picture doesn't do it justice. I considered backing out, but there really was no other way to go but down. It was time to trust the truck and the knowledge I had gained getting to this point; I was ready to take the plunge. Rosalie was not and refused to stay in the truck, believing "it was going to flip over." She chose to walk down, which was fine by me. I needed her eyes to help guide my wheels and reduce the risk of damage.

I gently crept toward the first step. The tires screeched and searched for grip. Each boulder has been worn smooth from consistent traffic and made slicker with a coating of dust. My tires clung to the rocks until they reach a tipping point and broke free all at once. The truck lunged forward and then bounced to a stop when it hit the bottom of the first step. It's an unnerving feeling, but I didn't hear any scrapes, thuds or crunches, so I began to settle down, loosen my grip on the wheel and let the truck do the work. Step by step, down I went to the bottom of the hill, to pick up my girl who was feeding me instructions and snapping a few hero pics of the descent.

The last few miles of the trail was a Sunday drive and we were both glad we didn't break anything. The rest of the trip was a relaxing blend of romance and adventure, a perfect mix only Sedona can deliver. ■



NICK CALDERONE is a host of the nationally syndicated news and entertainment show *RightThisMinute*. A lifelong car and motorcycle enthusiast, Nick says the coolest car he's ever owned was a 1986 Nissan 300ZX, and he currently rides a 1984 Honda Goldwing. Nick can be reached at [facebook.com/nscaldereone](https://www.facebook.com/nscaldereone) or on Twitter @nscaldereone.

ROSALIE MICHAELS is an actor, model and corporate spokesperson. She has been in many films and commercials and is a national spokesperson for Hyundai. In addition, she owns With a Smile Productions, an event model management company responsible for the iconic "red dress block girls" you see at Barrett-Jackson.

Rosalie's adventure

Nick loves outdoor adventure! And I love experiencing those things with him and seeing the look on his face as he does so. My man is never more full of joy than at those moments when he is doing something "in nature" and has me beside him. However, my sense of adventure is slightly different. Scratch that—it is entirely different! Here is what my adventure looks like...

I LOOOOVE food! And wine! So for me, adventure consists of seeing new places and immersing myself in the local epicurean delights. To this end, Sedona did not disappoint. Some highlights:

1) Wine tasting at Arizona Strong in Cottonwood—This cool, hip place was a nice surprise after our train experience. It was decorated with great, interesting art, and the music added another layer of cool. Kevin, our host, was fun, sweet, and really knew his stuff. While the wines, in my opinion, were nothing to rave about, the experience was! A perfect end to our walk through Cottonwood.

2) Dinner at Elote Café—When one of our closest friends, born in Mexico, said "It's the best Mexican food you'll have outside my mama's house," we knew we had to give to give this place a try—those are big words! And Elote lived up to them big time. There's a wait to get in, and it is absolutely worth it. We chose to wait a bit longer to get a table on the patio. It was the right choice—we had gorgeous views of the Red Rocks as we enjoyed our appetizer, the one the restaurant is named after. You must have the elote! It's a corn appetizer that I'm pretty sure Nick is still dreaming about.

3) Brunch at L'Auberge—Let me just preface this by saying L'Auberge is probably my favorite place on the planet. Its patio right on Oak Creek is a slice of heaven on earth. A trip to Sedona is not complete for me without a stop here. Nick had never eaten there, so I chose their outstanding brunch and asked to be seated at their best table on the creek. They came through for me! As we sat at our little table, tucked away from the rest of the patio, with our mimosas in hand, I think Nick was able to see why this place is so special to me. And I think Nick fell in love with the place, too. For he, the action guy, was perfectly happy to just sit there for a couple of hours and soak it all in, saying, "I don't think we need to leave here for a very long time." L'Auberge does it again.

When visiting Sedona, don't miss these highlights. They truly are an "adventure." You can thank me later. :)

—Rosalie Michaels

Texas is practically a neighboring state. At least if you drive from the Arizona-New Mexico border to El Paso, your journey is only about 190 miles (or for a crow, about 135 miles). From Hoover Dam to Matamoros, on the other hand, is over 1500 miles. Yep, Texas is a big place. Nonetheless, from its dry ranch pickup country to its poshest urban boulevards, it holds a lot of characteristics in common with Arizona, when it comes to vehicle shopping.

The Texas Auto Writers Association (TAWA) held its annual Texas Auto Roundup in late April, at Texas Motor Speedway, north of Fort Worth. Members drive contenders back-to-back on public roads in the area, with appropriate vehicles also making it onto the track. Awards are given in 14 categories, based on size, performance, utility, green credentials and combinations thereof. Awards are also given for best new feature, best new interior and best value. The two ultimate prizes are for Car of Texas and Family Car of Texas.

There were 782 individual drives recorded. Each vehicle was driven by an average of 17 people. Eight vehicles logged more than 20 drivers: Ford Fusion Energi, Corvette Stingray Convertible, Lincoln MKZ, Fiat 500 Abarth and Jaguar F-Type convertible from the 2014 model year; and all-new 2015 models of the Hyundai Genesis Sedan, Chrysler 200 and Kia K900 (three we drove at launch and have covered in recent issues).

As you can see, the vehicles that are of top interest in Texas are also of top interest here in Arizona. Top awards went to:

Car of Texas:

2015 Hyundai Genesis Sedan
(2nd: 2014 Jaguar F-Type V8 S Convertible)

Family Car of Texas

2014 Chrysler Town & Country
(2nd: 2015 Hyundai Genesis Sedan)

Best New Feature

Ford Fiesta's 1.0 Liter EcoBoost Engine

Best New Interior

2015 Hyundai Genesis Sedan (also winner in the Mid-Size Luxury Car category)

Best Value

2014 Ford Fiesta ST (also winner in the Performance Compact category)

Next up is the TAWA Texas Truck Rodeo, held in San Antonio in October. ■

TAWA Texas Auto Roundup



WINNERS (top to bottom, left to right) • MID-SIZE LUXURY CAR and CAR OF TEXAS: 2015 Hyundai Genesis Sedan • FAMILY CAR OF TEXAS: 2014 Chrysler Town & Country • PERFORMANCE COUPE: 2014 Jaguar F-Type V8 S Convertible • PERFORMANCE SEDAN: 2014 Lexus IS 350 F SPORT • MID-SIZE CAR: 2015 Chrysler 200 • FULL-SIZE LUXURY CAR: 2014 Cadillac XTS Vsport Twin-Turbo Premium • COMPACT CAR: 2014 Dodge Dart SXT • PREMIUM COMPACT: 2015 Subaru WRX Limited • PERFORMANCE UTILITY: 2014 Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT • GREEN VEHICLE: 2014 Ford Fusion Energi Titanium.

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Colorado and Arizona are almost exactly the same size and have similar populations, with about half in each case living in a dominant metroplex. The two states touch at one point, literally. So travel distances vary from zero at Four Corners, to about 1200 miles from Yuma to the northeast corner just past Sterling, Colorado—overall not that much less than the near and far ends of Texas.

Colorado vehicle purposes and tastes have a high degree of overlap with ours—all the moreso when you compare theirs to Arizona's higher elevations, with snow, cold and more two-lane highways.

The Rocky Mountain Automotive Press (RMAP) awards Vehicle(s) of the Year in car, truck and SUV categories—assessing value, performance, fuel economy, comfort and safety—among vehicles considered significantly new or updated. This is not a comparative drive event. Rather, a committee nominates three finalists in each category, from more than 120 vehicles members have already driven to evaluate. The full membership then votes, with winners announced in time for the Denver Auto Show in April. These are:

RMAP 2014 Rocky Mountain Car of the Year
2014 Lexus IS250/350—“for advanced design and technology, 2.5 and 3.5-liter V6 power and all-wheel drive.”

• Other finalists: Chevrolet Impala, Mazda3.

OUR TAKE: Arizona votes would likely be different—Lexus won for its AWD, in Colorado (we're surprised all finalists didn't have this there, in fact).

RMAP 2014 Rocky Mountain Truck of the Year
2014 Chevrolet Silverado—“for its range of powerful and efficient engines, high-quality cabin and advanced construction.”

• Other finalists: Ram 2500, Toyota Tundra.

OUR TAKE: Ford wasn't included? Ram didn't win?

RMAP 2014 Rocky Mountain SUV of the Year
(Includes crossovers and body-on-frame SUVs)
2014 Jeep Cherokee—“for exceptional efficiency, off-road capability, craftsmanship and user-friendly technology in the mid-size SUV class.”

• Others: Range Rover Sport, Subaru Forester.

OUR TAKE: These three vehicles would make anybody want a three-car garage. Winners, all.

RMAP also holds two comparative drive events: the Rocky Mountain Drive Experience in June—one day off-road, one on the track—and 4xFall in September. ■

RMAP Vehicles of the Year



CAR OF THE YEAR WINNER: 2014 Lexus IS 250/350; other finalists Chevrolet Impala, Mazda3.
 TRUCK OF THE YEAR: 2014 Chevrolet Silverado; other finalists Ram 2500, Toyota Tundra.
 SUV OF THE YEAR (bottom): 2014 Jeep Cherokee; other finalists Range Rover Sport, Subaru Forester.

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ARIZONA CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE ANNOUNCES CLASSES AND CALL FOR ENTRIES

Exceptional and unique automobiles are invited to take part in the second annual Arizona Concours d'Elegance, to be held on Sunday, January 11, 2015, on the lawns of the historic Arizona Biltmore Resort in Phoenix.

The judging classes have been set—including the four Featured Classes—for the 2015 Arizona Concours, an exclusive celebration of fine automobiles that will again serve as the startup and focal point for the famed classic car auction week in the Scottsdale/Phoenix area.

Well-known veteran concours judge John Carlson will again serve as chief judge, as he did for the inaugural event. Also returning for 2015 is Keith Martin, the charismatic publisher of *Sports Car Market* and *American Car Collector*, to serve as host and emcee.

The second annual Arizona Concours d'Elegance follows the highly successful inaugural show and competition on the manicured inner lawns of the Arizona Biltmore, which adds the art deco elegance of the 1920s resort to the ambiance of the Concours. In Phoenix's typical warm and sunny winter weather, participants, visitors and media representatives from throughout North America and Europe enjoyed a beautiful day of great cars in an intimate setting.

The winner of the first Best of Show award at the Arizona Concours was a 1925 Hispano-Suiza H6B Cabriolet de Ville owned by Donald Nichols of Lompoc, California, who received the top prize for a rare classic car that he had restored himself.

Everyone from private hobbyists to automobile museums can apply to enter their pre-1973 vehicles (age limit depending upon class). Not sure if your car is up to the standards of a Concours d'Elegance? Apply for entry and find out.

But you will want to act soon. Entries are limited to 80 automobiles, and the spaces in the various classes will fill up quickly, with a number of applications already in hand. For its inaugural event in January 2014, the Arizona Concours Selection Committee received nearly twice as many entries as could be accommodated. But the result was a splendid collection of cars, ranging from antiques and full classics to sports, racing and exotic.

2015 Specialty Class List

- 01 Antique/Century Automobiles (Pre 1915)
- 02 Pre-War Sports Cars
- 03 Pre-War Race Cars
- 04 Post-War American Sports Cars (through 1965)
- 05 Post-War American Race Cars (through 1965)
- 06 Post-War European Sports Cars (through 1965)
- 07 Post-War European Race Cars (through 1965)
- 08 American Classic Open
- 09 American Classic Closed
- 10 European Classic Open
- 11 European Classic Closed
- 12 Pre-War Preservation
- 13 Post-War Preservation (through 1973)
- 14 Avant Garde (through 1973)
- 15 Exotics (through 1973) - Specialty, Unusual or Limited Production Marques or Models
- 16 Post-War Mercedes-Benz (through 1965)
- 17 Post-War Rolls-Royce & Bentley (through 1965)

2015 Featured Class List

- 30 Pierce-Arrow
- 31 Competition Ferraris (through 1965) - cars with a documented period race history
- 32 Cars of Carrozzeria Ghia (100th Anniversary Year)
- 33 The Cars of Frank Lloyd Wright

Owners and caretakers may apply to enter their special vintage vehicles by using the application form at www.arizonaconcours.com. Entering a car is simple: click on Vehicle Submission, fill out the form and attach one or more photos of the entry vehicle.

The Arizona Concours d'Elegance benefits Make-A-Wish® Arizona, the founding chapter of the national organization that grants wishes for children facing life-threatening medical conditions. ■



Razor sharp elegance

By Joe Sage

The entire Hyundai lineup is solid. Value is high, styling sets trends and their warranty is unmatched (except by Kia, of course). Two things have puzzled us in the lineup. One, why not give Genesis Coupe its own name? And two, where exactly does Azera fit in?

Once a full-size car (like Genesis Sedan), Azera is now a midsize (like Sonata). Last year, Azera struck us as more elegant, but the 2015 Genesis has changed all that—and Sonata has a new style launching now, too.

We stumbled upon a thread on social media during this timeframe. One person noted that the Korean version (Grandeur) had received a minor facelift front and rear recently, while he said US sales were in a slight decline this year, after having shot up by 33 percent last year. He questioned Azera's relevance. The other found Azera handsome and a "more emotional alternative" to Sonata and Genesis.

That's not a bad call. They're all attractive, so it's more of a styling distinction—Azera tends toward the four-door coupe trend. Last year, Azera started at just \$1950 less than Genesis, base, while Sonata was \$11-13,000 less than those two. This year, Hyundai has knocked \$2150 off Azera's price, addressing

this somewhat.

Azera's 293-hp V6 considerably outpowers the base 2014 Sonata's 190-hp 2.4L four, but negligibly so the Sonata 2.0T's 274-hp turbo four. (Sonata specs may change a little for 2015.) There is also a Sonata Hybrid. The 2015 Genesis Sedan with V8 hits 420 hp, but its six has 311 horses, again close to Azera.

Genesis has rear-wheel drive (the V6 has available all-wheel drive). Azera, like Sonata, is a front-driver. Suspension in the Genesis is the most sophisticated, though Azera's is very similar—and very good.

Overall, we might consider Azera "80 percent Genesis and 20 percent Sonata"—the nod to Sonata mostly because of Azera's front-wheel drive. Twenty percent is plenty, since Azera shows no noticeable torque steer or front-drive handling.

Differentiated by style and relatively minimal practical differences, Azera and Genesis strike us as filling a similar niche and budget, though officially different sizes and with their own flavors of styling. If you like Azera's looks (and front-wheel drive), then decide by that. We make big decisions all the time based on appearance. ■



Azera brings you front-wheel-drive, power right between V6 Sonata and V6 Genesis, and its own sleek style.

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	3.3-liter GDI V6
POWER/TORQUE	293 hp / 255 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	6-speed auto w Shiftronic and active ECO system
DRIVETRAIN	FWD
WEIGHT	3605-3825 lb
MPG	19/29/23 (city/hwy/comb)
INCLUDED:	18" alloy wheels w P245/45R18 tires (standard), heated/power-fold side mirrors, chrome-tipped dual exhaust, keyless entry/start, HID xenon auto headlights, heated front/rear leather seats, vented front seats, power seats w driver's cushion extension, power tilt/telescope wheel, dual zone climate and rear vents, 8" touchscreen nav w rear camera, Infiniti Logic 7 550-watt surround sound audio, HE-Sirius, interior ambient light, electroluminescent gauge cluster, color LCD trip computer, bluetooth, BlueLink telematics.
BASE PRICE	34,750
PREMIUM PACKAGE:	19-in hyper silver alloy wheels w P245/40R19 tires, panoramic tilt/slide sunroof, power rear sunshade, manual rear side window sunshades, rear parking assistance.....2150
CARPETED FLOOR MATS:	110
DESTINATION CHARGE:.....	895
TOTAL	\$35,695

LOGBOOK NOTES

The Azera performed best with use of its manual. (This is called Sports Mode, but it does not remap of shift or acceleration.)

The interior is creamy with black uppers in our sample, but with a coarse texture, fairly heavy stitching and coarse perforations.

Azera defines its spot in the lineup with big wheels, shallow cabin, wraparound taillights, chrome side upkick—strong, different, as much storm trooper cool as elegant.

ABS kicked in on a routine smooth curve, but that may be attributable to tire fitment. The car is relatively lightweight (3600-3800 lb), and we noted assured "sports car handling" belying its size in most instances.



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Distinctively different

By
Joe
Sage

We really enjoyed the Jaguar XF a few years ago (\$47k base). The flagship XJ lineup starts at \$74k base, \$85.5k for our long-wheelbase XJL as outfitted.

- Its 340-hp supercharged V6 was a solid basis. But the car proved to be a mixed bag. Most logbook entries were frustrations, e.g.:
- We like the retracting knob shifter, but it's shiny and red hot to touch on a sunny day.
 - The car was hot and stuffy, on just a 90° day.
 - Tales of the touchscreen interface could fill a book. It took many steps to do even simple things like change the fan or adjust the seats.
 - Massaging seats came on while driving, not by our request. Startling. Complex to defeat.
 - The headlight stalk is dark and hidden at night, and if on auto setting, auto high-beams have a dangerous mind of their own.
 - The rear mirror is small and highly distorted.
 - The manual could require a semester of study. The table of contents is 36 pages long. There are five pages on how to enter the car.
 - The gauge cluster is grey against darker grey and very difficult to read. It does brighten and upsize the speeds and RPMs you are hitting, though, which is kind of neat.
 - The touchscreen is unshielded and difficult to see in daylight, including the backup cam.

- Audio controls delivered fairly flat sound.
- The auto stop-start is one of the worst, rough, sometimes premature, most times lagging.
- The car wandered and darted at times. It does not wallow, but still feels like a boat. Suspension bottomed out in simple dips.
- Its turning circle is over 40 feet.
- Locking/unlocking the doors was buggy.
- The engine failed to turn off half the time.
- Ceiling lights would flip open on their own.
- The power seat would move on its own.
- Console lid would flip open and whack us.

It does retain some British personality, less of a cookie-cutter than many competitors. Wood wrapping from the doors to the instrument panel is very classy and different. We found the overall shape bulky from the B-pillar back, but did catch a flattering angle in its rear 3/4 view at times.

Normally, we'd like the AWD model. Or the Supercharged or XJR. Sadly, none of those would eliminate some overdone features that drove us nuts with the XJL. Jaguar's flagship has always aimed to be understated yet luxuriously high-end and a strong performer. But by the end of a week, we had had our fill. It's a beautiful car, but we could not live with it. We had liked the XF a lot. We'd buy that. ■



Laden with some neat features and some frustrations.

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE.....3.0L supercharged V6
TRANSMISSION.....ZF 8-speed auto w paddles
DRIVETRAIN.....rear-wheel drive
POWER.....340 hp / 332 lb-ft torque
MPG.....17/27/20 (city/hwy/comb)
WHEELS.....19-inch standard w spare
INCLUDED: Long WB, xenon front / LED rear lights, panoramic opening roof, keyless entry-start, intelligent stop-start, TFT LCD virtual instruments, heated-cooled seats f/r, nav, 8" touchscreen, soft door close.

BASE PRICE.....\$81,200
VISIBILITY PACKAGE: Adaptive front lighting, intelligent highs, cornering lamps.....850
ILLUMINATION PACKAGE: Lighted door & trunk sills, illuminated air vents.....1700
FRONT SEAT MASSAGE.....800
DESTINATION CHARGE.....895
TOTAL.....\$85,445



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Ahead of its time all along By Joe Sage

The Hyundai Tucson compact crossover completes ten years in 2014, from its first-generation model in 2005-2009 to this second-generation model hitting five years now. Hyundai is working through a broad product lineup refresh right now, with a new Equus last year, a new Genesis Sedan earlier this year (launched here in Paradise Valley) and a new Sonata being revealed right about now.

A Hyundai Tucson Fuel Cell electric model has just made its first customer deliveries, in Southern California only, where there is a significant hydrogen fuel infrastructure in place to support it. We hope to get behind the wheel of this, and wonder whether and when that daring powertrain alternative may be available more broadly. If it's in SoCal, of course we'll all see one at some point, anyway.

The other thing we'd been waiting to see was whether it would be an adaptation of the current Tucson, or whether it might mark their opportunity to release our first look at generation three. It turns out to be the first, with a small taste of the latter, based on shots of the first ones rolling off the ships from Korea. A simple grille replacement has brought it effectively in line with the new Genesis or Sonata, but the rest remains outwardly as before. It's a clever adaptation.

The very first Tucson had been an entry level offering, when the brand was first leveraging its foothold here. But the second was what a lot of the brand's products have been since then—an up-to-date or even cutting edge product that arguably set the tone for other brands—a lot of the style and

stance of the new Ford Escape echoes this Tucson from six years ago. The 360-degree-no-corners philosophy of the new Chrysler 200, ditto. The "surfer wave" upward flow on the new Audi A3's side sheetmetal also reflects some of what's here.

Our time with the Tucson was refreshing—it's comfortable and attractive. Controls are well laid out, with setup for a new driver a breeze.

There are three trims. The base GLS has a 2.0L four and starts at \$21,450. The SE level jumps to 2.4L and the price only to \$23,500. Our line-topping Limited has the same 2.4L and also a modest base jump, to \$26,200. All have a 6-speed automatic, any is available with AWD for \$1500 more, and all deliver more than average for their price.

Add-ons for our test Tucson were modest, and you could skip them, if you want the upper level model's classy details but still want to save a buck.

Equus, Genesis and Sonata have taken significant leaps forward. Fuel Cell facelift aside, we enthusiastically await the next Tucson. Not that this one is ready to leave the party—that's the big benefit of having been ahead of the curve. ■



The 2014 Hyundai Tucson (left) becomes a 2015 Tucson Fuel Cell (right) pretty easily with just a grille (and powertrain) change.

LOGBOOK NOTES

The shifter itself doesn't really line up with PRND to its side, but this is made up for by an adjacent dot indicating which position you're in. Lack of an L helps avoid errors.

Each radio station seems to need its own tone settings—intended as a benefit, but a mixed blessing. In repeat testing of this, we usually found it necessary, but not always.

Tucson has 25.7 cu.ft. of cargo behind rear seats, 55.8 cu.ft. if folded, but three issues: the seats don't lie flat; headrests aggravate this further; and the cargo cover rail blocks some space and movement of large boxes.

If you really get into cargo use, the leather surface of the folded back seat wraps around its top, vulnerable to scuffing or frayed edges as you slide things in and out.

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE.....2.4L GDI 4-cylinder
POWER/TORQUE.....182 hp / 177 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION.....6-speed Shiftronic auto
DRIVETRAIN.....front-wheel drive
MPG.....21/28/24 (city/hwy/comb)

INCLUDED: 18" alloy wheels, active ECO system, roof rails, side cladding, chrome trim, auto headlights, fog lights, power heated mirrors w turn indicators, wiper deicers, keyless entry-start, leather seat surfaces w heated front, power driver's seat, leather-wrap wheel and shift knob, dual zone auto climate w ionizer, retractable cargo cover, auto-dim mirror w HomeLink, tilt/telescope wheel w controls, rear camera, 4.3" touchscreen, AM-FM-CD-MP3 audio w iPod-USB-aux input, bluetooth, Blue Link telematics, full tank of gas.

BASE PRICE.....\$26,495
BASE DISCOUNT:.....(295)
TECHNOLOGY PACKAGE: Panoramic tilt/slide sunroof, LED taillights, navigation with 7" touchscreen display, premium audio with subwoofer.....2750
TECH PACKAGE DISCOUNT:.....(100)
CARPETED FLOOR MATS:.....110
DESTINATION CHARGE:.....875
TOTAL.....\$29,835



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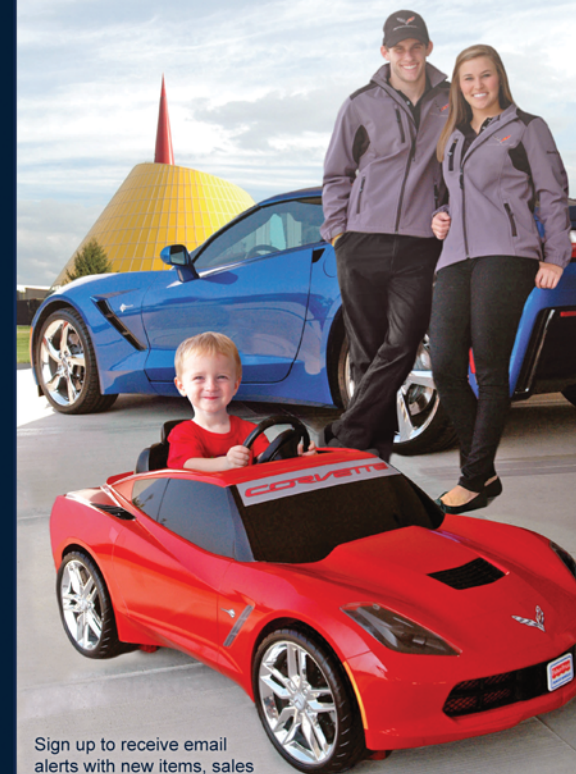
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With over one mile of frontage on Interstate 65 and located across from the National Corvette Museum (NCM) and the Corvette Assembly Plant, the 184-acre Motorsports Park will be one of the most centrally located and easily accessible driving facilities in the country.

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www.motorsportspark.org



Echo of a Murano

By Joe Sage

Smaller, less expensive, less powerful, less distinctive

The Nissan Rogue followed its big brother Murano into the marketplace by five years. Murano was ahead of its time, with curvaceous styling and its continuously variable transmission (CVT). Initially not appealing to everybody, it was nonetheless a big hit. It has been a segment leader, riding the crest of several waves. We had hoped for a baby Murano in the Rogue, but this was only partly so. Rogue is a competent driver of high utility, but never gave us that same cutting edge aura.

The 2014 Nissan Rogue received a comprehensive rework, with updated sheetmetal and new safety and technological inclusions. For 2015, the Murano receives its own restyling. Early images show the new Murano breaks new ground, even picking up style points from the 370Z. The Rogue's 2014 restyling, not particularly (see below).

The Rogue overlaps Murano in various ways, but also does so with Pathfinder and Quest mini-van, to degrees. Rogue is the least costly of the four and gets the best fuel mileage. Now that Pathfinder is also a unibody and Rogue can be a 7-seater, Rogue stands out as the only 170-hp four-cylinder in the group. The others have a 260-hp V6. It speaks well for Rogue that it so often

prevails—Rogue is Nissan's second-best-selling vehicle in the US, after its Altima midsize sedan.

Nissan generally provides great value, has proven dependable, and offers pure and simple features, without tech overkill. Our Rogue SV FWD totaled \$28,135, with third row and other options (for \$1350 more we would add AWD). Quest, Murano or Pathfinder start some \$6000-9000 higher. The base Rogue starts at \$22,790—or you can still buy the 2013 model, known as a 2014 Rogue Select, for just \$20,040.

Numbers do have a lot to do with the Rogue's success. Buyers will like the fact that the 2014 Rogue is bigger inside, but an inch shorter outside (though on a smooth half-inch longer wheelbase), adds enough features to increase weight over 100 pounds, yet improves fuel mileage by 5 MPG; increases headroom about an inch; and increases rear legroom by over 2.5". It retains the same relatively ponderous 37.4-foot turning circle.

The 2014 Rogue is a high achiever, already ranking in the Top 10, Top 12 and similar family or value listings from *Kelley Blue Book*, *Kiplinger's*, *Edmunds*, *AutoTrader.com* and *Parents* magazine, and it's an IIHS "Top Safety Pick Plus." ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE2.5L DOHC I-4
 POWER/TORQUE170 hp / 175 lb-ft
 TRANSMISSIONXtronic CVT w sport mode
 DRIVETRAINfront-wheel drive
 MPG26/33/28 (city/hwy/comb)

INCLUDED: 4-wheel discs, 17" wheels, temp spare, electronic safety and monitor systems, power driver's seat, 40/20/40 folding/reclining and 60/40 sliding 2nd row seats, 6-speaker AM-FM-CD audio, NissanConnect 5" display, device interfaces, rear camera, dual-zone automatic climate with 2nd row vents, divide-n-hide cargo system, power locks, driver's side only auto-up/down window, keyless entry-start, LED DRLs, halogen headlights.

SEATING(opt.) 3 rows, 7 passengers
 ASSEMBLY PLANTSmyrna, Tennessee

BASE PRICE.....\$24,490
 ROOF RAIL CROSS BARS:290
 FLOOR MATS:135
 SV PREMIUM PACKAGE: NissanConnect apps w nav, 7" touchscreen, voice recognition for nav/audio, SiriusXM traffic and travel link, AroundView monitor, power liftgate, heated mirrors, electronic safety and monitor systems1420
 SV FAMILY PACKAGE: 3rd row seating, run-flat tires (delete spare)940
 DESTINATION CHARGE.....860
TOTAL\$28,135

Below: Nissan Rogue, 2013 and restyled 2014; Nissan Murano, 2014 and restyled 2015.

LOGBOOK NOTES

The Rogue's CVT mimics at least one shift point, which does help its feel overall.

The liftgate unlocked and opened itself overnight once, our most disturbing experience.

The touchscreen can be hard to read, with key information in dark blue against black.

The start/stop button often did not shut off when punched, without a disquieting delay.

Lane departure warnings were inconsistent and somewhat random, seldom of use.

Audio was ordinary, inspiring us to try its settings multiple times, with same results.

The screen interface often launched with information we didn't request or prioritize and required deep digging for info we did.



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THE INSIDE TRACK: BRIEFS & RUMORS



Volvo Concept Estate

■ **Volvo** has won a long list of awards for its new Concept Estate concept car, one of the stars of the 2014 Geneva Motor Show, already named Car of the Show by a leading German automotive magazine at the 2013 Frankfurt show, while the Volvo Concept XC Coupé received the EyesOn Design award at the 2014 NAIAS in Detroit. These concepts provide significant cues to the all-new XC90 SUV, being launched later this year. The concept's key interior design feature is simplicity. Gone are all the buttons, replaced by a large tablet-like touchscreen control panel. "Not having to deal with buttons and controls for a growing number of functionalities is like being freed from a pair of handcuffs," says Robin Page, interior design director at Volvo Cars. Volvo also announced in Geneva that they are joining forces with Apple, to offer Volvo drivers full access to the widely-used iOS operating system in their own cars.

■ The largest electric vehicle rally in the world, **WAVE** (the World Advanced Vehicle Expedition), took place for its fourth time from May 31 to June 7, starting in Stuttgart, Germany with the largest e-mobile parade in the world. Subject to confirmation by the Guinness organization, a new record was set: 507 electric vehicles joined the parade in Stuttgart, beating last year's record of 305 vehicles during WAVE in Zurich, Switzerland.

■ **Lake Powell Resorts & Marinas**, has added a new Axiom Star fleet of 65-foot lake yachts, available for a minimum seven-day rental during summer or a minimum five-day rental the rest of the year. Each yacht features four staterooms with queen bed, sleeping up to eight. Common space includes two bathrooms, sitting room, kitchen with full size stainless steel appliances and a seven-piece dinette set. The craft has tracking satellite TV and surround sound music systems. A screened-in upper deck offers panoramic views and privacy, while the deck includes wet bar, barbecue, TV, a 250-gallon hot tub for up to eight and a water slide into the lake. Trained pilots take you to anchor, while the rental includes your choice of powerboat or two personal watercraft for your own exploring.



Lake Powell Axiom Star yacht



Ex-Works Aston Martin Ulster CMC 614

■ **iBiquity** Digital Corporation, developer of digital HD Radio Technology for AM and FM audio and data broadcasting, has announced that 16.5 million HD Radio equipped vehicles are now on the road, with over 2,200 radio stations broadcasting with HD Radio technology. These stations account for over 78 percent of all domestic listening—an estimated 3.8 billion hours of annual HD Radio listening. Based on Top Station Revenues, 94 of the top 100 highest billing radio stations are broadcasting with HD Radio Technology. All major car companies now offer HD Radio receivers in one or more of their vehicle platforms, many as standard equipment. A new vehicle with HD Radio is being sold every 4 seconds in the US.

■ A rare **Aston Martin** Ulster is set to break world records at the Bonhams Goodwood Festival of Speed auction. As

one of only 21 production Ulsters ever built, the works racer, estimated at \$2,346,000-2,681,000, is expected to beat the existing record of \$2,178,000 set by Bonhams last December for a pre-war Aston Martin. The Ulster is arguably the most extensively raced Aston Martin in the world, having competed in more than 100 races over nine decades, racing every year since 1935 (excluding World War II). Built for endurance and pace, the two-seater Ulster features a four-cylinder 1496cc engine, guaranteed to reach speeds of up to 100 mph. Its racing debut was at the 1935 Mille Miglia.

■ Every major manufacturer is working toward the possibility of a driverless, or "autonomous," vehicle. The foundation is already falling into place, via everything from GPS to backup and perimeter cam-



Google Self-Driving Car

eras, to lane-keeping and "smart" cruise control features, all of which can apply to a driverless future. A very near future, in fact, though not necessarily set in stone. While PayPal's founder launches private spaceships (and builds the electric Tesla), another Silicon Valley giant is ahead of the curve on self-driving cars: **Google**. They have been working with DARPA projects and on their own, in the deserts of California and Nevada—and Nevada has now become the first state to make driverless cars legal (in preparation for a theoretical future, and to ensure their spot as a hotbed of development). Not everyone is enthused by the prospect. One expert predicts that the American love for freedom will stall the concept. Art Wheaton, automotive industry expert and senior lecturer at Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR), says that while the Google car can be successful in certain niches, individual drivers will choose personal freedom and convenience over a car that drives itself. "The announcement by Google for their autonomous vehicle may be of interest in 20 years," says Wheaton. "The capability to have self-driving vehicles for delivering packages, mass transit or other point-to-point predetermined locations may be a trend for the near future. I highly doubt individual car owners will give up their freedom to drive anywhere, anytime for the Google car. It could be used in California for dedicated HOV lanes. The success of the Prius in the United States owes a great debt to California HOV lane preferential treatment. People may pay for the convenience of a shorter commute and own two vehicles in the family. One for commuting and the other for family or pleasure travel." Time will tell.

■ **STS Tire & Auto Centers** has teamed with the **Rubber Manufacturers Association (RMA)** to educate drivers about tires. "Too many motorists continue to ignore the only equipment on

their vehicles that touches the road," said Dan Zielinski, RMA senior VP of public affairs. "It takes just five minutes to check and properly inflate tires to optimize vehicle fuel economy and reduce the risk of tire problems." STS reminds drivers to check tire pressure monthly and before big excursions to avoid tire failure. Look for the placard on the driver's doorsill or inside the gas flap for proper inflation pressures. Check tire pressure when tires are cold—before driving or three hours after driving. Include the spare in your monthly check. To check for proper tread depth, insert a penny in the tread; replace the tire if you can see Lincoln's entire head. STS recommends extending the life of a tire by avoiding quick acceleration and avoiding potholes, which can throw a vehicle out of alignment. They recommend rotating tires every 5,000-8,000 miles, for even tread wear. Be sure that your tire valve cap is on, to keep the valve clean and prevent slow leaks. Check your tire balance to help guarantee even tread wear. Don't overload your vehicle, as unnecessary weight strains tires and also wastes fuel.



Bridgestone DriveGuard run-flat tires

■ **McLaren Racing** made its return to Detroit after a 26-year absence when Denver-based K-PAX Racing's McLaren 12C GT3s hit the Belle Isle course May 31-June 1 in the Pirelli World Challenge ser-

ies, with veteran Alex Figge and former US Touring Car Champion Robert Thorne driving the McLarens around the 13-turn, 2.35-mile circuit. McLaren last raced on Detroit's streets in 1988, taking the checkered flag with legendary Formula One driver Ayrton Senna. McLaren had two first-place finishes and two podiums over Formula One's seven years in Detroit. "Belle Isle is a challenging street course," says Figge. "Setting up the car properly for



K-PAX Racing McLaren 12C GT3

the severity of its bumps can make all the difference against the other teams." Thorne finished 8th and Figge 18th in GT/GTS. Five races remain in the Series.

■ **Bridgestone** has released a new line of DriveGuard run-flat tires, able to continue for up to 50 miles at maximum speeds of 50 mph in the event of a puncture or pressure loss. DriveGuard tires are available for coupes, sedans and wagons with tire pressure monitoring systems (TPMS), in 32 sizes, 15" to 19" rim diameters and 35 to 65 series. DriveGuard tires can be repaired in some circumstances, depending on damage, loss of pressure and operating conditions. ■

UPCOMING FEATURES

2015 Ford full line-up | Dearborn, Michigan



2015 Chrysler full line-up | Chelsea, Michigan



Dodge 100th anniversary | Meadowbrook, Michigan



2014 BMW 328d wagon



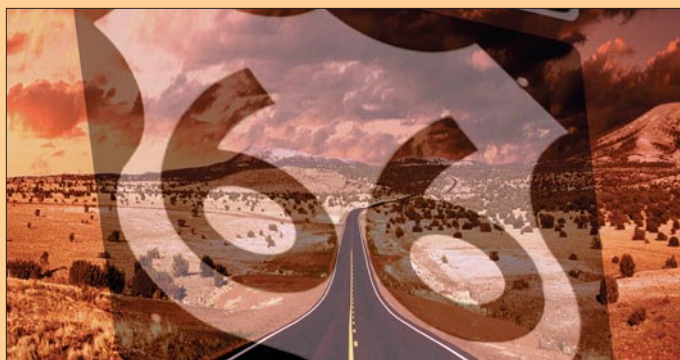
2014 Hyundai Elantra GT



Aerial combat planes with Nick Calderone



Route 66 with Brenda Priddy



Acura-hunting in junkyards with Tyson Hugie



Tyson Hugie

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Bob Bondurant #614
Pomona Raceway
1963 Corvette Stingray

sting-ray [sting-rey]
noun

having a whiplike tail bearing a serrated venomous spine
capable of inflicting painful weals on man



Bob Bondurant #614
Bondurant Training Facility
2014 Corvette Stingray



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