

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 14 NUMBER 3

MAY-JUNE 2015

MOTORSPORTS

NASCAR Y NASCAR MÉXICO AT PIR
NHRA AT WILD HORSE PASS
WRC RALLY MÉXICO HYUNDAI

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SILVER AUCTIONS ARIZONA IN SPRING
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COVER: Driver Dani Sordo and codriver Marc Martí work the rally stages during Thursday's opening run, in their #8 Hyundai i20 WRC rally car, at the WRC Rally Mexico through León, Guanajuato, Silao, Irapuato and the Sierra de Lobos and Sierra de Guanajuato mountains. **Photo: Hyundai Motorsport.**

Randall Bohl



Jan Wagner



Joe Sage



Randall Bohl



New, new, new. And fast. This issue contains a great many new vehicles, as auto show season continues, and it includes a number of motorsports events, as largely calendar-based racing seasons get underway. And it includes a lot more.

The racing takes advantage of our great spring climate, of course, but also that of our immediate neighbor to the south, Mexico. Drag racing in Arizona, the WRC rally series in Mexico, NASCAR in Arizona, NASCAR Mexico in Arizona—all converge here and give you a taste of what has unfolded at our bellwether events and how the seasons are shaping up. **Randall Bohl** brings us the story from NHRA drags, as well as NASCAR photos.

Randall also gets us on two wheels, bringing us updated info on the *Why We Ride* film folks and an interview with Scottsdale's own seven-time motorcycle land speed record holder and Mojave Magnum 200 MPH Club member, who has more big plans.

With LA, Detroit and Chicago shows behind us, we bring you a selection of our favorites from Geneva and New York—new production models and some dreamy-eyed concepts. Other dreamy-eyed concepts have just come to life, as you'll see with the all new Fiat 500X crossover. We drive that at its introductory launch event in Southern California, while we drive a completely new global Ford Edge at its launch held here in Arizona.

If you're thinking about summer escapes, visit San Diego's Balboa Park for its centenary, with contributor **Jan Wagner**, or check out special events in Sedona in this issue.

There are several other great vehicles driven in these pages, from a large but surprisingly nimble GMC Duramax diesel pickup, down to a surprisingly familiar though breakthrough Kia Soul EV, the company's first electric, and from the turbo Sport version of Hyundai's midsize Sonata, to BMW's new four-door Gran Coupé version of the new 4 Series.

Enjoy the ride.

Joe Sage

Publisher/ Executive Editor

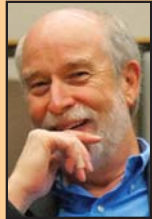


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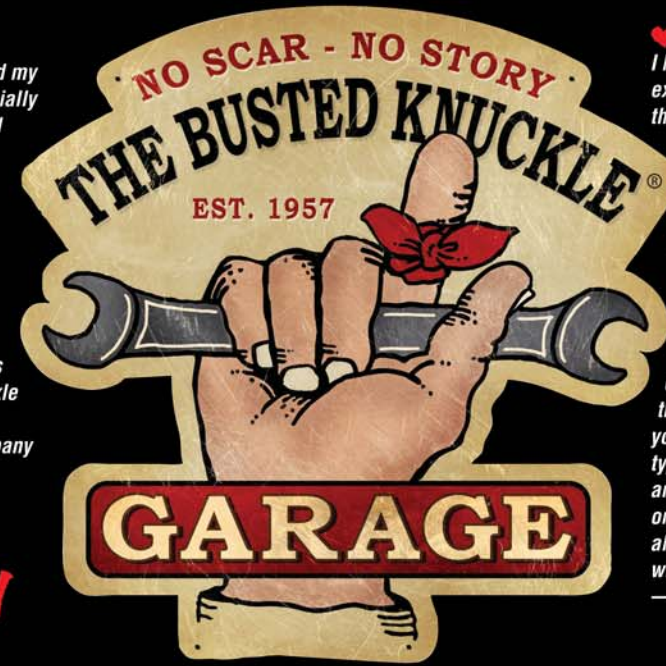


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♥ We have received our goodies and my husband just loves everything, especially me for getting him such cool stuff. I'd have to say we will be lifetime customers, oh ya!! Thank-you Greasemonkeys.
 — Sincerely, Pam

♥ I just had the most wonderful buying experience! I can't tell you how impressed I am with the service I received. I only hope my father asks for something from The Busted Knuckle Garage for Christmas so I can do business with such a wonderful company once more.
 — Cheers! Michelle

♥ First, let me be the one thanking you! I honestly cannot remember such extraordinary customer service. You may think I'm overstating, however, I assure you I am not. I wish you and all your "greasemonkeys" a great day, and know that thanks to you I also will have a great day.
 — Thanks again, "JR" Jean

♥ I am the proud wife a very hard working mechanic, so naturally I fell in love with your products. Not only are your products awesome, but the service and the people are too! As you know Greasemonkeys have only two types of friends; other greasemonkeys and people who need something worked on. I very much intend to pass the word along about how great it is to do business with the Busted Knuckle Garage.
 — Many thanks! Jackie B.

Check out these three Hot Sellers!



BKG Canvas Tool Bag

Papa got a brand new bag! This HEAVY DUTY zippered canvas bag is the perfect tote and storage bag for tools, detailing kits and all around general car guy stuff. Complete with a pocket divider inside and a handy, comfortable shoulder strap. A generous 25" L x 6" W x 10" H.

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News of a Rolls-Royce-inspired film and a film-inspired Rolls-Royce

The groundbreaking Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Wraith launch film, *And the World Stood Still*, has been accepted into the BFI (British Film Institute) National Archive, known as the world's most significant collection of film and TV. The film, having won a Gold Award at the 26th International Visual Communications Association (IVCA) Awards, caught the attention of Patrick Russell, the BFI's Senior Curator for Non-Fiction Films, who considered it such a striking piece of contemporary cinematography it belonged in the prestigious archive. "We selected it for preservation as it is an outstanding and award-winning example of modern corporate promotional filmmaking," noted Russell. "It's a powerful use of the film medium for product launch purposes, executed with impeccable craftsmanship." ▼ The film had introduced Wraith as a new model, "the most powerful and technologically-advanced Rolls-Royce in history" (see our launch drive feature in the Jan/Feb 2014 issue). Filmed at a secret location near Barcelona, Spain, the shoot included an innovative "Timeslice" frozen-time sequence created using 100 dSLR cameras; the longest purpose-built camera rig in Europe; an award-winning film director; 36 computers; 1.5km of cables; and one prototype Rolls-Royce Wraith. ▼ The film is easy to find on YouTube, well worth seeing, and—yes—will make you want your own \$285,000-to-\$400,000-or-so Rolls-Royce Wraith. A behind the scenes film was also launched after the company was inundated with requests from fans across social media networks worldwide. ▼ Art meets commerce as, to celebrate the event, Rolls-Royce created a model known as "Wraith 'Inspired by Film'," which debuted at the 2015 New York International Auto Show. The car hints at both film and noir, through a number of bespoke touches. The silver screen is evoked through an exclusive two-tone Silver and Jubilee Silver paint scheme, with a solid-silver hand-cast Spirit of Ecstasy gracing the hood. An Anthracite leather interior accented with Casden Tan features a pin sharp aluminum band through Maccassar Ebony open pore paneling. ▼ Wraith is the most powerful Rolls-Royce ever made, with 624 bhp from its twin turbo V12 and a 0-60 mph time of 4.4 seconds. Its dramatic styling comes from a shorter wheelbase, wider rear track and the swept lines of a fastback body suggestive of the 1930s film noir era. The Wraith "Inspired by Film" is available to order now, worldwide. ▼

Launch film-inspired Rolls-Royce Wraith "Inspired by Film"



2015 Saleen 302 Black Label



SALEEN UNVEILS 302 BLACK LABEL

▲ Saleen revealed its new Ford Mustang-based 2015 302 Black Label at headquarters in Corona, California in March. This joins the 302 White Label and 302 Yellow Label introduced earlier in the year. The car bears a 730-hp twin-screw supercharged 5.0L Coyote V8, producing 600 lb-ft of torque and running on 91 octane gasoline. Suspension is independent on all four corners, upgraded with Saleen S4 springs, shocks, swaybars and bushings, intended to see service both on and off the track. Massive 15-inch dimpled rotors and multi-piston disc brakes bring the 302 Black Label's 20-inch five-spoke alloy wheels (available in multiple finishes) to a standstill. Lengthening by an inch and a half in the front and almost two inches in the rear helps to increase the airfoil, thereby increasing downforce over the entire vehicle. A trademark Saleen rear wing balances the downforce created by the front air splitter. Carbon fiber body components help to reduce the overall weight of the vehicle. The performance-luxe interior has black leather and suede seats with contrasting chevrons, a high-contrast gauge cluster, leather wrapped steering wheel with controls, and a center stack with display and gauges. Unique badging includes a dash plaque with year of manufacture and serial number. The

2015 Saleen 302 Black Label starts at \$73,214 and can be ordered from select Ford dealers, or via saleen.com, or by calling Saleen at 800-888-8945.

ROCKFORD FOSGATE POWER SERIES

Rockford Fosgate has new Power Series subwoofer lines, including T1 Slim-Fit and T2 models. Technical highlights that contribute to the Slim-Fit subs' new performance characteristics include injection molded foam surround with VAST proprietary surround technique, encapsulating voice coil to former coupling technology, high temperature energy neodymium motor structure, and proprietary split yoke pass-through motor structure. Power T2 subwoofers include 13-inch and 16-inch models (with 1- and 2-ohm versions of each). T2 tech highlights include a carbon fiber/PMI/glass fiber cone with aluminum dustcap, injection molded foam surround with VAST proprietary surround technique, aluminum die cast frame with integrated heatsink fins, and triple stack segmented ferrite motor structure. Prices range from \$499.99 to \$1,499.99.

STUDY HAS DEALERS IN DRIVER'S SEAT

Vehicle sales hit near records in 2014, and indicators suggest a strong 2015. An annual surveys of households in 64 US markets, by Foresight Research, continues

to show strong intent to buy a new car. Last year, a majority of new vehicle purchasers were over 55 years old, which is also considered good news. According to Foresight's *2014 Dealer Immersion Report*—from an annual study of 7,500 recent buyers measuring purchase influence across 16 different marketing communication channels—the dealership experience was more influential among buyers age 55 or over than was any other marketing channel. "Dealers are incredibly important to the purchase decision for all buyers, but even more so for mature buyers making up the majority of today's market," says Chris Stommel, Foresight Research president. "The challenge for dealers is how to best maximize their strength position in this current growth period and at the same time establish a strong foundation for the inevitable times when sales are less robust." In response, Foresight has developed a suite of reports tailored to helping dealers convert prospects into buyers, with market specific perspective of local prospects and how to address their shopping process preferences, as well as dealer selection criteria, brand perceptions and influential messaging. Another new series provides insights into specific areas of managing, market-

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ing and selling at dealerships, including how prospects choose dealers. It turns out gender has no impact on the criteria people use for selecting a dealer, though age and luxury brand purchase does. They also note that three out of 10 new auto purchasers are influenced by printed brochures in the purchase process.

HONDAJET WORLD TOUR BEGINS

▲ After years of anticipation (we first featured this craft in our March/April 2008 issue), Honda Aircraft Company was preparing a world tour for the HondaJet—Honda’s first commercial aircraft—from late April into early May, with the advanced light jet making its first appearances in Japan and Europe, stopping in 13 countries while covering more than 26,000 nautical miles. The HondaJet will wind up in Geneva for static display during the 15th annual European Business Aviation Convention and Exhibition (EBACE), May 19-21. For the first time, the HondaJet will be on static display at the Geneva International Airport as part of Honda Aircraft Company’s presence at Europe’s largest business aviation event. This will be followed by a demonstration tour with HondaJet dealers across northern Europe. Orders are already being taken in Europe and North America. HondaJet is the fastest, highest-flying, qui-

etest and most fuel-efficient jet in its class. Innovations include its unique Over-The-Wing Engine Mount (OTWEM) configuration—with two GE Honda HF120 turbofan jet engines—which dramatically reduces aerodynamic drag, improving performance, fuel efficiency, cabin sound and ground noise. It also allows for a larger cabin and more baggage capacity.

HONDA US FACTORY CHANGES

Honda Manufacturing of Indiana LLC (HMIN) recently celebrated the one millionth car built at the Greensburg plant, just six years after the start of mass production at the \$800 million facility. In addition to Civic, the Indiana plant started building Acura ILX vehicles in 2012, then transferring production to the Marysville Auto Plant in Ohio early this year. At the New York International Auto Show, Honda announced the 2016 Civic sedan for North America will be produced at the Indiana plant, with models rolling off the line by fall. HMIN was Honda’s fourth auto plant in the US and its seventh in North America when production started in late 2008. The Indiana plant primarily manufactures vehicles for the US, with some Civics produced for export. Honda has also announced the end of the Honda Crosstour after this model year, which will open capacity at the East

Liberty, Ohio plant for CR-V and Acura RDX models. Meanwhile, Accord Hybrid manufacturing will leave the US, departing Marysville, Ohio and moving to Honda’s Sayama plant in Japan.

SHELL BUILDING CONCEPT CITY CAR

Shell will co-engineer an efficient ultra-compact car for city use based around the internal combustion engine, working in collaboration with legendary race and road car designer Professor Gordon Murray and engine specialist Osamu Goto. The Shell car is scheduled to be unveiled in November 2015. You can follow the project’s development online at shell.com/Projectm. Intended to be simple, practical and global, the Shell city car will draw on lightweight engineering, streamlining and driveline efficiency. It is intended to work in cities where vehicle travel is well established, as well as ancient cities that have never had any, while somehow promising to reduce congestion in both, “helping people get around the world’s ever-more congested cities where, by 2050, up to three quarters of the world’s estimated nine billion people could be living.” Development of lubricants, engine and vehicle will be completely integrated, delivering results

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no group could achieve by working individually. Shell will create new lubricants and fluids to be integrated into the city car's design from inception.

ASTON MARTIN AND JAMES BOND

▲ Aston Martin confirms James Bond will once again drive an Aston Martin in the upcoming film, *SPECTRE*. Unveiled on the 007 stage at Pinewood Studios in the UK, it will be a model developed specifically for the film—the DB10—built by their in-house design and engineering teams. The car marks the 50-year anniversary of the first Bond Aston Martin, the DB5 in *Goldfinger*, one of the best known film cars of all time. DB10 production will be limited to just 10 bespoke cars. *SPECTRE* hits theaters in November. For one weekend in March, Aston Martin displayed some of Bond's most famous film cars in London's Covent Garden, along with a selection of current models and a lineup of classics courtesy of Aston Martin Owners Club members. The *SPECTRE* car goes on display this year at the Bond in Motion show, the largest collection of original Bond vehicles in the world, now in its second year at the London Film Museum.

TOYOTA SUPPORTS GIRL SCOUTS

Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) has a new multi-year partnership with Toyota Finan-

cial Services, which has pledged \$2.1 million "to help girls become self-reliant, financially literate and capable of leveraging their talent, resources and personal business values to build a stronger economy and healthier communities." The focus is on helping young people understand the importance of properly managing personal finances, to better prepare for adulthood. Fewer than half of US states offer financial education in schools.

JEEP UK SALES LEAP BY 397 PERCENT

Jeep's growing momentum in the UK continues as figures released in April show new Jeep registrations rose by 397 percent in March 2015 against the same period last year. This increases Jeep's UK market share from 0.1 percent last year to 0.4 percent this year, the 19th consecutive month of year-over-year sales growth for the brand in the Mother Country, and the second-best month ever, after August 1997. The March 2015 sales figure exceeds a whole year's worth for Jeep in the UK just four years earlier, as Jeep became the fastest-growing car brand in the UK during the first quarter.

AUDI DRIVER ASSISTANCE CONTROLLER

Automated driving continues its march into our near future, as a central driver assistance controller (zFAS, for zentrales-

fahrerassistenzsteuergeraet) becomes the core of new systems for piloted driving under development by Audi. This "mastermind" is built with advanced high performance processors and will work its way into the Audi model range step by step in the near future. The project is considered a key milestone on the road to new, automated driving functions and a demonstration of the pioneering role Audi is pursuing in the field. Delphi Automotive has been awarded the contract for series production.

NEW SELF-DRIVE TESLA MODEL S 70D

Tesla Motors has introduced a new model, the all-wheel-drive Model S 70D, with an emphasis on balancing price and features value. Starting at \$67,500 after calculating its Federal Tax Credit, the new Model S 70D has dual-motor AWD technology, an EPA-rated 240 miles of range, a 0-to-60 time just above five seconds, and a top speed of 140 mph. The car comes standard with a range of technologies comprising their Autopilot Hardware system (completely self-driving capable once legal), navigation, and Supercharging to top off power in the Tesla network. The car will run on the latest software, with owners getting free over-the-air updates as additional functionality, performance and user features come on line. ■



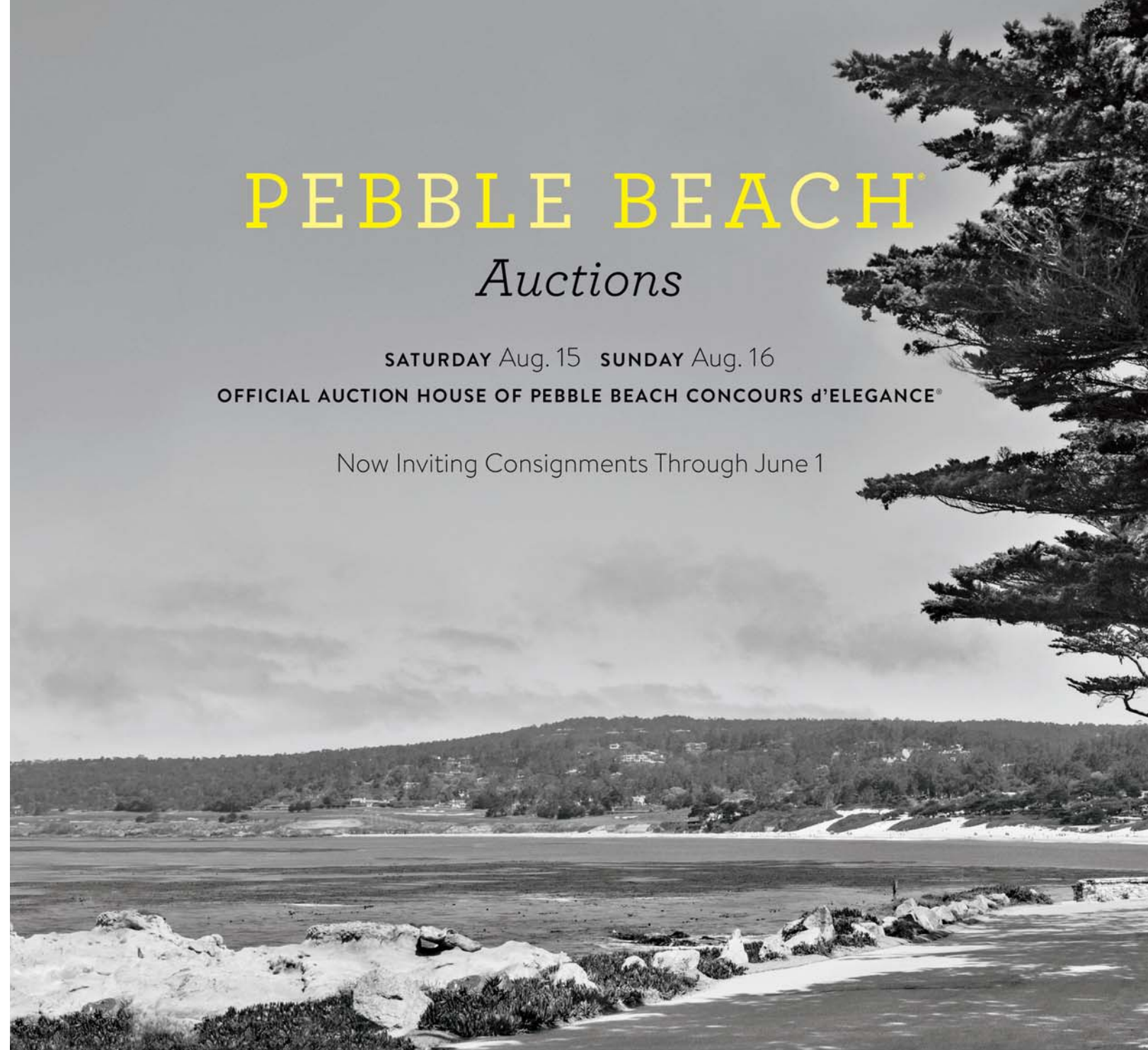
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PARDO WINS, HO SPEED RACING SWEEPS 1-2-3 IN THE THIRD TOYOTA 120 NASCAR MÉXICO TOYOTA SERIES RACE AT PHOENIX INTERNATIONAL RACEWAY • MARCH 13 2015

PARDO GANA, HO SPEED RACING BARRE 1-2-3 EN LA TERCERA CARRERA TOYOTA 120 DE NASCAR MÉXICO SERIES EN LA PHOENIX INTERNATIONAL RACEWAY • 13 DE MARZO DE 2015

PHOTOS BY RANDALL BOHL

Last year's NASCAR México Series saw tough battles among its top drivers, from the start of the season to its finale. In February 2014, Phoenix International Raceway had hosted the first race of the NASCAR México season for the second time, and Daniel Suárez had emerged victorious here. But as the 2014 season continued, Rubén Pardo and Abraham Calderón had become big threats to Suárez. (Calderón had been the winner at the first-ever NASCAR Mexico Series in the US, at PIR in March 2013.) By fall, all eyes were on Pardo, but by December the crown had gone to Calderón.

Competitive spirit was running high as the 2015 NASCAR México season had its opener at PIR for the third time. The México race runs on Friday night, as part of a race weekend also including NASCAR Sprint Cup 500 and XFINITY 200 series races.

A beautiful evening started with a few words from dignitaries representing both nations, local communities, NASCAR and PIR;

driver introductions and greetings from Avondale Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers, Arizona Diamondback legend Luis Gonzalez and others. Honor guards presented the colors for both nations, with the Agua Fria High School Junior ROTC doing duties for the US, as both countries' national anthems were performed and the sky lit up with the first fireworks of the weekend. And then it was race time.

By the end of the night, Rubén Pardo had his first NASCAR México Series win at PIR.

After starting on the pole, Pardo fell as low as 12th, but fought back to the front in the late stages. He averaged 81.807 mph for the 120-lap contest and finished .357 of a second ahead of teammate Luis Felipe Montaña, with Hugo Oliveras in third. The top three finishers are all teammates at HO Speed Racing, a team owned by Oliveras.

"I can tell everybody that I am very happy for me, my team," said Pardo, who notched his fourth career series win. "We did an awesome job. We placed 1 through 3 for the HO Speed

Racing. I want to say thanks to all my crew, the crew chief, all the guys, all the people who came to see this race, my girlfriend, and all the people that have supported me throughout my career. All my sponsors. I am very excited to start the first race with a victory."

The winning owner was also pleased.

"I think it was a lot of hard work went into all these cars," Oliveras said, "a lot of hard work over the winter months, not a lot of people see. I think it is a great way to start the season. I have two of the best drivers here in the series. Great way to start the season."

Rounding out the top six, all of whom battled for the lead late in the race, were #4 Rogelio López, #5 José Luis Ramírez and #6 Abraham Calderón, who had won the inaugural event at PIR in 2013.

Pardo led the first 57 laps before giving up the lead to López. Pardo and López battled back and forth for the lead most of the race.

There were six cautions, including a multi-car wreck on Lap 1. Two early challengers,



Rubén Rovelo and Rodrigo Peralta, had problems and did not finish the race. Rovelo hit the wall in Turn 4 on Lap 34, and Peralta's engine started to fail at Lap 75. Thirteen cars finished on the lead lap.

Calderón fell off the pace and had to pit on lap 34, but fought back and took the lead from Pardo on lap 87. Calderón then led for five circuits, until Pardo reclaimed the top spot on Lap 92. Pardo built a lead of nearly a second and led for the final 28 laps, though Montaña closed the gap in the final few miles. Manuel Gutierrez, who started 28th and last, gambled on pit strategy and finished a solid ninth.

Race fans headed next to the fan midway, where recording superstar Luis Coronel—who had earlier driven the pace car—performed to an enthralled audience.

The NASCAR México Series at PIR was televised on NBC Universo.



Luis Gonzalez and flag honor guards (3) Joe Sage

RECORDS, FIRSTS AND PERSONAL BESTS

LOGANO TAKES 200 AND HARVICK TAKES 500 AT NASCAR IN PHOENIX
AT PHOENIX INTERNATIONAL RACEWAY • MARCH 13-14-15 2015

PHOTOS BY RANDALL BOHL

Phoenix International Raceway welcomed their season opener—the fourth race of the 2015 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series—flush from receiving three awards from NASCAR: one for their 50th anniversary marketing plan last year, one for track services and one for community outreach. It was a great way to start a busy race weekend.

FRIDAY MARCH 13

Friday night would bring the excitement of the Toyota 120 NASCAR México Series race (see separate feature in this issue). During the day, practice and qualifying for México dovetailed with practice for Saturday's NASCAR XFINITY Series 200 and Sunday's NASCAR Sprint Cup Series 500. Sprint Cup qualifying followed, rolling up to México's pre-race ceremonies.

Round 1 qualifying for Sunday's CampingWorld.com 500 would determine the 24 cars that would advance to Round 2, which would determine the 12 cars that would advance to Round 3. Kevin Harvick, driver of the #4 Jimmy John's Chevrolet, won the pole, overtaking Joey Logano at the end. Though Harvick has been the all-time leader in Cup wins at PIR, this was his first Cup pole at PIR.

"All these West Coast races are special," said Harvick, "but this one in particular, just for the fact that we used to bring our Southwest Tour cars here, and Winston West cars, and struggled a little bit for quite some time, and then it all clicked."

SATURDAY MARCH 14

Saturday started with Sprint Cup Series 500 practice, followed by XFINITY 200 qualifying and Sprint Cup 500 final practice. After pre-race ceremonies, the Axalta Faster Tougher Brighter 200 race started at 1:00 pm.

Daytona 500 winner Joey Logano put on a dominating display at Phoenix, the fourth race of the XFINITY season. The 24-year-old had won pole position earlier in the day and led 176 of the 200 laps in his #22 Ford, eventually scoring his second career win at PIR over Matt Kenseth. Harvick finished third, ahead of Austin Dillon, Erik Jones and Ty Dillon.

"I would get tight and (Kenseth) would start catching up to me, because his balance was a little bit freer," said Logano. "But I was better than him in lapped traffic, so I just kept hoping for lapped traffic."

The victory was the 12th here for owner Roger Penske, who has eight wins with Indy cars and four with NASCAR stock cars.

With Logano and the Sprint Cup Series regular drivers ineligible for XFINITY Series points, Ty Dillon left Arizona with the series points lead, followed by Chris Buescher, Ryan Reed, defending XFINITY Series champ Elliott and rookie Darrell Wallace Jr.

SUNDAY MARCH 15

Sunday brought the biggest race, the 500-lap, 312-mile NASCAR Sprint Cup Series CampingWorld.com 500. Gates opened early, allowing

the crowd plenty of time to settle in and enjoy all sorts of pre-race activities, until ceremonies and a 12:30 pm race start.

39-year-old Kevin Harvick did something Sunday that no driver had ever done in the 52-year history of PIR—scored a victory in his fourth consecutive race in the same professional series here in Phoenix, leading 224 of 312 laps to win the CampingWorld.com 500.

Harvick has been on a remarkable run with his Stewart-Haas Racing Chevrolet. His strong showing at the end of 2014—with victories in the final Eliminator round race at PIR and in the Championship race at Homestead Miami Speedway—had propelled him to his first Sprint Cup Series championship.

As of Phoenix, Harvick had finished first or second in seven consecutive NASCAR Sprint Cup Series races (the last three of 2014 and the first four this year), a feat last accomplished in 1975 by "The King" Richard Petty.

PIR has become Harvick's favorite hunting ground. He has now won seven Sprint Cup Series races here (no other driver has won more than four) and, counting his victories in the NASCAR XFINITY Series and the Camping World Trucks Series, has an amazing 12 pro victories at PIR. After securing his first Cup pole position at PIR on Friday, on Sunday Harvick became the fifth driver in PIR history to win a Sprint Cup Series race from the pole and the first since Carl Edwards did so in the 2010 Kobalt Tools 500. ■



NOVEMBER 12-15 NASCAR AT PIR

The fall race at PIR—a NASCAR fixture since 1988—will again be the final race in the Eliminator round and the semi-final race in the Chase for the NASCAR Sprint Cup. Friday Nov 13 is the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series Lucas Oil 150. Saturday Nov 14 is the NASCAR XFINITY Series race. Sunday Nov 15, PIR's 2015 season concludes with the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Quicken Loans Race for Heroes 500.

PIR SEASON TICKETS

PIR season tickets bring great savings over individual tickets—discounts for parking, pre-race pit and Budweiser ROLL-BAR passes. Upgrade or change seats, and buy additional tickets at your discounted price. The new Zoom Pass credential grants all access. Visit PhoenixRaceway.com or call 866-408-RACE (7223). ■

(Main photo) The Perch hospitality area, above Turn 3 on the south side of the track, gives a great vantage point. • (At right, top to bottom) Pre-race prep with 500 winner Kevin Harvick's #4 car, #10 Danica Patrick and #19 Carl Edwards. • Saturday's 200 race winner #22 Joey Logano gives us a smoky burnout. • The Budweiser Clydesdales do a drive-by, and a vintage World War II B-25 Mitchell bomber does a fly-by. • Fun at the Filberto's booth on the fan midway. • Tonic was one of four major musical entertainers during the full race weekend.



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Photo: Ken Bryant



ARIZONA CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE SETS 2016 DATE

Featured classes announced for third annual event

The third annual Arizona Concours d'Elegance—an exclusive celebration of fine automobiles in an intimate setting—will follow its pattern of the past two years, taking place on Sunday, January 24, 2016, serving once again as the startup for Arizona auction week in the Scottsdale/Phoenix area. The event will again be held at the historic Arizona Biltmore Resort.

The 2016 Arizona Concours has also has announced its three featured classes: Duesenberg, Coachwork by Zagato and Exceptional Cars of Great Britain.

These special classes will join more than a dozen standing classes that will be judged during the event, culminating in the Best of Show.

The 2015 Arizona Concours, held this past January, hosted a magnificent collection of 87 vintage automobiles displayed on the landscaped inner lawns of the Arizona Biltmore, as the event built on the strong success of its inaugural year in 2014, again earning high praise from spectators, entrants and media.

Sunday's attendance was a sellout, and two Saturday seminars—the Phoenix Automotive Press Association's auction preview panel and an Elegance at Speed racecar design forum—were also very well attended.

Our balmy Arizona weather added its ambience to the Concours, as did the

event's list of special guests, including honorees Sir Stirling Moss and Norman Dewis, OBE, as well as Nigel Bennett, Peter Brock, Kip Wasenko, Glenn Mounger, Clive Cussler, Ken Gross and Lyn St. James.

On the Monday after the Concours, the entrants and their vintage cars were treated to the Tour d'Elegance, with a route incorporating Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West, the David Wright House and the Scottsdale Automotive Museum.

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. More than \$70,000 was raised to fund future wishes during 2015.

Preparations for the 2016 Arizona Concours d'Elegance have begun, and potential entrants are encouraged to submit their vehicle for consideration at www.arizonaconcours.com.

Additionally, the website links to downloads of the Arizona Concours mobile app for iPhone and Android.

For those planning to attend, make your plans early, as Concours tickets and hotel availability will be limited.

The Arizona Concours d'Elegance is a not-for-profit corporation registered with the State of Arizona, with federal 501(c)(3) status. ■

Photo: Joe Sage



MONTEREY AUTO WEEK 2015

Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance

The Lodge at Pebble Beach
Sunday August 16 2015

Ferrari will be the featured marque at the 65th annual Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, by chance after a Ferrari won Best of Show last year—the first postwar win in nearly 50 years. Special classes will focus on preservation Ferraris and Ferraris that raced in the Pebble Beach Road Races in the 1950s. Additional featured classes include: duPont; Designs by Carrozzeria Touring; Pope; Postwar Cunninghams; Historic Mercury Motorcycles; Japanese Motorcycles; and British Prewar Sports Cars. Lincoln Continental's 75th anniversary and Shelby GT350 Mustang's 50th will also be featured.
www.pebblebeachconcours.net

Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion

Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca
Thursday-Sunday August 13-16 2015
www.mazdaraceway.com

Concorso Italiano

Black Horse Golf Course, Monterey Bay
Saturday August 15 2015
www.concorso.com

Bonhams' Quail Lodge Auction

Quail Lodge & Golf Club, Carmel
Thursday-Friday August 13-14 2015
www.bonhams.com

Rick Cole Auctions

Monterey Marriott, downtown
Thursday-Saturday August 13-15 2015
www.rickcole.com

Gooding & Company

Pebble Beach Equestrian Center
Saturday-Sunday August 15-16 2015
www.goodingco.com

Mecum Auctions

Del Monte Golf Course
Thursday-Saturday August 13-15 2015
www.mecum.com

RM Auctions

Portola Hotel & Spa / Monterey Conf. Center
Friday-Saturday August 14-15 2015
www.rmauctions.com

Russo and Steele

Downtown Monterey waterfront
Thursday-Saturday August 13-15 2015
www.russoandsteele.com ■

Springtime trophy time

GOODGUYS 6TH SPRING NATIONALS
WESTWORLD / SCOTTSDALE / MARCH 13-15 2015

Photos and highlights by Joe Sage



Incredible devotion goes into creating and maintaining the beautiful machines on display at any Goodguys Rod & Custom Association show. As we look around the Goodguys 6th Spring Nationals at WestWorld in Scottsdale, we realize that just about everything there deserves a best of show trophy of one sort or another.

That amounts to more than 2,500 classics and customs in one place for three days. Every car is a gem, everyone is a friend and trophies are all in fun. Even the autocross events are held against the clock, not against each other. Defending PRO and Street Machine champion Kyle Tucker and his Detroit Speed '70 Camaro slalomed to an autocross win in 64.850 seconds. Brandy Phillips won the truck class in her Spectre Performance '72 Chevy C-10, at 69.901.

There were dozens of awards granted—some serious, some whimsical. A lot of folks went home happy, and—well, everybody goes home happy from Goodguys. Here are a few show car award examples (shown at right, top to bottom):

MIGHTY MUSTANG

1967 Ford Mustang
289 V8, C4 automatic daily driver
Randy Iverson, Queen Creek AZ

CLASS ACT

1955 DeSoto
291 HEMI, second owner, 40 actual miles
Gordon Aper, Scottsdale AZ

SUEDE & CHROME

1928 Ford
350 Chevy V8, Powerglide, blown, custom chassis
Vince Heuer, Granite City IL

PERIOD PERFECT

1956 Ford Thunderbird
Stock, all original
Mark Lorigan, Reno NV

Wide-ranging categories also included 75th Anniversary '40 Ford—and an all-new '40 Fords Forever group, with over 100 1940 Fords from the Phoenix club—as well as Best Ride on American Racing Wheels, One Fine Deuce, Timeless Traditional, Trick Truck Corral Pick, the flexible Wildcard Just 'Cause It's Neat, and many more.

About 60 were won by Arizonans. Others went to proud owners from neighboring states—California, New Mexico and Colorado—as well as everywhere from Texas to Illinois, to Manitoba and Alberta. The Long Distance Award went to Terry Eddy of Houghton Lake, Michigan, who traveled over 4000 miles round-trip.

A centerpiece of the Goodguys event is the Winners Circle lineup. Included are four Top 12

KEEP RIGHT >>





(At left) The all stock, all original Thunderbird V8 in Mark Lorigan's "Period Perfect" winner. • Ron and Jeannie Balfour drove their beautiful green '29 Ford with coordinated trailer down from Bloomfield NM and were "Rodding USA Pick" winner. • The steering wheel in Gordon Apker's "Class Act" winning '55 DeSoto. • Deep fried Oreos—'nuff said. • Stan and Donna Canter of Colbert WA won the "Memory Lane" award for their '33 Ford Cabriolet. • Caddys, Corvettes, Challengers and more, in the new all-years All American Sunday display.

Finalists (they'll be back at the end of the year) and ten All Ways Hot Rods Builder's Choice Top 10 winners. Shown at right and listed below are a sampling of these (left/right, top to bottom):

2015 TOP 12 FINALISTS:

2015 TRUCK OF THE YEAR (LATE)

1966 Chevrolet C-10 Stepside pickup
350, Vortec heads, 650 Demon carb, 700R4 trans
Yancey & Serita Taylor, Las Vegas NV

2015 MUSCLE CAR OF THE YEAR

1971 Plymouth 440 Six Pack Cuda
440 Six Pack, 4-spd, real shaker, 16 factory opts
Bob Leenstra, Kent WA

2015 MUSCLE MACHINE OF THE YEAR

1970 Chevrolet Camaro
416 cu.in. LS, 5-speed, Detroit Speed equipped
Paul Alderman, Ellensburg WA

2015 CUSTOM ROD OF THE YEAR

1959 Rambler (not shown)
Also a Builder's Choice Top 10 winner (below)
Dean Osland, Scottsdale AZ

2015 BUILDER'S CHOICE TOP 10 INCLUDE:

1933 Pontiac
Tuned-port fuel injection, 700R, one of 55 built
Dave & Marilyn Underwood, Scottsdale AZ

1958 Pontiac Bonneville
LS3 480hp, 700R4, rare bucket seat coupe
Dave Bertram, Scottsdale AZ

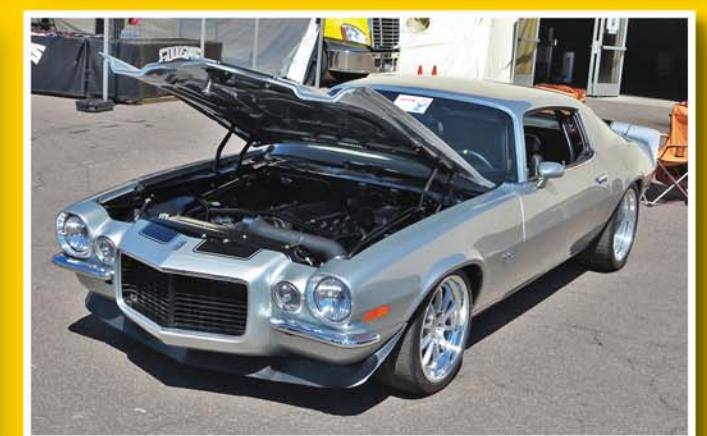
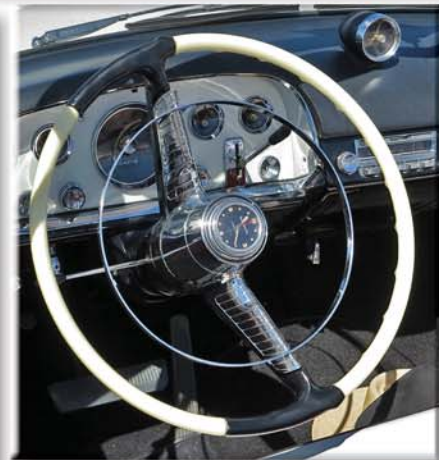
1953 Cadillac Coupe
6.0, 4L60 Air Ride custom
Lee & Marie Coleman, Phoenix AZ

1965 Pontiac GTO
LS3, 4L65 Kindig-it Build, Michelin redlines & Billet
Ron Meis, Lead SD

1932 Ford Roadster
392 '57 Chrysler HEMI, TKO 600 5-speed
Larry Christensen, Arvada CO, Fountain Hills AZ

The others included Custom of the Year, a 1959 Rambler belonging to Dean Osland of Scottsdale AZ, and five more Builder's Choice awards

Goodguys Rod & Custom Association opens and closes their busy annual event calendar here at WestWorld, returning this November for the Goodguys 18th Southwest Nationals—which will wrap up the year's 22-event season, including presentation of the final Top 12 for the year. For more information, visit www.good-guys.com. ■



POTENT LITTLE PILL by Joe Sage

// Bigger. More powerful. And ready for action." The Fiat 500X teaser ad shown during this year's Super Bowl pretty well spelled it out. (If you haven't seen it, it's easy to find on YouTube and worth a watch.)

We had had things spelled out earlier, at the LA Auto Show, where the 500X was first revealed. FIAT is on to something big, we had said. Not too big, of course, but bigger than the Fiat 500. Sexier than the Fiat 500L.

They don't shy away from the new Fiat crossover's Italian sexiness. Far from it. Its curvaceous sheetmetal and solid stance convey a seductive appeal to any gender.

But the little guy is not all lust—he's a good provider, as well, delivering all-wheel drive, ample interior space, an economical purchase price, frugal operating costs and plenty of power to get in the game.

The Fiat 500X is a sibling of the new Jeep® Renegade (see our prior issue), and each benefits from the other. Their personalities and styles are so different, you generally wouldn't equate them in your purchase decision. But there is commonality in their (differently tuned) chassis, engines and 9-speed transmission. And of course it's how we come

to have the significant benefits of an all-wheel-drive Fiat in play, including the fuel-saving rear-axle disconnect engineering introduced with Jeep Cherokee and Renegade—AWD disabled and its drag removed from the drivetrain when not needed. (The 500X is also available with front-wheel drive.)

The 500X is not intended to be comparable to a Jeep off-road. The Fiat's AWD is geared toward more what you would expect from a premium European SUV at two or three times the price—confidence and performance on dry pavement, and an edge on gravel, sand, snow or ice. Of course, the Fiat 500X will welcome dirt roads, making this stylish urban vehicle perfect for weekend getaways of all types. It's just not Rubicon Trail-Rated, as the Jeep is (in its Trailhawk trim, at any rate). The 500X also does not offer a tow package.

The 2016 Fiat 500X is born into a world already familiar with its little brother, the Fiat 500, whose appearance in 2011 had marked the reentry of the Fiat brand into the United States after about a three-decade absence. An entirely new dealer network was established—known as studios, not dealerships. The car (small as it is, a noticeably enlarged

adaptation of the classic Fiat 500, or Cinquecento) entered the market on the front edge of a wave of smaller cars, and it had heritage.

Over these three or four years, brand awareness has grown to a new high of 57 percent. (Halfway through this stretch, Fiat also introduced the 500L, which will continue on, but which has sold slowly and done less to build the brand.) The Super Bowl ad mentioned above and shown at right had millions of views at the time and has had millions more online. Fiat has made it onto the KBB.com Ten Hottest list. To date, they have introduced 12 special models of the Fiat 500—including a new cabriolet version of their distinctive 1957 model, just revealed to us at the 500X launch drive in San Diego.

The sales studios have expanded from a launch of just 30, to 218 now. Their visibility expansion must be working, as fully 87 percent of buyers are the always most highly sought "conquests"—people migrating from another brand. For a brand that was just reintroduced to our market, that's statistically likely, of course, but still shows strength.

Enter the Fiat 500X. Speaking with Jason Stoicevich, FCA vice president of the Fiat brand, we conclude the 500X is conceived as both a leader and a follower—a leader in that Fiat expects it to become the halo car of the brand, and a follower in that while it is

intended to keep the brand fresh, it bears all the key brand equity of the Fiat 500 and its forebears—the design, style and personality of the Fiat 500, in a package with wider appeal to the masses. Stoicevich expects the 500X to be a "gamechanger" for the brand. We are inclined to think that's correct. Their timing couldn't be better. The vehicle's segment, generally known as subcompact crossover, is the hottest thing in the market right now. Fiat considers the MINI Countryman, Chevy Trax (and thus Buick Encore) and Nissan Juke to be competitors. The Buick sells like mad. The Chevy just entered the market, but as a less expensive cousin to the Buick should do well. Juke has been a surprise smash hit for several years, though we wouldn't think of it first as an AWD competitor. Countryman is a good parallel, departing from its more familiar Hardtop brethren to some decent rough-road AWD capability, with a quality cabin attached. Not mentioned as a competitor is of course the Jeep Renegade, but it is about to benefit from the same front-of-the-wave timing in this segment. Nice timing indeed, for an all-new vehicle four years in the making. The segment is receiving significant growth from people moving away from com-

• In Fiat's popular Super Bowl commercial, a stray little blue pill is about to fall into this Fiat 500's fuel tank, promptly muscling it up to become a ripped 500X, quickly turning heads both male and female. (Lead photo): the 2016 Fiat 500X Trekking Plus.

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KEEP RIGHT >>



The marriage of Chrysler and Fiat would enable the excitement brought by Challenger, Charger, Viper, HEMI and Hellcat to survive increasingly stringent CAFE standards, by balancing these performance lineups with fuel-frugal Fiat. In so many other cases, this type of big-small lineup juggle has brought some pretty unexciting machinery to the fuel-sipping end of the scale. Not so, apparently, when you marry a sexy and technically clever Italian. It turns out the Fiat and Alfa Romeo lineup is every bit as enticing as the Detroit lineup... moreso all the time... while achieving the overall corporate goal. Grazie a mille! Bravissimo!

2016 FIAT 500X SPECIFICATIONS

POP (STANDARD)

ENGINE1.4L MultiAir 4-cylinder turbo
HORSEPOWER/TORQUE160 hp / 184 lb-ft
ENGINE PLANTTermoli, Italy
FUEL87 octane ok; 91 recommended
TRANSMISSION6-speed manual
.....optional 9-speed automatic
DRIVETRAINFWD only
MPGt.b.d.

EASY, TREKKING, LOUNGE, TREKKING PLUS (AND AVAILABLE ON POP)

ENGINE2.4L MultiAir2 Tigershark 4-cyl
HORSEPOWER/TORQUE180 hp / 175 lb-ft
ENGINE PLANTDundee, Michigan
FUEL87 octane regular
TRANSMISSION9-speed automatic
DRIVETRAINFWD or AWD
(AWD w/ Auto, Sport, Traction+ modes)
MPGt.b.d.

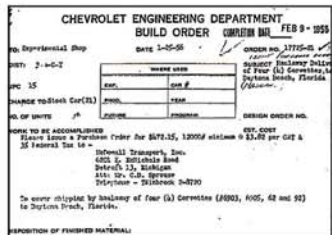
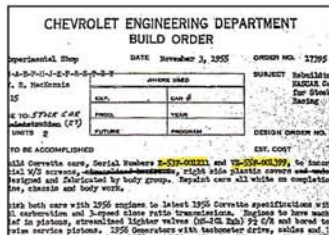
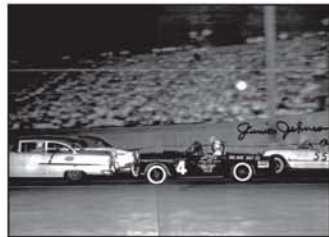
SUSPENSION: FRONT: MacPherson strut, coil springs, high-strength steel front cross member, high-strength steel mono shell lower control arms, stabilizer bar.
REAR: Chapman strut, high-strength steel links, isolated steel rear cradle, coil springs, stabilizer bar.

STEERING: Electric power rack and pinion.
BRAKES: Power-assisted four-wheel discs, ABS, ESC, 12" vented front, 10.95" solid rear; park brake elec motor on caliper.
WHEELS/TIRES: Vary throughout the lineup, by trim level and FWD/AWD drivetrain.

SEATING CAPACITYfive
FUEL CAPACITY12.7 gal
WHEELBASE101.2 in
LENGTH167.2 to 168.2 in
GROUND CLEARANCE7.9 in
CARGO VOLUME...behind 2nd row: 18.5 cu.ft.
.....behind 1st row: 50.8 cu.ft.
FINAL ASSEMBLYMelfi, Italy
TURNING CIRCLE36.3 ft
WEIGHT2967 lb

BASE PRICE: POP\$20,000
BASE PRICE: EASY\$22,300
BASE PRICE: TREKKING\$23,100
BASE PRICE: LOUNGE\$24,850
BASE PRICE: TREKKING PLUS\$27,100
+ All-wheel drive (except Pop)....+\$1,900
DESTINATION CHARGE.....900

NASCARCORVETTE.com "The Un-Told Story"



email: terry@ProTeamCorvette.com

compact and midsize sedans. This new segment is expected to triple in volume over the next four or five years.

Matt Davis, head of Fiat product marketing for North America, identifies the original little Fiat 500 as a "one-mission car," fun and very emotional. The next model, the 500L, was all about functionality. And the new 500X delivers both. The 500X rides another trend, as a true global car, going on sale in 100 countries.

Emotions are brought forth in familiar design cues, from its rounded double headlights, protruding trapezoidal front fascia and rounded clamshell hoods, to its low "smiling" grille.

Five trim levels all start in the \$20s, with the base Pop model at exactly \$20,000. The top Trekking Plus with AWD is exactly \$29,000. Options always exist, but you will find each model's base inclusions quite complete.

We spent our drive time in the Trekking Plus AWD, all on pavement. Its interior is a knock-out, with rich leather seats and door panels. We couldn't get out at the end of the day without pausing to admire the leather a bit more. The instrument panel on all models is more three-dimensional than that of the little 500, and includes Uconnect on every model.

Though the Fiat 500X's all-wheel capabilities are not geared toward off-roading, the car has 7.9 inches of ground clearance. Our drive in the Santa Monica Mountains north of Los Angeles was all on pavement. Had we encountered snow, ice, loose sand or gravel, we could have invoked its dynamic Traction+ mode, but we stuck with Auto and Sport. The 9-speed automatic, which we had already grown to admire with the Jeep Cherokee and continuing with the Chrysler 200 and Jeep Renegade, had seamless shift points and strong power curves in either mode.



Our paved highway time ensured that our AWD model had its rear axle disengaged most or all of the time, yet we marveled at its firm and true steering, with no hint of front-drive torquiness.

A smaller 1.4L turbo four from Italy delivers 160 hp, compared with 180 hp for the larger 2.4L naturally aspirated four from Michigan, though the smaller engine has more torque. Power is plenty with either, as the vehicle weighs less than 3000 pounds. Without even trying, we discovered we could pull off the highway on a significant uphill grade (to take some photos) and then reenter aggressive multilane uphill traffic quickly and surely.

Either engine runs on regular gas, but midgrade 91 octane is recommended for the 1.4L turbo. The 1.4L is standard on the lowest-priced Pop model, while the bigger engine is standard on the others (and available on the Pop). With the small engine and \$20k Pop trim level, AWD is not available, but a 6-speed

manual is (as is the 9-speed automatic), which adds up to a familiar conundrum.

The automatic-driving majority will probably gravitate to the higher models and AWD. That 1.4-liter engine is very compelling, as is the manual shift, but they appear on just that base grade. Hmm. The most affordable one, too. This really could be a tough choice, but that's why two-car garages were invented.

Uconnect features and screens upsize as you work up the line. Models above Pop have Beats Audio with steering wheel controls, heated seats and wheel, Bluetooth, various levels of leather included or available, and more. Our sample had heated and cooled front seats and heated rear seats.

The fundamental mission has been accomplished. The Fiat brand goes upsize, as the crossover segment is downsized. Premium features are being delivered for entry level prices. All with Fiat pizzazz. And as Davis had promised us up front, you give up nothing. ■





Texas flood

Heavy rain and coveted awards

Story and venue photos by Joe Sage

Texas has a lot in common with Arizona when it comes to variety of vehicle shoppers and vehicle usage, from mud ruts and ranches to malls and office towers. Thus we find value in attending the comparative vehicle events held by the Texas Auto Writers Association (TAWA). Our first was last fall's Texas Truck Rodeo, an event of such prominence that its awards are bragged about in national advertising, even Super Bowl caliber. It's also a great group of folks, full of Texas hospitality.

Spring brings the Texas Auto Roundup, and this was our first, although we've reported the results before. Held this year in early March, at Texas Motor Speedway near Fort Worth, it's a chance for analytical media types to drive contenders back-to-back on public roads, with appropriate vehicles also getting track time. Many of the vehicles shipped in by the manufacturers are indeed just begging for that track, and what a lineup it is—Hellcat, AMG, GT-R, Golf R, Stingray and more.

We always keep an eye on the weather when headed to an out-of-town event, at least partly hoping for some kind of dramatic change of pace from Arizona's typically perfect weather. And on this trip, we got it. Precipitation was forecast at 100 percent, and the radar maps were bearing this out. We flew in through heavy skies, which opened up just about as we arrived, and the deluge continued for the duration of the event.

This did not dampen anyone's spirits, but it did keep us off the track. The road courses were good, too—an inner and an outer loop on racetrack grounds, with challenging chicanes and solid straightaways, and there was a longer run out

onto the Interstate, which we took only a couple of times, the schedule being tight.

We had 56 vehicles to try, from 26 brands. Judging is organized into 14 vehicle award categories by size, performance, utility, green credentials, price and combinations thereof.

Two ultimate prizes are for the annual Car of Texas and Family Car of Texas.

Awards are also given for best new feature, best new interior and best value.

The manufacturers make their own decisions on what contenders to enter.

There were three display-only vehicles on hand, as well: the upcoming 2016 Fiat 500X (see elsewhere in this issue), the 2015 Infiniti QX80 and the last-of-its-generation 2015 Mazda MX-5 Miata Grand Touring with power hardtop.

We drove all day, one mad dash after another, car to car, making our swaps in a dry track garage. Selections are discretionary, and demand varied quite a bit.

Some decisions are obvious, some are tough to make. Some are based on specific attributes and some are subjective. Most are plenty of both. There are always some confirmations of previous experience and always some surprises.

Toward late afternoon, a few manufacturers were cleared to host right-seat ride-alongs on the very wet track. We stuck to the road courses and our hands-on evaluation duties—more cars this way.

As daylight faded and the rain continued to pour down, drivers retreated to their laptops and pads to enter judgment.

An 18-page online ballot had 128 questions and took an average of 40 minutes to complete, providing extensive cross-tabulated data for manufacturers' review.

Each category receives votes for first, second and third place. A weighted algorithm (second and third place votes count, at lower values) determines a first place trophy winner and one runnerup in each category.

We had heard that imports seldom take first place at this event. Some categories do seem to lean that way, but not all, by any means. Categories, winners and scores are as follows. Raw scoring tallies



AWARDS : VEHICLES OF TEXAS 2015



Subcompact Car:
Kia Forte5 SX



Compact Car:
Ford Focus SE



Midsize Car:
Chrysler 200



Midsize Luxury Car:
Cadillac ATS Coupe AWD Premium



Full-size Car:
Dodge Charger R/T Scat Pack



Full-size Luxury Car:
Mercedes-Benz S500 Coupe



Green Vehicle:
Lexus NX 300h



Minivan:
Toyota Sienna Limited

Photos: Major League Photography, except for Ford and Lexus (manufacturer) and Mercedes-Benz (Joe Sage)



are given, to demonstrate how tight some were. All are 2015 models unless noted.

Subcompact Car of Texas:

- 1st: Kia Forte5 SX**83
- 2nd: Chevrolet Trax LTZ72
- OTHERS: Toyota Yaris SE)55

Compact Car of Texas:

- 1st: Ford Focus SE**46
- 2nd: Acura ILX (2016)42
- OTHERS: Hyundai Elantra GT (2016)38
- Dodge Dart GT35
- Chevrolet Cruze Turbo Diesel32

Midsize Car of Texas:

- 1st: Chrysler 200**49
- 2nd: Mazda6 Grand Touring (2016)40
- OTHERS: Ford Fusion Titanium AWD36
- Toyota Camry XSE35
- Sonata Sport 2.0T34
- Nissan Altima SL10

Midsize Luxury Car of Texas:

- 1st: Cadillac ATS Coupe AWD Premium**...93
- 2nd: Lincoln MKZ Black Label AWD82
- OTHERS: Mercedes-Benz E400 Cabriolet...66

Full-size Car of Texas:

- 1st: Dodge Charger R/T Scat Pack**107
- 2nd: Toyota Avalon Hybrid Limited94

Full-size Luxury Car of Texas:

- 1st: Mercedes-Benz S500 Coupe***81
 - 2nd: Jaguar XJ Long Wheelbase*81
 - OTHER: Chrysler 300C Platinum V871
- NOTE: *S500 won the category by having the most first-place votes (16:12). Jaguar matched points by having far more seconds (20:11).

Green Vehicle of Texas:

- 1st: Lexus NX 300h**89
 - 2nd: Toyota Camry Hybrid SE68
 - OTHERS: Kia Soul EV Plus64
- NOTE: Toyota Avalon Hybrid scored 94, as entered in the full-size car category.

Minivan of Texas:

- 1st: Toyota Sienna Limited**89
 - 2nd: Chrysler Town & Country S82
- NOTES This non-track category often has only one entrant, yet this year's Toyota went on to win the broader Family Car of Texas award.

Activity Vehicle of Texas:

- 1st: Lexus NX 200t F SPORT***80
 - 2nd: Jeep Renegade Limited*80
 - OTHER: Kia Sorento SXL (2016)59
- NOTE: *Another tie decided by first place votes.

Performance Compact of Texas:

- 1st: Volkswagen Golf R**55
- 2nd: Ford Focus ST50
- OTHERS: Subaru BRZ Series.Blue27
- Fiat 500C Abarth Cabrio20
- MINI 4-Door Cooper S Hardtop manual...22
- Scion FR-S manual (w TRD options).....21
- Honda CR-Z HPD8

NOTES Abarth, with 20, places above MINI and Scion on basis of 2nd and 3rd place votes.

Performance Coupe of Texas:

- 1st: Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat**54
- 2nd: Alfa Romeo 4C Coupe46
- OTHERS: Lexus RC F40
- Ford Mustang GT33
- Dodge Challenger 392 HEMI Scat Pk Shk...18
- BMW 228xi Coupe16

Performance Sedan of Texas:

- 1st: Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat**116
- 2nd: Cadillac CTS Vsport TT91

Performance Utility of Texas:

- 1st: Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT**85
- 2nd: Land Rover Range Rover Sport S'chg...78
- Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG59

Supercar of Texas:

- 1st: Bentley Continental GT V8 S Conv**...65
- 2nd: Nissan GT-R Premium58
- Dodge Viper GTS51
- Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Z51 Coupe...50

Best New Feature:

Dodge SRT Supercharged 6.2-liter HEMI Hellcat engine (seven contenders).....28.9%

Best New Interior:

Lincoln Black Label Modern Heritage Theme (seven contenders).....30.8%

Best Value:

Alfa Romeo 4C (five contenders).....33.3%

The event's biggest trophies are not based on the above, but rather are a separate vote from among all vehicles:

CAR OF TEXAS:

- 1st: Chrysler 300**17
 - 2nd: Alfa Romeo 4C Coupe16
- NOTES (29) vehicles received votes.

FAMILY CAR OF TEXAS:

- 1st: Toyota Sienna minivan**20
 - 2nd: Chrysler 300C15
- NOTES (35) vehicles received votes.

There were no bad apples. Each was entered because of its builder's firm confidence. Competition was keen, yet in the end, votes were surprisingly consistent.

It is logistically impossible for anyone to drive all 56 cars, yet there were 885 individual drives recorded. Each driver drove an average of 17 vehicles; the highest number driven by one individual was 38. Each vehicle was driven by an average of 16 drivers; the Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat had the most drivers.

Winners were announced and trophies presented that night, followed by a formal presentation ceremony during the Dallas-Ft Worth Auto Show later in March. ■



2015 CAR OF TEXAS:
Chrysler 300 full-size sedan



2015 FAMILY CAR OF TEXAS:
Toyota Sienna minivan



Activity Vehicle:
Lexus NX 200t F SPORT



Performance Compact:
Volkswagen Golf R



Performance Coupe:
Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat



Performance Sedan:
Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat



Performance Utility:
Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT



Supercar:
Bentley Continental GT V8 S Convertible



Best New Feature:
Dodge SRT Hellcat
6.2-liter Supercharged HEMI V8 Engine



Best New Interior:
Lincoln MKZ Black Label Package



Best Value:
Alfa Romeo 4C Coupe

Photos: Major League Photography, except for bottom row (Dodge and Lincoln by manufacturer; Alfa Romeo by Joe Sage)

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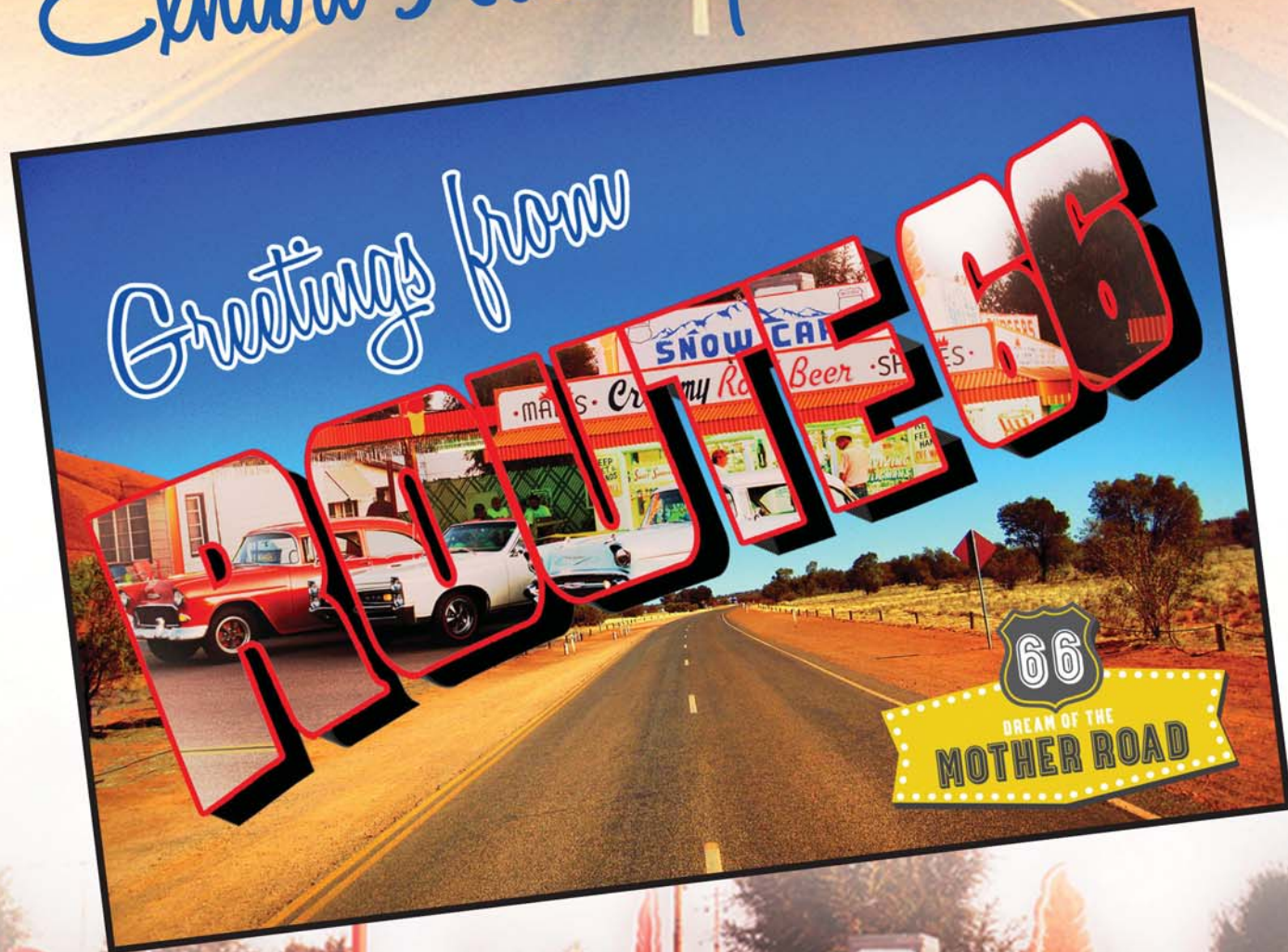
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All-star

NEW FULL-SIZE CHRYSLER 300 BAGS TOP TROPHY IN TEXAS, VISITS VALLEY IN TIME FOR FIRST PITCH THE NEXT DAY —AND PROMPTLY WINS ANOTHER TROPHY IN ARIZONA

As soon as we wrapped up our driving and judging duties at the Texas Auto Roundup, we caught the dawn flight back to Phoenix. The folks from Chrysler were so excited, they did the same, and magically had the new 2015 Chrysler 300 here by the time we landed.

Actually, they were already coming to visit—a chance to duck out of Detroit and join us for a Spring Training game on a beautiful March day. The fact the Texas Auto Writers Association (TAWA) had crowned the new Chrysler 300 as 2015 Car of Texas was just icing on the cake.

Just the day before, in a day of wet and challenging driving at Texas Motor Speedway near Fort Worth, collective media had voted FCA US products eight of the possible 20 awards, the most

of any manufacturer at the event, with trophies going to Alfa Romeo, Chrysler, Dodge and Jeep (see full TAWA results elsewhere in this issue).

It turns out they weren't done. By the end of the same week, FCA had earned two more awards here at home, as AAA Arizona voted the 2015 Chrysler 300 as Top Pick in the full-size sedan segment, and the new 2015 Jeep Renegade as Top Pick in the "Cool Car" category.

Jim Prueter, AAA Arizona automotive writer, said of the Chrysler 300, "This big, bold American sedan has world-class levels of sophistication, craftsmanship, and technology including Wi-Fi service." Vehicles selected as AAA Arizona Top Picks are evaluated on performance, safety, fuel economy, styling, reliability, and other criteria. ■



FCA Product Communications Manager Jiyan Cadiz explains the finer points of the fine Chrysler 300C Platinum, in Jazz Blue Pearl Coat, to media at Salt River Fields at Talking Stick, in the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community. The top model has 20-inch fully polished cast aluminum wheels, four-wheel independent touring suspension, full Poltrona Frau leather interior trim with quilted leather-trimmed seats, hand-sanded wood inserts, luxury Berber floor mats, power adjustable pedals with memory—and even heated and cooled front cup holders. All this starts at \$42,395 and is available with AWD starting at \$44,895.

Cool contender in the heated pickup wars

By Joe Sage



Ford. Ram. You hear a lot about these pickups lately. Chevy, too, of course. Sometimes Toyota, even Nissan.

Especially the new aluminum-bodied Ford F-150 and the Ram 1500 EcoDiesel—those two seem to win all the awards. What these share with Chevrolet is a heroic battle for top specs and with them top sales. And the fruits of battle are many—Ford F-150 has remained the top seller for decades, while Ram's sales have been growing by double digits.

Their market volume also somewhat sets the stage for this GMC Sierra Denali 2500 HD 4WD Crew Cab pickup (bearing a powerful Duramax 6.6-liter turbo diesel V8) to feel like a bit of a special discovery.

Those 150 and 1500 models above are officially class 2 light-duty pickups, traditionally referred to as half-tons, despite payloads far higher. This GMC 2500 is classified as medium-duty, despite the HD in its name. The success of the light-duty trucks not only creates a brand halo—a brand-wide boost to pride of ownership—it also brings more resources to the brand—engineering, technology, styling, even advertising. And the commonly-called

three-quarter-ton pickups, like this 2500 (with actual capacity far, far higher), benefit.

Flash back about twenty years. The big brother three-quarters were barely distinguishable, beyond badges and sometimes a bolder stance. All cattle, barely a hat. What mattered was all inside. Since then, though, the heavy-duty trucks—2500 (or 250) and up—have gone much their own way in styling and other visible cues. All hat *and* all cattle.

The GMC badge already promises more than the Chevrolet badge, by intent—Professional Grade and all that. The distinction is important enough for GM to let Ford combine all its F-Series sales figures, while GM splits theirs between Chevy and GMC, ceding the total sales war but maintaining brand image. It seems to serve a purpose, as the higher-volume Chevy lineup is largely out of mind as we try out the big and burly brother GMC.

If you've shopped full size pickups, you know the options pages can be as thick as an owner's manual. There is a lot to consider, with such complex machines that seem to carry such a simple and straightforward purpose—more than is practically feasible. Our

specifications sidebar gives you a slice of the full picture of this feature-rich example.

Even in Monroney sticker shorthand, the inclusions would be four and a half columns long. Some are real breakthroughs, such as the included EZ Lift tailgate, which uses an internal torsion bar and rotary damper to create effortless operation up or down.

Even the add-ons are tremendous bargains. Maybe we spend too much time exposed to German option prices, but when you see options listing at just \$35 or \$55 here—or whole off-road or trailering packages at just \$200-something each—you can be sure that at \$65,000 this pickup has great total value. The only pricey option is the whole Duramax Plus Package, at almost \$9000, but it's the game-changer for this truck: almost 800 lb-ft of torque at just 1600 RPM says it all.

Our Sierra showed up very well dressed, in rich Onyx Black paint and Jet Black Denali leather interior. Despite its utilitarian features—towhooks, underbody shields, heavy-duty rear bumper and industrial grade 4-wheel drive—there's something so handsome about this truck, it seems like a natural



around town, at the office or at the country club. So we took it out for a bigger challenge.

We headed into the hills, to a Jeep road we know. Calling it a road is being charitable, especially when in a 19.95-foot-long, 80.5-inch-wide, six-and-a-half-foot-tall package like this. But the truck fit—and felt—like a glove. We pushed it pretty far, as the road became narrower, steeper and rougher, with no complaints from the truck and none from us. It earns itself a utility grade A, in all meanings of the word. And we had no trouble backing its mass back down quite a distance.

We had three criticisms during our week. The entry steps, handy for someone very short, will just trip up a tall guy, but can be deleted. It was pointless to have keyless

entry but still need to dig out the key to start the truck. And we had to pay too much attention to a jittery shifter when aiming for Drive.

We did love the combination of analog and variable electronic gauges in the binnacle.

And we loved the driving experience. It proved itself on cliff-hanging trails. And as large as it clearly is, it always felt easily manageable on freeways and surface street cornering—powerful, smooth and accurate. A full four-door crew cab and 51.5-foot turning circle? It didn't feel like it.

Settle into the luxurious Denali interior, get your hands on the controls, and you will likely do as we repeatedly did—get close to home, pause, turn up the radio and decide to drive around a bit more. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE6.6L Duramax V8 Turbo Diesel
 TRANSMISSIONAllison 6-speed automatic
 DRIVETRAIN4WD w electronic transfer case
Auto locking RR differential / 4.10 rear axle
 HORSEPOWER397 hp @ 3000 rpm
 TORQUE765 lb-ft @ 1600 rpm
 TOWING CAPACITYBall hitch: 13,000 lb
5th wheel: 17,100 lb
 MAX PAYLOAD / GVWR2,793 lb / 10,000 lb
 BRAKES4-whl ABS, 4-whl disc, DuraLife rotors
 MPG / FUEL CAPACITY(na) / 36 gallons
 INCLUDED: Stability control, trailer sway, hill start, OnStar and WiFi w/trial, EZ lift/lower tailgate, 20" chrome wheels, fog lamps, front hooks, front/rear body-color bumpers, movable tie-downs, LED box lighting, chrome tubular steps, spray-in bedliner, fully boxed steel frame, front leather bucket seats, heated/cooled front seats, memory driver seat, 60/40 fold rear seat, remote start, anti-theft, power slide rear window, dual zone climate, power adjustable pedals, customizable displays, heated wheel, rear camera, park assist, Bos audio, Bluetooth and USB and more.

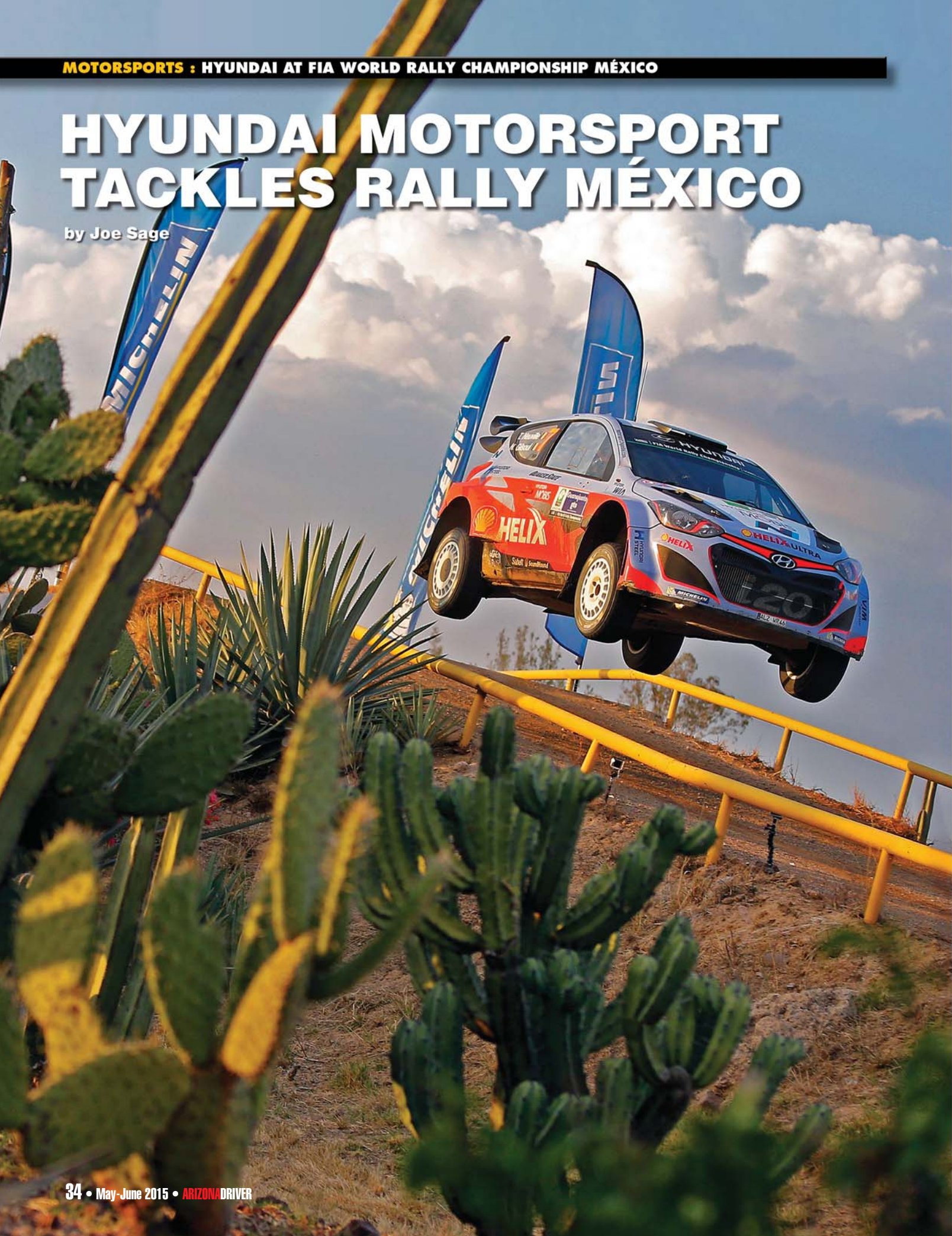
STANDARD PRICE (6.0L VORTEC V8)\$54,890
 DURAMAX PLUS PACKAGE: 6.6L V8 turbo diesel, Allison 6-spd trans, lane departure warning, forward collision alert, safety alert seat8,845
 OFF-ROAD SUSPENSION PACKAGE: Hill descent control, twin tube rancho shocks255
 CHROME TRAILERING MIRRORS w pwr glass, pwr fold/manual extend, heat, turn signals, LED guidance lamps, amber lights, memory upper glass230
 ROOF MARKER LAMPS55
 CAMPER/5TH WHEEL TRAILER WIRING PROVISION35
 CARPETED FLOOR MATS125
 DESTINATION CHARGE:1095
 TOTAL\$66,400
 (DURAMAX PLUS PACKAGE DISCOUNT):(1500)
 TOTAL AFTER DURAMAX DISCOUNT\$64,900

The Denali's design details—a great combination of handsome, elegant and rugged—announce a vehicle with an enhanced cooling airflow system, better conditioned for heavy loads and higher ambient temperatures. Auto grade braking works with integrated cruise control and—with this diesel powertrain—exhaust braking, all for better tough tow duty.



HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT TACKLES RALLY MÉXICO

by Joe Sage



Established at the end of 2012, Hyundai Motorsport spent 2013 prepping for its FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) program, which debuted with the 2014 season. They have 120 team members from 23 countries working at an 88,000-square-foot headquarters in Alzenau, near Frankfurt, Germany. Hyundai teams grabbed 193 Drivers' Championship points in 2014, with the Hyundai Shell World Rally Team and Hyundai Motorsport N operations pooling 215 points in the Manufacturers' Championship.

Hyundai is now in its second season of WRC, which opened in Monte Carlo in January and was now headed to Mexico for its third round, from Thursday March 5 to Sunday March 8.

The Hyundai i20 WRC

The crews race brand new Hyundai i20 WRC rally cars, built from Hyundai's global i20 model—a supermini hatchback that slots in one size down from the global i30, familiar to us domestically as the hot-selling Hyundai Elantra. (The i30, i20 and a tiny i10 are sold in most of the rest of the world, including in Mexico.)

The Hyundai i20 WRC car has a turbocharged direct injection 1600cc four-cylinder engine, fitted with a mandatory 33mm air restrictor, with an output of 300 bhp at 6000 rpm and 295 lb-ft of torque at 5000 rpm. This feeds through a six-speed sequential gearbox to four-wheel drive with mechanical front and rear differentials, controlled by hydraulic power-assisted rack and pinion steering.

Brembo ventilated disc brakes (355mm for asphalt, 300mm for gravel) have air-cooled four-piston calipers, augmented by a hydraulic handbrake. A reinforced steel and composite fiber body with welded multi-point roll cage sits atop MacPherson struts with adjustable dampers front and rear.

For Rally Mexico, team partner Michelin supplied LTX Force H4 and S4 tires. (The H4 hard compound is for abrasive, hard-wearing dry surfaces and temperatures above 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The S4 is softer, for use on wet or damp gravel and in cooler temperatures.)

Lubricant is Shell Helix-Ultra, and fuel is FIA-approved Carless, with 80 liters (21 gallons) on board. Driver and codriver settle into Sabelt seats with multiple fixing points and adjustable straps, working a Magneti Marelli SRG Engine Control Unit and instrument panel. The car weighs in at 2646 pounds, or 2998 with driver and codriver.

The drivers and course

The WRC course in Mexico is rough, tough, challenging and often clever. In Hyundai's maiden 2014 season, a large bottle of Corona beer was used to top off a holed radiator, enabling driver Thierry Neuville of Belgium to claim Hyundai's first WRC

(At left) Belgian driver Thierry Neuville and co-driver Nicolas Gilsoul grab some air on Saturday in their #7 Hyundai i20 WRC rally car.

(At right) Meet Hyundai Motorsport's competition teams: Dani Sordo and Marc Martí of Spain in the #8 car; Thierry Neuville and Nicolas Gilsoul of Belgium in the #7 car; and Hayden Paddon and John Kennard of New Zealand in the #20 car.

podium in Mexico—its first gravel event ever. (Hyundai also made the podium in Poland last year, while Neuville and driver Dani Sordo of Spain had a memorable 1-2 finish in Germany—their first WRC victory, achieved in their first year.)

Neuville and fellow Belgian codriver Nicolas Gilsoul placed number two in Sweden, the second rally this year. We tuned in as they traveled again to nearby Mexico, to compete in the third rally of the season—based in León, in Guanajuato state, roughly 100 miles east-northeast of Guadalajara.

High temperatures and high altitudes are important elements of Rally Mexico, where the route peaks with a season-high climb to 8980 feet above sea level, where engines can lose 20 percent power in the thin air. Temperatures can approach 90 degrees F, putting stress on engines and transmissions, not to mention drivers and codrivers. There are rocky gravel roads throughout, but also a few short stages on asphalt, which the drivers have to tackle with the vehicle still on gravel settings.

Rally Mexico was kicking off a six-event run of gravel rallies in the WRC and was the first hot gravel round since Rally Australia last September.

The start and opening stage were in Guanajuato, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with the first stage running through the city's old mining tunnels, an underground format unique in WRC. Much of the rally was in familiar mountain terrain of the Sierra de Lobos and Sierra de Guanajuato.

New this year were three visits to the Autodromo de León race track—with two laps of the 2.3km circuit closing out action on Thursday, Friday and Saturday—and two new 1.37km street stages in León city center on Friday and Saturday. Even with these changes and this much variety in the route, Rally Mexico is one of the most compact in the WRC, with about 40 percent of its 1000.59km (621.74 miles) run against the clock.

Sordo and fellow Spaniard codriver Marc Martí rejoined the team for Mexico, after Sordo missed Sweden due to an injury. Hayden Paddon of New Zealand had replaced Sordo in that round, claiming a career-best fifth. He and fellow Kiwi codriver John Kennard would be running in Mexico for the first time. With Neuville and Gilsoul also in Mexico, Hyundai fielded three competing teams.

Hyundai also maintains a test crew comprising



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Spanish driver Dani Sordo and codriver Marc Martí burn through the Sierra de Lobos and Sierra de Guanajuato in their #8 Hyundai i20 WRC car at elevations reaching 8980 feet during Friday's stages.

Kevin Abbring of the Netherlands and Sebastian Marshall of Great Britain.

FRIDAY

On the first full day of Rally Mexico 2015, Neuville won two stages (SS1 & SS5) and put up a strong fight for the overall rally lead throughout Friday, till a puncture led to a roll in the afternoon. The team would have to check damage to see whether Neuville might continue on Saturday under Rally 2 regulations—rejoining with a five-minute penalty.

Paddon, running in Mexico for the first time, had his first full day cut short early after hitting a rock in the second stage. He, too, would have to rejoin under Rally 2 regulations on Saturday.

But by the end of the day's eight stages, Sordo—feeling good after returning from his time on the injured list—was the top-placed Hyundai driver, in sixth place, heading into Saturday.

The Hyundai team was optimistic that their high-altitude adjustments were working well.

CLASSIFICATION AFTER DAY ONE

6. D.Sordo / M.Martí	+1:40.5
19. T.Neuville / N.Gilsoul.....	+21:04.3
27. H.Paddon / J.Kennard.....	+49:05.6

SATURDAY

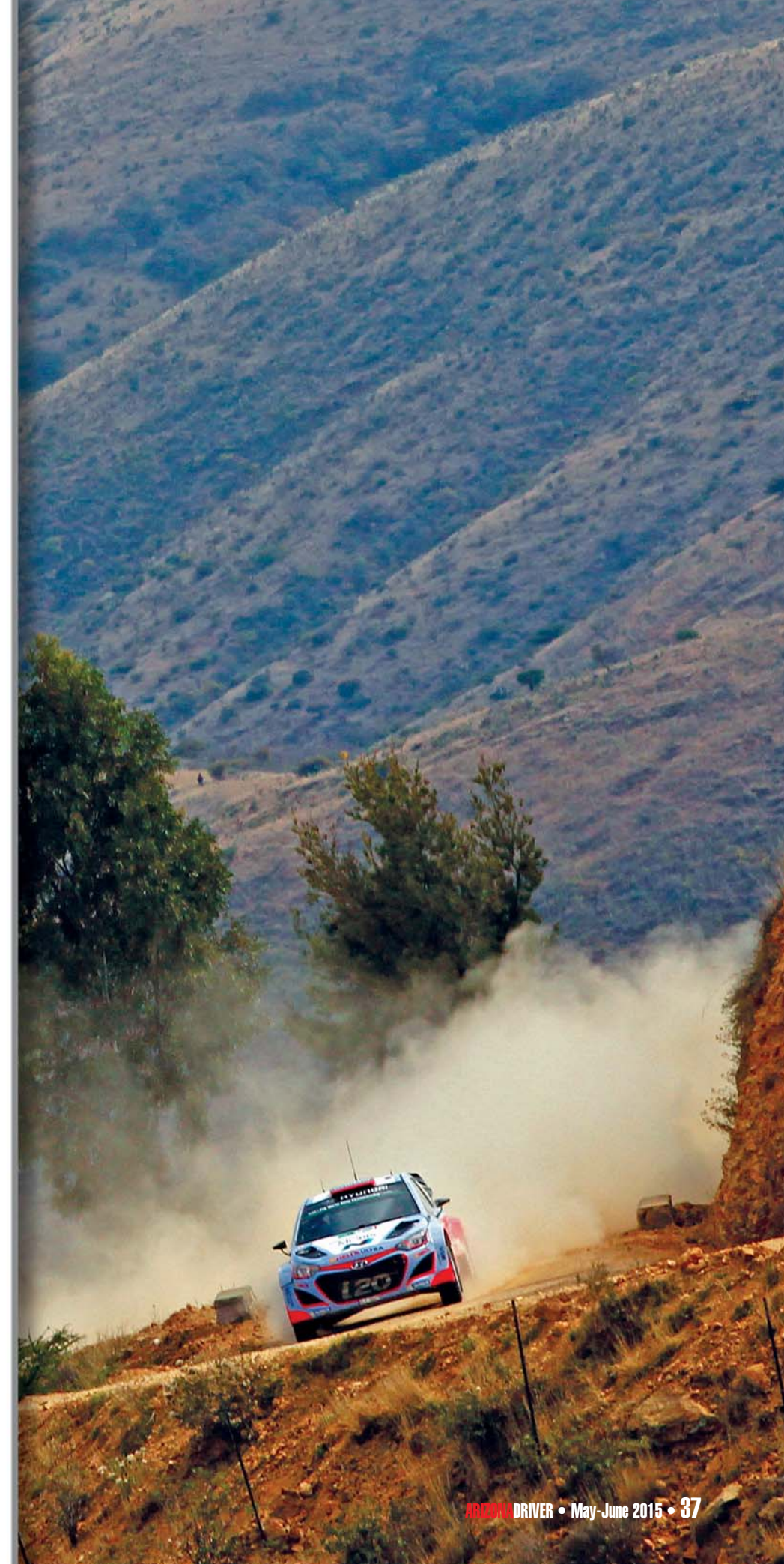
The Hyundai team had worked hard to ensure both Neuville and Paddon could rejoin Sordo for Saturday's stages, fixing both cars in the required time to allow all three Hyundai i20 WRCs to start.

Sordo ran top-four times in all four stages Saturday morning, including a stage win in the 11.07km El Brinco stage. A gearbox problem was addressed with a swap at lunchtime, but a front-left puncture in SS15 impacted his run in the final stages. "I had one spare soft tire with me, but to cover almost 60km," Sordo explained, "so I adopted a cautious approach." Nonetheless, Sordo finished Day Two in 5th place.

Neuville put Friday's disappointment behind him with a series of strong performances. He pushed hard to reclaim lost time and positions on this next-to-last day, showcasing his abilities with Mexico's unforgiving stages and highlighting the performance potential of the car.

Paddon's Rally 2 status put him first on the road for Saturday's eight stages, a disadvantage on dry gravel that was still at its loosest. He also experienced a loss of power during high afternoon temperatures. Still, he made it to the end of Saturday with no disabling issues and would seek to finish

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(Top to bottom) Earth, wind, fire and water: the team ran hot and heavy in the desert sun, catching air, kicking up dirt and blasting through creeks. An army of team mechanics was at the ready when miracles were needed and needed now. The event included stages in mining tunnels below the streets of Guanajuato and through the streets of León. Driver Thierry Neuville of Belgium greets the fans.



his first Rally Mexico on a high note the next day.

Team Principal Michel Nandan, the man responsible for building both the team and German facilities from scratch, said, "This is very typical of Rally Mexico, which can often be a rollercoaster of emotion. Dani started the day strongly by setting some impressive stage times, including a stage win in SS13. This allowed him to reduce the gap to fourth place. We had to change his gearbox over lunchtime service, but then he hit trouble in SS15 when he had a front left puncture which lost a lot of time. Carrying just one spare tire, he had to take a steady approach to the final stages. We take comfort from the fact he is still in the top five, but it's been a mixed day overall."

CLASSIFICATION AFTER DAY TWO

- 5. D.Sordo / M.Martí+4:10.6
- 11. T.Neuville / N.Gilsoul.....+22:23.8
- 20. H.Paddon / J.Kennard.....+53:18.3

SUNDAY

The final day included three stages—the monster 55.82km Guanajuatito stage, which could prove decisive, the 10.54km Derramadero stage, and the El Brinco 3 finale, where Power Stage points would be up for grabs.

Sordo held on for his 5th place finish, even as pain from his injury returned during Sunday's stages, with his best result of the season to date.

One of the fastest on opening day with two stage wins before his roll, Neuville fought back effectively from his Rally 2 Saturday, claiming 8th place in the rally overall. In fact, he put in a particularly strong performance in the longest stage, Sunday's monster Guanajuatito stage; took a stage win in the SS20 Derramadero; and finished third in the final El Brinco 3 stage, for an important Power Stage point.

Paddon carried the burden of Friday's setbacks and an up-front restart on Saturday under Rally 2. But he gained much knowledge of the car's handling on gravel, while staying among the top 10 in points for the season to date.

FINAL CLASSIFICATION (PRECERTIFICATION)

- 5. D.Sordo / M.Martí+5:01.8
- 8. T.Neuville / N.Gilsoul.....+22:43.3
- 17. H.Paddon / J.Kennard.....+54:20.5

Conquering every challenge along the way, all three Hyundai i20 WRC rally cars finished the

grueling 21-stage event. The team also scored valuable Manufacturer points.

Sébastien Ogier of France swept the first three rallies this year, driving a Volkswagen Polo R WRC.

With four stage wins and a Power Stage point, Hyundai Motorsport continued to hold second place in the Manufacturers' Championship as they headed to the next event in Rally Argentina, again on gravel, determined to keep up the pace with the front-runners.

2015 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
DRIVERS' STANDINGS AFTER RALLY MEXICO

- 1: S.Ogier (VW Polo R WRC)81 points
- 2: A.Mikkelsen (VW).....47 points
- 3: T.Neuville (Hyundai i20 WRC)35 points
- 7: D.Sordo (Hyundai).....18 points
- 10: H.Paddon (Hyundai)10 points

Following Argentina, the balance of the year is a series of mostly European rallies, other than Australia in September. The season finale takes place in Wales, in November. Hyundai Motorsport's key objectives are to keep developing their crew, which was built from scratch, while honing development of the new generation i20 WRC. We'll follow the team with interest, especially looking forward to next year's stop in Mexico. ■



TRANSFORMATIVE BY JOE SAGE

This car looks comfortingly familiar, yet under its skin it's quite new and exciting. You know the Kia Soul by heart—it's a runaway success, selling by the boatload since it arrived in 2009, while transforming American perceptions of the whole Kia brand. But much as a familiar body shell can conceal thunderous magic on a specialized race car, Kia has taken the body and cabin of the Soul and built something completely new within—their first electric vehicle. It's a neat move on Kia's part, using an outer layer of the familiar to make it a whole lot easier to dip a toe into unfamiliar waters. Though almost imperceptibly transformed, the result is transformative.

The Soul EV is not yet sold in Arizona. The car was first put on sale in California, at particular certified dealers with special training and specific service equipment. But no sooner had we driven this sample in Arizona, than they announced Soul EV sales expanding to Oregon, Washington, Texas, Georgia and Hawaii—states already demonstrating strong EV interest. Bearing in mind

Arizona and California were the only two states receiving GM's EV1 20 years ago, we hope to see our state added to the sales map any time now.

The vehicle needs no special care and feeding, which made it no problem for us to have one early. A simple one-touch panel up front slides open to reveal two standard charging ports. One is a common J1772 port; with this, a supplied cable connects to regular 120v or 240v household current (Level 1 and Level 2 charging, respectively), charging the car completely in 4-5 hours with 240v or 24 hours with 120v. The other is a 480v CHAdeMo DC fast-charging port, which works with a special 50 kW fast charger to do the job in just 33 minutes.

We plugged in overnight twice during our week, never because we had to—once with range still at about a third, once at about half. But it's an utterly simple plug-unplug process akin to the routine way you might top off your phone while at your desk.

We calculated costs, using kilowatt-hours, different voltage options, amps, Phoenix electricity rates and Kia's stated recharging times. At resi-

dential rates, a full 93-mile charge costs about \$4. Commercial rates are lower, so a full charge at work is about \$3.50 or less. If you work at a site with industrial rates, we calculate \$2.55 with 240v. A 28 MPG car at \$3/gallon costs \$10 for the same 93 miles. If you can grab some free juice at work or other stops, you save even more.

Markets, malls and movies are all starting to sprout free charging stations. Or you can hit a 110v commercial spot at 4¢/minute. That adds up to \$5 for 20 miles' worth, on a par with \$5/gallon gas in a 20 MPG vehicle, but higher than today's \$3 gas prices and 30-40 MPG cars. Nonetheless, these are a great convenience in a pinch.

We didn't have any pinches. Another impressive thing about the Kia Soul EV: its estimated range meter hit precisely on the nose for us. Its advanced lithium ion polymer battery holds its charge for a long time, and very consistently. Whether draining or refilling, the readout was dead accurate. Forget range anxiety. The math is simple, and the systems may help you more than any gas gauge ever did.

We've had good drive experiences with EVs in general. Between silence and power—electric vehicles have 100 percent of their torque from the

moment you touch the pedal—it takes no time to start thinking you must have the coolest thing on the road. The chassis is well balanced, and suspension felt strong and smooth, even on speed bumps.

A "B" mode involves regenerative brake power to a greater degree, to extend range a bit, but we were enjoying the car's power, smooth acceleration and cornering too much to want to try that.

But we finally did. We could feel a drag, which is to be expected and is why it's an optional mode. In the right mindset, though, we could feel like a surfer harnessing the power of a wave and just riding along with increased efficiency.

The Kia Soul EV blends with the crowd, though with its special badging, body panel grille area, and two-tone paint schemes unique to the model—Caribbean Blue with a white roof, like ours here, or black with a red roof—the cognoscenti will spot you. Soul EV is also available in grey or white.

Every detail is optimized for EV efficiency. Aerodynamics are applied in places large and small. Aero wheels cap off tires that are developed exclusively for Kia and found on no other vehicle, with low rolling resistance and other range-extending attributes over variable conditions.

The car has an appropriate mix of manual and power features, all of which makes sense—some conserving power, some utilizing all the electricity

at hand. The rear liftgate is manual—hugely welcome after battling any number of power and pneumatic versions. Seat and steering wheel adjustments are manual—things you access seldom, so why waste the juice? Yet those same seats are heated—in our Plus trim also ventilated and the rear seats also heated. AC works just fine. (We haven't run it on a 120-degree day yet; but it's an electronic system tested in the hottest conditions.)

The interior is a gem. Kia has not gone overboard with controls, interfaces and readouts, as many alternative drivetrain vehicles do. We appreciated its simple interface and controls—a simple meter and some easy gauge information to see your range, no more distracting than a gas gauge.

Our sample was the higher of two trims, the Plus ("+")—two grand well spent (see sidebar). Options are few. The purchase process is painless.

Everybody loves the Kia Soul—a great package with economical purchase and operating costs, nice command of the road, clean and effective controls, plenty of room for people and gear, styling that is cutting edge yet comfortable. Kia nailed all this from the get-go. Add to this all the economies and general future-preparedness of an EV, and you have a vehicle that anybody who is remotely thinking of shopping for should try on for size as soon as it's available to us here, if not sooner. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

MOTOR.....	109hp (81.4kW) AC synchr. elec
TRANSMISSION.....	1-speed gear reduction
BATTERY.....	27kWh lithium ion polymer
TORQUE.....	210 lb-ft
DRIVETRAIN.....	FWD
WHEELS/TIRES.....	16" alloy, 6.5Jx16
TURNING CIRCLE.....	34.8 ft
WEIGHT.....	3289 lb
MAXIMUM SPEED.....	90 mph
RANGE (EPA EST).....	93 miles
MPGe.....	120 hwy / 92 city / 105 comb
INCLUDED:	Electronically powered AC and heat-pump HVAC, 3.5" OLED cluster, nav w/ 8" display, UVO EV services, SiriusXM, USB/aux/Bluetooth, EV charging station locator, energy usage monitor, 2-level heated front seats, 60/40 split rear seat, keyless start, tilt/tele wheel, rear camera, ABS, brake assist, stability control, stability management, park assist
PLUS ("+") MODEL ADDS:	Aero wipers, projection foglights, power fold mirrors, electrochromatic rear mirror, luggage net, cargo screen, 12V cargo outlet, leather seat trim, leatherette cluster and door trim, 3-level heated front seats, vented front seats, heated outboard rear seats, passenger side tray. (Price diff \$2,000.)
WARRANTY:	
Powertrain.....	10 yrs / 100,000 miles
Battery.....	10 yrs / 100,000 miles
Basic warranty.....	5 yrs / 60,000 miles
Roadside assistance.....	5 yrs / 60,000 miles

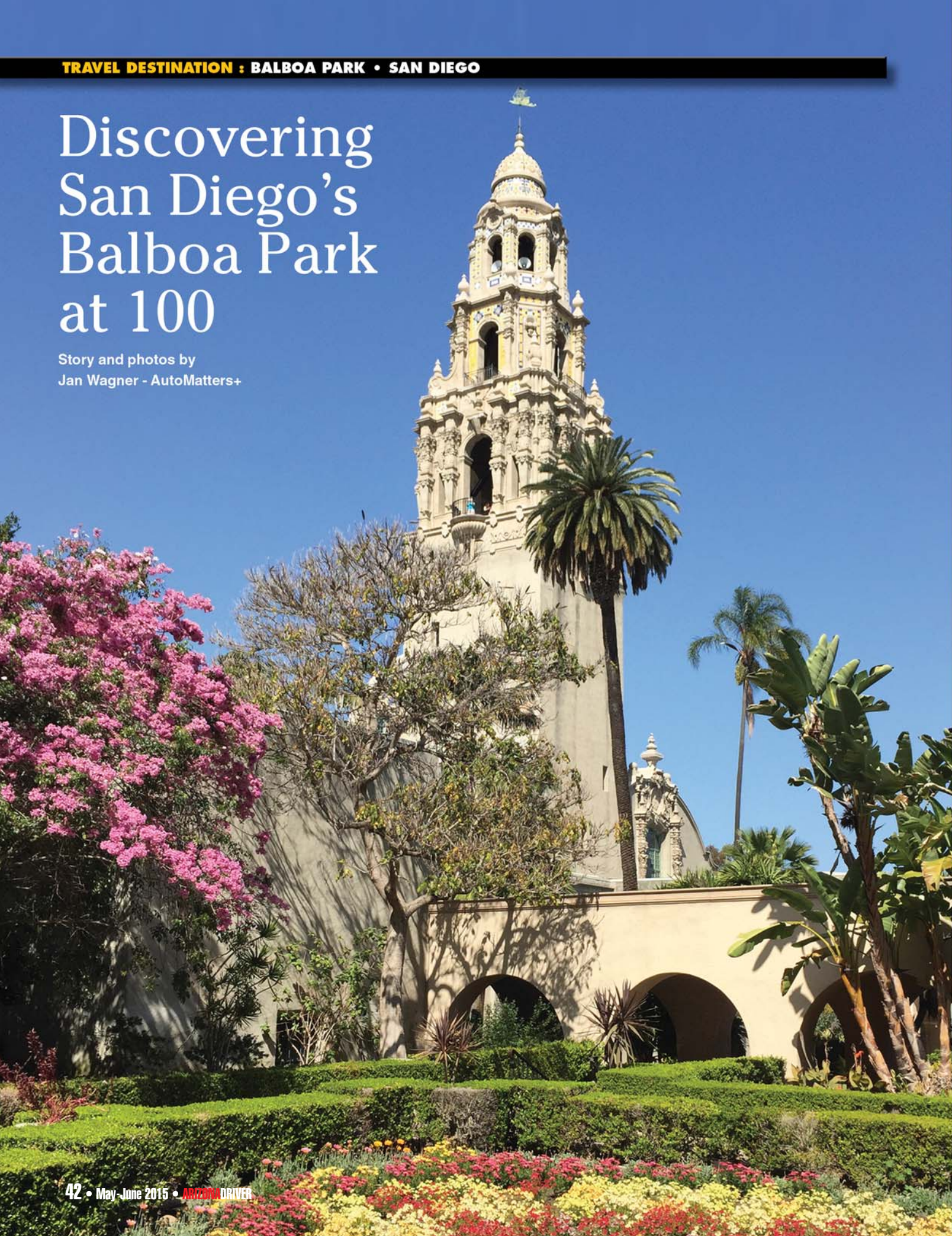
BASE PRICE ("+" model).....	\$35,700
CARPETED FLOORMATS.....	125
DESTINATION CHARGE.....	800
TOTAL.....	\$36,625

Features that distinguish the Soul EV from its gasoline sibling are simple, refined, complete, unobtrusive, attractive and well executed. As for gas pumps, no need to ever go there again—maybe for soda and chips.



Discovering San Diego's Balboa Park at 100

Story and photos by
Jan Wagner - AutoMatters+



Celebrating 100 years in 2015, Balboa Park is located just minutes from downtown San Diego. Within the park are 15 major museums, the renowned Old Globe theater, 1,200 acres of beautiful gardens, shopping, dining and the World Famous San Diego Zoo.

Balboa Park's 100th Celebration

The Panama California Exposition was held in San Diego from 1915-16 to commemorate the opening of the Panama Canal and to promote San Diego as both a port—"the first United States Port of Call in the Pacific"—and as a truly beautiful city.

That World's Fair and the California Pacific International Exposition, which followed in 1935, are responsible for much of the legacy of beauty and architecture found in today's Balboa Park. "Most of the arts organizations along Balboa Park's famous El Prado pedestrian walkway are housed in Spanish-Renaissance style buildings constructed for the 1915 Exposition," according to the Park's site, balboapark.org.

Balboa Park's 100-year anniversary celebration is already well underway.

STEAM Family Day

STEAM (for Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) Family Day, in mid-March, was 2015's first major family-oriented event in the park. Presented by the Balboa Park Conservancy, it featured hands-on activities, crafts, demonstrations, special exhibitions and more.

Family Day activities included group butterfly releases from the Zoro Garden; puppet-making near the cherry blossoms in the Japanese Friendship Garden; live music, dance and sports demonstrations amid the "House of Pacific Relations" international cottages; a massive paper airplane build and launch, plus quadcopter aerial photography demonstrations at the San Diego Air & Space Museum; a giant, interactive, robotic giraffe in front of the Reuben H. Fleet Science Center; a fun and interactive Maker exhibit, courtesy of the San Diego History Center; a solar-powered train from the San Diego Model Railroad Museum; booths on the El Prado

(Left page) California Tower, open to the public for the first time since 1935. • (Right, top to bottom) 1915 Exposition Guide Book, at the San Diego Automotive Museum. • Butterfly release during STEAM Family Day. • STEAM Family Day, held in March.

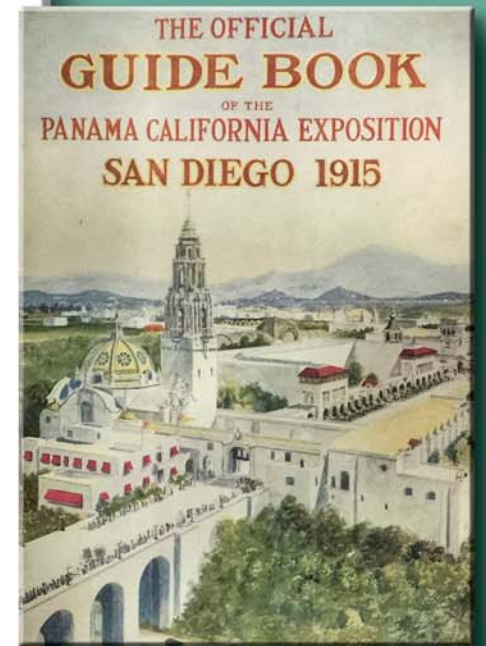
walkway; a Spreckels Organ Society concert featuring music for kids; hands-on art activities in the Spanish Village Art Center; and much more.

Garden Party of the Century

On Saturday, May 9, Balboa Park's "Garden Party of the Century" highlights one of the world's most interesting civic gardens. Enjoy flowers galore, master gardener demonstrations, floral artisans, the Marine Corps Commemorative Plant Exchange and Cabrillo Bridge March, a flower-filled Crofton Bug (a miniature Jeep-looking, early '60s-vintage vehicle from the San Diego Automotive Museum) and more. Entertainment will include organ pavilion concerts and the Youth Orchestra of the Californias.

Climb the California Tower

For the first time since it was closed to the public in 1935, you can take a guided tour up the California Tower at the San Diego Museum of Man. Climb the steep, shallow stairs of the metal spiral staircase to the public observation level and you will be rewarded with a bird's-eye view of Balboa Park and a panoramic, 360-degree view of San Diego. Keep a sharp lookout and you might spot a red-tailed hawk. Down below, on the roof of Balboa Park's



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(Top to bottom) Bea Evenson Fountain on El Prado.
• "War Years" at the San Diego Automotive Museum.
• Trumpet flower blossoms at the Japanese Friendship Garden. • The Balboa Park Botanical Building.

internationally acclaimed Old Globe theater, you'll see where they 'hide' The Grinch in-between Christmas seasons.

The tower's carillon, originally installed in 1946, was upgraded to 100 chimes in the 60s. It plays pre-recorded, seasonal songs each day at noon.

Automotive Museum war exhibit

On exhibit at the San Diego Automotive Museum through June 26 is "Balboa Park, the War Years." Using informative panels and a collection of vintage military vehicles, uniforms and other historical memorabilia, it chronicles important contributions made to the war effort by the San Diego region during World War II.

IMAX "Journey to Space"

The California Premiere of "Journey to Space" gives us an exciting look at the past, present and future of manned space exploration. Used to full advantage is the Reuben H. Fleet Science Center's giant IMAX dome screen, with state-of-the-art digital technology that incorporates four Sony 4K resolution cinema-grade projectors and a 16,000-watt digital surround sound system. Together these convey a powerful sense of a space shuttle launch.

We learned that following the successful unmanned test flight of the Orion spacecraft, work is well underway to develop and refine the technology that will be required to send manned missions on the long, 34-million mile journey to Mars—and back again—in the not-too-distant future. San Diego may well play a role in that. (Another project in the works envisions taking settlers taking a one-way trip to Mars, where they will establish a permanent settlement on this new world. For more information, see the Mars One project at mars-one.com.)

For more information on park history, visit balboapark.org/info/history, and for more about centennial celebration festivities, visit celebratebalboapark.org. ■

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Award-winning JAN WAGNER has been writing professionally since 1979 and an avid photographer for as long as he could hold a camera. He was a television writer/producer in his native Alberta, before transferring to his current home in San Diego.



Pushing the envelope by Joe Sage

Ford offers a remarkably complete and complex range of utilities and crossovers. They clearly have identified demand for them all, can plan and build them all, and they can sell them all. As always, your decision among them will start with a combination of tangibles—purpose, price, features, comfort, operating costs—as well as your own particular intangibles.

Try to recall distant 2006, when the Ford Edge was introduced. It was an unusual vehicle with a new combination of attributes. It wasn't a car, although it appealed to people who liked a car with more height and more volume. It wasn't an SUV, although it

appealed to people who liked SUVs but were not intending any serious off-roading. It wasn't a minivan, although it appealed to people who liked that utility but preferred regular front-hinged doors. You could have called it a crossover, except that term had already settled in as meaning a smaller SUV with a car-based unibody chassis.

What it was was a new kind of vehicle with a high degree of useful comfort in a strong and attractive package. Ford Edge has always offered its own intangible: a segment that defines itself, perhaps without label.

NEW FOR 2015. The 2015 Ford Edge looks like a simple evolution, which is a good thing, given its strong brand equity. But just about everything is new. The all-new Edge is based on Ford's new global midsize platform. This total reinvention required all new sheetmetal, and here exterior design manager Kevin George spotted an opportunity, along with a challenge. The vehicle has such strong

heritage, they would not want to lose that. "Just because you can change everything," George says, "you don't have to." So they anchored the new Edge on key reference points from the prior model, but "futed it up," as he coins a phrase.

The 2015 Ford Edge doesn't just push the envelope—it's packaged in an entirely new envelope.

INSIDE, OUT AND UP. The largely familiar appearance of the new Edge successfully crosses a threshold, intended to nudge the vehicle from simply nice utility to premium utility.

Customer demographics for the Edge are headed upscale, while also indicating a faster-paced and more nimble lifestyle—touchstones that were applied to a faster and more nimble Edge.

The prior slab sides have been "carved out"—a step that saw 60 pounds of clay removed during that design phase. The team set out to make the Edge "look fast when parked." More sculpting of the hood helps with that, while its Edge-trade-mark clamshell shape remains. Down-road graph-

ics (DRG) were strengthened and brand-updated, with a grille that echoes Taurus, and aggressive headlights anchored to that. It also lightly echoes the three-bar grille that had been an Edge identifier throughout the first generation—lasting longer than it had in other parts of the Ford lineup.

The rear is styled to look "technical, functional and sculptural." Encapsulated rear lights with a high-contrast "3D" light bar, boldly framed in black, runs the full width. All rear lights are LED.

Externally, the new Edge is about four inches longer, though its wheelbase is only an inch longer, creating a nose that accommodates European pedestrian safety laws. Width is about the same, but height is up by an inch and a half. Put it all together, and the interior grows by five and a half cubic feet—visualize four suitcases you might otherwise have had to leave behind.

Interior volume has been increased not only through new bodyside dimensions. Interior design manager Hak Soo Ha has created a new cabin he describes as more modern, expressive, sporty and dynamic. Practicality is in play here, too, for example by gaining considerable interior space through the stylish deep-dishing of door panels. Side by side with the old generation, you might think 20 years separated them (or twenty thousand dollars). Rear legroom benefits from increased wheelbase



and from sculpting of front seatbacks. Surfaces are luxurious soft-touch, and previously painted trim parts now have premium plated finishes. No body color shows inside, avoiding a cheap feeling we've seen even in some models from pricier brands.

The previous top Limited model is replaced by a Titanium model. SE, SEL and Titanium models share drivetrain basics, working up the trim levels to add style and features as you would expect.



2015 FORD EDGE SPECIFICATIONS

EDGE SE, SEL, TITANIUM
 ENGINE2.0L EcoBoost 4-cylinder
 HORSEPOWER/TORQUE245 hp / 275 lb-ft
 ENGINE PLANTCleveland (Brook Park OH)
 FUEL DELIVERYDirect injection
 DRIVETRAINFWD or AWD
 TOW CAPACITY(w/package) 3500 lb
 MPG(FWD) 20 hwy / 30 city / 24 comb
(AWD) 20 hwy / 28 city / 23 comb

OPTIONAL V6 (SE, SEL, TITANIUM)
 ENGINE3.5L Ti-VCT V6
 HORSEPOWER/TORQUE280 hp / 250 lb-ft
 ENGINE PLANTLima OH
 FUEL DELIVERY ..Sequential multiport injection
 FUEL NOTE:Flex Fuel capable
 DRIVETRAINFWD or AWD
 TOW CAPACITY(w/package) 3500 lb
 MPG(FWD) 18 hwy / 26 city / 21 comb
(AWD) 17 hwy / 25 city / 20 comb

EDGE SPORT
 ENGINE2.7L twin-turbo EcoBoost V6
 HORSEPOWER/TORQUE315 hp / 350 lb-ft
 ENGINE PLANTLima OH
 FUEL DELIVERYDirect injection
 DRIVETRAINFWD or AWD
 TOW CAPACITY[n/a on Sport model]
 MPG(FWD) 18 hwy / 27 city / 21 comb
(AWD) 17 hwy / 24 city / 20 comb

TRANSMISSION6-spd SelecShift auto
SUSPENSION: FRONT: MacPherson strut and L-shaped lower control arm with isolated subframe and stabilizer bar.
REAR: integral-link independent, with coil springs and antiroll bar.
BRAKES: Power-assisted four-wheel discs, 4-channel ABS, 13.6" front, 12.4" rear; AdvanceTrac w Roll Stability Control
SEATING CAPACITYfive
WHEELBASE112.2 in
LENGTH188.1 in
CARGO VOLUME.....behind 2nd row: 39.2 cu.ft.
behind 1st row: 73.4 cu.ft.
FINAL ASSEMBLYOakville, Ontario
TURNING CIRCLE34.8 ft
WEIGHTFWD 3912 lb / AWD 4078 lb

BASE PRICE: SE\$28,495
BASE PRICE: SEL\$31,895
BASE PRICE: TITANIUM\$35,595
BASE PRICE: SPORT\$38,495
DESTINATION CHARGE:.....895

2015 Ford Edge Titanium 2.0L EcoBoost AWD



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(Above) 2015 Ford Edge Titanium AWD. • Hands-on demonstration of enhanced active park assist's perpendicular parking. • (Below) 2015 Ford Edge Sport AWD.

In a parallel niche, an Edge Sport model comes in about \$2500 higher than Titanium, a premium for its larger engine, plus Sport signatures such as 20-inch polished/painted-pocket wheels, distinctive piano black grille and integrated exhaust.

Use of new materials—stronger yet lighter in weight—has dropped vehicle weight significantly, from a range of 3999 to 4458 pounds in the prior model, to just 3912-4078 in the new one.

NEW POWERTRAINS. For the first time, Ford Edge comes standard with EcoBoost turbo power on all models. Now standard on most models is a 2.0-liter EcoBoost 4, nominally what they offered as an option before, but all new—a Cleveland-built twin-scroll turbo with bumps in horsepower and torque, now powerful enough to have all-wheel drive and to tow 3500 pounds, like the old V6—thus also bringing AWD to the entire Edge lineup. The venerable 3.5L V6 is an option here, partly because it's flex fuel capable and, as a global model, popular in sugar-cane-rich Brazil.

The Sport model's prior normally-aspirated 3.7-liter V6 is replaced by a 2.7L EcoBoost turbo, upping horsepower from 305 to 313, and torque by 70 lb-ft, from 280 to 350. The Sport model, however, has dropped towing from its résumé.

TECH. Technological advancements on the Edge include the science behind the new body, chassis, interior and powertrains. Then there are safety, infotainment and, well, driving features.

Ford's customer research indicates technology can make or break a buying decision, with 84 percent of customers prioritizing safety features over infotainment, their favorites being backup cameras and blind spot detection. Fifty-six percent of shoppers would abandon one brand and move to another for its technology. It's no wonder all manufacturers load up on this lately.

Edge offers familiar adaptive cruise, lane control, auto-brake and other technologies. Add to this one proud new feature: enhanced active park assist. This can do your parallel parking for you—as in some models already—but now offers semi-automated perpendicular parking. We tried this trick in a controlled demonstration in downtown Scottsdale. It's a combination of automation and wakeup calls. It steers the vehicle into place a bit, but warns you when to hit the brakes... and pull forward a little... automatically back up some more... hit the brakes when warned again... until you are ultimately in place. Neat gadgetry, but we urge anyone to just learn to park.

One welcome innovation when it comes to

pulling out of perpendicular parking is a washer on the 180-degree front camera—an A-plus for thinking to add this. Another is acoustic windshield glass in every model (plus acoustic side glass in the Titanium model). Other technologies include remote start, and active grille shutters to enhance aerodynamics.

ON THE ROAD. Ford Edge Sport has stiffer suspension accompanying its bigger EcoBoost engine. (The six-speed SelectShift transmission offers Drive and Sport modes on all models.) For our drive, a long cruise out the Beeline Highway, Bush Highway and beyond, we took the Titanium AWD in one direction and the Sport in the other. Although we normally might gravitate straight toward any Sport model, we think most drivers will be happy with the engine and suspension in the rest of the lineup. With the premium-outfitted Titanium costing less than Sport, perhaps even happier.

Production is now in full swing, and the new Edge will be appearing in dealerships and on our freeways, roads and weekend highways probably as quickly as you read this. It will be sold in 100 countries worldwide, as the rollout continues, including Western Europe for the first time. ■

2015 Ford Edge Sport 2.7L EcoBoost AWD





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VEHICLE IMPRESSION : 2015 HYUNDAI SONATA SPORT 2.0T

Cherry vanilla

BY JOE SAGE

Midsize sedans are the biggest-selling automotive segment, and vanilla is the biggest-selling ice cream flavor, so we use that term as a compliment, reflecting this broad popularity. And the Hyundai Sonata—proudly carrying the DNA of its larger sibling, the universally praised and endlessly prize-winning Hyundai Genesis—is quite flawlessly executed in most ways, so when it comes to midsize sedans, this one is pretty cherry.

The Hyundai Genesis is widely proclaimed as the nearly perfect car. Meet the midsize Sonata. It's a slightly smaller sibling, it's front-drive, and it goes up against significant competitors—Accord, Altima, Camry, Fusion, Malibu, Passat and more. Genesis goes up against plenty of competitors, too, including some very well-established high-dollar makes, and it wins. That's enough right there to establish that Sonata has the chops.

Hyundai has the savvy to offer the Sonata in a wide variety of versions, enough to hope to keep your midsize sedan decision within their dealership. Limited and Sport trims go for volume, with a 185-hp 2.4L engine, 35 MPG highway ratings and prices starting at \$23,175 for Sport and \$26,525 for Limited.

There are models for the efficiency-minded. A 1.6-liter Eco version, starting at \$23,275,

saves at the pump, with a 38 MPG highway rating, while a 2.4L SE trim saves at purchase time, priced at just \$21,150 and closely matching the Eco at 37 MPG. (There is also a Sonata Hybrid model, \$26,000 and 40 MPG highway, which for now is a carryover of the prior generation, for those who specifically want that powertrain.)

Then, despite the Sport and Limited names having been used in the 2.4L lineup, there are 2.0T turbo versions of both, aimed at the performance-minded buyer. Blowing past the others, with 245 hp to their 185, the 2.0T models live up to their performance aim within a bit higher price range. The Limited 2.0T is the range-topper, starting at \$33,525, if you tend toward luxury with your sport. At about \$5k less than the Limited, bearing that power and getting 32 MPG highway, the Sport 2.0T we have here is a great best-of-all trim.

The Sport 2.0T has its own interior, with sport-bolstered leather seats, contrast stitching and piping, zeroed-out active analog gauges, a D-cut steering wheel with paddle shifters, sport shift lever, aluminum pedals and other distinctive sport trim.

The car handles beautifully—tight and smooth on corners, strong and decisive on the highway. We don't always get into using

paddle shift (we tend to prefer manuals, those rare times they're available), rather tending to treat automatics as just that. But both the paddles and manumatic features added to our driving experience in this one.

The car's turning circle is within a few inches of a MINI Cooper, while some of the competitors are pushing 40 feet.

If you chart every factor of every model in the segment, somebody will win each category, some more than others, some might tie—but the overall balance of attributes in this performance Sonata makes it belong on any midsize sedan shopping comparison list. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	2.0L twin-scroll turbo dual-CVVT GDI 4-cyl
TRANSMISSION	6-spd auto w Shiftronic & paddles
DRIVETRAIN	front-wheel drive
POWER/TORQUE	245 hp / 260 lb-ft
TURNING CIRCLE	35.8 ft
FUEL CAPACITY	18.5 gal
MPG	23/32/26 (city/hwy/comb)

INCLUDED: Blind spot and rear cross-traffic systems, 18" alloys, Drive Mode Select, quad exhaust tips, HID headlights, LED taillights, LED DRLs, keyless entry and start, hands-free smart trunk, dual auto climate, aluminum pedals and sill plates, spot leather seats, heated front seats, much more.

BASE PRICE	\$28,575
ULTIMATE PACKAGE	Pano tilt/slide sunroof, full range of driver assist electronics, 6-way power passenger seat, vented front and heated rear seats, rear side sunshades, 8" touchscreen nav, 400-watt Infinity amp-speakers-subwoofer, LED interior lights and more
CARPETED FLOOR MATS	4950
DESTINATION CHARGE	125
TOTAL	\$34,460

If there are a lot of shades of grey, and there are, this Shale Gray Metallic is one of the nicest. The car looks even sexier when ordered for Arizona, without the front license plate frame this one bears.



Elapsed weekend

NHRA AT WILD HORSE PASS MOTORSPORTS PARK

Story and photos by Randall Bohl

We hadn't been out to NHRA drag racing at Wild Horse Pass Motorsports Park (formerly Firebird International Raceway) in a half dozen years. We jumped at the chance to revisit what are now 320-plus-mile-per-hour Nitro Methane burners and 200-plus-mile-per-hour Pro Stock racers.

Every February, Arizona is host to the second race of the NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series season: the CarQuest Auto Parts NHRA Nationals. Most people simply call it the Arizona Nationals.

We connected with Motorsports Maniac Wally Cahill, who reports each Sunday for "Good Morn-

ing Arizona" on 3TV Phoenix. This particular weekend, he was arranging live shot NHRA driver interviews, while also reviewing the Audi A8 from the track with meteorologist Kim Quintero.

GENDER BIAS

One story hook could be "the women of drag racing," but successful women in drag racing are more the norm than a novelty these days.

Looking back several decades, Shirley Shahan had been the first NHRA national event-winning female in Top Stock at the 1966 Winternationals. Another Shirley, three-time Top Fuel Champion Shirley Muldowney, was another obvious exception. But they were not alone for long.

There have been literally dozens of professional female drivers over the past 50 years. In fact, Carol Bunny Burkett celebrated 50 years behind the wheel in April, much of that time in BB/FC—a Sportsman class, but her livelihood nonetheless.

Della Woods ran AA/FC from the 1960s through the early '90s. Paula Murphy in 1966 was the first female Fuel Funny Car driver. "Miss Mighty Mopar" Judy Lilly ran through the late 1960s and '70s.

"Nitro Nellie" Goins was the first African-American female AA/FC driver, and Cristen Powell the first female AA/FC driver in the 4-second zone.

The pace of women entering the sport sped up from the 1990s into this century, with drivers such as Danielle DePorter, Top Fuel 1992 NHRA Rookie of the year recipient; Shelly Anderson, Lori Johns, and Melanie Troxel, all in Top Fuel dragsters; Ashley Force in Funny Car; and Angelle Sampey, three time Pro Stock Motorcycle Champion (2000-2002). They seemed to come along one at a time, but today there are more female professional drivers than ever before.

We spent Friday afternoon and Saturday photographing Qualifying and doing a little touring of the spectator midways, as well as the pits. It was clear the times they have been changing. We had a list of five drivers we would meet with for Channel 3 on Sunday morning, so we watched them closely. Three of those five were women.

In Top Fuel dragster, there were three women entered, out of 17 participants: Brittany Force, Leah Pritchett and Jenna Haddock.

In AA/FC, there were two women out of 17 en-

trants: Alexis DeJoria and Courtney Force.

In Pro Stock, there was just one female entrant out of 17: Erica Enders-Stevens—who just happens to be the first female and reigning Pro Stock Champion.

Our list of five included Brittany Force, Courtney Force and Erica Enders-Stevens, along with male drivers J.R. Todd and Del Worsham.

QUALIFYING

Friday afternoon, the weather could barely have been better for Qualifying—about 80 degrees, with mostly cloudy skies keeping the track cool.

Side-by-side runs were phenomenal, although in Qualifying round number one, Brittany Force had a tire smoking shut-off. J.R. Todd took the third position with a 3.776 ET at 323.97 mph, while Tony Schumacher led the way with a 3.750 ET at 313.15 mph.

In Funny Car, sister Courtney Force landed in the seventh spot with a stout 4.095 ET at 306.19 mph. Del Worsham had a shut-off 7.522 ET and Matt Hagan took the number one spot running 4.025 ET at 316.60 mph.

In Pro Stock, Erica Enders-Stevens stepped into the number two spot with a 6.551 ET at 211.26 mph, trailing right behind fellow Houston-based

racer Rodger Brogdon by just over 1/10th of a second, with Brogdon running a 6.545 ET at 210.90. Both run Elite Motorsports powerplants, the dominant engine builder this past season and Erica Enders-Stevens' primary sponsor.

The second round of Qualifying began about 4:30 pm, with the air cooling, bringing the density up a bit, improving engine performance, and with the track in excellent condition.

Brittany Force stepped up to the number eight qualifying position with a 3.088 ET at 323.81 mph, while J.R. Todd remained in the third spot with an improved 3.753 ET at 323.97 mph, and Tony Schumacher remained number one, setting a new track record with a 3.722 ET at 325.61 mph. The crowd let out a roar of approval.

Courtney Force rolled out a blistering 3.996 ET at 321.58 mph to take the first qualifier's position, with another resounding roar of approval from the stands. Alexis DeJoria fired off a 4.000 ET at 313.58 mph to land the ladies' number one and number two at the end of the day. Del Worsham not only got down the track in this round, but with the number three spot, running 4.005 ET at 318.17 mph. That's only 9/1000 of a second between the first and third qualifying positions.

Matt Hagan ran another 4.025 ET identical to

the first round, this time only good for the fourth spot, but it's hard to beat that kind of consistency come race day.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Saturday, we spent time walking the pit area—which can be half the entertainment of going to the drag races. Unlike a lot of other motorsports, fans have always been welcome in the pits at the drags—seeing the crews prepare the cars, with a crowd gathering around as a Nitro Methane engine is warmed up ... then the crowd thinning out, with burning noses and watery eyes, at least those who get in the wrong position or downwind of the fumes. (However, this may truly be the perfect cure for a stuffy, sniffly, sneezy cold.)

Certain teams draw more attention than others. Don Shumacher Racing, fielding seven cars including reigning Funny Car Champion Matt Hagan and the ever popular Tony "Sarge" Schumacher (with 77 National event wins) is a huge draw. (Make that 78 National Event wins as of that Sunday.)

Kalitta Racing, the legendary Connie Kalitta's operation, with drivers Doug Kalitta T/F, J.R. Todd T/F, Del Worsham F/C and Alexis DeJoria F/C, is always a busy area.

And John Force Racing may be the most con-

KEEP RIGHT >>



Del Worsham, here being guided back from his burnout in the DHL-sponsored Kalitta Racing Funny Car, would go on to an eventual runner-up finish.

sistently surrounded pit area, fielding a four-car team: Robert Hight F/C, John Force F/C, Courtney Force F/C and Brittany Force F/C. His daughters may be beautiful, but *nobody* is more fan friendly or draws attention like John Force himself, constantly out on the fringe of the pit area greeting fans, signing autographs and posing for photos with fans. He has to be wrangled back by crew and family, to work with his team in privacy.

In the Pro Stock pits, the place to be was Erica Enders-Stevens' trailer. The 2014 Pro Stock Champion is very, very popular.

The fan/sponsor midway at NHRA events compares (dare we say?) to NASCAR, at least on a relative scale for a smaller facility. There's the Mello Yello NHRA drag racing tent, with interactive activities such as "test your starting line reaction time." Nitro Mall is a huge apparel and souvenir shopping experience. Traxxas, as a major sponsor, took up a large central area, with radio controlled cars sailing about on jump ramps, controlled by Traxxas employees as well as by fans. And for festival atmosphere, there are beer, dogs and barbecue. We stuck to the sponsor soft drink, Coca-Cola (maybe should have had a Mello Yello?).

FINAL QUALIFYING

The fourth and final round of Pro Qualifying commenced Saturday at 4 pm, and we chose the high road, climbing to the top of the starting line tower to photograph the race cars from above the starting line. It's a unique perspective, heavy with nitro fumes and Goodyear tire smoke wafting up on the desert breeze.

In the end, Tony Schumacher remained atop the Top Fuel field with a 3.7222 ET at 325.69

(consistency—he had run a 3.7222 at 325.61 on Friday afternoon). J.R. Todd ended up in the fourth spot with his 3.753 from Friday afternoon's session, and Brittany Force in the 10th spot, also from her Friday afternoon run of 3.792. It was apparent that conditions had not improved over those of Friday, as there had been more sun on the track throughout the afternoon and the humidity had increased.

It was a similar situation in Funny Car, with one major exception. Matt Hagan made a move up from the fourth spot to number one with a 3.978 ET at 320.28, bumping Courtney Force to number two, still using her 3.996 ET from Friday afternoon. Del Worsham remained in the number three spot, with a slightly improved 3.997 ET at 319.98 in this round, and Alexas DeJoria remained in fourth with her Friday afternoon shot, a 4.000 ET.

In Pro Stock Qualifying, the story was simple: identical ETs for the top two qualifiers, Erica Enders-Stevens and Rodger Brogden, both running 6.545 seconds, but Erica becoming number one with a top speed of 211.20 mph over Rodgers' 210.90 mph.

SUNDAY RACE DAY

Our Sunday at the track began before dawn, 6 am to be exact, meeting up with Wally Cahill, NHRA director of media relations Anthony Vestal, and the Channel 3 remote truck with Kim Quintero.

We headed back to the pro pit with the remote truck and the Audi A8. From 7 am until 9:45, Kim and her cameraman, both with ear buds, would take direction from the station as to when to go live—Kim first, doing a 2-minute weather report,

somehow, with nothing but a smartphone in hand, then turning to a short driver interview. The interviews were kept very basic, in layman's terms, as she explained to the drivers that "most of our viewers have no idea what you do"—not necessarily flattering, but they seemed used to that.

Our first stop was with Kalitta Racing and Top Fuel driver J.R. Todd, who in a little pre-interview did an excellent job of explaining Qualifying and how as number four he would race number 13 in the first round, and the fact that they have 75 minutes between rounds to rebuild motors and have the car back to the line. It was all helpful, as Kim had never been to the drag races before.

Del Worsham is driver of the DHL-sponsored Kalitta Racing Funny Car. We spoke with Worsham prior to his live shot, as he worked on untangling and folding his parachutes, a responsibility many drivers insist upon taking on for themselves—nobody else to blame if their chutes don't come out. Del learned this growing up at the drag races, as his father Chuck Worsham has been a funny car racer driver/owner since before Del was born. In fact, Del nodded with pride at the minimally sponsored car across the aisle from his DHL car—Worsham & Fink, driven by Shane Westerfield. Del was very happy that his father's team had qualified in the 15th spot, and that's what he wanted to talk about. (Unfortunately, that paired them with number two Courtney Force in the first round, and a loss.)

After Del Worsham's television spot, we turned around to find Erica Enders-Stevens waiting to lead us to her Pro Stock pit. While waiting for a "go" from the TV studio, we had time to photograph Erica and speak for a moment. When we

entered her pit with cameras, a crewman immediately threw a large towel over the intake and manifold of the exposed Elite Motorsports motor—completely understandable, as this is an Unlimited class, and a lot of the secrets are in making these normally aspirated motors breathe. We had to ask, though, about the black drapery around the rear end of the car—done nicely, we might add, with permanent button clips on the body. A crewman was in fact climbing in and out from under the car, working with lights under this shroud. Erica explained it was about the 4-link—"we don't want anyone to see how the 4-link is set up, or any suspension settings, even what rear end we have under the car, if we can help it." As for the manifold towel, she reminded us of the story of Bob Glidden climbing out of what was left of his car after a severe crash years ago, lucky to be alive, but—first things first—removing his fire suit jacket and covering the motor so nobody could see it. (This is worth a YouTube look.)

TV time interrupted us at this point. Channel 3 called for Wally's Sunday morning car review of the Audi A8—which had been garnering a lot of fan attention early in the morning, even sitting among 300 mph race cars.

While Wally and Kim did their segment, we headed to the Force Racing camp and found Brittany Force signing autographs and posing for photos with fans, before she had to warm the car. We spoke together of her need for sponsorship on the Top Fuel dragster. Her lips were sealed, but she indicated a deal was close.

We walked around the back of the trailer, to find quite the outdoor kitchen providing breakfast for the whole John Force Racing team. They had a hot grill going, with omelets and sausage, as well as fresh fruits and juice. We tried not to stare like hungry puppies.

Besides, the Nitro Methane fumes from Courtney's Funny Car pit next door were sufficient entertainment for the time being—she too had engine warming duties. We reminded Courtney we'd met a few years ago, when she was doing appearances for Ford Motor Company's teen driver safety program at Coronado High School in Scottsdale and Perry High School in Gilbert (see our Jan/Feb 2012 issue online).

Kim Quintero arrived, complimenting Courtney on her makeup, to which she replied, "yeah, haha, you should see it after the first run in the car." Kim's main question in the live shot was what

KEEP RIGHT >>

(Left) Rodger Brogden emerges victorious after the Pro Stock final. • (Right, top to bottom, left/right) Our five picks to watch: Brittany Force, Courtney Force, Erica Enders-Stevens, J.R. Todd and Del Worsham.

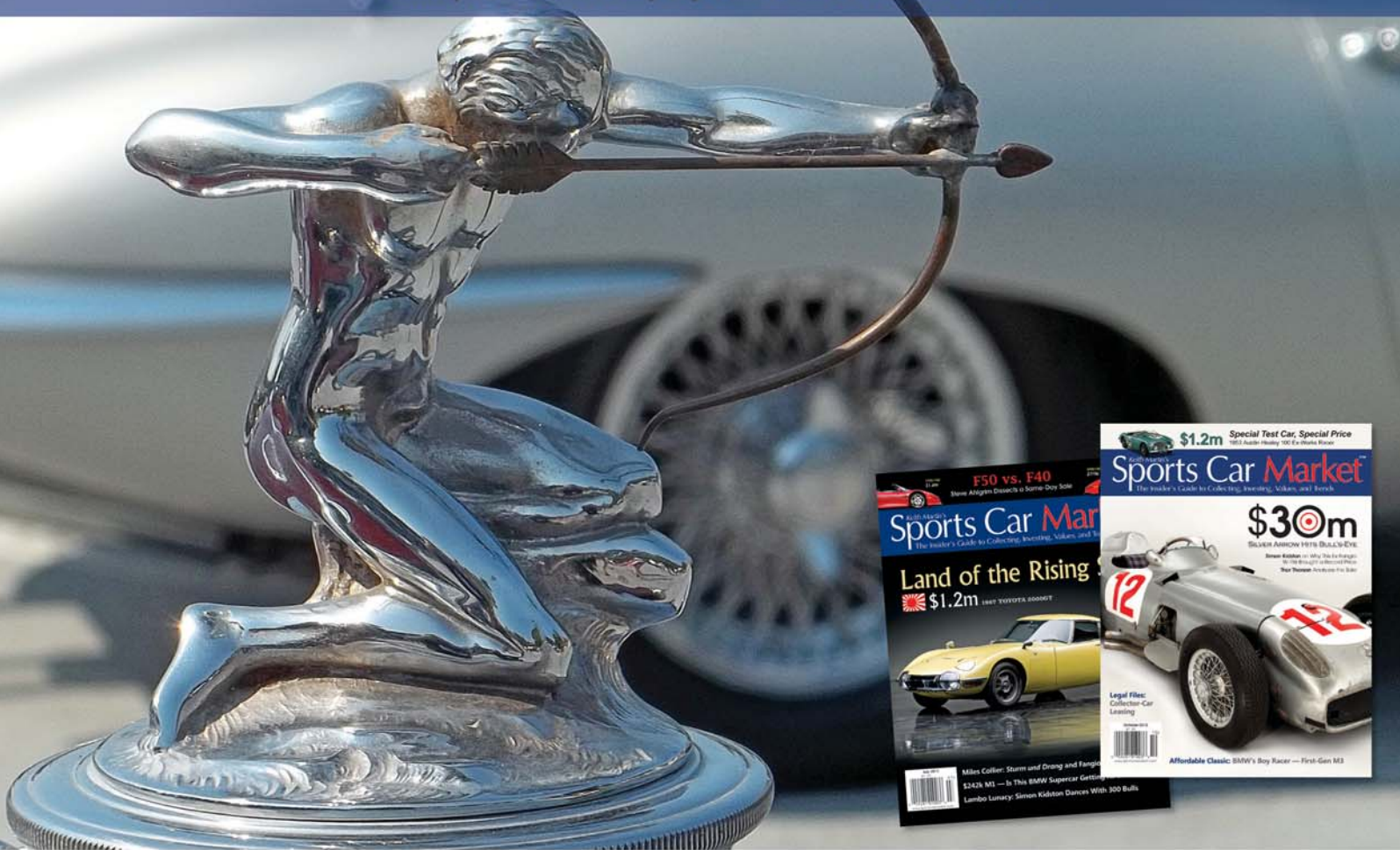


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Courtney did to prepare for a run. She responded that she's not as outgoing as her father, tending to stay a little quieter, closer to the trailer and concentrating on the job at hand. And, referring to the feast cooking behind us, she recommends “light portions, before you pull three or four G's accelerating and six G's when the chutes hit.”

RACE TIME

By the time we walked back through the pits, pre-race driver introductions had begun behind the starting line—and the show was on. Our time with the drivers made watching them on track all the more fun. Certainly every fan who gets to shake John Force's hand and take a snapshot with him feels the same way.

We watched “our” five drivers throughout the day, and two made it to the final round.

In Top Fuel, Brittany Force defeated Steve Torrence in round one with a 3.822 ET at 323.19 mph. Unfortunately, she was defeated by Doug Kalitta in round two—Doug running a 3.777 to Brittany's 3.799. Doug would go on to the final round, where Tony Schumacher (number one qualifier at 3.725 ET) won with another 3.72, this one with a zero on the end—3.720 ET—garnering his 78th National Event win. You can't beat consistency, especially being consistently fast.

In Funny Car, Courtney Force took out Shane Westerfield in the aforementioned Worsham & Fink car, with a 4.022 ET at 320.13 mph—only to meet teammate Robert Hight in the second round, losing an incredibly close race won by Hight with a superior reaction time of .094 to Courtney's .115 overruling a 4.069 ET to Courtney's 4.057. The margin of victory: .009 seconds.

Meanwhile, Del Worsham beat John Hale in round one with a 4.037 ET at 317.05 mph, Chad Head in the second round with a 4.047 ET at 316.38 mph and Robert Hight in the third round running a 4.010 ET at 315.78 mph.

Thus ended the day for the John Force Racing team in the semifinals, John himself having been defeated by Robert Hight in the first round. A problem for the team was that the order in which they qualified had pitted team member against team member in rounds one and two.

So “our driver” Del Worsham had made it to the Finals to meet number one qualifier Matt Hagan from the other side of the ladder. Del's ETs throughout the first three rounds had been consistently .01 second quicker than Matt's, leaving us optimistic about who we'd meet at the top end for the winner's photo op.

Note that after the first two rounds, we had

gone to the “top end” or final turnoff at the end of the racetrack to photograph the drivers during ESPN II interviews after their runs. “Optimistic” is nice, but reality is that crew chiefs and drivers throw it all into the final, and Matt Hagan not only was the number one qualifier, but 2014 NHRA Funny Car Champion, as well as winner of the Winternationals in Pomona just two weeks prior. He knows how to win.

Hagan stepped up to a blazing 3.975 at 324.83 mph, bettering his number one qualifying pass by 3/1000 of a second and more than 4 mph. Del, in the other lane, had run a duplicate to his semifinal ET: 4.010 at 318.17mph (2.39 mph faster) in a losing effort. So we gladly photographed champion Matt Hagan hoisting the trophy at the top end—smiles all around.

“Our” other driver, Erica Enders-Stevens in Pro Stock, marched through her side of the 16-car field, beating Joey Grose in the first round with a 6.575 ET at 211.23, Greg Anderson in the second round running a 6.570 at 210.60 and in the semifinals Chris McGaha with another 6.575 ET, this one at 210.67 mph.

From the other side of the ladder came number one qualifier Rodger Brogdon, running slightly quicker and faster than Erica in each round, including his semifinal win over Drew Skillman with a 6.554 ET at 211.36 mph. Although this didn't bode well for “our driver” Erica, Brogdon was one friendly, happy guy to meet when he came out of the car after his semifinal win. And he did have a bit of an underdog's appeal, being self-financed with only a small RoofTec logo to show for sponsorship. Nonetheless, he was facing the reigning champion in the final.

In the final round, Enders-Stevens cut a .017 reaction time to Brogdon's .050, only to experience an engine failure, slowing to a 6.640 ET at 205.51 mph. Brogdon motored on through, with a victory-clinching 6.560 at 211.49 mph—his quickest and fastest pass of the day.

As it turns out, we were witnessing only the second National Event win for Rodger Brogdon. And, ironically, it turns out his first was in 2013 against none other than Erica Enders-Stevens.

Now 2-0 in finals over the reigning Pro Stock Champion, Rodger Brogdon's search for sponsorship should become a little easier, which could give him the opportunity to run the full season, as opposed to his self-financed plan to run six or seven races. We wished him well at the top end.

And couldn't help but smiling on the way out of the track, having enjoyed a great three-day weekend at the races. ■



(Top to bottom) John Force gets ready to rumble. Brittany Force lights 'em up. Matt Hagan earns his Funny Car trophy in a nail-biter. Tony Schumacher takes his 78th National Event win. And the crowd takes it all in.



• Kia SPORTSPACE concept

GENEVA SHOW HIGHLIGHTS

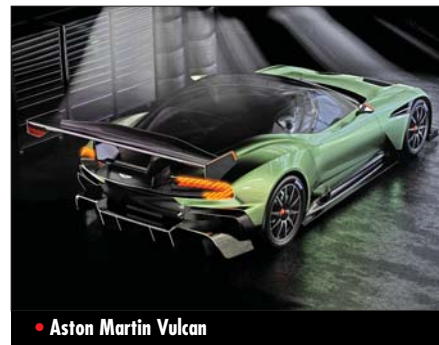
GENEVA INTERNATIONAL MOTOR SHOW | MARCH 2015



Photo: Tom Purves

Every year or two, we take a serious look at attending the Geneva International Motor Show. It falls in the schedule just after the LA, Detroit and Chicago shows, as well as Arizona's collector auctions, about the same time as NASCAR and several other events, and just before the NY International Auto Show. So somehow it has not yet made the cut. But we follow it with interest, as high-end and/or high-volume Europeans and others always save something special for Geneva. Here are a few highlights, alphabetically (with photos mostly alphabetically):

- The new **Aston Martin Vulcan** track-only supercar is powered by their most potent yet naturally-aspirated 7.0L V12—a front-mid-plate 800-plus-hp unit developed with their racing unit. Its power-to-weight ratio beats that of GTE cars in the FIA's World Endurance Championship. The car has a carbon fiber monocoque, integral limited-slip differential, magnesium torque tube with carbon fiber propeller shaft and Brembo carbon ceramic racing disc brakes. All this power feeds through a race-bred rear-mid-mounted Xtrac six-speed sequential shift gearbox.
- The second-generation **Audi R8** supercar has noticeable sharpening of body styling, built over a new multi-material space frame with emphasis on aluminum and carbon fiber-reinforced polymer. A mid-mounted V10, new quattro AWD system and 7-speed S tronic deliver either 540 or 610 hp, the latter quicker to 62 mph than any series production Audi in history (3.2 seconds)—and the first officially capable of exceeding 200 mph.
- The **Bentley EXP 10 Speed 6 concept** (above right) is a visual knockout. The two-seater is intended to express the brand's earliest racing years and its modern international racers. Built with a combination of British handcrafting and modern technologies, the concept incorporates the finest materials and advanced performance technology. Bentley suggests this car may become a reality: "This is not just a new sports car concept, but the potential Bentley of sports cars," declared chairman and CEO Wolfgang Dürheimer. We hope so.
- Another visual knockout is the **Kia SPORTSPACE concept** (above left). Unveiled by Kia Motors Europe, it reflects that continent's love for the shooting brake—a stylish and practical form that's sleeker than a



• Aston Martin Vulcan



• Audi R8



• Infiniti QX30 concept



• Lexus LF-SA concept



• McLaren 675LT



• Bentley EXP 10 Speed 6 concept

wagon, longer than a hatchback and lower to the ground than a crossover. Also shown was the new **Kia cee'd GT Line**, with their first 1.0-liter T-GDI engine and new 7-speed dual-clutch transmission. The cee'd is entering European production, and the SPORTSPACE seems likely to do so. We hope for North American versions of both.

- The **Infiniti QX30 concept** communicates "stylish protection," with angular yet aerodynamic lines accented by skid plate fascias, carbon fiber cladding, three-dimensional milled aluminum interlocking 21-inch wheels and sure-footed large profile tires. A nice direction for Infiniti.
- The **Lexus LF-SA concept** is an ultra-compact sub-B-segment urban 2+2. In their own words, "the LF-SA explores unexpected territories for the brand in a bold and emotional execution." Unexpected, yes. Their philosophy is of "a future in which Lexus drivers will still be able to enjoy the real life luxury of driving themselves"—a phrase both encouraging and disturbing. We are of course glad that Lexus still embraces drivers.
- The **McLaren 675LT** revealed at Geneva was said to be a sneak peek of the Sports Series to be shown in New York. Following McLaren Longtail heritage, it focuses on light weight, aerodynamics, power, track-focused dynamics and driver engagement. Two-thirds of the 675LT's parts are shared with the McLaren 650S. With a half-reengineered 3.8L V8, the car hits 62 mph in 2.9 seconds and 124 mph in 7.9 seconds. Top speed is 205 mph.
- The **Mercedes-AMG GT3** was revealed just as the 2015 race season was firing up. An FIA-spec racer, the GT3 is based on the Mercedes-AMG GT, being launched a few days later. The GT3 has an enhanced version of the 6.3-liter V8 in the SLS AMG GT3. Following an intensive test phase, the new AMG GT3 racer will ship to its first customer teams at the end of the year.
- The new **Porsche 911 GT3 RS** is designed to be both a road-going sports cars and a GT3 racer.

Modifications to its drivetrain, aerodynamics and weight surpass the 911 GT3, right to the limits of street-legal. The RS is the fastest current 911 at Nürburgring, beating the prior GT3's lap time by five seconds. The GT3 RS is powered by a 4-liter six with 500 hp and a modified PDK transmission, weighs 22 pounds less than the GT3 and does a track quarter mile in 11.2 seconds. The 911 GT3 RS comes with the widest tires of any 911 model.

- The **Range Rover Evoque Convertible** from Land Rover is confirmed for production, on sale in 2016. Confirmation came at Geneva in the form of a test film made in unusual conditions—tested deep inside Europe's largest construction project, a network of Crossrail tunnels 130 feet below the streets of London. This enabled test engineers to push the vehicle to aerodynamic limits with the top down, yet completely away from any prying eyes.
- The **SEAT 20V20 concept** (or Vision 2020)—from Volkswagen's Spanish brand—reflects elements destined for VW Group siblings, with further evolution of crossover and four-door sport compact coupé synthesis. LED headlights, 20-inch wheels and extensive premium features inside all aim to deliver German "technology, quality and precision at an affordable price." The 20V20 platform, with DSG gearbox and electronically controlled four-wheel drive, is adaptable to high-performance TSI and TDI engines or plug-in hybrids.
- The **Volkswagen Sport Coupé Concept GTE** is a design language study, revealing cues that will be adapted throughout the Volkswagen brand in the immediate future. This Sport Coupé concept blends elements of the B and C segments in the "four-door coupé" styling of the current Volkswagen CC and other German brands. The GTE designation announces a plug-in hybrid drive system good for about 32 miles in all-electric mode and also 374-hp long-distance driving, with a top speed of 155 mph and a European combined fuel economy of 118 MPG. ■



• Mercedes-AMG GT3 race car



• Porsche 911 GT3 RS



• Range Rover Evoque Convertible



• SEAT 20V20 (Vision 2020) concept



• Volkswagen Sport Coupé Concept GTE

Solid A-minus*

By
Joe
Sage

BMW 6 Series coupes have been their own beast since birth, though derived from one size up, the 7 Series. On the other hand, the 3/4 Series and 1/2 Series scheme is a more recent development. Though always inherently distinguished by name and form, the new redundant badging approach keeps smaller sedans as 1 or 3 Series, while moving numbers not down but up, with coupes and convertibles becoming 2 and 4 Series.

Along came a four-door Gran Coupé model of the 6 Series, just three years ago. A debate has been running for a decade as to whether there is such a thing as a “four-door coupe.” That conversation continues, but BMW’s naming scheme may just skirt that debate. If it’s a 4 Series, it is by their branding definition a coupe—Gran or otherwise.

People could easily mistake our 4 Series Gran Coupé for a sedan, though badging makes it clear it is no 3 Series, as does the capacious rear hatch, a tremendously useful layout. With front and rear seats up, you have 17 cu.ft. of cargo space—the same as a 3 Series sedan—but fold the rear seats down, and this expands to 45.9 cu.ft., challenging the volume utility (if not the height) of a crossover—a BMW X3 has 27.6 to 63.3 cu.ft. for cargo—or virtually equalling the 49.4 cu.ft. of the arguably awkward X4 fastback-hatchback utility. But in the 4 Series Gran Coupé, it’s all within the sleek

performance envelope of a road-hugging car.

A few years back, we went through a period where we were finding ourselves pretty critical of BMWs we were reviewing. A lot of this had to do with their early implementation of auto-stop/start, as well as some of the user interfaces. (An exception was the 6 Series, whose power and grace trumped all that.) We have likely just grown used to those issues—including with other brands—but for a couple of years now, we’ve appreciated our BMW drives a lot more. That developing streak continues with this 4 Series Gran Coupé.

We lucked out on timing, having this during NASCAR week, when we have multiple hundred-mile roundtrips to make from our northeast Valley offices to Phoenix International Raceway. From its relatively high-torquing 240-hp turbo with rich feel and impressive sound effects, to its cabin comforts and sporty nature, to its 34 MPG highway fuel mileage, this car—also benefitting from its M Sport Package upgrades—was just the ticket.

It still nags at us that any \$40k BMW turns into a near-mid-\$50s car with the addition of packages. And packages remain largely inescapable, as you typically need to buy three just to get such basics as heated seats, keyless entry and backup camera (things that are included in many a \$17,000 car). In this car, those three added \$4100 to the base cost.

The M Sport Package is worthwhile. Diehard M Car fans may always make light of this, wherein you get some M badging (while an actual 2-door M4 Coupe starts at \$64,200). But you also get upgraded suspension, seats and wheels, as well as distinctive trim details inside and out. This is \$3500 well spent, though it remains disturbing to have to pay another \$650 for M Sport brakes that should have been bundled. You can make your own judgment on other packages (see sidebar).

There are four 4 Series Gran Coupés—a 240-horse 2.0L 428i with either RWD or xDrive all-wheel drive, and a 300-horse/300-lb-ft 3.0L 435i, also with either drivetrain. Weight gains are minimal: 130 pounds for AWD, and about the same for the bigger engine. Fuel mileage numbers dip, but remain at 20 or better in the city and are all above 30 MPG highway. The larger engine adds \$5500; xDrive adds \$2000 with either engine.

We like power, and we tend to favor all-wheel-drive characteristics in a sporty sedan or coupe, even on dry pavement, so we’d likely opt for the xDrive version. The engine choice is less obvious. For noticeably more cost and a measurable drop in fuel economy, you get a zero-to-60 time of 4.9 seconds instead of 5.7. We found the 2.0L 428i to be nimble, quick and well distributed. All in all, we’re inclined to think this model will satisfy most people’s needs and desires admirably. One positive tradeoff we might have hoped for but that’s missing: the smaller engine still requires premium fuel.

* TEACHER SAYS, “SEE ME”

We imagined the same schoolmaster who almost granted this car an A in the headline, also requiring an after-school talking-to. “Son, you have a lot to be proud of,” they might say, “and we’re mostly quite happy with your performance. Which is why it’s important, and frustrating, that there are some things we just have to talk to you about.”

That may seem to suggest high expectations, or maybe we’ve lowered them. We liked the car quite a bit, but had the same kind of experiences that had frustrated us even more, a few years ago.

Perimeter cameras (top and side views of the car) are a welcome feature, but we had a world of trouble dismissing them, so we could move on to tuning the radio or adjusting the air. Physical buttons and icons seemed to variously reflect models with other features, as did the small interface screen and the printed manual. Ultimately, the small screen does not seem to allow both a back-up camera and top view—pick one, miss one.

Some features were never found, such as synchronizing climate, left and right. This might not be so urgent, if cabin temperature stayed comfortable for very long, but it didn’t, and the lack of one knob twist to change it aggravated this.

The joystick shifter popped into neutral once,

just entering a driveway (and it took two steps to correct, while sticking out in traffic). We had frequent problems with keyless locking and unlocking. And one morning we found the hatch wide open on its own. On the plus side, that hatch’s power close feature in normal use is easily overridden manually, and is even quick in power mode.

The auto-stop/start still had occasional restart delays at the critical moment a light turns green.

Many interface complications can be conquered or ignored over time. The lack of synced climate would always be annoying. Failure issues—hatch, shifter and locks—give us pause. Few new cars are flawless, of course; we do not get into dealer service during these sessions; and we don’t know what problems may have been reported and/or repaired beyond our exposure.

All that said, the car graduates with honors.

One friend described the 4 Series Gran Coupé as a stealth hatchback. If you don’t pop the back open often, you could practically forget it was a sedan alternative. If you like the style and function of the immensely popular 3 Series, but are intrigued by utilitarian aspects of the odd X4, then—unless you have real SUV needs, such as creek-fording or deep snow—the 4 Series Gran Coupé is an unbeatable synthesis of the two. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	2.0L 4-cyl twin scroll turbo
TRANSMISSION	8-speed automatic
DRIVETRAIN	RWD
POWER/TORQUE	240 hp / 255 lb-ft
STEERING	rack and pinion
BRAKES	13" / 11.8" (F/R) all ventilated disc
WHEELS	17" standard (upgraded here)
WEIGHT	(48.5/51.5 distrib) 3610 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	15.8 gal
MPG	23/34/27 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE.....**\$40,300**

M SPORT PACKAGE: 18" alloys, aero kit, adaptive M suspension, shadowline exterior trim, gloss black headlight trim, sport seats, aluminum hex interior trim, anthracite headliner, M steering wheel3500

COLD WEATHER PACKAGE: Heated wheel, heated front seats, heated rear seats; retractable headlight washers950

DRIVER ASSISTANCE PACKAGE: Rear camera, park distance control950

DYNAMIC HANDLING PACKAGE: Variable sport steering1000

PREMIUM PACKAGE: Keyless entry, lumbar support, satellite radio2200

M SPORT BRAKES:650

SIDE AND TOP VIEW CAMERAS:650

M SPORT BRAKES:750

ENHANCED BLUETOOTH/PHONE INTERFACE: 500

DESTINATION CHARGE:950

TOTAL.....**\$52,300**





LIKE A KID IN A CANDY STORE

Just try to stay focused, at Silver Auctions. Actually, why try? No sooner do you home in on one delight, than you spot ten more. Look at the top right photo, for example. Nice Chevelle. Really nice. But nearby are a '60 Chevy, a Studebaker pickup, a panel hot rod, a Corvair, even a vinyl-roofed Cadillac sedan or a '70s Ford Bronco. Check out the other photos. The corner of a '58 Mercury Turnpike Cruiser convertible, or a Triumph TR-3. An early Lexus SC, a Mercedes-Benz SLK or best of all, the Chevy's sibling, a beautiful '57 Buick Roadmaster. More hot rods or a '58 T-Bird convertible in primo shape. Where do you stop? Maybe you don't. Things are pretty affordable here, though we're starting to see an upward trend on some. Cars at Silver are fun, random and driveable. Inspiration is bound to strike, ready or not. It's like a car show where everything's also in the for-sale corral.

If you've ever wondered how the top-dollar auction houses keep coming up with a seemingly endless supply of multi-million-dollar Ferraris and such, it may also cross your mind that fun, funky and affordable Silver Auctions seems to never stop coming up with their incredible range of fun, funky and affordable auction cars. This crosses our minds as Silver now runs three auctions a year in Arizona, alone in doing more than one. And why not? There's every indication Mitch Silver likes coming here to sell some cars and have some fun, as much as we and his consignors and bidders like it when he does so.

The events are held out on the Beeline Highway, Arizona 87, next to the We-Ko-Pa Resort & Conference Center at the Fort McDowell Casino on the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation. The people are friendly. The cars are accessible, before, during and often after sales. The process is easy, and bargains abound. It brings us back to a time when you could buy an old car just because you thought it was the neatest thing, and you could drive it, maybe even putter on it. If you want something to put in the vault, by all means stick with the multi-

million-dollar Ferrari. If you like to drive your cars and maybe even get a little dust on them on the way home, this is your best serendipitous used car lot.

Here are a few examples, shown above and at right.

Cicely works the crowd and comes up with a buyer for this beautiful, ready to roll 1970 Chevrolet Caprice convertible with a new top, at \$5600.

The 1972 Chevrolet Chevelle SS 402 resto-mod has had a frame-off restoration and has a 500 hp built engine, B&M Billet shifter and original 12-bolt posi-traction rear end. The custom interior includes four-point belt and racing seats. Hotchkiss suspension is lowered, with heavy sway bars front and rear. Every piece is rebuilt or replaced. The car bid to \$31,000 but was still for sale.

There were two Studebaker Avantis at the sale, but this gold Avanti R2 would be hard to top—with a treasure trove of original release memorabilia, as complete as its own creators could hope to have. It's a 289 automatic, also with original records, original parts and new parts. Bid to \$25,000, it's still for sale.

The blue '57 Chevy is the entry level One-Fifty model, an all original frame-off restoration with matching-numbers engine, transmission and rear end. Purchased in 2011 from its original owner, the car came with thorough original records. Appraised and insured at \$63,000 (so yes, the lower models have been discovered now), this beautiful '57 was bid to \$23,000, but is still for sale.

This Elite J2X 1965 Allard replicar has a Ford 289 V8 and C4 automatic, Ferrari red paint, five wire wheels and six new tires including spare. Brakes and suspension have been upgraded, and other machined features include a grille from Jay Leno's shop. Bid to \$24,500, this one was also still for sale.

Are these the original owners of this '31 Ford Phaeton? It's fun to speculate. Sold at no reserve, it went for \$22,750, while a replica of the same model was a no-sale at \$6100. You can't beat the real thing, and this one was a real gem.

It can't hurt just to register to bid, just in case. See you there next fall! ■



RESOURCES:

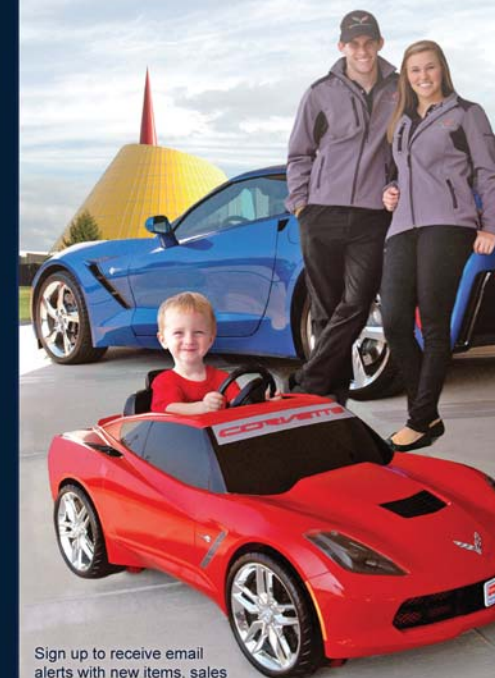
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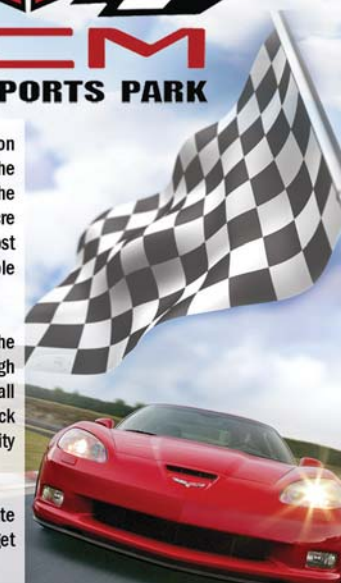


With over one mile of frontage on Interstate 65 and located across from the National Corvette Museum (NCM) and the Corvette Assembly Plant, the 184-acre Motorsports Park will be one of the most centrally located and easily accessible driving facilities in the country.

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TRAVEL DESTINATION : SEDONA

Sedona's top five list

Travel + Leisure has made their top US hotel selections for their 2015 T+L 500 list, with L'Auberge de Sedona and Enchantment Resort and Mii Amo Spa making the cut as two of Arizona's eight premier destinations. With scores of 89.56 and 91.49 respectively, the resorts have each earned their places among Arizona's elite. L'Auberge has been named to the list five consecutive years, and Enchantment nine.

Before planning your next trip to this desert oasis, you'll want to know about these top five "hidden treasures" in and around Sedona:

5. The Hog Trails Sedona's newest trail system, The Hog Trails were completed in May 2014. The trails' loops and turns provide a new and exciting view around every turn, from the enchantment of the Chapel of the Holy Cross, to other illustrious trails.

4. Petroglyphs Sedona was discovered centuries before Columbus arrived in this hemisphere, and evidence is still visible in the many ruins and petroglyphs that fascinate thousands of modern explorers drawn to this area each year. These can

be found at the ancient Native American Palatki Heritage Site, the Honanki Heritage Site and the V-Bar-V Heritage Site.

3. Wine and dine like a local In the last few years, the Verde Valley has been rediscovered by vintners who have come to appreciate its climate and soil. Along with its esteemed wine community, the farm-to-table movement has produced some of the most delectable dishes Sedona has to offer. Don't miss out on the local favorites.

2. Bed and breakfast paradise Sedona could very well be the bed and breakfast capital of Arizona. Something about the beautiful setting inspires innkeepers to create little masterpieces of lodging in and around the hills and creeks.

1. Catching the Sedona sun Finding a picturesque spot to capture the essence of Sedona sunrises and sunsets is an easy feat. Whether it's at the peak of Capitol Butte or at the base of Oak Creek Canyon, there are plenty of hidden paths and hikes to make sure you capture the perfect sun-kissed moment. ■

SEDONA CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

MAY

Sedona Photofest.....May 2-3

JUNE

Sedona Bluegrass FestivalJune 3-7
Four days of Bluegrass related activities include BBQ, free concerts, film and the festival concert on the grounds of Los Abrigados Resort and Spa under the giant sycamores by Oak Creek.

JULY

4th of July Concert & Laser Show.....July 4
Held at the Sedona Performing Arts Center and nearby baseball fields, this all-day experience has festivities during the day before your favorite fireworks shows at night. A patriotic laser light show happens at 11am, 12 noon and 1pm, with food, fun water games and toys meant to help beat the heat.

Sedona's 11th Annual National Day of the Cowboy Celebration.....July 25
Sedona has a rich cowboy heritage. Cattle drives to Munds Mountain began in the 1890s, as early cowboy legends such as Ira Smith and Earl Van Deren made their trek through Northern Arizona. This free event from 11am to 8pm is a celebration of local cultural heritage, presented by the Sedona Main Street Program and Red Rock Posse.

SEPTEMBER

Sedona WinefestSept 26-27

OCTOBER

Sedona Arts FestivalOct 10-11
Sedona Plein Air FestivalOct 17-24

For more information and a complete calendar of events, see visitsedona.com ■

Why We Ride. (And why Valerie Thompson rides.)

Story and photos by Randall Bohl

As a lead-up to the Progressive International Motorcycle Show at WestWorld in Scottsdale last fall, we participated in a cosponsored meet-up at Go AZ Motorcycles in the Scottsdale Airpark, followed by a ride to Regal Cinemas in Gilbert to view *Why We Ride*, an award-winning documentary film.

Go AZ was the gathering spot, with burgers and hot dogs on the grill, refreshments and special guest Valerie Thompson displaying her 2012 BMW S 1000RR, on which she has run 212 mph at the Texas Mile. Valerie is a seven-time Land Speed Record holder in several motorcycle classes. A member of 200 mph clubs at Bonneville, the Texas Mile, the Mojave Magnum and the East Coast Timing Association, she also happens to appear in the movie *Why We Ride*.

We spoke with Valerie about her BMW, during the Go AZ social time. She loves the bike, although she was an "all Harley" rider during her drag racing career. And her need for speed is no longer limited to two wheels.

Thompson, who lives in Scottsdale, has been test pilot in a turbo-diesel dragster on the quarter mile, and in July 2014 climbed into a NASCAR



vehicle at Bonneville, running 192 mph on the salt (in a straight line, she states emphatically).

Her future plans include streamliners—two- or four-wheel—as she states she'd like to go 400 mph. Well, 300 mph for sure.

Nineteen riders' kickstands were up at 7pm, and we worked our way through freeway traffic to Gilbert. Rides ranged from Yamaha and BMW dual sports, to your correspondent's Honda Nighthawk sport touring, to crotch rockets, including a Suzuki Hayabusa, which didn't exactly get to stretch its legs out in traffic.

Arriving at the theater, we found another group of riders gathered in the parking lot and at least another 50 "cages" (cars) of moviegoers. Attendees received concession stand vouchers and

DVD copies of the movie, and Valerie autographed handbills for everyone.

Even if you've never ridden so much as a mini-bike, *Why We Ride* can be appreciated simply for the beauty of its cinematography, and the historical perspective it reveals about motorcycles.

The film takes us back to the turn of the 20th century, when bicycle racers created the first motorcycles, then through the Great Depression and shortly after, when club riding was at its height. There are interviews with people who were there as children and ride to this day. There is racing history, from the first Daytona to modern day hill climbs. And of course there are the Bonneville Salt Flats, where Valerie Thompson appears in the film. It all culminates in a review of

the variety of motorcycling experiences available today, largely centered around the family recreational aspect of riding.

Some of but not all who appear in *Why We Ride* are: Arlen Ness, Kenny Roberts, Mert Lawwill, Al Lamb, Jason Disalvo, Joey Pasarella, Josh Hayes, Brian Klock, Ed Kretz Jr., Donna Kretz, and Keith Code.

Why We Ride is a highly recommended view, and if you're a rider you'll be dying to put your two cents' worth into answering that question. ■

The **Progressive International Motorcycle Show** is currently scheduled to be in Long Beach CA and Dallas TX next winter (along with a few cities in the East and Midwest).

Why We Ride has partnered with Italy's largest video game developer, Milestone, as it launches its latest creation, *RIDE*. The Digital Deluxe Edition of the game is on Steam and includes a digital download copy of the film *Why We Ride*, as well as a making-of booklet, a season pass to downloadable game content and a digital download of the game's soundtrack.

RIDE is also available in the US for Xbox One, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and PlayStation 4, beginning May 19. *RIDE* allows players to ride over 100 bikes on a variety of city and country roads and historic circuits from the world of motorcycling.

By popular demand for a followup to *Why We Ride*, the film team has announced their next movie, *I Am Sturgis*, timed to coincide with this year's 75th anniversary of the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota, August 3-9. In recent years, the Sturgis rally has drawn half a million participants, but estimates for this year's anniversary rally surpass a million riders. Why We Ride Films figures there is no better time or place to capture the passion, dedication and camaraderie of the motorcycling community.

The group hopes to raise \$350,000 of the production budget through a Kickstarter campaign, with levels starting at \$5, which gets you a digital poster; to \$15, which gets you an early digital film download; up to \$75 or more, with increasing inclusions such as patches, pins, stickers, T-shirts and limited edition Blu-ray/DVD combo packs. Large-dollar donations range up to \$10,000, which earns you Co-Executive Producer status and a private theatrical showing in your home town.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.whyperide.com
www.goazmotorcycles.com
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• Lincoln Continental Concept

NEW YORK SHOW HIGHLIGHTS

NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL AUTO SHOW | APRIL 2015



Photo: Joe Sage

Hot on the heels of Geneva, which in turn follows the Los Angeles, Detroit and Chicago shows, comes the New York International Auto Show, in early April. Despite the gravitas of all the shows that came before, the manufacturers had plenty still in store for New York (General Motors and Toyota in particular seem to have saved up more reveals than average). In new models, there were some big leaps as well as evolutionary moves. Whereas 50 years ago, a lot of cars looked very different each year but were fundamentally the same, this year there are a number that look fundamentally the same but are highly revised. And of course there are concepts that for now are just dreams. Here are some highlights (alphabetically, with exceptions for the bigger photos at top):

- Cadillac—who had made quite a stir last year with the announcement that their headquarters would move from Detroit to New York—continues to develop both its lineup and its evolving name strategy, as they introduce the **2016 Cadillac CT6** rear-drive sedan, in the brand's return to the prestige luxury segment. Jumping in above the front-drive XTS, the aluminum-intensive CT6 claims the interior space of a BMW 7 Series in a car that's lighter than the 5 Series or the Mercedes-Benz E-Class. The Cadillac CT6 will put 400 hp at your fingertips from a highly-tuned 3.0L twin turbo V6—the first turbo with cylinder deactivation. There will also be a naturally aspirated 3.6L V6 and a 2.0L turbo four.
- This venerable nameplate has had surprising difficulty with sales in the biggest segment of all, midsize sedans. The all-new **2016 Chevrolet Malibu** is a complete restyling—well received by some, derivative to others—in a package that is larger, more fuel-efficient and delivers a more extensive range of driving, safety and connectivity technologies than before. A new hybrid, picking up certain technologies from the Chevy Volt, delivers an estimated 48 MPG city, 47 combined.
- We've done two reviews of this vehicle in the past, one in which we thought it was very clunky looking, and another in which its beauty showed through more, due largely to top-model trim and larger wheels. The **2016 GMC Terrain** shown in New York seems to have discovered both these tricks, plus a restyling that ties those boxy



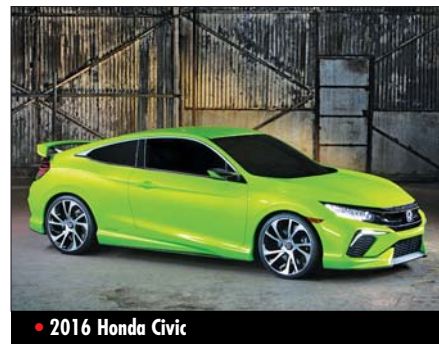
• 2016 Cadillac CT6



• 2016 Chevrolet Malibu



• 2016 GMC Terrain



• 2016 Honda Civic



• 2016 Jaguar XF



• 2016 Porsche Boxster Spyder

wheel arches together with front and rear bumpers/fascias at full width, creating a more handsome entry in this popular segment. Five trim levels, two engines and AWD on most trim levels together may seal the deal.

- The **Honda Civic Concept** turned a lot of heads, with its vivid green paint and its sharp new lines and overall sporty character, right down to a rear spoiler. Under the hood, it will be the first Honda to apply new VTEC turbo engines in North America. Expect this tenth generation version of this top-selling compact to enter production with only the most minimal of changes from concept, arriving in sedan, coupe, and 5-door hatchback bodies, with Si and Type-R versions.
- The all-new **2016 Jaguar XF** is a largely aluminum second generation version of probably our favorite Jaguar, sedan anyway. It had just been introduced in London, via a high-wire act crossing high above the Thames River, and came to New York to show off recognizably evolved styling on a car that has shed up to 265 pounds. The super-charged V6 and 8-speed automatic deliver up to 380 hp. Intelligence is applied to drive modes, all-wheel drive, safety features and entertainment systems up to a 12.3-inch touchscreen.
- The **2016 Kia Optima** is immediately recognizable, a good move after the smashing success of the prior generation introduced five significant years ago, but is in fact all new—longer, wider and stiffer for tighter and quieter performance. The new Optima will have three engine choices, including two turbos, one of which is a new 1.6-liter, in five trim levels again including the US-only SXL, and is built in the US. Feature and technology inclusions remain extensive.
- An all-new version of the biggest seller in the brand's history, the **2016 Lexus RX** will include an F SPORT on AWD models, as well as available adaptive suspension, and an extensive array of active safety systems combined into one pack-

age. Sheetmetal is dramatically revised, bringing an aggressive, powerful style atop available 20-inch wheels. Engine choices include a 300-hp direct-injection V6 in the RX 350 and an RX 450h hybrid V6 also with 300 hp.

- The **Lincoln Continental Concept** (top left) was one of the biggest show-stealers, bringing a solid new direction to this luxury brand that's been looking for its compass. Seeming to contain styling cues from several well-established European luxury marques, it does do its job, prompting a higher degree of wishing and dreaming than their recent reskinned Fords. The concept suggests everything from a 3-liter EcoBoost V6, to 21-inch painted-pocket wheels, to a 30-way driver's seat.
- The **2016 Mazda MX-5 Club** will be recognizable by its 17-inch gunmetal alloy wheels, front air dam, rear spoiler and piano black mirrors. When equipped with a manual transmission, it receives a limited-slip differential, Bilstein shocks and shock tower brace. A 7-inch touchscreen infotainment system with 9-speaker Bose audio and headrest speakers is also standard. Other performance and aero packages are also available for the Club.
- Mercedes-Benz previously revealed its new GLE, a new name for its top-selling SUV, the previous M-Class—including an AWD plug-in hybrid GLE550e 4MATIC and a GLE300d 4-cylinder diesel. Now meet the **2016 Mercedes-AMG GLE63 4MATIC**, its high-performance model sibling with a 5.5L twin turbo delivering 550 hp and a 0-to-60 time of 4.3 seconds, atop a revised chassis. A **GLE63 S 4MATIC** offers 577 hp and 60 mph in 4.2 seconds. Both are bargains next to the big **Mercedes-AMG G65**, whose price was announced in New York at \$217,900.
- As the brand experiences double-digit growth in its small slice of the American pie, the new **2016 Mitsubishi Outlander** jumps on the front



• 2016 Kia Optima



• 2016 Lexus RX



• 2016 Mazda MX-5 Club edition



• 2016 Mercedes-AMG GLE63 4MATIC



• 2016 Mitsubishi Outlander

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• Subaru STI Performance Concept



• 2016 Nissan Maxima



• 2016 Scion iM



• 2016 Toyota RAV4 Hybrid



• Volkswagen Beetle Special Edition concepts



• 2017 Volkswagen Golf SportWagen Alltrack

of that wave. Bearing style elements up front that include cues from both the prior generations, as well as elements of its more utilitarian forebears, and much more attractive work in the rear, the new Outlander bears over 100 design and engineering improvements. Larger wheels and an upgraded interior all add to the vehicle's longstanding value equation, as the brand now sets its sights on some of their highest-volume competitors.

• The **2016 Nissan Maxima**, an eighth-generation revision of a model we had found very attractive in its seventh—what Nissan calls its “four-door sports car”—is immediately distinguished from its predecessor by dramatic new sheetmetal, with notable creases and angles. The full-size front-drive executive car remains a solid value, with a 300-hp V6 and five trims starting at \$32,410 plus an extensive array of driver and safety technical features, as well as a chassis that is both lighter and stiffer than before.

• The **2016 Porsche Boxster Spyder** (top of previous page) brings this pure-sport entry into the new generation, with its trademark lighter weight, trimmer features, lower chassis and characteristic rear fins, wrapped around a 375-hp 3.8L six. Despite its stripped-down, power-prioritized nature—the trim Spyder does not have so much as a radio or A/C standard—this is the top Boxster model. The Spyder soft top is still manually operated, but now in a more traditional form, much easier to operate and stow.

• Largely unchanged from its reveal as a concept at the LA show, the **2016 Scion iM** 5-door hatchback is known to the rest of the world as the Toyota Auris, an evolution of the Corolla hatchback. The sporty Scion version has edgier body styling details, lowered suspension, 19-inch wheels and more performance-oriented brakes. It is expected to sell for just under \$20,000, get 37 MPG highway, and be available with either a 6-speed manual or faux-7-step CVT transmission. Also revealed was the subcompact **2016 Scion iA**, the brand's first sedan, built atop the Mazda2 chassis and promising 42 MPG

highway from a one-spec car in the \$16k range.

• Subaru showed off a planned US expansion of its STI performance lineup beyond the WRX, with a stunning **Subaru STI Performance Concept** coupe (above) built off the popular lightweight BRZ sports car, the brand's only rear-driver. With an engine based on the Subaru BRZ Super GT race car, the body and chassis are also upgraded.

• The **2016 Toyota RAV4 Hybrid** brings the brand's hybrid lineup—something people associate with the brand—to eight. There are four Prius models, two sedans, and this makes two SUV or crossover models. The new hybrid delivers not only higher fuel mileage than its conventional counterpart, but also promises to have more horsepower and quicker acceleration (both as of now unstated) from its alternative powertrain. This sounds like a win-win, but purchase price has not been announced. The hybrid will come in two of the regular RAV4's trims, the top two, and will be equipped with on-demand intelligent AWD.

• **Volkswagen Beetle Special Edition concepts** shown in New York honor 60 years of the car in the US—since 1949 but with a gap that becomes difficult to envision now—with four just-for-fun finishes including Beetle Convertible Denim, Beetle R-Line, Beetle Pink Color Edition (shown) and Beetle Convertible Wave (shown). Two coupes and two convertibles, the quartet display style and finish points that could make it into upcoming production models.

• Nameplate migration for wagons from Jetta to Golf seems complete with the **2017 Volkswagen Golf SportWagen Alltrack**, a do-it-all entry with wagon utility, electro-hydraulically activated 4MOTION all-wheel-drive, about an inch of additional ground clearance, a number of distinguishing style points such as wheel arch moldings, flared sills and new bumpers, and an upgraded interior. Large five-split-spoke alloy wheels add to the show car's aggressive stance and bearing. ■



Chrysler 200 new interiors

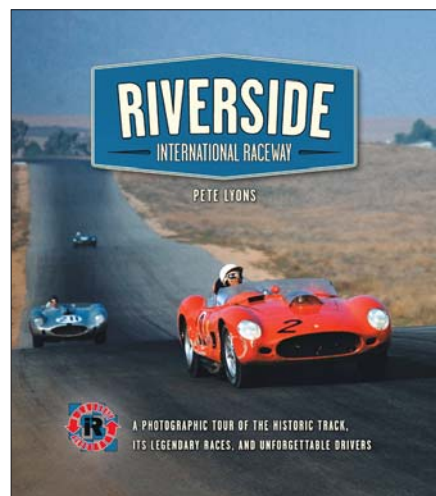
■ The 2015 **Chrysler 200** has two new interiors—an Ambassador Blue leather for the 200S, which joins existing choices of black leather or black cloth with Ambassador Blue leather trim. The 200C adds premium Mocha leather interior with heated and ventilated front seats, joining existing black or linen leather interiors. The Chrysler 200 has set a sales record in every month since September 2014, with year-to-date sales up 61 percent through March. Sales for March were up by 155 percent month-over-month, the new Chrysler 200's best month to date. Rocky Mountain Automotive Press (RMAP) recently name the 2015 Chrysler 200 "Car of the Year," and Texas Auto Writers Association (TAWA) recently name it "Mid-size Sedan of Texas." The Chrysler 200 lineup starts at just \$21,895.

■ **Audi and Marvel Studios** have joined forces once again in *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, in theaters as of May 1. The film features the next-generation Audi R8 (which made an earlier debut in *Iron Man*), Audi TTS and Audi A3 Cabriolet, alongside the next generation of Avengers characters. As part of the partnership, Audi is releasing exclusive digital content. Fans can view an extended online video at audi.com/MarvelsAvengers. Audi has also collaborated with Marvel's comic book creator Stan Lee to deliver fans a digital short comedy, available on Audi's YouTube channel.



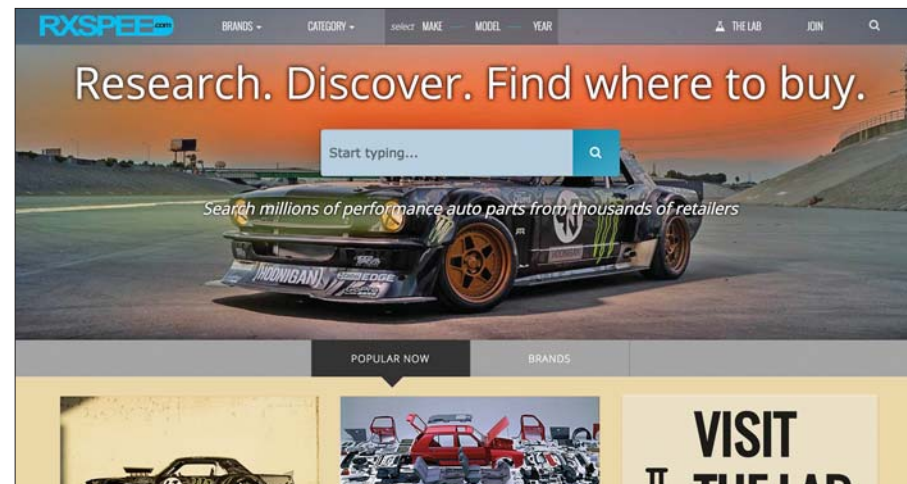
Tony Stark's Avengers Audi R8

■ **Kia** Motors America is donating \$75,000 to the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) to award 16 scholarships in the amount of \$4,000 each to eligible students attending an HACU-member institution. Established in 1986, HACU represents more than 400 colleges and universities committed to Hispanic higher education success, and its member institutions in the US are home to more than two-thirds of all Hispanic college students. To be eligible for the scholarship, students must have a 3.0



grade point average and already be accepted to one of the member schools. Recognizing that students who are the first in their family to attend college may face unique obstacles, Kia and HACU strongly encourage first-generation students to apply for the Kia scholarship.

■ Gearheads spend some \$33 billion per year—a lot of disposable income, but customers ready to spend have bogged down in research, on average visiting 5-6 websites researching parts, whether they buy



them online or not. This doesn't even include time spent with paper catalogs or in car club forums. **RxSpeed** promises to bridge the gap, with an easy-to-use search engine and interactive content featured in The Lab. RxSpeed is a one-stop shopping and comparison search engine exclusively targeting the automotive aftermarket, the only such site. It works much like Expedia or Kayak, but unlike direct seller Amazon, connecting consumers to suppliers and retailers. It has been a huge data management job, with 27 millions parts fitments and counting. Inquiries on additional investment and venture capital are welcome. Visit rxspeed.com.

■ The 2015 **Pirelli World Challenge** season finale is at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca, September 11-13. An impressive driver lineup will push the limits of the 11-turn, 2.238-mile road course and through the Corkscrew. The series, in its 26th season, has grown to include seven classes of sprint-format competition, with two rounds almost every weekend. Early races have been full, and three different winners in the top GT class in the first four rounds means competition is close and the field is wide open. Four GT classes will have Ferrari, McLaren, Aston Martin, Porsche, Bentley, BMW, Lamborghini, Acura, Cadillac, Nissan, Mercedes-Benz and Audi. Three TC classes host Mazda, Porsche, Nissan, Ford, Honda, Kia, Volvo, Volkswagen, Chevrolet, MINI and Scion.

■ The 2016 **Nissan** Maxima, revealed at the New York show, included a small but important new detail: a little amber coffee cup symbol that may appear in the center of the instrument panel—part of a

visual and audible warning from Nissan's new Driver Attention Alert (DAA) system, designed to help detect drowsy and inattentive driving. According to a 2014 AAA study, 37 percent of drivers report having fallen asleep while driving at some point in their lives, with 11 percent having done so in the past year. Survey results suggest that drowsy drivers are also involved in about 300,000 crashes each year, 6,400 of them fatal. DAA aims to address this. The system adapts to each individual driver, measuring steering input patterns to establish a baseline, then monitoring for inconsistent behavior. DAA logic addresses false detection, road curvature, lane changes, braking and even bad road conditions. It all resets when the engine is turned off or can be turned off by the driver if desired.



Pirelli World Challenge

■ **Las Vegas** welcomed a record 41.1 million visitors in 2014, about 1.4 million visitors up from the previous high of 39.7 million in 2012. The 2014 year-end statistics, from the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA), point to continued recovery for Las Vegas tourism, with increases in all of the key visitation indicators. Las Vegas tourism generates over \$45 billion in local economic impact and supports 376,000 local jobs.

■ A prototype of new STARLINK technology was displayed by **Subaru** at the New York show. Shown installed in a 2016 Forester (and in a kiosk show stand), the new in-vehicle platform provides hands-free connectivity, entertainment and safety services to vehicle occupants. Coming soon with built-in AT&T 4G LTE, it will deliver Sirius XM Connected Vehicle Services, including stolen vehicle recovery, automatic collision notification, remote vehicle services such as lock/unlock via smart-



phone and monthly diagnostic reports. Enhanced roadside assistance is available using the STARLINKs GPS system to pinpoint an exact vehicle location. STARLINK will be available in select 2016 model year Subaru vehicles starting later this year. ■

UPCOMING FEATURES

2016 Volvo XC90 launch, Southern California



MINI 4-door Cooper S



Mazda6



2016 Mitsubishi Outlander launch, Northern California



Kia Sorento



Mazda CX-5



NW Automotive Press Mudfest 2015, Olympic Peninsula



Midwest Automotive Media Spring Rally, Road America



Photo: NWAPA / Josh Mackey

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Barrett-Jackson Palm Beach | Russo Newport Beach



Monterey / Pebble Beach



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*Starting MSRP for a 2015 Audi A3 1.8T Premium. Model shown is a 2015 Audi A3 2.0T Prestige with 19" wheels and Sport pkg., starting MSRP \$43,250. Prices exclude destination, taxes, title, other options and dealer charges. \$489 Dealer Doc Fee. Dealer sets actual price. "Audi," "MMI," "quattro," "Truth in Engineering," all models names, and the four rings logo are registered trademarks of AUDI AG. ©2015 Audi of America, Inc.

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