

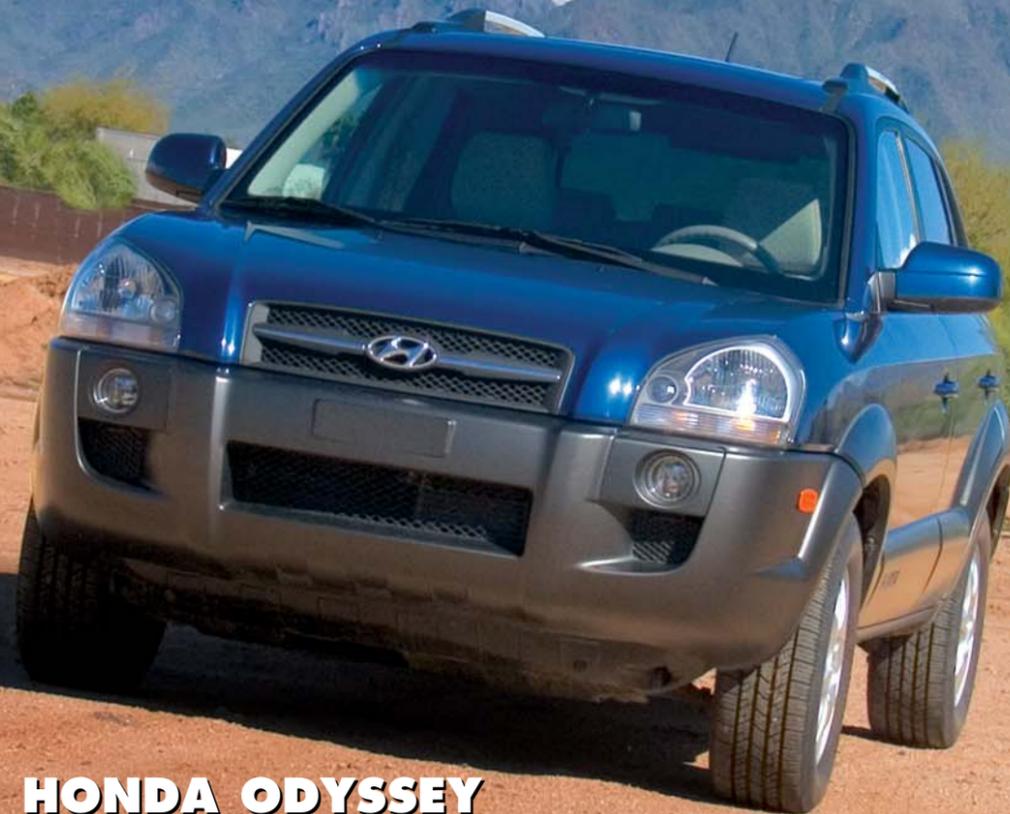
ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 4 NUMBER 2
MARCH-APRIL 2005

HYUNDAI TUCSON

New smaller size SUV



HONDA ODYSSEY

A benchmark minivan grows

HONDA CIVIC HYBRID

Squeezing out more economy than ever

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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8 It's still a good idea to lock your car and take the keys. The National Insurance Crime Bureau gives us some tips on protecting ourselves from auto theft.

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When the Union of Concerned Scientists speaks up, it's not a bad idea to listen, as they are intent on saving us from ourselves. They've given a major award to Honda.

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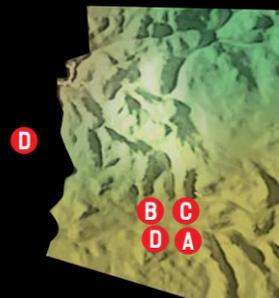
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COVER: Hyundai Tucson at the McDowell Mountains in Scottsdale.
Photo by Joe Sage



We test drive several interesting vehicles this month—each probably interesting to a different kind of owner, and each interesting for its own reasons. The Hyundai Tucson represents more momentum in the latest direction for the SUV craze: smaller. This is most definitely not the only direction of late, as the big 'uns are holding strong and in some cases even getting bigger. But after a few years of Tahoe, Expedition, Navigator and Escalade dominance, the developing wave of small and midsize and on-road and off-road and crossover and tall wagon and SUV-like and other sport utility and related vehicles offers something new.

And if there's nothing new under the sun, how does one explain the booming interest, by automakers and buyers alike—and it's sometimes difficult to tell which is motivating the other—in alternative fuels and gas/electric hybrid vehicles? Honda gave us the Insight a couple of years ago, and—as with the Toyota Prius—you know one when you see it coming, and it makes a certain clear statement. So what's next? How about a popular but mundane Honda Civic, reengineered as a hybrid? That's what they've brought us, and we give it a spin.

And there just might be something to this green automotive movement, as the Honda lineup has caught the eye of, and won the award from, the very serious Union of Concerned Scientists. Sure, they're concerned... but they see some hope here.

Honda also brought us their segment-leading Odyssey minivan, which, if you are seeking a minivan, remains a solid choice. It also has grown in capacity, considerably.

Enjoy the ride.



Joe Sage
Publisher/Executive Editor

ARIZONA DRIVER

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DESIGN & PRODUCTION: AdZoneAZ

ADVERTISING SALES: 480-948-0200

ARIZONA DRIVER MAGAZINE

PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY BY ADZONE ARIZONA LLC
Arizona Driver Magazine
PO Box 13387 - Scottsdale AZ 85267
www.azdrivermag.com

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

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6450 E Cave Creek Rd - Suite 105 - Cave Creek AZ 85331
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1. How many vehicles did the average national lender repossess per month in 2003?
a. 78 cars /month b. 184 cars /month
c. 372 cars /month d. 696 cars /month

2. What is the average annual household income of a Ferrari buyer?
a. \$500,000 to \$600,000
b. \$700,000 to \$800,000
c. \$1 to \$1.2 million
d. \$1.3 to \$1.4 million

3. What do the electronic components in the average US-produced car cost?
a. \$487 b. \$752
c. \$970 d. \$1,217

4. When driving while talking on cell phones, what percentage of subjects steer more accurately when using a headset, rather than holding the phone to their ear?
a. 71 percent b. 61 percent
c. 51 percent d. 41 percent

5. What was the car President Kennedy was riding in when he was assassinated?
a. 1961 Lincoln Continental convertible
b. 1962 Cadillac convertible
c. 1962 Lincoln Continental convertible
d. 1963 Lincoln Continental convertible

6. When did Dr. Wankel first patent the rotary engine, as used in the Mazda RX-8?
a. 1936 b. 1958
c. 1967 d. 1976

7. Which of the following cars has the fewest pounds of weight per horsepower?
a. Ferrari Enzo
b. Porsche Carrera GT
c. Ford GT
d. Lamborghini Murcielago

8. What product does Royal Purple make?
a. paints
b. synthetic lubricants
c. vehicle lighting systems
d. automotive cleaning products

9. How much does the auto industry spend on research and development annually?
a. \$900 million b. \$3.5 billion
c. \$10.1 billion d. \$18.3 billion

10. What is the horsepower of the new high performance BMW M5 sedan scheduled to come to the US in late 2005?
a. 455 hp b. 507 hp
c. 540 hp d. 602 hp

11. How many different vehicle classes does Mercedes-Benz offer for 2005?
a. Mercedes offers 8 vehicle classes
b. Mercedes offers 9 vehicle classes
c. Mercedes offers 10 vehicle classes
d. Mercedes offers 11 vehicle classes

12. Electronics control what percentage of all the systems of a typical new vehicle?
a. 51 percent b. 63 percent
c. 77 percent d. 86 percent

13. How much computer power does today's average car have compared to the Apollo moon mission in the 1960s and '70s?
a. About the same b. About 10x
c. About 100x d. About 1,000x

14. How many previous generation Corvette buyers took the heads-up display option?
a. 35 percent b. 55 percent
c. 75 percent d. 95 percent

15. Of Chrysler products with an available Hemi engine, which vehicle was sold with the largest percentage of the option?
a. Dodge Ram
b. Dodge Durango
c. Chrysler 300 & Dodge Magnum
d. Jeep Grand Cherokee

16. What was the top speed of the Toyota Prius Hybrid in its recent record setting runs at the Bonneville Salt Flats?
a. 99.794 mph
b. 112.794 mph
c. 130.794 mph
d. 141.794 mph

17. How many Ford F-Series pickups were sold in 2004 to set a new sales record?
a. 682,411 b. 852,653
c. 939,511 d. 989,222

18. Which car received the best EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) fuel economy rating for 2005?
a. Toyota Prius (hybrid)
b. Honda Civic (hybrid)
c. Volkswagen New Beetle (diesel)
d. Honda Insight (hybrid)

19. What sales position will Toyota be in the US within five years according to automotive consultants predictions?
a. First b. Second
c. Third d. Fourth

20. Which truck was picked by *Motor Trend* magazine as the 2005 Truck of the Year?
a. Toyota Tundra b. Dodge Dakota
c. Nissan Frontier d. Ford F-250/F-350
e. Hummer H2 SUT

21. What percentage of the respondents to a recent national survey said they had driven after drinking during the last year?
a. 5 percent b. 12 percent
c. 20 percent d. 27 percent

22. How much cleaner are the emissions of today's cars than the cars produced 35 years ago?
a. today's cars are 39 percent cleaner
b. today's cars are 59 percent cleaner
c. today's cars are 79 percent cleaner
d. today's cars are 99 percent cleaner

23. What is a new product called Alcantara® being used for on several new luxury cars?
a. paint b. seat fabric
c. floor mats d. custom car covers

24. What percentage of the near 17 million vehicles sold in the US 2004 were classified as trucks?
a. 48.2 percent b. 51.8 percent
c. 54.5 percent d. 59.7 percent

25. Which American concept car sold for a record \$3 million at the January Barrett-Jackson auction in Scottsdale?
a. 1954 Oldsmobile F88
b. 1956 Edsel
c. Ford GT
d. 1952 Chevrolet Corvette

26. Which car was listed as the greenest car sold in the US in 2004, according to GreenerCars.com ?
a. Honda Civic GX (CNG)
b. Honda Insight Hybrid
c. Toyota Prius Hybrid
d. Honda Civic Hybrid

27. How long is the waiting list for buyers to receive the new Bentley Continental GT?
a. 6 months b. 9 months
c. 12 months d. 15 months

>> ANSWERS (quiz on page 7) >>

1. Answer: d. According to the National Automotive Finance Association the average lender repossessed 696 new and used vehicles a month in 2003.
2. Answer: d. According to Maserati CEO Maurizio Parlato in an interview in *Automotive News*, the average Ferrari buyer has a household income of \$1.3 to \$1.4 million. The average Maserati buyer household income is between \$500,000 and \$600,000.
3. Answer: c. According to the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers US-produced vehicles have an average of about \$970 in electronic content.
4. Answer: a. According to a study measuring physical impairments drivers experience while using a mobile phone, researchers found that 71 percent of the test subjects steered more accurately when using a headset. They also found 100 percent of the subjects braked faster and 92 percent maintained a more consistent speed.
5. Answer: c. The car President Kennedy was riding in when he was assassinated in Dallas was a 1962 Lincoln Continental convertible. A private collector now owns it, but it will go on sale at RM Auctions Inc on January 28, 2005 and is expected to fetch at least \$500,000.
6. Answer: a. Dr. Wankel patented the original Wankel rotary engine, like the one that powers the current RX-8 sports car in 1936. Mazda first used the engine in 1967 in the Cosmo.
7. Answer: a. The Ferrari Enzo has the lowest pounds to horsepower ratio of the cars listed with 5.0 pounds per horsepower (pph). (Porsche 5.4 pph. Ford GT 6.3 pph. Lamborghini 6.4 pph. The really exotic McLaren F1 is 3.9 pph.)

8. Answer: b. Royal Purple makes a wide range of high performance synthetic lubricants for nearly every consumer and industrial application.

9. Answer: d. According to the Alliance of Automotive Manufacturers, in the most recent year reported 2000, the auto industry spent \$18.3 billion on research and development. That's more than any other industries including computer, electronics and pharmaceuticals.

10. Answer: b. The new BMW M5 high performance sedan is powered by a V-10 engine rated at 5.0-liter 507 horsepower engine and uses the latest version of BMW's 7-speed sequential gearbox.

11. Answer: c. For 2005 the Mercedes-Benz press book lists 10 different classes, including the exotic SLR, for 2005: C, E, S, CL, CLK, SL, SLK, G, M and SLR.

12. Answer: d. According the Alliance of Auto Manufacturers, 86 percent of all systems of a typical car are now controlled by electronics.

13. Answer: d. According to The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers a typical car today has about 1,000 times more computing power than the Apollo spacecraft that landed men on the moon.

14. Answer: d. Of those buying the last generation Chevrolet Corvette, 95 percent ordered the head-up display option that displays a speedometer, tachometer and other functions on the windshield so the driver need not take his eyes off the road.

15. Answer: b. Since the Hemi V-8 engine became available in certain Chrysler products 54 percent of Dodge Durangos have been sold with the optional Hemi. (Dodge Ram 46 percent. Chrysler 300C and Dodge Magnum 43 percent. Jeep Grand Cherokee 29 percent.)

16. Answer: c. The Toyota Prius Hybrid recently set a world hybrid speed record of 130.794 mph at the Bonneville Salt Flats.

17. Answer: c. Ford sold a record 939,511 F-Series trucks in 2004 beating the previous record of 911,597 in 2001.

18. Answer: d. The two-seat Honda Insight hybrid with manual transmission has the best EPA fuel economy rating for 2005: 61 mpg city/66 mpg highway. (Toyota Prius automatic 60/51. Honda Civic Hybrid manual 46/51. Volkswagen New Beetle manual 38/46.)

19. Answer: c. Expert automotive consultants are predicting that Toyota will move up from the fourth place sales position to bump DaimlerChrysler out of third place in the US within five years. The company is expected to take market share in all its existing product lines: Toyota, Lexus and Scion.

20. Answer: a. The Toyota Tundra was picked as the *Motor Trend* 2005 Truck of the Year out of the five eligible new trucks, which included the Nissan Frontier, Ford F-250/F-350, Hummer SUT and Dodge Durango.

21. Answer: c. According to a new poll by the legal Web site FindLaw.com 20 percent of the respondents said they had driven after having more than one alcoholic drink during the last year.

22. Answer: d. According to The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers today's cars are 99 percent cleaner than the cars produced 35 years ago.

23. Answer: b. Alcantara® is a new suede-like fabric made in Italy. It is currently being used on the seats of select BMW, Audi and Lexus models. The fabric is made from synthetic materials including polyester and resists staining, fading and matting. According to the manufacturer the thread is so light that a thread 1,500 miles long would only weigh one ounce.

24. Answer: c. According to *Automotive News*, 54.5 percent of the 16,912,613 vehicles sold in 2004 were trucks. The truck category also includes sport utility vehicles, minivans and some crossovers in addition to the regular pickup trucks.

25. Answer: a. The Olds F-88 concept sold for a record \$3 million at the January Barrett Jackson auction in Scottsdale this year. It was designed by General Motors's godfather of automotive design, Harley J. Earl, and unveiled at the 1954 Motorama. Many auto historians consider the F-88 to be an archetype of modern car design with a racy fiberglass body, bullet taillights, open top and lightweight structure. Due to lukewarm sales of the newly released 1954 Corvette, GM refused to give the green light for its Oldsmobile division to produce another sports car.

26. Answer: a. With a score of 57 GreenerCars.com in their annual rating ranked the natural gas powered Honda Civic GX as the greenest car sold in the US for 2004. (Honda Insight 56. Toyota Prius 53. Honda Civic Hybrid 51.) The greenest ratings are based on emission and fuel economy ratings.

27. Answer: c. Buyers who have placed a deposit on the new Bentley Continental GT currently have to wait about 12 months to take delivery on the \$160,000 coupe. Last year Bentley sold between 5,000 and 5,500 cars worldwide and expects to sell 6,000 in 2005. ■

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



NEW PORSCHE 911 CABRIOLETS ARE NOW READY

Porsche has launched the Cabriolet version of the new 911 and 911S Carreras. Both models are equipped with an electronic soft top that can be deployed at speed up to 30 mph. Both cars are the best in class for aerodynamic efficiency with a low 0.29 coefficient of drag. The engines are the same as in the coupe, a 3.6-liter 325 hp for the Carrera and 3.8-liter 355 hp for the S with performance levels the same or close to the coupe levels despite the extra 180 pound weight. The safety gear is the same as in the coupe, plus there are two ultra-strong steel tubes in the A-pillars and two supplemental safety bars located behind the rear seats that automatically deploy in a rollover situation. Pricing is \$79,100 for the Carrera Cabriolet and the \$115,650 for the Carrera S Cabriolet. They are expected to be available in mid March in the US. ▼



Porsche 911 Carrera Cabriolet and Porsche 911 Carrera S Cabriolet



Honda Ridgeline

Honda claims to have approached the whole pickup truck concept with a clean slate. The result: much innovation and some "Well, is it a...?" questions.

TOYOTA ALL-HYBRID FLEET?

Based on customer demand, Toyota's senior managing director in charge of product development, design, R&D and technical administration says "in 20 or 40 years" all Toyota's lineup will be based on hybrids. "That's our intention," he said, "And it won't just be Toyota. All makers will have hybrids." Toyota has plans to develop hybrid versions of every nameplate it makes, although a schedule has not been set. The Japanese media reported a hybrid Camry coming in 2006, a hybrid Lexus LS in 2007 and a Corolla hybrid by 2008. They are also considering a hybrid version of the Sienna minivan, which is built in the US.

MICHELIN ACTIVE WHEEL TECHNOLOGY

Tire maker Michelin and French automaker Peugeot are exploring a new take on an old technology of mounting an electric motor inside a wheel to drive the vehicle. The wheel-mounted propulsion system eliminates the need for traditional components linked to a central engine, transmission, clutch, driveshaft and anti-roll bar. It's also easy to adapt anti-lock braking and dynamic stability control to such a system. With all these parts removed from a vehicle, it would allow designers to build smaller cars with larger

interiors. The technology is being developed for use with new hydrogen fuel cell systems to create the power for the electric drive systems. Michelin has already demonstrated the system complete with electronic traction system, active suspension and disc brakes, all incorporated into what they call Active Wheel Technology.

HONDA'S TRUCK AVAILABLE IN MARCH

▲ Honda will be one of the last automakers to jump into the pickup truck pool when it rolls out its new Ridgeline truck in March. Debuting as one of the first 2006 models, the Ridgeline takes advantage of a new body construction and steel reinforce composite bed to deliver true truck capabilities including 1,100-pound payload and 5,000-pound towing capability. The Ridgeline is the first truck with fully independent suspension. It also has automatic four-wheel drive and a high-output 255-hp 3.5-liter VTEC V-6 engine with a five-speed automatic transmission. The dual action tailgate can be lowered like a conventional tailgate, or opened sideways like a car door to provide easier. (Yes the bed is wide enough to haul four-foot-wide building material—flat.) The four-door pickup has full-size truck interior space

including the most generous rear seat legroom for a four-door pickup. Under the large rear seat there's enough room to hold a set of golf clubs. Prices should range from about \$27,000 to \$32,000.

VW OFFERS FREE CAR INSURANCE

Volkswagen is offering a year of free car insurance as an incentive for new car buyers. The pilot program called "In the Car" is being offered through March 31 at 43 dealerships in Illinois and Wisconsin. Customers must buy or lease a new 2004 or 2005 Golf, New Beetle or New Beetle convertible to qualify for the program. The offer is open to licensed drivers in those states even if they have infractions on their records. The full coverage policy is valued somewhere between \$1,300 and \$3,000 for the annual policy. The plan offers a standard plan with normal limits and a \$500 collision damage deductible. If it helps sales in these states, we might see the program expanded to others.

MERCEDES V-6 DIESEL TO M-CLASS

Mercedes-Benz has developed a new V-6 diesel engine for use in the new M-class SUV. The new model does not have

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Range Rover Sport

LAND ROVER ADDS SPORT MODEL

Land Rover has announced a new Range Rover Sport model designed for fast, comfortable long-distance driving. Developed as a true performance vehicle, the fifth nameplate in the Land Rover brand gets its power from a 390 hp 4.2-liter supercharged V-8 derived from its sister Jaguar brand. The Sport has excellent on-road dynamics, delivered through a new Dynamic Response suspension system and performance-tuned chassis. The system senses cornering forces and acts to optimize body control and handling, and it automatically deactivates when going off-road to allow greater wheel articulation during tough all-terrain driving. The 2006 Range Rover Sport debuts at the North American International Auto Show in January and will be available in summer 2005. Prices have yet to be announced, but will probably be between \$90,000 and \$100,000. ▼



Hyundai Sonata

The Koreans have come on strong with generous warranties and broad lineups, but their evolving style is about to make them very serious contenders.

>> AUTO NEWS UPDATE - cont'd

enough room for the current in-line six-cylinder Mercedes diesel. The M-Class diesel, which will be available this spring in Europe, is rated at 224 horsepower and 377 lb.ft. of torque, making it a little more powerful than the current in-line six used in the E-class sedan. The common-rail injector engines have four-valve technology and variable-geometry turbochargers. Mercedes has not indicated how soon the new diesel will be offered in the US, but it will likely correspond with the introduction of the lower sulphur fuel mandated for 2006.

MERCEDES AND BMW "86" 42-VOLTS

The last few years the auto industry was talking about the need to convert vehicle electrical systems from 12-volts to 42-volt systems to handle electrical demands from new electric steering, suspension, climate control and other systems. Because of the complexity and high cost of converting all existing systems over to the higher voltage those plans have been scrapped. Also the 42-volt system is not compatible with hybrid systems, which work on a maximum 500-volts. As a result Mercedes-Benz and BMW have both decided to drop plans for such a

costly change. They have not indicated how they plan to deal with the need for additional electrical power that is expected to climb from the current 3-kilowatt level to the estimated 8-kilowatts needed handle the new features.

HYUNDAI SONATA UPSIZE & UPSCALE

▲ The 2006 Hyundai Sonata is not only going to be larger than the current model, but it will be the best-looking Hyundai sedan ever. The Sonata will be longer and wider overall, with a longer wheelbase, all of which will move it up in size to a full-midsize category to compete directly with the Toyota Camry, Honda Accord and Nissan Altima. The standard engine is a 163-hp 2.4-liter four-cylinder with an optional 226-hp 3.3-liter V-6. It gets standard 17-inch wheels for all models and the V-6 will get dual exhausts.

MAD MAPS FOR BEST BACK ROADS

Drivers that like to seek out great back roads to drive should pickup a copy of Mad Map™. The young San Francisco-based company has produced five regional maps (four of California areas and a new one of the Smoky Mountains and Southern Appalachia). The large colorful maps show different back road routes that are not only scenic, but also fun to drive or ride a

motorcycle on. Each loop route is also documented with turn-by-turn directions so it's not necessary to have the map always spread out. Each map is tailored to the area and has lists of roadside attractions, campgrounds, great places to eat and other useful information about the area. The San Francisco Bay area map also has city routes and information about where famous movies were filmed, where to go for all types of entertainment and the city's colorful history. The Mad Map people tell me they are moving quickly to expand the areas covered and have a bunch of new maps slated for release in spring and fall 2005. Mad Maps can be ordered online at madmaps.com or at Barnes and Noble and Borders bookstores.

CHRYSLER 300 EYES LIMO MARKET

Chrysler officials are trying to decide whether or not to offer an option package that would facilitate the stretching of the Chrysler 300 sedan to build limousines. A 300 stretched by 6 inches was shown at the recent Specialty Equipment Manufacturers Association show in Las Vegas. The Chrysler group design chief, Trevor Creed, said Chrysler would not stretch the 300s, but is considering selling them to

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MazdaSpeed6

MAZDASPEED6 TAKES MAZDA TO NEW LEVEL

Come summer Mazda will roll out its latest performance model, the MazdaSpeed6. The sedan derived from the standard Mazda6 sedan will feature supersized lower air dam, beefed-up side sills and the trademark five-point grille accentuated with a thick crossbar. The rear gets new taillights and dual exhausts while inside there are heavily bolstered bucket seats. Under the hood the mostly new 2.3-liter direct-injection turbocharged four-cylinder engine produces 274-hp and 280-lb.ft of torque over the full range from 2000 to 6000 rpms. The power drives all wheels through an all-new wide-ratio six-speed manual transmission. Initial manufacturer performance figures showed 0 to 62 acceleration figures of 6.6 seconds. The price of the MazdaSpeed 6 is estimated at just under \$30,000 with production limited to 5000 units. ▼



Mercedes-Benz AA Vision concept

The AA Vision concept vehicle from the 1996 NAIAS in Detroit previewed the M-Class. The next M-Class should look a lot more like this original vision.

>> AUTO NEWS UPDATE - cont'd

the aftermarket coach builders without headliners and rear-door trim panels. The 300 is attractive because it costs less than the Cadillac or Lincolns that dominate the market segment and everyone seems to like the looks of the 300. Currently the Lincoln Town Car makes up about 80 percent of the sedan limousine business. Creed said Chrysler is not hurrying to make a decision on the option because they can't build enough cars to satisfy current customer demand.

NO 300 CONVERTIBLE PLANNED

Trevor Creed, Chrysler senior vice president of design says Chrysler does not plan to build a factory convertible version of the new 300, but look for one at the Detroit auto show in January created by American Specialty Cars of Southgate, Michigan. Creed says Chrysler does not plan to do a convertible because of the engineering changes required to create a four-door convertible body. Chrysler engineers are working with American Specialty to develop the show car, the aftermarket convertible company will not confirm if they plan to build production versions of the four-door convertible.

NEXT-GEN MERCEDES M-CLASS SPOTTED

▲ The next generation Mercedes-Benz M-Class SUV shows an "edgier" and sportier design than the original. It's about the same size with only one available wheelbase, which is contrary to earlier rumors. The ladder frame has been replaced by a lighter unibody construction. The interior is of higher quality with a contemporary soft-touch dashboard material, more room and improved versatility. Cargo capacity is increased to about 23 cubic feet behind the rear seat and to 77 cubic feet with the seat folded. The engines are the new four valves per cylinder V-6 and V-8 models with the 3.5-liter V-6 rated at 272 hp and the 5.0-liter 292 hp. The V-8 will be replaced later by a 4.6-liter V-8 producing 325 hp and eventually there will be another level V-8 with a 5.5-liter producing 410 hp. An AMG version is also in the works with a 6.3-liter V-8 rated at about 465 hp. All the new M-Class models will get the new Mercedes 7-speed automatic transmission. It's due at North American dealerships in April 2005.

NEW AUTO RACING MAGAZINE

Twice in 2005 Time Inc. will offer a new magazine aimed at NASCAR fans. To be called *Racing Fan*, the magazine will be

aimed at a broad market of racing fans. It will offer first person accounts of NASCAR races by drivers and crew chiefs, extensive photo essays and other news on racing personalities. About half the editorial content will be devoted to non-NASCAR topics. Time has no relationship with NASCAR. The initial press run is set at 250,000 copies. If it proves successful, look for *Racing Fan* to go monthly.

EPA GREEN LIGHT FOR ROMANIAN SUV

After a series of delays, Cross Lander USA has announced it will start selling its 1950s-era military SUVs in the United States by June this year at a base price of \$20,000. The latest delay was waiting for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approval but other reports have indicated financial problems. The 244X is a US-spec four-wheel-drive vehicle designed especially for off-road use where owners are not worried about keeping their vehicle pretty. The Cross Lander 244X is powered by a German-built Ford 4-liter V-6 engine and uses an Eaton Corp transmission and other components built in the US Cross Lander claims to have signed up 140 dealers since it announced intentions to sell the

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SUV in the US. They also said they plan to sell at least 6,000 units in the US annually plus have plans to sell the 244x in the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

CHINESE CAR TO US IN 2 YEARS?

Malcolm Bricklin, the man who brought Subaru and Yugo to the US, as well as creating the Bricklin gull-wing sports car in 1974-1976, is now helping bring Chinese-built Chery cars to North America. Bricklin said he plans to sign up 250 dealers by the end of 2005 and launch sales in January 2007. Auto industry sources are skeptical about Bricklin's ability to make the plan work because Chery Automobile Co. sales have been declining recently and they only sold 91,000 vehicles last year. Bricklin plans to offer five models in 2007: entry-level, sedan, coupe, crossover and SUV. Bricklin's plan calls for sales of 250,000 the first year at prices 30 percent below comparable vehicles in the US market. He also plans to offer a 10-year/100,000 mile warranty.

ENGINES LEAD 2ND-GEN MINI CHANGES

BMW plans to change the engines in its popular Mini Coopers in 2007 when it introduces the second generation of the small coupe. A new range of all-aluminum, twin cam four-cylinder engines developed out of a partnership between BMW and Peugeot includes a normally aspired version and two turbocharged models. The engines will get BMW's variable valve timing and other controls inspired by the BMW six-cylinder engines. The new models will get few other major changes with the platform unchanged, the body a hair larger and it will retain its go-kart style handling. The interior will be similar, but with higher quality materials.

NEXT JAGUAR XK BORROWS FROM XJ

The next generation Jaguar XK sports car will be built on the same bonded aluminum underpinnings as the XJ sedan. The new version has been spied testing in England near Jaguar's Coventry engineering center. It appears to be about the same length as the current model, but it has a longer wheelbase and shorter rear overhang. The new design also appears

more sculptured than the smooth flowing lines of the current model. The suspension, also adapted from the XJ, features wishbones in the front and multilink axle in the rear. Engines will be the same 300-horsepower 4.2-liter V-8 along with a supercharged 400-hp version. The only transmission will be a six-speed automatic. The XK8 coupe debuts this fall at the Frankfurt show and the convertible at the Los Angeles or Detroit show in 2006 with US sales starting in the summer of 2006.

CHRYSLER AND FORD GET AWARDS

Chrysler scored another prestigious award in January when the jury of 48 journalists at the North American International Auto Show at Detroit picked the Chrysler 300 as the 2005 North American Car of the Year. In December the 300 was awarded the *Motor Trend* magazine 2005 Car of the Year. The Chrysler pooled 313 points beating out the new Ford Mustang, which had 256 points, and Chevrolet Corvette with 108 points. The Ford Escape Hybrid, which is the first hybrid SUV, beat out two other Ford products to take the top honor with 232 points. The Ford-owned Land Rover LR3 got 163 points, followed by the Ford Freestyle sport wagon with 148 points.

AMG ENGINES GO TO TWIN TURBO

The days of the super fast 5.4-liter supercharged Mercedes-Benz V-8 engine are numbered, with the last installation going into the upcoming CLS55 AMG that is due out later this year. The replacement engine will be a twin-turbo version of the new 32-valve modular V-8. The first application of the engine is a 268-horsepower, 24-valve V-6 that is being used in the new SLK350. The V-8 version will be direct fuel injection with twin-turbochargers. According to *Motor Trend* magazine, a Mercedes insider says the twin turbo should produce about 536-horsepower. For big jobs Mercedes keep the current twin turbo V-12 that produces 612-horsepower with a ground stomping 737 lb.ft. of torque. With that kind of torque the only constraints are getting transmissions that will handle it all.

SATURN L OUT, UPSCALE AURA IN

The Saturn L sedan, which was discontinued in the summer of 2004, will be



Ford Fairlane concept

Resembling somewhat of a "MINI grande" with its white roof, the Fairlane concept readdresses a lot of what people have assumed required a minivan.

replaced by the summer of 2006 with a new upscale sedan called the Aura. The Aura debuted as a concept at the 2005 Detroit auto show, but insiders say the final street version will look nearly the same. The styling takes cues from the new Saturn Sky roadster that goes on sale late in 2005 or early 2006. The front-wheel drive powertrain for the Aura includes a 250-hp 3.5-liter DOHC V-6, a six-speed automatic transmission and 19-inch polished alloy wheels. Interior features include Rustica leather seats that are designed to resemble expensive furniture, metallic and chrome trim and a four-panel sunroof like the one on the new Pontiac G6. A 300-hp Red Line Performance version is possible after the launch of the standard model.

GM DROPS GMC XUV

General Motors has announced it will discontinue production of the innovative GMC XUV sport utility on March 31. The XUV is a long wheelbase SUV with a power sunroof-like top over the cargo area that opened to allow tall cargo to be carried. It also has a removable Midgate

that allows the cargo area to be sealed from the front compartment or opened to expand the cargo space into the second row seating area. While the XUV was popular with a limited number of buyers, most SUV consumers seemed to opt for the 7-passenger seating capacity.

FORD TO CHANGE MINIVAN APPROACH

▲ Ford is looking for a way to get out of the traditional minivan business and possibly replace the current slow-selling Ford Freestar and Mercury Monterey with a new "people mover" called the Fairlane. Shown recently at the Detroit show, the Fairlane has SUV-inspired styling and is shorter than the conventional minivans, but has more interior space. It's built on the versatile Mazda6 platform in an all-wheel drive configuration. If Ford moves on the concept, look for the Fairlane, or something similar at dealerships by 2008. ■

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



More sibling rivalry: the Hyundai Santa Fe gets a very capable baby brother, big on the inside, and this time named for Arizona

by Barbara and Bill Schaffer

It's time to buy a new car and you're really bewildered by the choices. Your adventurous side romantically eyes the popular SUVs, but you really don't need something that big and don't like the idea of \$60 and \$80 tanks of gas. Your sensible side sees you in a nice mid-size sedan but you're thinking you want something sportier, this time.

Why not check out the new compact sized Hyundai Tucson SUV? It has about the same interior space as a Ford Taurus and about twice the cargo area, even before folding down the rear seat. It has rugged good looks, the desirable higher ride height, better than average fuel economy and one of the best warranties in the business.

Hyundai seems to have a thing for Southwestern US cities when it comes to naming their sport utility vehicles. The new Tucson SUV joins its slightly larger brother the Santa Fe, doubling the Hyundai SUV stable to better compete with SUVs like the Mitsubishi Outlander, Toyota RAV 4 and the Honda CR-V.

A 2.7-liter DOHC V-6 rated at 173 horsepower powers the mid-level Tucson GLS we drove and the upper level LX.

Both models are standard front-wheel drive with a four-speed automatic transmission with Shiftronic, which allows the driver to manually shift if desired. The entry level GL has a 2.0-liter DOHC four-cylinder with a Continuously Variable Valve Timing (CVVT) and standard five-speed manual transmission. Four-wheel drive is an option with either engine.

The V-6 models come with a nice looking dual exhaust system that adds to the sportiness of the Tucson.

With an athletic and masculine appearance, the new Hyundai not only delivers good looks, but versatility and utility specifically designed to fulfill the consumer's needs. Looking at it from the rear, we thought that it resembled the BMW X3 a little.

The interior offers a great deal of space, with thought for the needs of the driver and passengers. With fold-flat rear and front passenger seats, the Tucson presents a large cargo space with a variety of cargo configurations.

A handy feature is the reversible rear cargo mat that is plastic on one side and can be hosed off for easy cleanup. A number of tie-downs are also incorp-

The new Hyundai Tucson is of course covered by The Hyundai Advantage, which includes a 10-year/100,000-mile powertrain warranty.

Cupholders are swell, and most brands provide plenty of those currently, but the Tucson also goes all out with power outlets. You can use your laptop, iPod or roadside power tools from just about anywhere in the vehicle, front seat, back seat or rear storage area. But they didn't neglect the cups: door pockets have a special contour for bottle- or cupholding, a clever idea that gives owners far more flexibility than one-purpose cupholders.

orated into the cargo area to keep gear and baggage from shifting.

Our front-wheel-drive test vehicle was perfect for our warm climate, but buyers who spend time in snowy climates will want the four-wheel drive option (\$1,500). A Borg-Warner Electronic Inter-Active Torque Management system drives the front wheels under normal conditions, but when road conditions or torque demands change, the system automat-



KEEP RIGHT >>



Hyundai Tucson GLS

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Traction control system; Electronic Stability Control; 16-Inch alloy wheels; Roof rack side rails; Fog lights; Privacy glass; AM/FM/Cassette/CD/MP3 stereo; Air conditioning; Wiper deicer; Power heated mirrors; Power windows & locks; Keyless entry; Cruise; Rear cargo cover and tray.

Base Price..... \$19,999

Optionsnone

Freight.....\$595

Price as Tested.....\$20,594

DIMENSIONS

EPA SizeSpec. Purp

Weight.....3,370 lb.

Wheelbase103.5 in.

Length.....170.3 in.

Width.....72.1 in.

Height68.1 in.

Fuel Capacity17.2 gal.

Cargo Capacity 11.5 to 39.9 cu. ft.

MECHANICAL

Engine2.7L DOHC V-6

Horsepower173@6000

Torque178@4000

Transmission4-Spd. Auto

DriveFront wheel

BrakesDisc ABS

Tires235/60R16

PERFORMANCE

0 to 60 mph.....est. 10.0 sec.

EPA economy rating20/26 mpg

Our actual fuel econ23.9 mpg

COMPETITORS

Chevrolet Equinox, Ford Escape, Honda CR-V, Honda Element, Jeep Liberty, Kia Sportage, Mazda Tribute, Mitsubishi Outlander, Saturn Vue, Suzuki Grand Vitara, Toyota RAV4

Every SUV does a variant of this trick (left page). The Hyundai's mechanisms are very accessible and easy to operate. We'd prefer the seats to fold flat in case of a need to sleep in the back. The shelf unit offers a combination of utility and security. It all folds up into a trim package (above).

ically diverts up to 50 percent of the available power to the rear wheels and continues to automatically route the power to the wheels with the best traction. The driver also has the option of manually locking the driveline into 4WD for a 50/50 torque split.

All three models are very well equipped, with standard air conditioning, power windows and door locks, remote entry and alarm system, power dual remote control heated outside mirrors, roof rack and side rails plus more, for the entry GL price of \$18,094.

The GLS adds the 6-cylinder engine, cruise control, upgraded fabric seats, AM/FM with CD, cassette and MP3 player and leather wrapped steering wheel for a base price of \$20,594. The LX model adds an in-dash CD changer and leather seating for \$21,844. All prices are for 2-wheel drive systems and include delivery charges.

Performance levels for the V-6 version were good, but nothing to write home about with 0-to-60 mph acceleration coming in an estimated 10.0 seconds. We recorded 69 mph in our acceleration test, which we run about one-eighth mile.

The EPA rates fuel economy at 20 mpg for city driving and 26 mpg on the highway. We averaged 23.9 mpg during our

week of driving.

For a small SUV, the Tucson offers a solid quiet ride even during hard acceleration or over rough roads.

Hyundai has not skimped on safety equipment on the new Tucson. They have included on all models four-wheel disc brakes, dual front airbags, dual side-impact airbags, dual side curtain airbags, traction control system and child seat anchors among others. It even has standard Electronic Stability Control and traction control.

We would take a hard look at the Hyundai Tucson if we were shopping for a new car in the \$20,000 range. It has a spacious, flexible interior that can be easily expanded to nearly 40 cubic feet. The car-like ride makes it comfortable for four adults, or five with some crowding in the rear. Interior materials and fit and finish are good. We like that it sits lower to the ground, giving it a lower center of gravity that feels safer than high-riding SUVs. All this and an outstanding warranty make the Tucson a good value and a good alternative to the traditional sedan or even to the larger SUVs.

Hyundai is making a positive impression on us, and the Tucson is one more vehicle added to the impressive Hyundai collection. ■

OUR DRIVE

While Bill and Barbara hit the open road, we took a second Hyundai Tucson around metro Phoenix. It would have been great to take it on the I-17 or Beeline climb, to see what its 173hp can do under load, and to see how its traction and clearance do in the dirt. But we are generally able to get a fair sampling locally. Zero to 60 in the 10-second range is not impressive, but for an eminently affordable small SUV, the Tucson has plenty of pep for normal freeway ramping. Once in motion, the little rig is solid and stable, handling lane changes or sharper turns on the surface streets just fine. And short overhangs front and rear give it a significant edge on rougher roads. You get what you pay for, or quite a bit more.

Big news with the Tucson comes in its upgraded quality, packaging, styling and features. It seems to us for some time that the Koreans are quickly studying the competition, studying the US market, and developing corrections and improvements every step of the way.

We never fell for big brother Santa Fe, and we admit disliking its appearance, like a chipmunk with its little cheeks all chock full of nuts for the winter. Looks are nothing, but with a lot of competition in the field, it's easy to look elsewhere. And the Hyundai warranty is stellar, but of course our cynical side made us figure either they really needed it, or at least that they needed it for marketing reasons (which is actually a really good thing for the consumer who locks into the deal).

We never spent enough time in a Santa Fe to compare interior features. But we do know this: the Tucson looks great ... the Tucson has the same stellar warranty, but has all the feel and appearance (as noted on the rest of the Hyundai lineup) of a vehicle with far better build quality than just a few years ago ... and the Tucson has so many detail features that we're hard pressed to create a wish list for more. More small SUVs are on the way, for reasons of fashion and economy both, but for a company that does such careful study of its competition, in this niche Hyundai is doing a good job of leading the way. ■

Arizona

ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

Chiricahua State Park

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

Grand Canyon National Park

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

Lake Havasu State Park

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

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument

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

Petrified Forest National Park

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

Saguaro National Park

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

Sport Compact Drag Racing

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

Wupatki National Monument

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

California

ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

Palm Desert Visitor Information Center

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

MOTOR MUSEUMS

Petersen Automotive Museum

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

Colorado

ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

Colorado Activity Centers, Inc.

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

MOTOR MUSEUMS

Shelby American Collection

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

Nevada

ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

Las Vegas Tourism Bureau

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

MOTOR MUSEUMS

Imperial Palace Auto Collections

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

National Automobile Museum

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

New Mexico

ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

New Mexico Department of Tourism

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

Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce

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

RESORTS / LODGING

Inn on La Loma Plaza

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

Inn on the Alameda

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

Utah

ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

San Juan County Tourism

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

Southern Utah Scenic Tours

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

RESORTS / LODGING

Desert Rose Inn & Cabins

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

Mexico

RESORTS / LODGING

Puerto Peñasco Mexico Online

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

ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

Baja California State Tourism Office

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

Chihuahua State Tourism Office

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

Sinaloa State Tourism Office

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

Sonora State Tourism Office

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

Of national interest

MOTOR MUSEUMS

Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village

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

Imperial Palace Auto Collections

(see Nevada listings)

Motorcycle Hall of Fame Museum

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

National Automobile Museum

(see Nevada listings)

National Corvette Museum

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

Petersen Automotive Museum

(see California listings)

Shelby American Collection

(see Colorado listings)



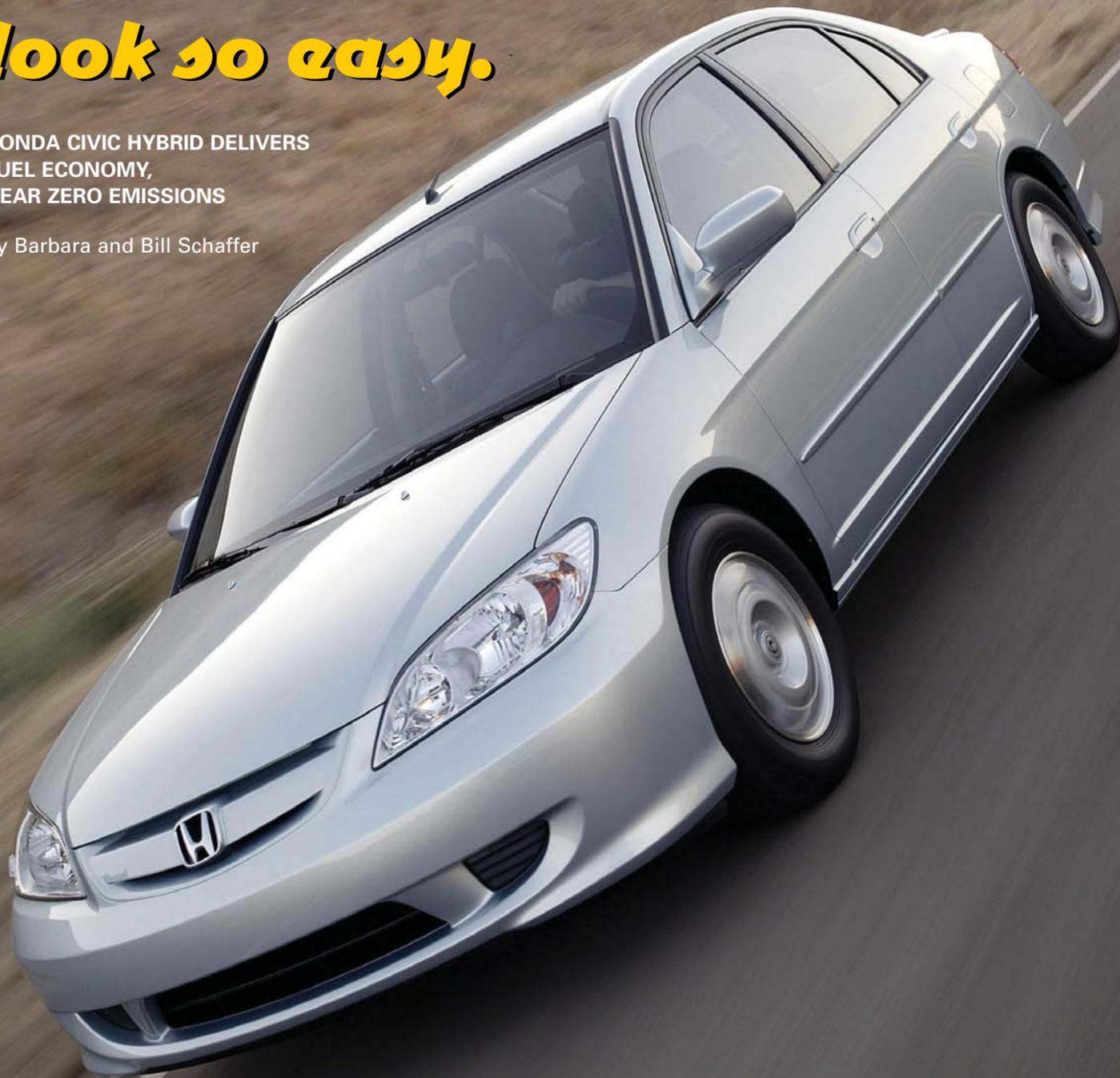
Information is derived from a variety of sources and may not be final or accurate; check all info. Listings do not necessarily represent any specific affiliation with nor endorsement by *Arizona Driver* magazine.



Why can't every car do this? Honda makes it look so easy.

HONDA CIVIC HYBRID DELIVERS FUEL ECONOMY, NEAR ZERO EMISSIONS

by Barbara and Bill Schaffer



The Honda Civic Hybrid, the first mainstream gasoline-electric hybrid vehicle sold in North America, enters its third year on the market as a fuel economy, emissions and advanced technology leader. Honda led all other automakers in consumer registrations of hybrid vehicles in calendar year 2003 with 23,048 Civic and Insight hybrid vehicle registrations combined, according to registration data released by R.L. Polk & Company. The Civic Hybrid alone accounted for half of all hybrid vehicles registrations that year. According to R.L. Polk data, national hybrid vehicle registrations rose 25.8 percent against the prior year, while Honda Civic registrations doubled.

The Civic Hybrid's amazing fuel economy remains unchanged for the 2005 model year. The Hybrid CVT ULEV has earned an EPA city/highway rating of 48/47 mpg. By the same measure, the 5-speed manual achieves a city/highway rating of 46/51 mpg. Both models have a range of more than 600 miles. (Civic models sold in California and certain northeastern states qualify at Advanced Technology Partial Zero Emissions [AT-PZEV] vehicles.)

The Civic Hybrid uses Honda's

innovative Integrated Motor Assist (IMA) technology, employing a 1.3-liter i-DSI 4-cylinder gasoline engine coupled with a high output electric motor to provide excellent performance and fuel efficiency. The system's compact nickel-metal hydride battery module is automatically recharged during braking and deceleration.

The hybrid system provides up to 93 horsepower and 116 lb-ft of torque with the electric motor "assist." Fuel economy is improved by up to 30 percent compared to other Civic sedans. All this is achieved by the hybrid powertrain while still meeting the stringent AT-PZEV standard.

The Civic Hybrid comes equipped with a long list of standard features including power windows, door locks and mirrors; cruise control; Immobilizer anti-theft device; dual stage, dual-threshold driver and front passenger air bags; and a tilt steering wheel. For 2005, the Civic Hybrid adds a new exterior color: Eternal Blue Pearl.

Honda was the first automaker to introduce gas-electric hybrid technology to American consumers when it launched the Honda Insight in December 1999, followed by the Civic Hybrid in March

2002. Together, the Insight and Civic Hybrid captured four of the top five slots in the 2004 EPA fuel economy ratings. The 2005 Honda Insight has earned the highest EPA fuel economy rating for any passenger car for the fifth consecutive year. The EPA rates the Honda Insight city/highway fuel economy at 60/66 mpg and the Civic Hybrid city/highway fuel economy at 46/51 mpg (manual transmission models).

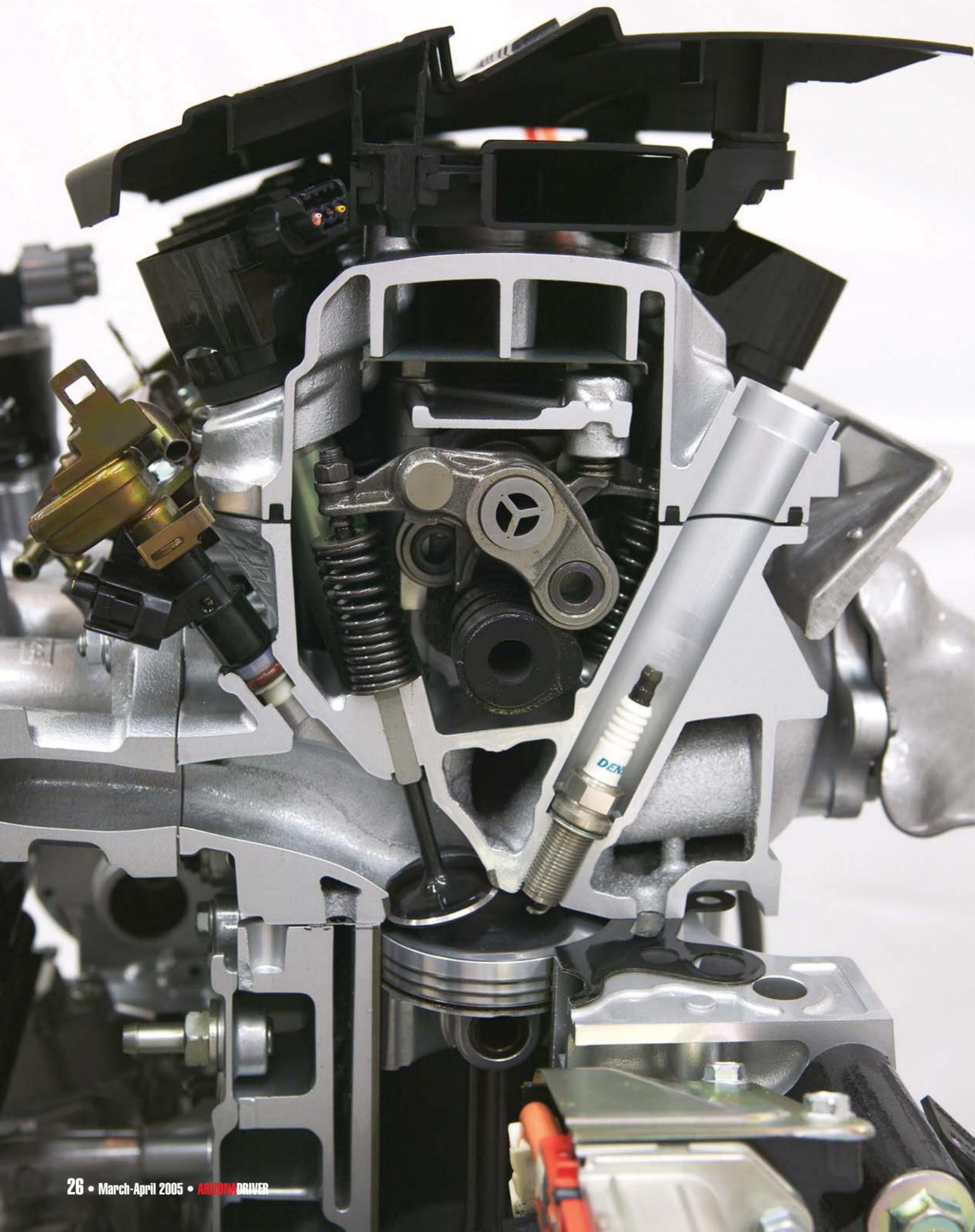
With the price of gas at an all time high, what can be better than a vehicle that gets close to 50 mpg? The Honda Civic Hybrid not only gets great fuel economy, it has become the first ever hybrid vehicle to earn certification as an Advance Technology Partial Zero-Emissions Vehicle (AT-PZEV) from the California Air Resources Board.

DESIGN

Like the gas version of the 2004 Civic Sedan, the Civic Hybrid sports an aggressive new appearance. It is sleeker with new front and rear fascias, hood, front grille and headlights.

Inside the Civic there are new adjustable rear outboard headrests, a

KEEP RIGHT >>



Model	Transmission	MSRP	EPA City/Hwy
Civic Hybrid	5-Speed Manual	\$19,900	46/51
	Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT)	\$20,900	48/47
Civic Hybrid (PZEV)	5-Speed Manual	\$20,050	45/51
	Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT)	\$21,050	47/48

Destination and Handling Charge is \$550 per vehicle.

console with armrest and storage and new seat fabric pattern. Also floor mats are now included as standard equipment on all models.

MECHANICAL

The Civic Hybrid uses Honda's innovative Integrated Motor Assist hybrid system with an 85-hp 1.3-liter four-cylinder gas engine paired with a high-output 13.4-hp electric motor/generator to provide respectable performance and excellent fuel efficiency.

The innovative hybrid system improves efficiency with an "idle stop" system that shuts the engine off when the vehicle is stopped. When the driver pushes the accelerator to go again, the electric motor moves the car forward and restarts the gasoline engine when its needed. When it coasts or is slowing the system shuts off three of the four cylinders to reduce engine-pumping losses. The battery is automatically recharged using a regenerative braking system when the brakes are applied, or the car is coasting.

Buyers can choose to pair this hybrid with a five-speed manual transmission or

Honda's automatic CVT (Continuously Variable Transmissions).

PERFORMANCE AND HANDLING

In a classic turtle and hare fashion the Hybrid isn't going to win many drag races accelerating for 0 to 60 mph in 13.6 seconds, but in the long run it will pass gas stations for more than 600 miles. The EPA rates it at 48 mpg for city driving and 47 mpg on the highway. The high city number is because the electric motor is used more in city driving. We averaged 39.3 mpg during our time behind the wheel.

PRICE RANGE

There are no factory-installed options on the Honda Civic Hybrid other than the choice of transmissions and colors. With a price of \$21,110 including the delivery price, the Honda Civic Hybrid with the CVT comes with automatic climate control, AM/FM/CD stereo with anti-theft feature, cruise control, power windows and door locks, keyless remote control entry, power sideview mirrors, rear window defroster, rear spoiler and 15-inch alloy wheels. ■

OUR DRIVE

We've been in some hybrids before, usually when some colleague is driving one for a week and we get to tag along. The basic ride is a little different in ways we've all been familiarized with already: the engine is so quiet, dead quiet at a light, comes to life after a fleeting but nagging disquiet that maybe nothing will happen and there you'll sit. But they work, and off you go. The main entertainment is to play with the various instruments that keep you up to date on fuel usage, battery charging, reserve power, perhaps estimated mpg, depending on the vehicle, and so on. For the past couple of years, this has basically meant the Honda Insight or Toyota Prius, aside from some show presentations and concepts. But there is much on the horizon, as various automakers announce everything from SUVs to pickups trucks, slated to the hybrid treatment.

In that environment, as it were, Honda—who already co-leads the pack with the Insight—has given the treatment to one of its most popular and reliable vehicles, the Civic. So what does it mean to be driving a Civic, as mainstream a vehicle as there is, but to be faced with the out-of-the-mainstream experience of driving one o' those newfangled hybrids?

Well, that's the heart of our experience with the Civic Hybrid, really. The first thing we did was hop in and head down the freeway to a lunch meeting we were having with a press group, and little did we know there would be Honda reps and engineers there. Driving down, we found the car to be so normal, we didn't really think that much about it being a hybrid at all, other than to realize it was smooth and quiet, and we knew we were getting knockout fuel mileage overall. But there's not much gauge-gazing to be done in freeway traffic, and the gauges are simple enough to mostly ignore anyway. By the time we got to Tempe, the experience amounted to one question, which we posed to Honda: "This is great. Why can't every car do this?" Aha. Stay tuned. They are going to bring us the brand new Accord Hybrid (see page 40) in just a few weeks. We'll report back. ■



2006 Harley-Davidson Street Rod Initiates the Roadster Revolution

NEWEST VRSC MODEL
COMBINES MUSCULAR STYLE,
AGGRESSIVE PERFORMANCE

In the court of public opinion, the all-new 2006 VRSCR Street Rod might appear guilty of using steroids. But the newest member of the liquid-cooled family of Harley-Davidson motorcycles gets its reputation honestly by combining an upright riding position, 40-degree lean angle and a retuned suspension to deliver a Harley-Davidson that marries custom looks with agile performance.

"Harley-Davidson's racing genes flow throughout the new Street Rod," said Bill Davidson, Harley-Davidson director of marketing, motorcycle product development. "The spirit of our strong racing heritage and the recent success of our NHRA Pro Stock Championship season is evident in the feel and performance of this premium, hot rod roadster."

Carrying on the VRSC family tradition, the Street Rod wields the explosive power of the liquid-cooled, 1130cc Revolution V-Twin engine. In addition, the engine is cradled in a hydroformed, tubular perimeter frame topped with stylized bodywork. A clipped rear fender and 180mm-wide rear tire carry the family looks as well. However, the fuel-injected, 60-degree V-Twin has been pumped up with a pair of chrome straight-shot dual exhaust pipes that help boost horsepower to 120 hp at 8,250 rpm while maintaining its 9,000-rpm redline.

The Street Rod's distinct styling and upright riding position are the result of a new suspension combination, highlighted by massive 43mm inverted forks. Aero-cut polished, forged aluminum

triple clamps are equally robust and deliver a steeper rake/fork angle (30/32 degrees) for more aggressive handling in the corners. The change in rake and fork angle shortens the bike's wheelbase by 0.7 inches (to 66.8 inches). When matched with performance suspension calibration on the rear shocks, the set up delivers a sporty, performance-oriented ride.

Complementing the suspension changes is a generous 40-degree lean angle and Brembo four-piston caliper brakes with 300mm dual front rotors. The Street Rod's handlebar and risers are shorter and less swept back. Combined with mid-mounted foot controls and a higher 30-in. seat height, this places the rider forward and into an aggressive position for attacking corners. Fuel

capacity of the Street Rod is five gallons.

Adding to the Street Rod's muscular looks are standard 10-spoke Staggered Cast Aluminum wheels, while radial, ZR-rated Dunlop tires deliver the performance message to the pavement with authority.

The VRSCR Street Rod is available in five stunning color options, including Vivid Black with a black frame, or Black Cherry, Rich Sunglo Blue, Mirage Orange and Yellow Pearl all with a silver-leaf frame. Highlighting each paint option is the silver and black engine with polished covers, plus selected, blacked-out components.

The Harley-Davidson VRSCR Street Rod is a 2006 model available now at Harley-Davidson dealerships. ■

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GarageTek

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Mobile Communications

NEXT Technologies, LLC

Integrated Mobile Media Environment (IMME)
602-370-0098 • www.NextTech.biz

Mobile Broadband Internet

Sunangel Communications, Inc.

2-Way Mobile Broadband Internet
480-905-1663 • www.broadbandonwheels.com

Mobile Detailing Service

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Not the first minivan, but if you like your mini big, it's one of the best

By Barbara
and Bill Schaffer



With the Honda Odyssey still ranked as one of the best minivans on the road, it being the number two selling minivan (just behind the Dodge Caravan) and with sales still improving, we didn't expect Honda to be introducing an all-new version at this time.

But when the invitation came to travel to Birmingham, Alabama, to drive the next generation Honda Odyssey and tour the new plant came, we got packed and ready to go.

CHANGES FOR 2005

When compared side by side with the last generation Odyssey, the new version does look different, but frankly to us most minivans look alike. But according to Tom Elliot, executive vice president of American Honda Motor Co., Inc., "The new Odyssey raises the bar in every aspect of its performance, function and character. It sets a new benchmark for sophistication, innovation and overall performance in the minivan class."

Engineered from the ground up, the 2005 Odyssey offers eight-passenger seating and a new, more flexible seating configuration with a One Motion 60/40 Split Third-Row Magic Seat. All models now include anti-lock brakes, advanced front and front side airbags, three row side

curtain airbags with rollover sensor and Vehicle Stability Assist (VSA) with traction control all as standard equipment.

There is a new ultra premium Touring model with standard features like power adjustable pedals, power tailgate, tri-zone automatic climate control, Michelin® PAX® run flat tires and a 360-watt stereo.

Available options include a new Honda Satellite-linked Navigation System™ with the ability to accept full street addresses through expanded Voice Recognition capabilities and DVD Rear Entertainment System with the largest in class 9-inch screen and Personal Surround Sound™.

MECHANICAL

In addition to making the new Odyssey larger and more rigid, it also has a new 255-hp. V-6 engine (up from the previous 240-hp) and a new five-speed automatic transmission. To improve fuel economy the leather and Touring models now come with the i-VTEC SOHC V-6 with Variable Cylinder Management (VCM) engine that shuts down one bank of cylinders when cruising, slowing or going down hill. When more power is needed the system seamlessly activates the other three cylinders to give the driver the full advantage of all 255 horses.



Honda Odyssey EX-L

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Front side airbags; Side curtain airbags; Remote keyless entry; Leather trimmed seats; AM/FM stereo with 6-disc CD changer; Dual zone climate control; Driver's 8-Way power seat; Power windows in rear sliding doors; HomeLink; Power moonroof; 16-Inch alloy wheels; Dual power sliding doors; Heated door mirrors.

Base Price \$30,295
Options none
Freight \$515
Price as Tested \$30,810

DIMENSIONS

EPA Size Spec. Purp
Weight 4,537 lb.
Wheelbase 118.1 in.
Length 201.0 in.
Width 77.1 in.
Height 70.0 in.
Fuel Capacity 21.0 gal.
Cargo Capacity 38.4 to 147.4 cu. ft.

MECHANICAL

Engine 3.5L SOHC VTEC V-6
Horsepower 255@5750
Torque 250@4500
Transmission 5-Spd. auto
Drive Front wheel
Brakes Disc ABS
Tires 235/16R16

PERFORMANCE

0 to 60 mph 7.5 sec.
Top speed 117 mph
EPA economy rating 20/28 mpg
Our actual fuel econ 25.1 mpg

COMPETITORS

Chevrolet Venture, Chrysler Town & Country, Dodge Caravan, Ford Freestar, Kia Sedona, Mazda MPV, Mercury Monterey, Nissan Quest, Pontiac Montana, Toyota Sienna



OUR DRIVE

One thing we've noticed when we're driving a high-performance car on public streets: the mostly ones to challenge us are either in the smallest, lowest-horsepower cars (trying to prove themselves) or guys driving minivans when they wish they were driving their own hi-po sportster or big SUV (also trying to prove themselves, but we suspect not aware of it). So what's it like to be in the Honda Odyssey? Well, when it comes to minivans, this one is big and powerful. Does that erase any minivan stigma? No.

That aside, for the minivan buyer, this baby is solid, loaded, capacious and Honda-reliable. Could you want anything else? Well, this one is so capacious and loaded, you could actually want something a little bit smaller. It's too bad Honda doesn't make a shortie of this one, for those with a smaller family or other needs. (We also wouldn't mind a panel van version, but that's something we always wish with all of them.)

We drove the Odyssey in metro situations, running errands, merging with the usual high-speed traffic on surface streets and freeways, and even parallel parking the beast a time or three. It acquitted itself nicely on all tasks. But we still would wish for less bulk. Funny thing is, though, if you need the carrying capacity, you'll probably never even notice the size, and we suspect we'd stop noticing it even in routine use before very long. It does handle very well, and visibility is extremely good for such a large vehicle, with its large greenhouse offering parking and lane-change visibility beyond what size might suggest.

Chrysler has hung onto the number one sales figures in this category, but Honda seems to get the number one rating in anecdotal recommendations. The new-model improvements are stunning, and if we've heard it once, we've heard it a hundred times (and said it a few): it's a Honda. Simplicity of option decisions, clever but straightforward engineering and features, and the stellar Honda reputation for quality and reliability might be all you need to know, giving all those other choices a big run for their money. ■

PRICING

Prices for the Odyssey start at \$25,510 including shipping and go as high as \$38,810 for the Touring version with navigation system and DVD entertainment unit, about the same as the previous generation, but with a higher high end.

ODYSSEY IS A GREAT RIDE

In spite of how our daughter and son-in-law feel about minivans, we both like them—a lot. Even our grandkids like them, but that is only because they are yet to be influenced by their parents.

Minivans are easy to enter and exit, they are spacious and comfortable especially when traveling with several people. We tried out the new Odyssey on a recent long weekend trip to Yosemite with our sister and brother-in-law and we all give it high marks for comfort and versatility.

We were surprised that Honda completely redesigned the Odyssey from the ground up this year. After all, it has been one of the best-rated minivans since the second generation was introduced in 1998. The changes amount to Honda's effort to maintain product advantage, and it appears that the changes have worked.

Our drive through the Sierra foothills was a genuine pleasure. There was very little body roll as we cruised through winding mountain roads, and it wasn't necessary to slow through the corners to compensate for handling. We especially appreciated the new V-6 engine with the positive shifting five-speed automatic transmission that allowed us to make those two-lane passes around gawking tourists.

The Odyssey has been re-engineered for the 2005 model year with improvements to design, quality, performance and technology. The Odyssey comes in three models including the entry LX, the EX and the new Touring model, which takes the Odyssey to a new level with unique features and technology never seen before in the minivan segment.

The interior is more stylish, sophisticated and versatile than the previous version. It starts with a deeply sculpted two-tone dashboard with the instrument panel sloping so that both the primary and secondary controls are within reach.

All models feature three-row seating with two captain's chairs in both the first and second rows. The second row can be

removed, slid fore and aft up to 10 inches and can be made into a bench seat or just have one seat up for making additional cargo space. The third row seat features the Magic Seat® with one-motion 60/40 split and capabilities to be stowed creating a flat floor cargo area.

Traveling with another couple, we especially appreciated the dual power sliding side doors that allowed easy access when we made one of our many 'great view' or shopping stops.

The Odyssey rides on the latest version of Honda's Global Light Truck Platform. With its long 118.1-inch wheelbase, heavy-duty four-wheel independent suspension, low center of gravity and ultra rigid platform, the Odyssey is the best handling minivan we've driven. Handling is further enhanced with large 16-inch tires. The Touring model even comes standard with the Michelin® PAX® run-flat tire system that allows the driver to travel on a deflated tire for up to 125 miles at speeds to 50 mph. It also has a standard Tire Pressure Monitoring system with location and pressure indicators.

To stop the 4,500-pound people carrier, the front-wheel drive Odyssey is equipped

The new Honda Odyssey abounds with extra storage space. One novel storage spot is the in-floor storage unit behind the front seats with a built-in Lazy Susan to store items not needed as often.

with massive disc brakes both front and rear, along with anti-lock and brake assist.

The EX-L (the L stands for leather) that we tested comes equipped with most of the amenities and new technology that we would want. Among our favorites are leather seating, heated front seats, eight-way power driver's seat with adjustable lumbar support, two row power windows, dual power sliding doors, power door and tailgate locks, HomeLink system, power moonroof, second row sunshade, six-disc in-dash audio system and dual zone automatic climate control along with manual rear controls. It is wired for XM Satellite Radio, plus a DVD entertainment system and navigation are also available.

Honda's latest 3.5-liter V-6 engine has 15 more horsepower than the previous version, plus it also gets an EPA rating of 20 mpg for city driving and 28 mpg on the highway. That's 2 mpg better for the city and 3 mpg better on the highway. We had an actual measured average of 25.1 mpg during our trip.

Performance and handling are more on par with that of a luxury sedan than a

minivan. We recorded 73 mph in our benchmark acceleration test, where we pull onto the highway and accelerate full throttle about one-eighth mile.

A list of advanced safety features standard on all models includes the new Advanced Compatibility Engineering™ (ACE) Body Structure that offers enhanced safety protection in a frontal collision, Vehicle Stability Assist (VSA) with Traction Control, ABS brakes, Brake Assist, advanced driver and front passenger front side airbags, three-row side curtain airbags with rollover sensors plus numerous other features.

The Honda Odyssey gives us many more reasons to like a minivan. It's so practical, spacious and comfortable with little or no sacrifice. It's like driving a big luxury sport sedan with lots of extra room. The only thing we could ask for would be all-wheel drive.

Are we in the market for a new minivan? No. But if we were, we would definitely shop at our local Honda dealer. ■

Phoenix Drops to Number 2

California Leads the Nation in Auto Theft Rates: Car Thieves Strike Gold in the Golden State

The ten metropolitan statistical areas with the highest vehicle theft rates were:

1. Modesto CA
2. Phoenix-Mesa AZ
3. Stockton-Lodi CA
4. Las Vegas NV
5. Sacramento CA
6. Fresno CA
7. Oakland CA
8. Miami FL
9. San Diego CA
10. Detroit MI

The National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) reported at the end of 2004 that for calendar year 2003, car thieves were most active in California. Six of the nation's ten hottest spots for vehicle theft rates are in California, while the remaining four are Phoenix-Mesa, AZ; Las Vegas, NV; Miami, FL; and Detroit, MI.

According to Hot Spots 2003, its annual report on auto thefts, NICB reviewed data supplied by the FBI for each of the country's 336 metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). MSAs are designated by the Office of Management and Budget using Census 2000 data, and may include areas surrounding a specific city. For example, the number one Hot Spot in the current report is Modesto, CA. The Modesto MSA, however, includes data not only from the city of Modesto, but the entire county of Stanislaus in which Modesto is located.

The rate is determined by the number of vehicle theft offenses per 100,000 inhabitants. When compared with the data from 2002, Hot Spots 2003 contains some good news as well. For example, the MSAs of Seattle and Tacoma, WA (numbers nine and ten, respectively in 2002) fell from the top ten list completely, and replaced by newcomers San Diego, CA and Detroit, MI, ninth and tenth place, respectively.

Meanwhile, Phoenix-Mesa, AZ dropped from first to second place and Miami, FL moved from sixth to eighth place.

After declining steadily through 1999, vehicle thefts began creeping upward in 2000 with a dramatic increase in 2001. In 2001, an estimated 1,228,391 vehicles were stolen which was an increase of 68,389 thefts over 2000. In 2003, an estimated 1,260,471 vehicles were reported stolen which was an increase of 13,825 from 2002. So while the incidents of theft are up, the rate of increase has been trending in a positive direction.

"The victim of a vehicle theft is hardly consoled by positive statistical trends," advises NICB President and Chief Executive Officer Robert M. Bryant. "With over 1.2 million vehicles stolen annually in the United States, the loss to owners and insurance companies is over \$8 billion. That amount of money makes it a lucrative endeavor for organized rings and professional operators. With recovery rates dropping, that signals the more insidious problems of exportation and surgical dismantlement—the former feeds the foreign demand for vehicles, while the latter feeds the domestic black market for replacement parts.

"NICB has teamed with law enforcement entities at border areas and elsewhere, and is actively engaged in a number of vehicle theft education, enforcement, and recovery operations throughout the United States, Mexico, and Canada," Mr. Bryant said.

NICB recommends the following actions under its "layered approach" to protection that automobile owners can take to minimize their risk and prevent their car from becoming the next statistic:

Common Sense—An unlocked vehicle with a key in the ignition is an open invitation to any thief, regardless of which anti-theft device you use. The common sense approach to protection is the simplest and most cost-effective way to thwart would-be thieves. Secure your vehicle even if parking for brief periods. You should always:

- Remove your keys from the ignition
- Lock your doors /close your windows
- Park in a well-lit area

Warning Device—The second layer of protection is a visible or audible device which alerts thieves that your vehicle is protected. Popular second layer devices include:

- Audible alarms
- Steering column collars
- Steering wheel/Brake pedal lock
- Brake locks
- Wheel locks
- Tire locks/Tire deflators
- Theft deterrent decals
- Identification markers in or on vehicle

- Window etching

Immobilizing Device—The third layer of protection is a device which prevents thieves from bypassing your ignition and hot-wiring the vehicle. Some electronic devices have computer chips in ignition keys. Other devices inhibit the flow of electricity or fuel to the engine until a hidden switch or button is activated. Popular third layer devices include:

- Smart keys
- Fuse cut-offs
- Kill switches
- Starter, ignition, and fuel disablers

Tracking Device—The final layer of protection is a tracking device which emits a signal to a police or monitoring station when the vehicle is reported stolen. Tracking devices are very effective in helping authorities recover stolen vehicles.

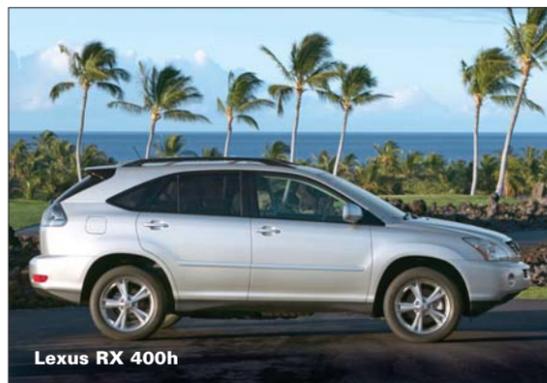
The National Insurance Crime Bureau is the nation's premier non-profit organization exclusively dedicated to fighting insurance fraud and vehicle theft for the benefit of its customers and the public through information analysis, forecasting, criminal investigation support, training, and public awareness.

Anyone with information concerning auto theft and insurance fraud can report it anonymously by calling toll-free 1-800-TEL-NICB (1-800-835-6422).

For more information, visit <http://www.nicb.org/> ■

THE INSIDE TRACK: BRIEFS & RUMORS

■ **Lexus** claims they have presold 9,500 of the new RX 400h luxury SUV hybrids. The new luxury hybrid sport utility vehicle doesn't go on sale until April 15. Lexus group vice president and general manager, Denny Clements, says this is the largest preorder level ever for Lexus. Lexus has set up a dedicated communication system where customers can track their vehicle delivery date. Lexus Financial Services plans to extend leases on current vehicles if customer's RX 400h delivery date is beyond the end of their current lease date.



Lexus RX 400h

■ **Hyundai** plans to replace its flagship XG350 in the United States with a new more powerful TG mid-size sedan. The TG will have a 3.8-liter V-6 with about 240 hp but will get about five percent better fuel economy than the XG. It should reach US dealerships in the second half of 2005 as one of seven new or redesigned vehicles being introduced by Hyundai through the end of 2006.

■ To keep the model moving forward, watch for **Bentley** to unveil a mid-size sedan based on the highly successful Continental GT coupe. Laced between the GT and the flagship Arnage, the yet to be named sedan will probably incorporate the dominate grille and quad round headlamps from the GT along with the awesome twin-turbo W-12 engine. The sedan will debut at the Geneva auto show in March and should be at dealerships in the fall of 2005 with a price tag a little higher than the \$155,000 coupe.

■ The **Chevrolet** SSR retro-style hot rod hardtop convertible truck has not been the runaway success General Motors expected, so modifications were made to increase the desirability of the 2005 model. New for 2005 the SSR gets a 6.0-liter LS2 V-8 engine with 390 horsepower, (up from the 300 hp original engine) and an optional six-speed manual transmission. In addition Chevy engineers have tweaked several features of the new model to make it better.



Chevrolet SSR

■ The new **Ford** Mustang has an innovative speaker system with two subwoofers encased in an innovative injection molded chamber in the doors. The system that was developed by Visteon plays 8 decibels louder than the previous system with four subwoofers, frees up trunk space and saves 18 pounds per vehicle.

■ **Hyperion Solutions** Corp., a software firm in Santa Clara, California, has offered its employees \$5,000 if they buy a vehicle that gets at least 45 mpg. The company says as many as 200 employees can take advantage of the "Drive Clean to Drive Change" offer each year, on a first-come-first-served basis. The program was developed to get their employees to save fuel and reduce emissions. The fact that



Volvo V50 SV concept

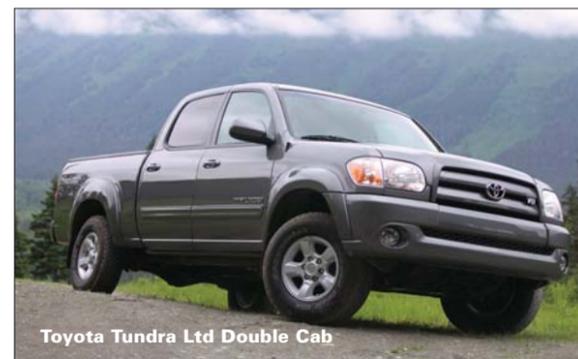
the company is getting some good national publicity as a result of the initiative doesn't hurt either.

■ **Audi** is expected to have a diesel-powered SUV by 2007. The Audi Q7, which is based on the same platform as the Volkswagen Touareg, will introduce a gasoline-powered version first in 2006, but will follow that with a diesel version. Plus there is a chance diesel engines will be added to other Audi models later.

■ **Mercury** has announced that the mid-size Sable sedan will be discontinued after the 2005 model year – the Sable wagon was discontinued earlier this year. Production is scheduled to end as early as April. Sales of the aging Sable dropped about 30 percent for 2004, and it has not had a significant redesign since the 1996 model. With the introduction of the Montego sedan in September and the upcoming Milan next year, there will be two new sedans in the Mercury stable by the fall of 2005.

■ **Volvo** is considering a high performance version of the V50 wagon to expand the R line vehicles. A turbocharged 2.5-liter inline five-cylinder engine rated at 340 hp powers the Volvo concept, V50 SV. It has a six-speed manual transmission and all-wheel drive. Volvo says the SV accelerates from 0 to 60 in 5.5 seconds. Other enhancements included a sport suspension that lowers the ride, stiffer springs, AP Racing brakes and 18-inch Pirelli Corsa tires. No decision has been made about producing V50 SV, but we think the chances are good.

■ **Toyota** is developing a turbodiesel engine for the heavy-duty version of the Tundra pickup to be called the 400N. The full size pickup will be built at the new plant in San Antonio, Texas beginning in

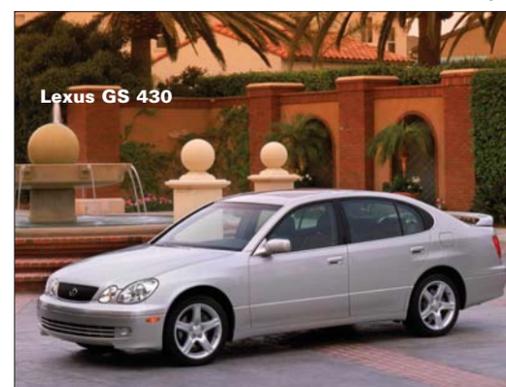


Toyota Tundra Ltd Double Cab

2006. The engine goal is for 390 horsepower and 700 lb.ft. of torque but it's likely to just beat out the General Motor's Duramax that has 605 lb.ft. of torque. The 400N will be a major reworking of the Tundra standard and extended cabs. The double cab gets a full remake for 2009.

■ **Nissan**'s next Altima sedan, due in 2007, may be followed up with a coupe in 2008. There is also a rumor that there will be a convertible version offered about six months later. The new Altimas, which are aimed directly at the Honda Accord Coupe and Toyota Solara, will be built on the same platform as the current generation so the size will likely remain unchanged.

■ The **Lexus** GS sedan will get a hybrid version as early as next spring according to Japanese media reports. The GS sedan version to be called the GS 450h will be



Lexus GS 430

powered by the 4.5-liter V-8 gasoline engine in cooperation with an electric motor. Toyota sources have indicated that the GS 450h will have V-12 performance levels and V-6 fuel economy.

■ The next generation **Volkswagen** Passat that launches in the fall of 2005 will be built on a stretched Golf/Jetta platform. It gets a longer wheelbase with shorter overhangs and a new body styling. The W8 engine will be dropped and a new turbocharged 2.0-liter fuel stratified injection engine producing 200 horsepower will replace the 1.8-liter turbocharged four-cylinder. The 2.8-liter V-6 will probably be increased to a 3.0-liter and a 3.6-liter VR6 will be the big engine.

■ **Mercury** will issue a classy looking version of the upcoming Ford Fusion called the Milan starting in the fall of 2006. The mid-size sedan is based on the Mazda6 platform and gets a standard 2.3-liter 4-cylinder engine and optional 3.0-liter V-6. The Milan will get lots of aluminum and nickel trim to differentiate it from the Ford Fusion.

■ **Toyota** is rumored to be working on a replacement for the discontinued MR2 sports car. The MR2 replacement has been seen testing at the Nürburgring racetrack in Germany. The slightly larger and rounder two-seater is thought to have a 1.5-liter four-cylinder hybrid engine boosted by the same hybrid system used in the Prius. There is also speculation of an optional V-6 hybrid system taken from the upcoming Lexus RX 400h SUV.

■ **Chrysler** plans to drop the two-door coupe versions of its Dodge Stratus and Chrysler Sebring after the 2006 model year according to Trever Creed, senior vice president of design. Creed said while people say the two-door looks sportier, the four-door is more practical and that is the car people will buy. Despite that change Chrysler will continue to offer its top selling two-door Sebring convertible because the two-door "impracticality" is already built into a convertible.

■ The upcoming **Mazda5** will be the first small MPV to be sold in the US with sliding rear doors that open four inches wider than those on the Mazda MPV minivan. The Mazda5 has three rows of two seats. The standard engine is a 2.3-liter four-cylinder with an optional V-6. Optional features of the 5 include a DVD entertainment screen for rear seat passengers and a 300-disc capacity MP3 sound system.

■ **General Motors** and **Daimler-Chrysler** have agreed to jointly develop gasoline/diesel and electric hybrid powerplants. The first products to come out of the partnership will likely be for the Chevrolet Tahoe and GMC Yukon followed by the Dodge Durango and possibly even some of the Mercedes-Benz models.



Saturn Sky

■ According to Ford COO Jim Padilla, the next generation **Ford** Sport Trac will get a V-8 engine option. The redesigned SUV-pickup combo will go on sale in 2006.

■ **Saturn** has started to release details of its upcoming rear-wheel-drive roadster, the Sky. The design will be a showcase for future Saturn products planned for release over the next 24 months. The latest concept of the Sky debuted at the Detroit auto show in January 2005.

■ The **BMW** M6 coupe is expected to be powered by the 500-hp 5.0-liter V-10 engine from the M5 sedan. The gearbox will be a seven-speed sequential and it will wear 19-inch rubber. The M6 is lighter so it will likely be faster than the M5. ■

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

Union of Concerned Scientists Names Honda "Greenest Automaker"



Honda Civic Hybrid, Honda Accord Hybrid, Honda Insight

American Honda Motor Co. has been recognized by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) as the 2004 Greenest Automaker in the organization's biennial ranking of car manufacturers' environmental performance. It's the third consecutive number one ranking of Honda in the UCS study. Compared with the UCS's 2002 findings, Honda actually increased its lead over other automakers in reducing both greenhouse gas and tailpipe emissions across the full range of its product lineup.

According to the UCS, Honda increased its lead by building vehicles that produce less than half the smog-forming pollutants of the industry average and 18 percent less heat-trapping emissions.

"Honda is in a class of its own when it comes to producing clean cars and trucks," said David Friedman, Research Director of UCS's Clean Vehicles Program and lead author of the report.

"This award reflects our commitment to apply the latest technologies for reduced emissions and improved fuel efficiency across our complete product line," said Ed Cohen, vice president of government affairs, accepting the award.

"It's a commitment that goes to our core objective of being a company that society wants to exist."

The UCS study, titled Automaker Rankings 2004: The Environmental Performance of Car Companies, is the third installment of the only comprehensive ranking of automakers' environmental performance. The report analyzes the six largest automakers in the US market, which together account for nine out of every 10 vehicles sold in this country. The study evaluates data on smog-forming pollution and heat-trapping emissions from each vehicle manufacturer's fleet using model year 2003 sales information and certification standards. The report rates the pollution performance of the average vehicle produced by each company; total sales volume does not influence the results.

Honda has a long history of environmental leadership including the introduction of America's first hybrid, the Honda Insight, and the first vehicles to meet stricter emissions standards, including the first Low Emissions Vehicle (LEV), the 1996 Honda Civic, Ultra-Low Emissions vehicle (ULEV), the 1998

Honda Accord and Super Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicle (SULEV), the 2000 Honda Accord. Fully 60 percent of the company's 2004 model cars and light trucks, more than any other automaker, meet the U.S. EPA's Tier 2 Bin 5 emissions standard, well in advance of regulatory requirements.

On fuel efficiency, Honda vehicles—including two Honda hybrid models (Insight and Civic Hybrid)—captured four of the top five spots in the EPA's 2004 fuel economy rankings. With the introduction of the Accord Hybrid at Honda dealerships nationwide in December, Honda became the only automaker to offer US customers three distinct hybrid models, and the first company to offer a V6-powered hybrid.

Honda also leads in the development of alternative fuel technologies including hydrogen fuel cells. The company's FCX fuel cell vehicle is the only Fuel Cell Vehicle (FCV) to earn certification from the EPA and CARB for regular commercial use. Today, there are twelve of these zero emissions vehicles in operation with five different customers in California and New York. Yesterday, the State of New York

took delivery of the first of two 2005 FCX fuel cell cars that it will lease from Honda and put into daily fleet use in Albany. The 2005 FCX is unique in that it is powered by Honda's own fuel cell stack (Honda FC Stack) and is the first FCV with the ability to start and operate in below freezing temperatures, along with significant improvements in range, fuel efficiency and performance over earlier models.

In addition, Honda has taken a leadership role in developing the hydrogen-refueling infrastructure required to support fuel cell vehicles. Honda is operating a unique experimental solar powered hydrogen fuel station at Honda R&D American in Torrance, California. This winter in the northeastern US, Honda has begun testing the second generation of its experimental Home Energy Station (HES II) developed in conjunction with partner, Plug Power, Inc. HES II is a home refueling unit that provides hydrogen from natural gas for vehicle refueling, as well as heat for domestic hot water use and electricity for the home. ■



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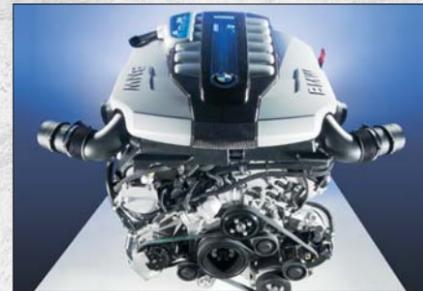
UPCOMING FEATURES

Acura RL



When you combine renowned Honda reliability and Acura comfort and luxury, with power and all-wheel-drive performance, could anything come up short? We'll drive the RL and report.

BMW CleanEnergy Program



Hybrids were a novelty just a couple of years ago and are now very mainstream. Hydrogen has the big buzz now, and BMW is hard at work on this and other key programs.

Kia Sportage



By practically inventing the tiny SUV market, the Sportage started as both a breakthrough vehicle and somewhat the runt of the litter at the same time. See how it has grown up.



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