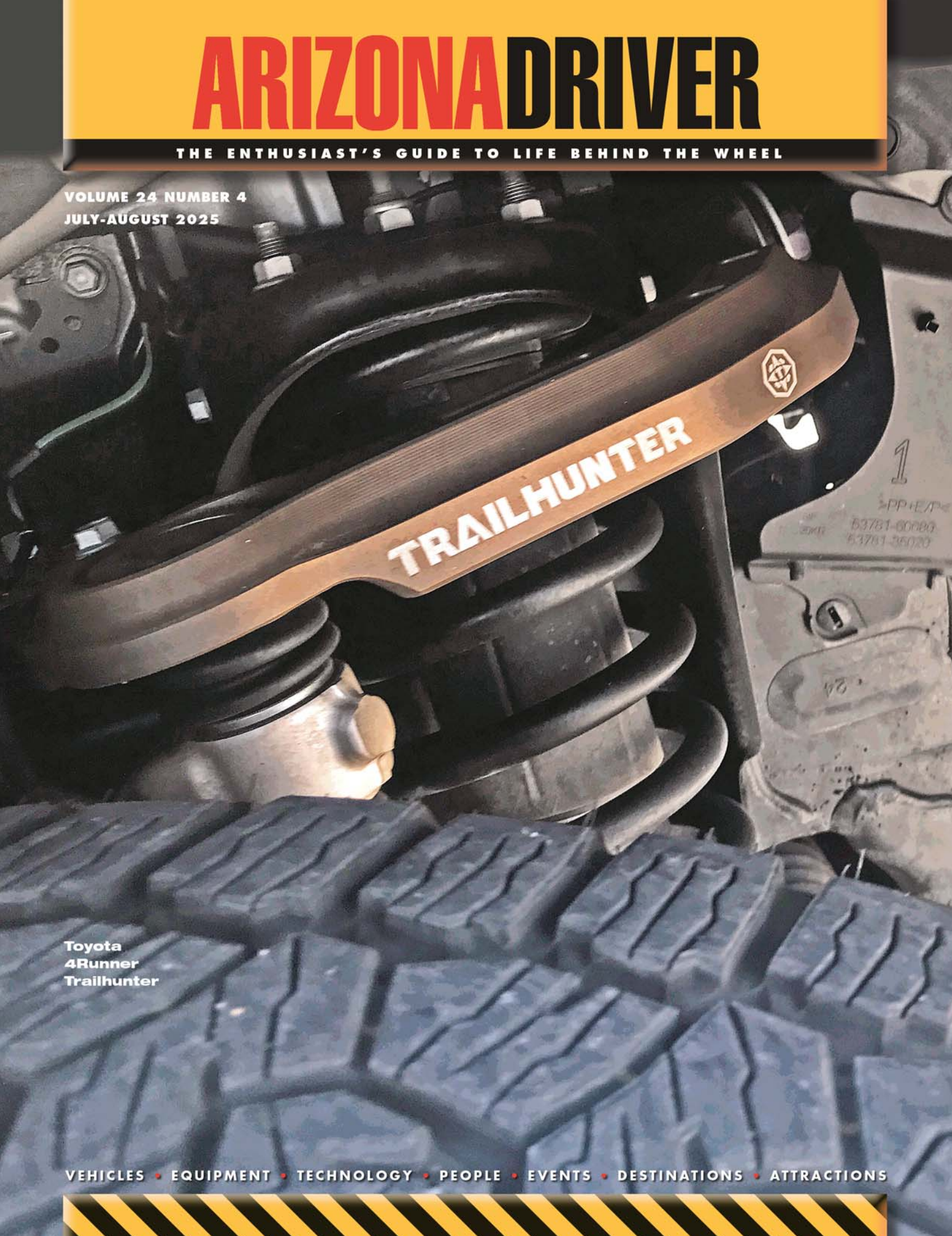


ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 24 NUMBER 4
JULY-AUGUST 2025



Toyota
4Runner
Trailhunter

VEHICLES • EQUIPMENT • TECHNOLOGY • PEOPLE • EVENTS • DESTINATIONS • ATTRACTIONS



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news & features

July-August 2025

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	Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance 2025 A15 Monterey Bay, on California's Central Coast, is certainly a great getaway in August, and this long-running event anchors a full week of automotive auctions, shows, rallies, tours and racing.
A Week With Travel	2025 Toyota Tacoma Trailhunter i-FORCE MAX 6-Ft16
	SeaWorld San Diego Summer Spectacular 2025 B20 San Diego is another great summer getaway, an easy drive or flights, with plenty of lodging options, and SeaWorld is one of the best places to catch some cool, wet spray. By Jan Wagner
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COVER: Advanced off-roading suspension in the new Toyota 4Runner Trailhunter, featured in this issue, as is the new Toyota Tacoma Trailhunter, both in i-FORCE MAX trim.

Jan Wagner

Arizona Concours d'Elegance

William Dorée



START YOUR ENGINES : FROM THE PUBLISHER

We seem to take you a lot of places in this issue, as we often do. Our map on the prior page bears dots for Northern and Southern California, the Pacific Northwest, Texas and Mexico, in addition to various specific spots within Arizona.

And then there are the vehicles, which represent the global state of things, all the more noteworthy as an era of great change is developing. As of now, we have two American brands, built in the US and Mexico; multiple Japanese vehicles, all built in Japan except one in Mexico; Korean, built in the US; and European, built 100 percent in China (answering the question of when the first Chinese vehicles would arrive, and confirming that they might not be what you were thinking). We've included content and assembly information (when provided) in our specifications sidebars for some time, out of general interest. Now it will be interesting to keep an eye on any future trends. (A related note: prices are stated at time of production or review. Impacts of new tariffs and such, if any, are to be determined. As always, check for the latest local information and availability.)

These vehicles all represent mainstream brands and popular style and function groups—several delivering especially strong off-road skills and just one EV. All fall within a fairly mainstream price range (even the very priciest offering alternatives). There is something here to whet anyone's appetite—we're certainly ready to build a bigger garage.

Contributors take us places in this issue, too. **Jan Wagner** entices us all to San Diego, always nice during an Arizona summer, especially at the cool waters of SeaWorld. And **Sandra Muñoz Dorée** and her photographer husband **Bill Dorée** bring us along on an in-state overlanding adventure, as they trade in their most recent off-roader for a new Land Rover Defender 130, the slightly longer version of our prior issue's Defender 110 cover vehicle. And in our *Arizona Rider Magazine* pages, Honda brings us to Baja, where they have recent wins in both the two-wheeled and four-wheeled worlds.

So buckle up. You don't need a passport. Enjoy the ride.

Joe Sage - Publisher/ Executive Editor

ARIZONA DRIVER
MAGAZINE



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- USFRA** ...Utah Salt Flats Racing Association
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Drive Toward a Cure for Parkinson's Disease

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Thursday, October 10, 2024: Drive Toward a Cure celebrates Sam Posey as a Legend of Motorsports and Champion of Parkinson's at Lime Rock Park, CT.

We are inspired by the **Cars and Camaraderie**® within automotive culture, found in equal measure among both enthusiast communities and industry professionals. **Drive Toward a Cure**® events harness the passion for cars and driving and turn that power into support for ongoing efforts to improve the lives of those living with **Parkinson's Disease**, as well as the research that will hopefully one day lead to a cure.

From our *signature* events, to the grassroots movement of programs from coast-to-coast, we invite you to join us as we **Drive Toward a Cure for Parkinson's Disease!**

Let us motivate you to create or turn an existing event into a powerful fundraiser by allowing your group to give back and make the day more meaningful. Better yet, challenge others in your area to see who can raise the most money and drive the most miles to foster awareness! Get in touch at info@drivetowardacure.org.

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Bentley Continental GT High Performance Hybrid



▼ The **Bentley** lineup of Continental GT, Continental GT Convertible and Flying Spur models has now doubled with the addition of a second V8 plug-in hybrid option, the High Performance Hybrid). Offered across all body styles in a choice of new core or Azure variants, these join the Ultra Performance Hybrid unit introduced in 2024 as a Speed or Mulliner, making Bentley's two-door and four-door sedan models now exclusively powered by electrified V8 engines. The new Bentley High Performance Hybrid powertrain unites an advanced 4.0-liter V8 engine and powerful electric motor to develop a maximum power output of 680 PS (671 hp) and a maximum torque output of 930 Nm (686 lb-ft). While the 782-PS (771-hp) Ultra Performance Hybrid of the Speed remains the most extreme powertrain in Bentley's range, it is significant that the new High Performance Hybrid outperforms the previous generation's W12 Speed powertrain on all power, torque and performance parameters—while also being capable of up to 50 miles in pure electric mode. These nine cars together define Bentley's family of performance-focused daily supercars, each bringing its combination of power, dynamic handling, advanced design and true handcraftsmanship. The V8 High Performance Hybrid powertrain endows the new models with exceptional performance—zero-to-60 mph in a mere 3.5 seconds for the new Continental GT (0-100 km/h in 3.7 secs), while the figure for the Continental GT Convertible is scarcely less

impressive at 3.8 secs (0-100 km/h in 3.9 secs). Electric-only range is 53 miles for the GT and 51 miles for the GTC. Bentley Active Chassis technology includes Dynamic Ride, rear wheel steering and eLSD with a choice of Comfort, Bentley and Sport modes. Together, the powertrain and chassis deliver refined, surefooted performance in a wide variety of road conditions.

▼ **Ford** Expedition has been fully re-

Ford Expedition TREMOR



signed for 2025, under the tagline, "For Families with Big Lives," with space for active families and introducing the first-ever Expedition TREMOR, the most off-road capable Expedition ever, with four-wheel drive, underbody shielding, 33-inch General Grabber all-terrain tires, best-in-class 10.6-inch ground clearance, electronic locking rear differential and advanced off-road technology. Expedition TREMOR is

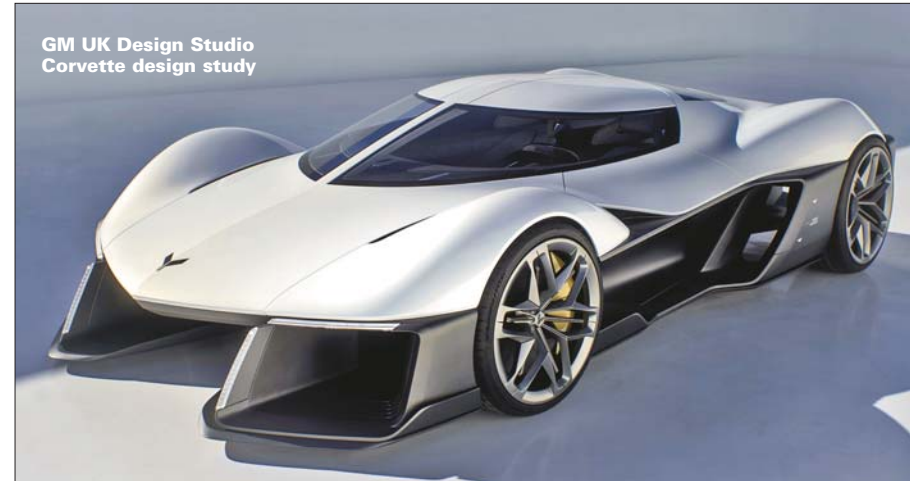
powered by a 3.5-liter EcoBoost V6 High-Output engine that puts out up to 440 hp and 510 lb.-ft. of torque. The model also features re-tuned suspension and electric power-assisted steering systems; Raptor-inspired running boards and front skid plate; off-road auxiliary lights embedded behind the grille; and underbody protection for the front axle, transfer case and fuel tank. Made for adventures far off the beaten path, Expedition TREMOR's drive mode system includes Rock Crawl Mode and a trail control system including Trail Turn Assist and Trail 1-Pedal. Pro Trailer Hitch Assist uses the rear camera and corner radars to align the hitch with the trailer coupler, while simultaneously controlling the truck's speed, steering and braking, to stop at just the right place—all at the touch of a button. This is done by rotating a knob left or right in the direction the trailer needs to go, while the system controls the steering wheel. When properly equipped, Expedition delivers up to a 7,000-pound tow capacity without the need for a load-leveling bar, or 9,600-pound max towing capacity with a weight

distributing hitch. A new Ford Split Gate on the 2025 Expedition creates a hangout space with reconfigurable cargo management that can transform the rear area into a table or stadium seating, while a sliding front center console adds easy storage access for front and second rows.

▼ **General Motors** has expanded its global design studio footprint with the official

opening of a new advanced design studio in Royal Leamington Spa, about 20 miles from Birmingham. In connection with the opening, GM revealed an advanced design study Chevrolet Corvette concept car de-

GM UK Design Studio Corvette design study



veloped by the UK team as part of a global project involving multiple studios that will see additional Corvette concepts revealed throughout 2025. The studio opening also provided a first glimpse of a GMC concept vehicle to be revealed later in 2025, developed in partnership with the GMC design team in Detroit. GM's design teams regularly work on conceptual design studies that are intended to drive ideation, innovation, and collaboration across the company. With the opening of the UK studio, GM is demonstrating a commitment to Europe as the company scales its Cadillac electric vehicle business there, while also preparing to launch Corvette sales across the UK and mainland Europe. The UK design studio is an integral part of GM's global design footprint, providing valuable insights into European customer and cultural trends and introducing new talent and fresh perspectives into GM's global network. GM's design studios also span Detroit, Los Angeles, Shanghai and Seoul. The UK studio is led by Julian Thomson, a deeply experienced automotive designer who has worked with some of the industry's most recognized brands. The 24,584-square-foot Royal Leamington Spa studio, which employs more than 30 designers and creative team members, is outfitted for both digital and physical clay model development. The Corvette nameplate has long been leveraged to introduce experimental cars, concepts and prototypes that push the boundaries of automotive design and engineering, and the new UK design con-

cept is no exception. Although there is no production intent behind this concept, the GM UK Design team undertook the exercise to rethink what a Corvette could be with a true blank-page approach. The UK

team's concept subtly incorporates Corvette's iconic design heritage into a futuristic aesthetic focused on clean forms and muscular shapes. The design draws inspiration from the aviation industry, both in sculptural and functional elements. The exterior design includes a distinctive division—the upper half captures classic Corvette design elements, but in a futuristic manner, while the lower half focuses on functional technical design, including EV

Genesis X Gran Equator Concept



battery technology embedded into the structure and aerodynamic elements designed to channel air efficiently without the need for wings or spoilers.

▼ **Genesis** has revealed a X Gran Equator Concept, an exploration of elegance and adventure designed for those seeking the serenity of nature and the thrill of the unknown. As the brand's first adventure

vehicle concept, the X Gran Equator Concept reimagines the brand's "Athletic Elegance" design philosophy meshed with the rugged spirit of overlanding. Inspired by reductive design principles, the concept's exterior emphasizes clean lines and uncluttered surfaces. A long hood, sleek cabin and "fast" C-pillar create a silhouette defying traditional SUV conventions, while dark wheel-arch cladding and 24-inch beadlock wheels underscore off-road readiness. Geometric auxiliary lamps and a split-opening tailgate blend practicality with Genesis' signature "Two-Line" headlamps. Inside, the concept contrasts analog architecture and digital technologies, crafting a space that feels both functional and evocative. At the center is a four-circle center stack display cluster, inspired by the dials of vintage cameras. The interior features contrasting colors and shapes, with a preference for geometric over organic elements. An absence of decorations on the instrument panel keeps the driver's attention focused on the road, while swiveling front seats and modular storage solutions enhance practicality. The name is inspired by Equator, recognized as the finest stallion in the world of Arabian horses, a benchmark for endurance, agility and refined power, reflecting a vehicle engineered to perform in extreme conditions

while maintaining a natural sense of grace. The X Gran Equator Concept signals an expansion by Genesis into lifestyle-oriented vehicles. While not confirmed for production, its design language and features such as the integrated roof rails and split-opening tailgate showcase the brand's future design potential.

KEEP RIGHT >>

▼ **Toyo Tires** unleashed the **Action Vehicle Engineering**-built Toyo Ferret with seven-time national off road racing champion BJ Baldwin behind the wheel. De-



signed by the Toyo Tires crew “to prove that Toyo Tires Open Country tires are capable of taking any vehicle across every terrain,” they started with a 1959 Ferret, an armored military scout vehicle. The original engine was replaced with an LS V8, and the chassis was upgraded to accommodate impressive King shocks. As another cool feature, a custom-built grappling hook launcher is attached to a winch cable. To complete this awesome build,



the Ferret has six custom wheels fitted with Toyo Tires Open Country M/Ts, with the middle wheels hydraulically driven.

▼ The introduction of the modular, flexible, and scalable Van Electric Architecture (VAN.EA) marks the beginning of a new era for **Mercedes-Benz** in 2026. This innovative architecture reimagines spacious, privately positioned vehicles being elevat-

ed into the luxury segment with a focus on the “Private Lounge.” The future model portfolio will cater to a range of customer needs, with a versatile, spacious vehicle designed to provide exceptional space and

comfort. From exclusive VIP and high-end limousine transport to luxurious family vehicles, the new model will deliver on both the flexibility customers require and the refined luxury they desire. By expanding the top end of its model portfolio, Mercedes-Benz Vans is defining a segment of its own—“a luxurious and elegant chauffeur-driven limousine that has traditional craftsmanship with cutting edge technology, delivering a groundbreaking



holistic experience with a cocooning effect.” The exterior is both sporty and elegant, simultaneously signaling dynamism and status. An open, lounge-inspired interior emphasizes elegance and functionality, with a large, automatically opening “portal” door on the righthand side and an illuminated, retractable running board for access to the rear lounge. An intelligent, switchable glass partition separates the

Private Lounge from the driver. Offering customizable transparency for privacy or communication, the glass can be changed from transparent to opaque, either completely or in sections. The exceptionally spacious Private Lounge area blends traditionally crafted elegant materials with hyper-modern, tech-savvy elements, to redefine luxury for the digital age. Crystal white Nappa leather and shimmering white silk contrast with decorative elements crafted from open-pore burr wood. Display cabinets, similar to an exclusive sideboard, are integrated into the dark wood trim along the side walls and framed by polished aluminum trim strips—elegant storage for personal accessories such as handbags, sunglasses or smartphones. A game controller, for racing games, and one of 42 Dolby Atmos surround-sound speakers are also incorporated. Additional speakers, housed in round glass enclosures, are mounted on handmade brackets that protrude stylishly from the side walls. A center console between two individual seats showcases both form and function, doubling as a display cabinet and featuring a touchpad to operate the infotainment system and a fold-out table that can transform into a chessboard. The center console automatically adjusts to seating positions. Another standout feature of the Pri-

ivate Lounge area is a retractable 65-inch cinema screen (with split-screen functionality) housed beneath the floor. When passengers enter and the doors close, the screen rises from a console with burr wood and Nappa leather. Through transparent floor slats, passengers can observe as the display extends and partitions the



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Private Lounge area from the cockpit, forming an immersive environment.

▼ Highlighting **Dubai Police's** commitment to sustainability and smart policing,



the Tourist Police Department under the General Department of Criminal Investigation has officially introduced the fully electric **Lotus Emeya-S** into its luxury patrol fleet. The unveiling ceremony took place at the Dubai World Trade Centre during the World Police Summit, an international platform for law enforcement innovation and cooperation. Major General Khalil Ibrahim Al Mansouri, Assistant Commander-in-Chief for Criminal Investigation Affairs at Dubai Police, led the launch event, accompanied by a number of additional senior officers. Al Mansouri received a detailed briefing on the Emeya-S, a high-performance electric vehicle capable of covering up to 600 kilometers per charge, reaching speeds of up to 250 km/h, and accelerating from 0 to 100 km/h in 4.2 seconds. The car combines powerful performance with sustainable technology, featuring autonomous driving capabilities, state-of-the-art digital interfaces, and a sleek, futuristic design. He highlighted that such advanced vehicles support Dubai Police's operational strategy by enhancing visibility in prominent tourist destinations like Burj Khalifa, Mohammed Bin Rashid Boulevard and JBR. "Integrating smart and sustainable vehicles reflects Dubai Police's forward-looking vision and strengthens our interaction with the community by providing support, information, and a sense of security," he said. A commemorative plaque was presented. The continued partnership follows the earlier introduction of the Lotus Eletre R into the fleet.

▼ **Bentley** Motors has publicly unveiled the Batur Convertible, at a launch event also in Dubai. Handcrafted by their bespoke division, Mulliner, it is the third coachbuilt

Bentley of the modern era. Following after the two-door Bacalar Barchetta and Batur Coupe, the Batur Convertible aims to capture the essence of open-air Grand Touring in a progressive design. Only 16 individually numbered cars will be produced, each featuring the most potent iteration of Bentley's W12 engine, a 750-PS (740-hp), hand-assembled 6.0-liter twin-turbo set to end production this summer—making this one of the last Bentleys to ever house



this legendary powertrain. Beyond extraordinary performance, the Batur Convertible offers wide personalization, to reflect the vision and individuality of each owner. The exterior of the Batur Convertible Engineering Car, currently in Dubai, showcases dynamic color transitions and high-performance materials, brought to life via its Midnight Emerald exterior paint and High Gloss Carbon Fiber finishes. The grille has

a Satin Dark Titanium finish, with the exception of the grille matrix, where a Gloss Mandarin to Gloss Beluga fade creates a striking visual transition. At the heart of this bold exterior is a Batur Racing Stripe, in Gloss Porpoise flanked with Gloss Mandarin outer stripes, both hide-matched to the interior leather, for a seamless visual connection between exterior and cabin. Bentley's rich history of open-cockpit cars runs from the very first Bentley of 1919, through their foundation years of the 1920s, to the most recent, the Bacalar. The designers of the Batur Convertible also chose to highlight the two-seater character with a 'wraparound' cockpit inspired by the design of the Bacalar. The Mulliner Bespoke Studio will co-create each Batur Convertible with each client, utilizing exclusive in-house commissioning software. This adopts a unique 'off menu' approach to commissioning that allows any part of the car to be customized in color and surface finish, bringing each vision to life. Paint choice is infinite, from the full Mulliner color palette to fully bespoke paint, and even to hand-painted elements. Exterior brightware can be any mix of light and dark, satin or gloss or even titanium. Another subtle option is a graduated contrast color in the front grille, for a vibrant effect. Each Batur Convertible will be

handcrafted over several months in Mulliner's workshop at Bentley's carbon-neutral factory in Crewe, England. The W12 powertrain—derived from the Batur Coupe—includes a revised intake system, upgraded turbochargers, new intercoolers, and extensive recalibration. Development over 20 years has led to it producing nearly 40 percent more power while improving fuel economy by 25 percent. ■

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Shown: Vintage Iron Speed Shop Clock / SKU: 09-BKG-VI

Were \$399 • Now \$349 / Free shipping on this item!

All-Steel Toolboxes

The Greasemonkeys have the feeling their full line of durable all-steel portable toolboxes with lift-out tray and a variety of the most cool car guy graphics (five styles now and more coming!) just may be too good to stash tools in—we may have to call them "deco-boxes"!

- Rugged all steel end cap construction • Powder coated, rust resistant • Heavy-duty stainless steel handle • Nickel-plated steel latch and hinge for added security • Full length lift-out tote tray
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♥ Not only are your products awesome, but the service and the people are too! 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.

♥ 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 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.
— Thanks again, "JR" Jean



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1957



You know Jeep. You know Wrangler. And you know Rubicon. But this one has one more defining point, and it's a huge one—its 392-cubic-inch (6.4-liter) pushrod V8, putting out 470 hp and 470 lb-ft of torque. In the face of EV pressures, customers—heavily attached to their power and presence—have clamored for the V8, maybe all the moreso. And Jeep has delivered, granting an extension for its “Final Edition.” This may be reminiscent of various rock bands doing a final tour, then coming back for another final tour, but there's the same reason in either case—people don't want all the fun to ever go away.

While most internal combustion Wranglers (including the Rubicon X) come as 2-Door or 4-Door;

Rubicon 392 is 4-Door only. Out of about 20 Wranglers (see sidebar), this is tops, at \$100,590 base.

The Rubicon 392 comes with the highest clearance and fording specs of any Wrangler (exception: approach, by a hair). Maximum off-road capability includes Selec-Trac full-time 4WD, gen-three Dana axles (with Tru-Lok electronic locking front, 44 HD full float rear), electronic sway disconnect, high-pressure monotube gas shocks, electro-hydraulic steering and more. The 392's 4-Door-only layout may be long for some rock-crawlers, an advantage for others, though the Final Edition adds an extra half-inch of clearance. The 4-Door is by far Wrangler's bigger seller, the probable reason for this decision on a model with lower production

volume, precluding making both.

The very presence of the big V8 is also a reminder that this may have high speed and open roads on its mind, as well. And for these conditions, especially if icy or slick, a longer wheelbase is always more stable. Plus, for a road trip, the 4-Door of course carries more people and cargo.

The basic mission of such a beast is to be great at either, neither at the expense of the other.

While off-roading speaks for itself with this one, it also has benefits in town. In challenging traffic, you not only have a good view of conditions, but

power aplenty on tap to break free from a jam, sharing your V8 soundtrack as a bonus. Even atop its big 35-inchers, the turning circle is reasonable, at 38.8 feet, Backing into parking is easy and accurate with the help of a solid camera system—and it's frankly fun to watch your knobbies rotating in the mirrors, as you do so. All in all, anything that's a little different in town is chalked up to its personality, thus inherently a plus.

This V8 Jeep quickly feels like home. You can't beat its power and acoustics, and with the future still uncertain, you can't beat the opportunity.

Yes, it's pricey, but compared to what? While Wrangler has a more than threefold price range, anyone shopping the Rubicon 392 is less likely to

compare with cheaper Jeeps, more likely, if anything, with a handful of pricier exotics. Here, brand and (again) personality will rule the decision. Comparing with the 285-horse V6 Rubicon X, at a lower price and offering the 2-Door option, may bring decision torment to some. But only a V8 is a V8, as any V8 fan will point out. And what a package this is, if you're able.

Who knows—there may be more change coming in the powertrain realm. Even since our drive, Stellantis announced the return of the HEMI® V8 to Ram, along with apologies from the newly re-Americanized upper echelons for “taking our eye off the ball” in the name of now-disappearing EV mandates. But the only thing certain about the future is its uncertainty. If you would love to see the V8 continue, vote with your wallet. It's the one sure way to never let this get away. ■



Power. Don't fence me in.

BY JOE SAGE

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY.....	Toledo, Ohio
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD.....	Mexico / Germany
PARTS CONTENT.....	US/Can 68% / Mex 18%
ENGINE.....	6.4L (392 cu.in) V8, pushrod OV, 16v, w sodium-filled exhaust, hollow stem intake, 16 conv lifters w roller tips, seq multi-port EFI, returnless, Fuel Saver mode; deep-skirt cast iron block w cross-bolted main bearing caps, alum alloy heads w hemispherical combustion chambers
HP/TORQUE.....	470 hp / 470 lb-ft
ALTERNATOR / BATTERY.....	240A / 770 CCA
TRANSMISSION.....	8HP75 8-spd auto/OD: adaptive electronic or ERS driver-interactive manual control & electr torque conv
DRIVETRAIN.....	4x4
TRANSFER CASE.....	MP3022 Selec-Trac: full-time 4WD auto, 4HI, 4LO
AXLES.....	F: 3rd-gen Dana axles, Tru-Lok electronic locking diff; R: 3rd-gen Dana 44 HD Full Float, Tru-Lok electr locking diff
AXLE RATIO.....	(Rubicon 392) 4.56
SUSPENSION.....	F: solid axle, link coil, leading arms, high-pressure monotube gas shocks, track bar, coils, stblzr bar; R: solid axle, link coil, trailing arms, high-pressure monotube gas shocks, track bar, coils, stblzr bar
STEERING.....	electro-hydraulic pwr
BRAKES.....	F: 12.9 vented, twin piston floating; R: 14 vented, single piston floating
WHEELS.....	17x8 beadlock-capable cast alum, machined face, Smoke Bronze low-gloss paint pockets, mid-gloss black trim ring
TIRES.....	LT315/70R17
LENGTH / WHEELBASE.....	192.5 / 118.4 in
GROUND CLEARANCE.....	11.2 in
APPR/BRKOV/DEPART.....	46.7 / 24.5 / 39.8°
TURNING CIRCLE.....	(4-door) 38.8 ft
HEADROOM (F/R).....	(hardtop) 40.8 / 40.3 in
LEGROOM (F/R).....	41.2 / 38.3 in
CARGO CAPACITY.....	31.7 / 72.4 cu.ft
WEIGHT.....	5268 lb
TOW CAPACITY.....	3500 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY.....	91 oct prem unl / 21.5 gal
MPG.....	13/16/14 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE.....	\$99,995
PAINT: Hydro Blue Pearl-Coat.....	595
CUST PREF PKG 27J: Sky one-touch power-top, removable rear quarter-windows, power-top quarter-window storage bag.....	3995
MOPAR AIR COMPRESSOR.....	1995
DESTINATION CHARGE.....	1895
TOTAL.....	\$108,475

2025 JEEP WRANGLER LINEUP

WRANGLER (ICE).....	2-DOOR.....	4-DOOR
Sport.....	\$32,690	\$37,290
Sport S.....	35,695	40,295
Willys.....	40,190	44,790
Sahara.....	--	49,370
Rubicon.....	47,550	52,050
Rubicon X.....	57,500	62,000
Rubicon 392.....	--	100,590
WRANGLER 4xe.....		
Sport S 4xe.....		\$50,695
Willys 4xe.....		56,030
Willys '41 4xe.....		60,525
Sahara 4xe.....		57,695
Rubicon 4xe.....		61,990
Rubicon X 4xe.....		70,940
Backcountry 4xe.....		64,885
High Altitude 4xe.....		tbd



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GENERAL ADMISSION: Stroll the show field, including special classes and features, as judges review the world's greatest collector cars, then end the day at the awards celebration.

CLUB d'ELEGANCE: Relax and refuel in an elegant and immersive tent at Parc du Concours, a

short shuttle ride from the show field—the only VIP experience with both gourmet breakfast and lunch, plus all-day hosted beverage service.

THE VENUE ABOVE THE CONCEPT LAWN: With the very best view of the latest concepts, this VIP experience provides enhanced continental breakfast, gourmet luncheon buffet and all-day hosted beverage service.

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CHAIRMAN'S HOSPITALITY AT THE LODGE: Also with enhanced continental breakfast, gourmet luncheon buffet and all-day hosted beverage service, this ultimate VIP experience inside Stillwater Bar & Grill has a panoramic view of the show field, a direct overview of all winners driving up to the Awards Ramp and a spectacular view of the Best of Show presentation.

TICKETS: theconcoursstore.com

INFORMATION: pebblebeachconcours.net



The big news of this build of the Toyota Tacoma sits atop the still-big news of the new-for-2024 generation-four Tacoma itself. That's right—just three generations spanned the prior 30 years of this mighty midsize, supporting both the idea that this is a timeless vehicle, while it had been due for a new version, all the moreso as the segment has grown far more populated.

All the new Tacoma builds have more power, via one of two powertrains (see sidebar). The standard 2.4-liter i-FORCE turbo brings 278 horsepower and 317 lb-ft of torque to the game, while the line-topping i-FORCE MAX turbo hybrid hits 327 hp

and a potent 465 lb-ft. While a few trims offer six-speed manuals, and a few offer rear-drive versions (only with the base engine, in either case), the majority are automatics, and all are either also available as 4x4, or (in most cases) they are 4x4-only.

Last year, we drove the new TRD Off-Road and TRD Pro relatively briefly off-road, as part of a regional comparo and a multi-vehicle introduction.

We looked forward to some town and highway time, where the prior gen had room for improvement in power and gearing. And here we are. This would be our first full week with any, and it's the newest version, Trailhunter, a 327-hp i-FORCE MAX,

with top power plus hybrid fuel mileage in the low-mid-20s. With prodigious off-road capabilities, this build also arguably leans a bit more toward dual duty in town than those TRDs, perfect for gauging that pavement performance.

Another dirt-specialist Tacoma? When you are as hot in the market as Tacoma, volume and demand can beget variety most can never achieve. And yes, the Trailhunter does turn out to have a flavor very much its own. The only hard part is that deciding may have just gotten tougher than ever.

Trailhunter's off-road engineering is both similar to and different from TRD Pro (its most irresistible comparison), featuring Old Man Emu 2.5-inch forged monotube shocks with rear external piggyback style remote reservoirs, a low-profile high-mount air intake (snorkel) and 33-inch Good-year Rugged-Terrain tires with 18-in bronze-finish wheels, plus RIGID color-selectable LED fog lamps and a bronze grille with integrated LED light bar.

All Trailhunters are 4x4 i-FORCE MAX turbo hybrids. One distinction is that Trailhunter is available with either a 5-foot bed or a 6-footer, as on TRD Off-Road, but the latter is not offered with TRD Pro, where tight turning (and lower volume) generally

ruled product planning. Trailhunter's price with five-foot bed is \$1,000 lower than TRD Pro, but shaves the difference to \$500 with our six-footer.

Tacoma Trailhunter is a Double Cab with either bed, which, on top of its taller stance, makes an immediate impression of substantial size. We like that. Perfect as a midsize can be in a lot of cases, it's never fun to be the little guy on a freeway full of full-size, and this beefy build narrows the gap.

The flip side to this version's extra length may be its turning circle, running just north of 50 feet.

Features are plentiful, and most are well laid out and work as intended. Cool touches abound, such as marker lights on the bed rail that you'll notice as soon as you open your doors. The ARB Sport Bar is another personality touch with poten-

(cont'd)

NEW BAG OF TRICKS

MEET TRAILHUNTER

BY JOE SAGE



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Guanajuato, Mexico
ENGINE	.....i-FORCE MAX 2.4L 4-cyl turbo hybrid, DOHC 16v, D-4S fuel inj
HP/TORQUE	.....(Trailhunter) 323 hp / 465 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....11:1
TRANSMISSION	.....8-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	.....part-time 4WD
SUSPENSION	.....(Trailhunter) F: 2.5-in Old Man Emu shocks w unique End Zone Control Tech, standard stblz w disconnect; R: same specs as front
STEERING	.....EPS: pwr-asst rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....F: 13.4 vented; R: 13.2 vented
WHEELS/TIRES	.....18-in Trailhunter alloys w 33-in Goodyear Territory R/T tires
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....226.2 / 145.1 in
INSIDE BED LENGTH	.....(6-ft bed) 73.5 in
WIDTH BTWN WHEEL WELLS	.....44.7 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....not stated by trim
APPR/DEP/BRKOVER	.....not stated by trim
TURNING CIRCLE	.....(6-ft bed) 50.6 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....39.7 / 38.4 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....41.8 / 33.7 in
WEIGHT	.....(i-FORCE MAX 4x4 double cab) 5030-5410 lb
GVWR	.....(" ) 6665-6835 lb
MAX PAYLOAD	.....(" ) 1420-1710 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....(" ) 5950-6000 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....reg unl / 18.2 gal
MPG	.....22/24/23 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	.....\$63,235
TOWING TECH PKG: incl Toyota wireless camera system	.....850
BALL MOUNT	.....70
DOOR PANEL SCUFF PROTECTOR	.....135
SPRAY-ON BED LINER	.....575
MINI TIE-DOWN	.....45
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1495
TOTAL	.....\$66,405

2025 TOYOTA TACOMA LINEUP

	.....4x2	.....4x4
SR		
XtraCab LB (6-ft)	.....\$31,590	.....\$34,790
Double Cab SB (5-ft)	.....33,790	.....36,990
Double Cab SB GMT	.....	.....36,990
SR5		
XtraCab LB	.....36,220	.....39,420
Double Cab SB	.....37,290	.....40,490
Double Cab LB	.....37,790	.....40,990
PreRunner		
XtraCab LB	.....38,120	
TRD Sport		
Double Cab SB	.....39,400	.....42,600
Double Cab SB GMT	.....	.....41,800
Double Cab LB	.....39,900	.....43,100
i-FORCE MAX Dbl Cab	.....	.....46,320
TRD Off-Road		
Double Cab SB	.....42,900	
Double Cab SB GMT	.....	.....41,800
Double Cab LB	.....43,400	
i-FORCE MAX Dbl Cab	.....	.....46,620
Limited		
Double Cab SB	.....52,555	
i-FORCE MAX Dbl Cab	.....	.....55,880
Trailhunter		
i-FORCE MAX Dbl Cab62,735	
i-FORCE MAX Dbl Cab LB (6-ft)63,235
TRD Pro		
i-FORCE MAX Dbl Cab63,735

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tial of more function (e.g. driving lights), though its corner bracing inside the bed can preclude fully accommodating some pickup loads up to or beyond bed height. The tailgate is electric (which we could live without), and there is no corner step (despite being tall, so we could have used one).

Not for deep fording, thus not a snorkel per se, the high air intake—to avoid ingesting dust and dirt on the trail—is a key identifier receiving varying degrees of love. Note that this is not deemed necessary on TRD Pro as outfitted, so consider it a style point—and it does add something to the look and feel. (If you never really need it, or use it only very occasionally, it may almost be the style-and-intent equivalent of a 4Runner's popular little ladder.) The key thing is not appearance, however. The distinctive faint metallic rattlesnake rattle of the high intake will fairly continually remind you of its presence during regular driving—as is typical, something some will love, others dislike, and some simply shrug off. But since you've seen it with, the visual will make you want to keep it. The paradox is that, of the topmost off-road Tacomas, this off-road feature comes on one that may have an equal edge in regular pavement driving.

We enjoyed the drive thoroughly—in town, on mountain highways and two-lanes, and off-road. Its generous horses and torque are more about power than instant acceleration or precision in town—just let the urban superspeedway drivers go. Lane-keeping tech could be overaggressive.

Our truck was new and particularly transmitted every detail of washboard and ruts on unpaved

roads at reasonable driving speed. Switching between 2HI and 4HI on the go could not be easier. We also found we could perform much dirt trail driving in 2HI, if for any reason you wanted to.

Switching back to 2HI back at the edge of civilization is just as easy, and Trailhunter's highway manners are tops—you would not know the off-road capability you have beneath your feet, cruising, keeping your lanes, maintaining your speed, carving your curves, all nice and smooth, and without much road or wind noise (just the snorkel).

You wouldn't even parse finer points for this new build on its own, but with TRD Pro differentiation in mind, Trailhunter may shape up as a good package for those who really, really want to be able to do some off-roading, but maybe not really that much—but when they do, to have no compromise to speak of. Some may focus on it as being much like the TRD Pro but offering a six-foot bed. Spec by spec, its off-roading is a little bit lighter-duty, but still with as much as many may need. And its style and manners may have an edge in town.

We had kind of expected it to be a hair-splitting fine line of difference, but one you get in and drive them both, you'll know exactly how they're different, exactly how that can work for you, and exactly whether Trailhunter is the one you need, or the most direct comparative, TRD Pro. It's remarkable.

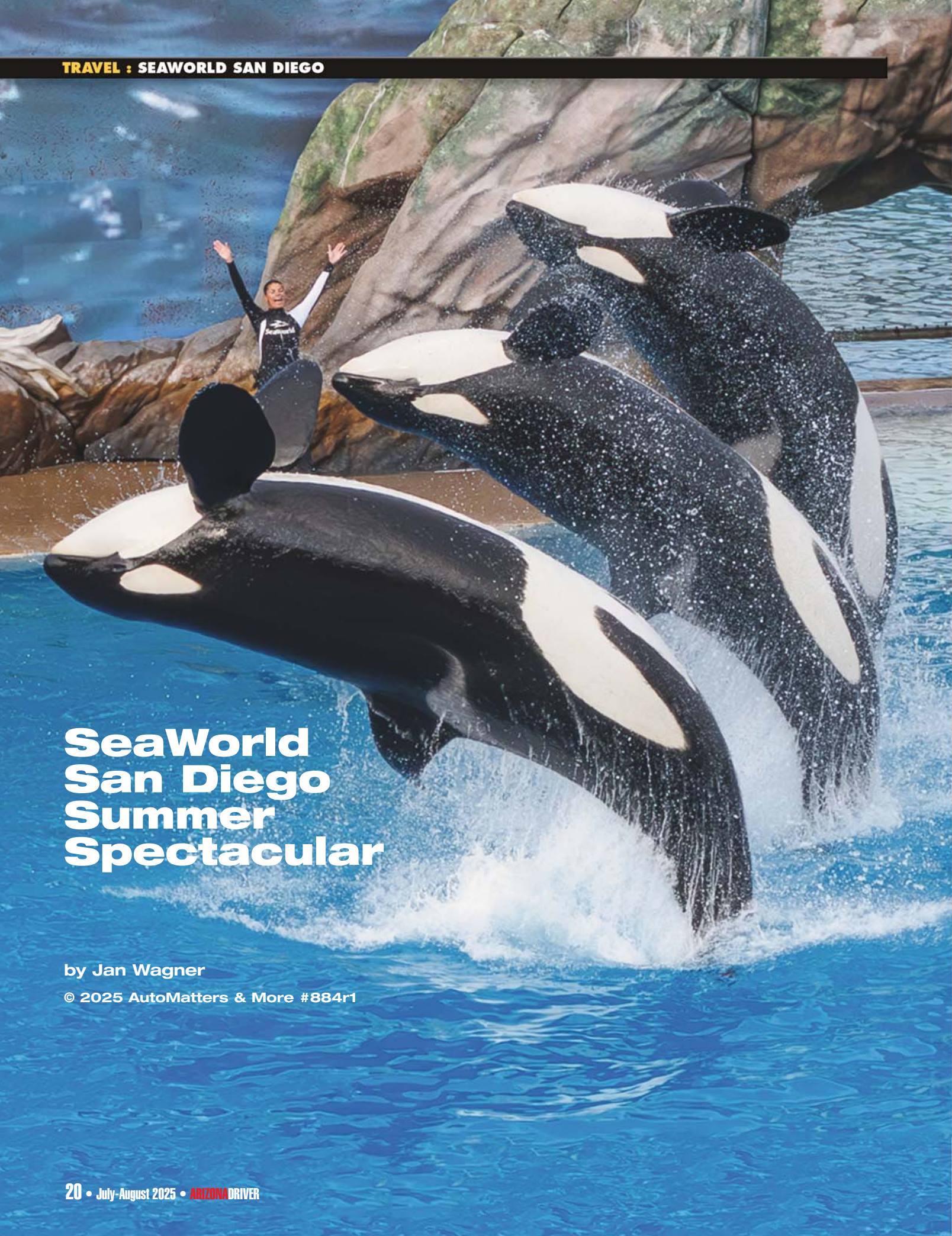
Joining an already impressive stable of dirt-capable beasts—including TRD Sport, TRD Off-Road and TRD Pro—the new Tacoma Trailhunter finds its own powerful spot, with its own build, its own personality and its own taste for adventure. ■



SeaWorld San Diego Summer Spectacular

by Jan Wagner

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Summer is upon us, and that means it is time for this year's special entertainment at SeaWorld San Diego—their Summer Spectacular.

A jam-packed four hours of entertainment on our recent visit began with the newly refreshed, education-focused *Orca Encounter*, complete with new music and new video.

SeaWorld San Diego is dedicated to fostering a deeper understanding of, and connection to, the magnificent Orcas, and to promoting conservation. Orcas are the ocean's most powerful predators, with masterful hunting techniques and complex communication codes. The role of families is important to them, as is play.

SeaWorld explains: "It is up to us to protect and safeguard the lives of marine animals for future generations. Killer whales and all marine animals need us now more than ever. Our oceans are facing significant changes, and it is up to all of us to ensure they're healthy for years to come. The challenges oceans face can seem insurmountable, but when we work together, anything is possible."

"By properly disposing of trash and encouraging others to do the same, we can help prevent pollution from entering our world's oceans. It's a simple act, but one that has a significant impact. Be curious about the ocean and its inhabitants, while maintaining a safe and respectful distance."

Interactions between the pod of Orcas and their trainers demonstrate the playful, energetic nature of whales as they learn new things, spend time with their trainers and assist other whales in learning new behaviors. We also gain insight into how animal care specialists care for the whales.

A word of warning: people seated in the front rows will almost certainly get wet!

Before and after the presentations, you can enjoy the Orcas close-up, from the underwater viewing area, as they swim, glide and play in the water right before your eyes.

Head over to Bayside Amphitheater for *Pirates Ahoy! The Battle for Mermaid Cove*—an exciting, swashbuckling adventure on the high seas, played out on stage and in the waters of Mission Bay, complete with high-flying personal watercraft, an aerialist mermaid, fight scenes where pirates end up falling into the Bay, and spectacular pyrotechnics.

The stunts continue in the Nautilus Amphitheater with the all-new *BMX Blast!*—a high-energy stunt show celebrating the history of extreme sports in Southern California. Daring world-class BMX riders perform such stunts as tail whips, bar spins and back flips as they launch off ramps, accompanied by a live band cranking out pop-punk



hits of the late '90s.

Kids especially will enjoy the all-new *Rhythm of the Reef Parade*, in celebration of the wonders of the deep sea, with favorite SeaWorld characters, floats, music and more.

While at SeaWorld San Diego, be sure to visit the immersive new *Jewels of the Sea: The Jellyfish Experience*. This large, informative and fun exhibit is filled with amazing jellies—creatures that have roamed the oceans since before the age of dinosaurs. Discover the mysteries of their stings, and explore the unique characteristics that distinguish moon jellies from sea nettles, and more.

For serious thrill seekers, SeaWorld San Diego also has a variety of roller coasters.

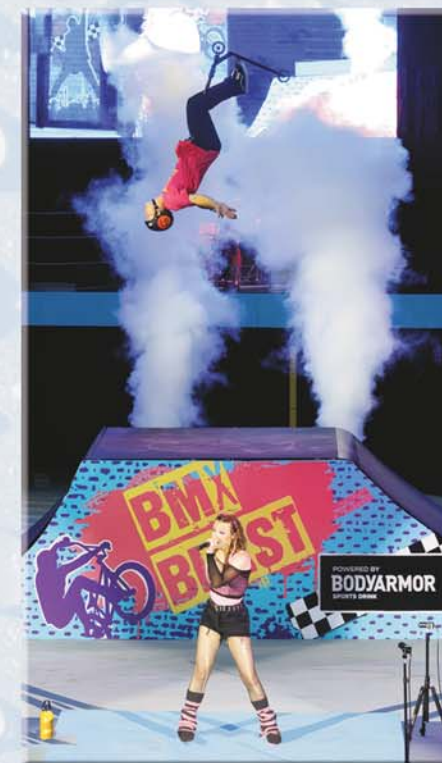
We ended our day with a dazzling display of vibrant laser lights, set to an electrifying summer soundtrack, in front of the SeaWorld Store near the park gates.

All this and much more is included in park admission, including general admission for the Summer Spectacular Concert Series at Bayside Amphitheater (through August 23), for an unforgettable musical journey featuring R&B, hip-hop and rap hits from the '90s and early 2000s. With the bay's scenic views as a stunning backdrop, this is the ultimate spot to move to the sounds that defined a generation. Reserved seating is also offered.

For more information, visit the SeaWorld San Diego website at seaworld.com/san-diego. ■

(Opposite page) *Orca Encounter*.

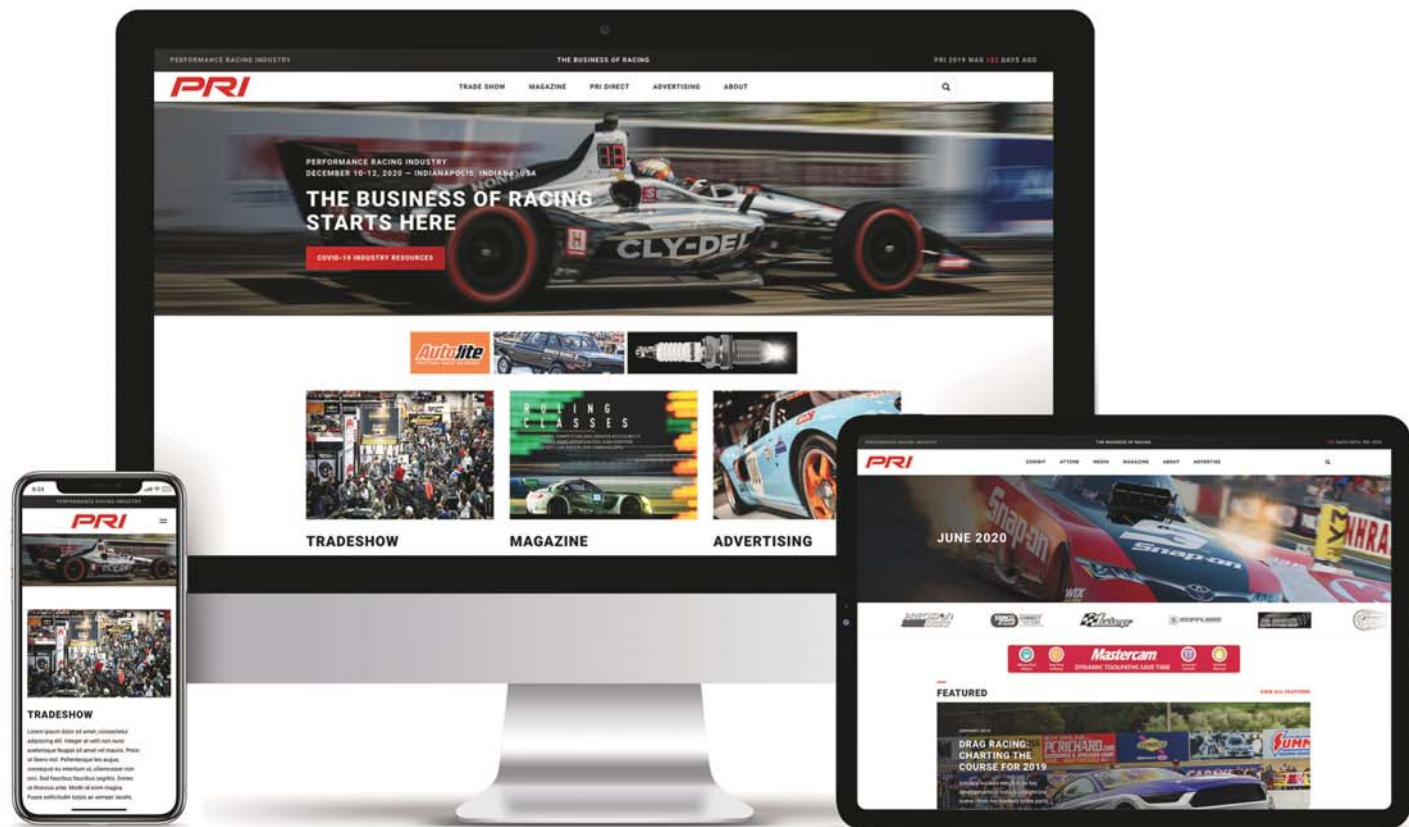
(At right, top to bottom) *Pirates Ahoy! The Battle for Mermaid Cove*; *Jewels of the Sea: The Jellyfish Experience*; and *BMX Blast!*





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NASCAR FALL CHAMPIONSHIP WEEKEND: FRIDAY-SATURDAY-SUNDAY OCTOBER 31 / NOVEMBER 1-2, 2025

NASCAR CHAMPIONSHIP WEEKEND returns to Phoenix Raceway this fall, running Friday/Saturday/Sunday, October 31, November 1-2. This will be the last NASCAR Cup Series Championship held here for a few years, as it rotates to a new track starting in 2026. Championship tickets sell out quickly, so don't wait—check plenty of choices online, but do it ASAP.

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Friday, October 31, 2025: 5:30 PM
NASCAR CRAFTSMAN TRUCK SERIES CHAMPIONSHIP
NASCAR CRAFTSMAN TRUCK SERIES
The kickoff to the last NASCAR Championship Weekend in Phoenix.

Saturday, November 1, 2025: 11:00 AM (ARCA) & 5:30 PM (NXS)
NASCAR XFINITY SERIES CHAMPIONSHIP RACE
& ARCA MENARDS SERIES
DESERT DIAMOND CASINO WEST VALLEY 100
High-speed action at Phoenix Raceway in the NASCAR Xfinity Series and ARCA Menards West Series Desert Diamond Casino West Valley 100 Championships, as tomorrow's stars race for the ultimate victory.

Sunday, November 2, 2025: 1:00 PM
NASCAR CUP SERIES
NASCAR CUP SERIES CHAMPIONSHIP RACE
The thrill of the last NASCAR Cup Series Championship at Phoenix Raceway before it moves to a new track. Championship tickets sell out quickly, so don't wait—get your tickets today! ■



Roll back about 50 years, when pickups were pretty much all the same, a single cab and separate 8-foot box on ladder frame as default, while engines, drivetrains, tow and load capacities offered variables. Then came the compacts, first from Asia—a shorter cab-box-frame build, usually atop one powertrain.

It didn't take too many years for Detroit to start producing compact pickups and for the compacts to diversify such things as cabs and bed lengths, then finally drivetrain, most now 4x4. It also did not take long for the compacts to start growing into midsize range, some becoming beefier, if not bigger, than prior full-size trucks. Reasons for the upsizing run from crash protection requirements to perceived market demands and response.

Ongoing variations of build, style, power and format have given us a pickup marketplace with such diversity that it exposed a neglected niche—the smaller truck. This has worked totally to Ford Maverick's benefit—or perhaps Maverick itself created the effect that has turned the page, creat-

ing what could be called an alt-pickup—without the traditional cab-and-box-on-frame build.

Then another opportunity emerged. Partly because of healthy sales, with the format now established and proven, partly because its build offers its own flexibilities, and partly because product planners, designers and engineers still like to do cool things, Maverick itself has diversified, first with beefier builds echoing the full-size F-Series and midsize Ranger.

Now Maverick leapfrogs the rest with its new Lobo build—a factory truck with the dual persona of street rod and autocross runner. Lobo is the brainchild of Maverick designer Josh Blundo, who joined the Dearborn team in 2019. Intrigued by Detroit's lowrider and street performance culture, he sketched what he thought could be done to bring this Ford's new small pickup into this realm. Response to a concept version shown at SEMA in 2021 earned it the green light from Ford.

The production Maverick Lobo is lowered a half inch in front, 1.12 in the rear, with the roof 0.8 inch

lower). Lobo opts for the higher-powered 2-liter EcoBoost engine, replacing its 8-speed automatic with a 7-speed direct shift, all atop road-tuned suspension and shocks, with reduced stability controls when in Lobo Mode for the track.

This simple little truck is chock-full of details and style points that are distinctively its own. Its interior strikes us as equal parts ranch and tech, a perfect combination for the brand and mission.

As a pickup, Maverick Lobo is easier to load and unload than an SUV or even a bigger pickup. The tailgate is simple, lightweight and manual, perfect on a smaller truck, no waiting for a damped power tailgate to do its thing. We moved a 400-lb load of boxes, noting that wheel housings extend to the front wall, avoiding awkward trap spots. A toothy bed coating kept everything in place in motion.

The powertrain has a nice, throaty rumble during acceleration, and its 7-speed direct shift is so smooth and hesitation-free through turns, hills and lane changes, its paddles and drive modes weren't needed, as power has plenty of headroom, given



Ford apparently knows they have a hit on their hands with the Maverick Lobo, as shortly after our week with it, they announced an F-150 Lobo, a 400-hp package for STX that follows much the same street-savvy formula, but with its own big truck personality. We'll have more on this once it rolls our way.

the truck's light weight. (We did play with modes at one point and found the algorithm's mix of dictated gears and its own overrides just distracting.) On a familiar boulevard with a brutal double rain trough, brp! brp!, this cruised right over them. It's one tough little performance truck. An errant driver also gave us a hard brake test, which it aced.

The only operational downside we experienced was with neck-snapping panic braking while backing into parking, multiple times. Reluctantly, we finally turned this off, but with more time would hope to keep it functional but set for significantly less.

We drove the Lobo enough for two tank top-offs during our week, but the readout said 20.3 mpg,

right on the money for its city rating, which comprised most of our drive time. (The 30 mpg highway rating makes us hope for a road trip sometime.)

Comparing today's wide variety of pickups is a lesson in distraction, kind of like comparing friends—they don't all have to be the same, to each be great in their own right. You will always have a good time when you go out with this one.

This particular build of this small pickup is not aimed at towing horses, building houses, working oil fields or off-roading. But what it is *not* is not part of the story. What it *is* is lots of fun, with a big dose of utility thrown in. And the more utilitarian builds might only wish they could look this slick. ■

Street smart, road-ready

BY JOE SAGE



What do you call the Blue Oval when it's black? As far as the one front and center on the Maverick Lobo, we'd call it way cool.

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico
BUILD	.....unibody SuperCrew pickup, high-strength steel frame, mild steel body
ENGINE	.....2.0L EcoBoost 4-cyl GTDI
HP/TORQUE	.....238 hp / 275 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....10.8:1
TRANSMISSION	.....(Lobo) 7-spd Quick Shift
DRIVETRAIN	.....AWD
SUSPENSION	.....F: indep MacPherson strut-type w coils, twin-tube hydraulic gas shocks, stblzr bars, alum lower control arm, steel subframe, cast knuckle; R: indep multi-link trailing arm w monotube hydraulic gas dampers w hydraulic rebound stop, coils, stblzr bar, steel subframe, cast knuckle
STEERING	.....electronic pwr-asst
BRAKES	.....4-wheel disc, regen braking; (Lobo) upgraded two-piston front, larger rotor, higher friction pads
WHEELS	.....(Lobo) 19x7.5 turbofan-style black painted aluminum
TIRES	.....(Lobo) 225/55 R19
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....(Lobo) 200.9 / 121.1 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....(Lobo) 7.3 in
AXLE DIFF TO GROUND (F/R)	.....( " ) 9.5 / 8.7 in
APPR/DEP/BRKOVER	.....(Lobo) 19.0 / 19.2 / 16.9°
TURNING CIRCLE	.....40 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....40.2 / 39.6 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....(at accel pedal) 42.8 / 36.9 in
BED LENGTH	.....(top / floor) 53.1 / 54.4 in
BED WIDTH AT WHEEL HOUSE	.....42.6 in
EXPOSED CARGO WIDTH	.....53.3 in
UNDERSEAT STORAGE (REAR)	.....2.6 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....3563-3731 lb
GVWR	.....(Lobo) 4970 lb
MAX PAYLOAD	.....(Lobo) 1045 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....2000 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....prem unl / 16.5 gal
MPG	.....21/30/24 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	.....\$40,750
LOBO (EQUIP GROUP 702A)	.....incl
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1595

TOTAL**\$42,345**
(sticker base price varies from consumer pricing below; check with dealer for latest)

2025 FORD MAVERICK LINEUP

2.5L Hybrid / CVT	.....FWD	.....AWD
XL	.....\$28,145	.....\$30,365
XLT	.....30,645	.....32,865
XLT 2.5L w FX4 Off-Road Pkg	.....	.....33,665
Lariat	.....-	.....38,440
2.0L EcoBoost / 8-spd auto	.....	.....AWD
XL	.....\$28,270	
XLT	.....30,770	
XLT 2.0EB w FX4 Off-Road Pkg	.....	.....33,460
Lariat	.....40,090	
Tremor	.....	.....40,995
2.0L EcoBoost / 7-spd QuickShift	.....	.....AWD
Lobo	.....	.....▼ 35,930

(You will note some inconsistencies e.g. in whether prices go up or down from one engine to the other. There appear to be variances in other packages, options or details that go hand-in-hand with the engine change in some cases, but, as always, check with your dealer for the latest and most accurate information.)

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**22ND TEXAS
AUTO ROUNDUP
WINNERS 2025**

Photos courtesy of Texas Autowriters Association

Most often held in a track venue—Texas Motor Speedway, Circuit of the Americas, Eagles Canyon Raceway—with local roads also available, this pavement-based awards event was held this year north of Houston, at the Margaritaville Lake Resort on Lake Conroe, meaning local roads only. Houston is not very flight-friendly from Phoenix (turning a quick overnight into four days and three nights), so we had to take a pass.

But with considerable vehicle commonality between Arizona and Texas, we do watch for the results, with awards showcasing performance, luxury, family-friendliness and innovation.

BEST VALUE (PEOPLE'S VEHICLE)

- WINNER: Honda Civic Hybrid Sport Touring**
 • Second Place: Kia K4 GT-Line Turbo
 • Third Place: Nissan Murano Platinum AWD

FAMILY VEHICLE

- WINNER: Toyota Sienna Platinum Hybrid AWD**
 • Second Place: Kia Carnival Hybrid SX-Prestige
 • Third Place: Honda Odyssey Elite

MINIVAN

- WINNER: Toyota Sienna Platinum Hybrid AWD**
 • Second Place: Chrysler Pacifica Limited AWD
 • Third Place: Kia Carnival Hybrid SX-Prestige

PERFORMANCE VEHICLE

- WINNER: McLaren Artura Spider**
 • Second Place: Dodge Charger Daytona Scat Pack
 • Third Place: Toyota GR Corolla

LUXURY VEHICLE

- WINNER: Genesis G80 AWD 3.5T Sport Prestige**
 • Second Place: INFINITI QX80
 • Third Place: Lexus LX 700h Hybrid Overtrail

EV (ELECTRIC VEHICLE)

- WINNER: Hyundai IONIQ 5 Limited AWD**
 • Second Place: Dodge Charger Daytona Scat Pack
 • Third Place: Acura ZDX Type S

HYBRID VEHICLE

- WINNER: Honda Civic Hybrid Sport Touring**
 • Second Place: Lexus LX 700h Hybrid Overtrail
 • Third Place: Toyota Sienna Platinum Hybrid AWD

Additional awards for special attributes included Best Exterior (McLaren), Best Interior and Best NEW Interior (both Infiniti QX80), and Best New Feature (Nissan Armada Invisible Hood View).

VEHICLE OF TEXAS 2025

Top Honors at 22nd Annual Texas Auto Roundup, went to the Genesis G80 sedan, citing its powerful engine, effortless maneuverability, opulently appointed interior, and head-turning looks. ■



Toyota has considerably reset the table over the past couple of years, with replacements and new generations, successively, of both the Tacoma midsize pickup and now the ever-popular 4Runner. Less obvious to the casual observer was the relationship of the new Land Cruiser (and its cousin, Lexus GX). This can get complicated, and if bringing Japanese and global versions into the conversation, exponentially moreso. But the interrelationships among these, variously of platform, style, engineering and lineup, are knit together.

The new Land Cruiser is its own success story. With its styling set apart from Tacoma and 4Runner (long easily spotted as siblings), anyone can

see it is now less like Sequoia (or Tundra) than in the past, but not everyone knows how closely related it is now to 4Runner. The significance of this is multi-pronged, but what's notable overall is that it has contributed to a new 4Runner with considerably more heft and presence.

We've been able to introduce you to all of the above, successively, in these pages—via local introductory drives, our regional comparo drives, and various weeklies along the way, such as this.

Our sample here is top-tier—the more powerful (yet relatively fuel-frugal) i-FORCE MAX hybrid turbo powertrain and the new Trailhunter build—both as also on our new Tacoma Trailhunter in this

same issue, where you can find additional details. As with Tacoma, Trailhunter shares its top-tier status with TRD Pro—in fact, moreso, as both are the same price for 4Runner, whereas they vary by a few dollars (and bed-length variables) on Tacoma.

What is the same is that it presents a new buying decision, equal parts difficult and easy. As with Tacoma, we recommend any serious shopper go drive both trims—Trailhunter and TRD Pro—where you will quickly learn that, while each is highly capable and highly outfitted, with any specification differences clear and objective, each has its own distinct personality, which is of course more subjective. You will have less difficulty se-

lecting your match than you might expect.

We did not take this off-road, but we did have higher than average time on the pavement—freeways, surface streets, mountain highways, parking lots—with many positive notes.

The eight-speed automatic is a good one, providing a continuous power curve through corners from a stop, a situation that trips up many. Highways had revealed the prior gen's power limitations, but with this, cruising was strong, heading to higher elevations or back down. (Again, Trailhunter is the higher-horse i-FORCE MAX.) Extreme rain troughs we often cross at speed, in the course of things, were near nonexistent. Twice, in fact.

Steering is accurate. This big-wheeled version is particular tall, a good feeling in traffic. Cameras are therefore all the more useful when parking, of-

ten with a few more feet in front or behind than it seems, and they assist tremendously. (We did, though, have an instance of it insisting we should stop, quite forcefully, while still four or five feet from a wall behind us. Better than most, though.)

As with the Tacoma Trailhunter, this bears the dirt-avoiding raised air intake most people will call a snorkel, complete with its light but persistent metallic sound effects.

As with the Tacoma, those with the most extreme dirt duty may still look at TRD Pro first, even if just from familiarity or habit. Whichever you think of first, you owe it to yourself to drive both. Either one will be great for 90 percent of the off-road driving that 90 percent of people do. But style equals personality, and this is where you will find your best match. ■

TRAILHUNTER JOINS THE ALL-NEW 4RUNNER LINEUP

BY JOE SAGE



SPECIFICATIONS

Preproduction unit: some specifications with sample, some via NHTSA, all subject to final.

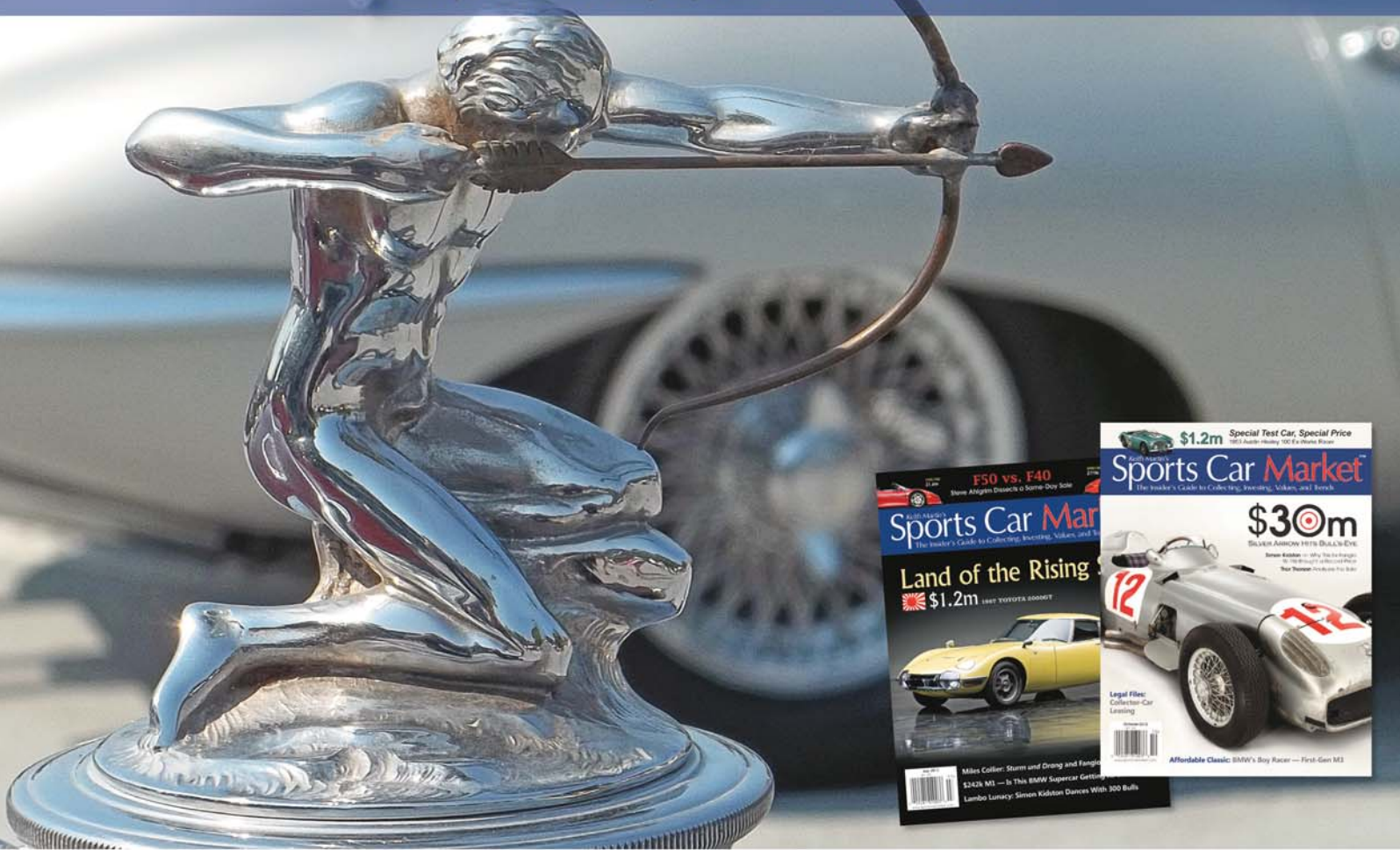
ASSEMBLY	.....Toyota Tahara, Aichi, Japan
ENGINE	.....i-FORCE MAX 2.4L 4-cyl turbo hybrid, DOHC 16v, D-4ST fuel inj
HP/TORQUE	.....326 hp / 465 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....11:1
TRANSMISSION	.....8-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	.....4WD
SUSPENSION	.....F: indep dbl wishbone w stblzr bar, twin-tube shocks; R: multi-link w coils, outboard-mounted twin-tube shocks
STEERING	.....EPS: pwr-asst rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....F: 13.4 vented; R: 13.2 vented
WHEELS/TIRES	.....18-in bronze-finish alloys w 33-in Toyo 265/70R18 tires
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....194.9 / 112.2 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....(Trailhunter) 10.1 in
APPR/DEP/BRKOVER	.....( " ) 33 / 24 / 24°
TURNING CIRCLE	.....39.4 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....na
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....na
CARGO CAPACITY	.....na
WEIGHT	.....(Trailhunter) 5500 lb
GVWR	.....( " ) 6505 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....6000 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....reg unl / 19 gal
MPG	.....23/24/23 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	.....\$66,900
OPTIONS: (preproduction; not itemized)	.....na
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....na
TOTAL	.....na

2025 TOYOTA 4RUNNER LINEUP

	4x2	4x4
SR5	\$40,770	\$42,770
TRD Sport	47,250	49,250
TRD Sport Premium	52,610	54,610
Limited	55,400	57,400
TRD Off-Road		49,190
TRD Off-Road i-FORCE MAX		51,990
TRD Off-Road Premium		54,970
TRD Off-Road Premium i-FORCE MAX		57,770
Limited i-FORCE MAX		60,200
Platinum i-FORCE MAX		62,860
Trailhunter i-FORCE MAX		66,900
TRD Pro i-FORCE MAX		66,900

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ARIZONA CONCOURS
SAVE THE DATE: SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 2026

The Arizona Concours d'Elegance, a curated and judged exhibition of the world's finest collector cars, is a celebration of automotive design held every January. A point of pride for the region's car community, the non-profit event supports Make-A-Wish Arizona, as well as the arts and local artists via Scottsdale Arts, the organization responsible for an array of artistic services.

The world's most interesting and exciting automobiles are often referred to as Sculpture in Motion, their kinetic beauty expressing the joy and excitement of motoring. This, appropriately, is the theme for the next Arizona Concours d'Elegance.

The date for the eighth edition has been announced as Sunday, January 18, 2026, again on the parklike lawns of the Scottsdale Civic Center.

Ed Winkler, co-chairman of the Arizona Concours along with Chuck Stanford Jr, says, "2026 is shaping up to be a great year for the Arizona Concours. Once again, the Concours will be an upscale lifestyle event featuring rare and fascinating vehicles arrayed on the grass, with entrants and spectators, some in period costumes, strolling the lawns

under the sparkling-blue Arizona sky."

The Arizona Concours committee has designated 15 judged classes for 2026, including special classes that range from the 140th anniversary of Mercedes-Benz, the event's featured marque, to a class for dune buggies and beach cruisers.

Other classes include a celebration of 125 years of Indian motorcycles, mid-century station wagons, post-war European sports/racing cars, and exotic supercars from 2000 through 2025.

Awards are presented in each class, along with a variety of special awards, then the two coveted Best of Show trophies—one for pre-World War II and one for post-war. There is also an award for favorite costume.

Co-chairman Stanford, a longtime Mercedes-Benz enthusiast, notes that 2026 is a significant year for the esteemed German car company. "As the company that invented the automobile, Mercedes-Benz has always been at the forefront of automotive engineering and has presented the world with extraordinary examples of voluptuous design and fierce competitiveness," Stanford says. "I'm cer-



tain that a wide variety of Mercedes-Benz style and heritage will be on display come January."

Proceeds from the Arizona Concours benefit local artists and art programs, as well as the Concours' longtime beneficiary, Make-A-Wish Arizona, the founding chapter of the national organization that grants wishes for children facing life-threatening medical conditions.

The Arizona Concours not only raises money for Make-A-Wish but gets some of the children involved in judging the cars, then awarding a specially designed trophy to their favorite.

Tickets for the Arizona Concours d'Elegance at the Scottsdale Civic Center will be available starting August 1. For information about tickets, vehicle submissions and sponsorships, visit the Concours website at ArizonaConcours.org. ■



WHAT MAKES A SUBARU A SUBARU?

WELCOME TO AN ERA OF SUBTLE REDEFINITION BY JOE SAGE

It's interesting to trace the evolution of the entire Subaru lineup. In particular, the crossovers started out easy to follow—Outback based on Legacy Wagon based on Legacy Sedan; and both the Crosstrek and Forester based on Impreza Sedan. As all have migrated to the Subaru Global Platform, keeping track of individual model evolutions is equal parts compelling and almost unnecessary.

A disappearance of sedans and increased emphasis on utilities and crossovers has been happening industrywide for years, as market forces and platform evolutions intertwine. For Subaru, it has been taken as an opportunity, using their adaptable universal platform to move away from that sibling relationship and create new utilities.

And the overall change feels significant.

Through considerable evolution, Forester has stayed conceptually stuck in our heads as its earliest iterations—shorter and (therefore seemingly) taller, even as it had evolved to more common proportions. Such echoes are now easily cast aside, as the new Forester takes on considerably more mainstream SUV proportions.

In its new form, we suspect many may take the Forester as an Outback at a glance (or even the less commonly seen Ascent), till they see the badge. But Outback is now embarking upon its own upswing for 2026, a story for another time.

We spent considerable time developing a complex chart for you, comparing the evolution of just

the two most recent (or upcoming) generations of Forester and Outback, only to realize Forester has not changed as dramatically as it may seem, so we are skipping the chart. It turns out to be more a case of solidifying Forester's form and space, in turn clarifying Outback's upcoming nudge upward within its space.

As both evolve in style as well as size, when you come down to it, it seems the driving distinction is persona as much as specifics. And the persona of the new Forester will appeal widely.

All that aside, Subaru Forester for 2025 has a range of news and advancements all its own. Tops on the list may be the one we're driving here—a hybrid, with an all-new, next-generation power-

train, with a new engine in familiar size and format, still a 2.5-liter boxer, adding hybrid components for up to 40 percent higher fuel mileage and massive torque (combined figures still do not have an industry standard), along with advancements in both vehicle and user style, comfort and tech. The hybrid also brings towing to Forester, at 1500 lb.

We always notice others of the same vehicle we're driving each week, especially all-new vehicles. Subaru's presence in our market has been growing dramatically for years, and the gen-six 2025 Forester seems to be catching on fast.

Through it all, Subaru's evolving wagon-crossover-SUV set has seemed to own its own space—long known for their utility, standard universal all-wheel-drive and active lifestyle buyers, attracted by affordability, value and reliability.

It may seem that Subaru is migrating some of its key lineup toward the space occupied by others, and there is some truth to that—again, market forces, perhaps over idiosyncrasy. But it could

also be said that others have migrated to try to be more like Subaru.

Our week of driving was remarkable in its lack of nitpicky notes. Power and handling were tops. Legroom and headroom provide full-size-worthy fit and long-drive comfort. Subaru's iteration of CVT avoids the feel and operation that bother some people with other brands. And that was without even relying on its extensive set of modes and management—it's good to go, right out of the box, which is our favorite setup.

The broader point may be about how shifts in key Subaru vehicles may shift the feel of the overall lineup and brand. We suspect most people won't think about it in this much depth (although their base is tops in loyalty and commitment, so they may debate things a bit among themselves).

But without changing their basic flavor at all, Subaru has made a few moves, equal parts subtle and dramatic, to make sure they fortify their position and still own the space. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Yajima Plant, Ota, Gunma, Japan
ENGINE	next-generation Subaru series-parallel hybrid system: 2.5L 4-cyl boxer, DOHC + two electric motor generators
ELEC MOTOR / BATTERY	three-phase AC synchronous elec motor, high-voltage sealed Li-ion battery
HP/TORQUE (ICE)	162 hp / 154 lb-ft
ELEC MOTOR	118 hp / 199 lb-ft
COMBINED	194 hp
TRANSMISSION	Lineartronic CVT w integrated motor-generators, X-Mode, SI-Drive performance mgmt, EV drive mode, 6-spd manual mode
DRIVETRAIN	Symmetrical AWD
SUSPENSION	four-wheel indep, raised: F: MacPherson-type struts, lower L-arms, coils, stblzr bar, hydraulic engine mts; R: dbl-wishbone, coils, stblzr bar
STEERING	dual-pinion elec pwr-asst
BRAKES	F: 12.6 vented; R: 11.8 vented
WHEELS	19x7.5 alum alloy, bronze finish
TIRES	235/50 R19 99V a/s
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	183.3 / 105.1 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	8.7 in
APPR/DEPART/BRKOVER	19.0 / 24.7 / 19.3°
TURNING CIRCLE	35.4 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	40.0 / 37.7 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	43.3 / 39.4 in
CARGO CAPACITY	27.5 / 69.1 cu.ft
TOW CAPACITY	1500 lb
WEIGHT	3913 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	reg unl / 16.6 gal
MPG	35/34/35 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$37,995
DESTINATION CHARGE	1420
TOTAL	\$39,415

2025 SUBARU FORESTER LINEUP

FORESTER	
(base)	\$29,695
Premium	31,995
Sport	34,495
Limited	35,995
Touring	39,995
FORESTER HYBRID	
Premium Hybrid	\$34,995
Sport Hybrid	37,995
Limited Hybrid	39,410
Touring Hybrid	41,695



WINNER: BEST VALUE
NWAPA "Mudfest" Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year Awards 2025



Pro Moto Unlimited victory to CRF450X-mounted SLR Honda

HONDA RULES 2025 BAJA 500



Red Bull Honda Talon Factory Racing wins Pro UTV NA with Talon 1000R

Honda-backed teams dominated the 57th edition of the Baja 500 in early June, with SLR Honda topping the Pro Moto Unlimited division and Red Bull Honda Talon Factory Racing winning the Pro UTV Normally Aspirated class.

Heavy rains hammered the Baja Peninsula leading up to the event, making for a challenging, 461.03-mile race course. The motorcycles began leaving the ceremonial Ensenada start line in full darkness Saturday at 3:30 am, with Tyler Lynn taking the SLR Honda CRF450X 209 miles southeast before handing off to teammate Carter Klein with a 10-minute lead on second place. Klein raced back north along the Pacific Coast to mile 380 before Lynn took over to the finish, reaching the checkered flag back in Ensenada with a winning time of 9:18:23, for a margin of just over 10 minutes on the runner-up Hero Racing Honda CRF450X fielded by Arturo Salas, Shane Logan and Ciaran Naran. It was Honda's 24th two-wheel overall win in the Baja 500.

"The conditions were really harsh, with heavy fog and rain, but everyone performed great," said SLR owner Mark Samuels.

It was daylight by the time the four-wheel vehicles began leaving the ceremonial start at 9:15 am, with Corbin Leaverton piloting the Red Bull Honda Talon Factory Racing Talon 1000R. With the assistance of codrivers Cavan Freeman and Isaac Torres, Leaverton handled the challenging conditions impressively. At the finish, the squad posted a time of 12:6:41, with the Raceco-backed Team Padder Racing Talon 1000R of Ricky Torres earning second place, six minutes and 24 seconds back.

"Corbin is an accomplished side-by-side racer, with experience stateside and in the Dakar, but he had never raced in Baja before," said Red Bull Honda Talon Factory Racing owner Jeff Proctor. "I don't think he was on a lot of people's radars. ... With the weather, the course was extremely muddy, and there was very limited visibility. ... It was really, really challenging, and it's so rewarding to bring home another 'W' for Honda."

Red Riders performed well in other classes as well, with Honda riders taking provisional wins in Pro Moto 30, Pro Moto 40, Pro Moto Limited, Pro Moto Ironman, Sportsman Moto, Pro Quad and Sportsman Quad. Also of note, Proctor's Passport team finished second in the 2WD Trophy Truck class, with driver Ethan Ebert at the wheel.

Many of these same teams will be back again in November, to tackle the Baja 1000. ■



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SIMULTANEOUSLY FUNDAMENTAL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL

BY JOE SAGE

The Toyota Crown nameplate was born back in 1955 and is now in generation 16, with much variety—but only occasional US presence—along the way. The name reappeared here in 2023, after a 50-year gap, as a tall hybrid sedan with AWD and a touch of crossover flavor, impressive in styling, utility and powertrain variety.

A name-variant joins it for 2025—Crown Signia—a two-box design, distinct from the Crown sedan. There can be both pros and cons to naming different vehicles as though they're related when they aren't (or as though they're not, when in fact they are). In this case, people may ask, is Crown

the same as Crown Signia? And what's a "signia"? In Japan, a wagon variant is generally an "estate," also common in the UK, while Crown Signia also hints at the two-door European "shooting brake." While NHTSA classifies the Crown as a "car," the Crown Signia long-roof variant (with "wagon" no longer in our lexicon) is classified as an SUV.

Call it (or them) what you want, it (or they)—the Toyota Crown and Crown Signia—are each and/or both intriguingly successful new vehicles.

Fundamentally the same build brings extra generous ground clearance to the Crown sedan, and a more ground-hugging overall profile to the Crown

Signia SUV, different advantages, by category, delivered via the same fundamentals. It's downright clever, really.

Classified as a midsize, the cabin feels almost full-size, inside, while from the outside, the upper form is quite tapered, emphasized by a high beltline (adding to that shooting brake feel).

Drive experience, size, fit, performance and handling might be considered unremarkable toward the point of perfection—no blistering performance, but nice and steady, with all the power we needed for any sudden demands.

We don't always notice a CVT, to the degree some do, but this did have us wishing for a shift (and noticing its sound effects), at least for the

first couple of days, but then we got used to it. We played with sport mode quite a bit, in varying conditions, but didn't find it particularly different in power, shifts or general sportiness (which is fine—we prefer things best right out of the box, with no need to keep ducking into a phone booth and changing to Superman and back). Manual mode and paddles are right at hand if desired, but again, philosophically, we'd rather an automatic just perform its best automatically.

We realized that we probably only noticed the transmission so much because it was really most likely the only thing that wasn't 100 percent (for those who even notice it). With or without that, the new Crown Signia as a whole scores way higher than average.

Toyota Crown is already sort of an "end run" on the sedan concept, thanks to its added height and

stance. Crown Signia, in turn, is sort of an end run on Crown's end run, thanks to its added length and volume. Does this mean we've gone full circle? Or somewhere else? It's a decent rhetorical question, but it doesn't really matter, at all. Crown Signia takes us somewhere new, cool and useful.

Knowing it would bring a higher price point, we pondered a "crowning touch" that could address the two points we had noted—power and shifting—though the base powertrain is more than adequate and has notably higher fuel mileage. Crown sedan's top Platinum trim has a more potent 340-hp i-FORCE MAX and six-speed automatic, which together could make a nice version of the Crown Signia. Doing the math (see sidebar), this could run about nine grand higher than Limited, or two grand higher than Crown MAX, either way about \$57 grand. This may well be on the horizon. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Toyota, Aichi, Japan
ENGINE	.....2.5L Dynamic Force 4-cyl w EV mode, 16v, DOHC w variable valve timing-intelligent by elec motor (VVT-iE) and VVT-i
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....14.0:1
ELEC MOTOR	.....perm magnet synchronous
BATTERY	.....bipolar NiMh 5.0A
HP/TORQUE (ICE)	.....188 hp / 178 lb-ft
ELEC MOTOR	.....front 199 / rear 89 lb-ft
COMBINED	.....net 240 hp
TRANSMISSION	.....electronic control CVT
DRIVETRAIN	.....AWD
0-TO-60 MPH	.....(w 91-octane) 7.1 sec
SUSPENSION	.....F: indep MacPherson strut w 26.5mm hollow stblzr bar; R: multi-link w 21.0mm hollow stblzr bar
STEERING	.....rack parallel-type elec PS
BRAKES	.....F: 12.9 vented; R: 12.5 vented
WHEELS	.....(Limited) 21-inch alloys
TIRES	.....225/45R21
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....194.1 / 112.2 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....6.7 in
APPROACH/DEPARTURE	.....15.2 / 21.4°
TURNING CIRCLE	.....39.5 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....(pano snrf) 37.7 / 38.1 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....42.1 / 37.1 in
CARGO CAPACITY ..(pano snrf)	24.8 / 66.1 cu.ft
LENGTH BEHIND SEATS	.....31.9 / 79.5 in
WEIGHT	.....4210 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....reg unl or higher / 14.5 gal
MPG	.....39/37/38 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	.....\$47,990
ADVANCED TECH PKG:	pano view monitor, traffic jam assist (subscrip), lane change assist, front cross-traffic, front/rear park assist w auto brake, outer mirrors w puddle lights and reverse tilt-down.....1865
PREFERRED ACCESSORY PKG W/ CARGO MATS:	cargo tote, carpet cargo mat, carpet floor mats, first aid kit.....405
CONNECTED SERVICES TRIAL:	2 addtl years of Drive Connect & Remote Connect, in addition to 1-yr standard trial.....325
DASH CAM	.....375
WHEEL LOCKS	.....105
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1450
TOTAL	.....\$52,515

2025 TOYOTA CROWN LINEUP

Crown XLE Hybrid AWD	.....\$41,440
Crown Limited Hybrid AWD	.....45,950
Crown Nightshade Hybrid AWD48,765
Crown Platinum Hybrid MAX AWD54,990

2025 CROWN SIGNIA LINEUP

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WIMNA SHEro Award program underway

Honoring women making an impact in motorsports

The third year of the prestigious and growing SHEro Award program by Women in Motorsports North America (WIMNA) is underway, with Mazda joining AdventHealth and Jostens as partners in supporting the initiative in 2025.

The SHEro Award was established in 2023 to recognize outstanding women who make an impact in motorsports. Each year, individuals are invited to nominate their personal "SHEro." Once nominated, the honoree receives a SHEro (Nomination) Award during a presentation of the nominator and nominee's choosing.

Sarah Smith, CNO at AdventHealth Shawnee Mission, Kansas City and Member of AdventHealth Care Center team at Kansas Speedway (below), is the first person nominated for 2025. Recognized for her contributions to motorsports, she will be among the group of inspiring women con-

sidered for this year's national award.

Nominations submitted by October 31, 2025, will be entered for the National WIMNA SHEro Award. You can nominate a deserving woman—whether a team member, track official, industry professional, volunteer or beyond. Each nomination includes the purchase of a customized engraved SHEro trophy for \$200 through Jostens, with profits supporting WIMNA programs. Each nomination winner receives:

- Complimentary registration to the Women with Drive V Summit
- Paid travel and hotel accommodations
- Opportunity to speak at Summit and share their journey

The review committee then meets in November, where all nominees are reviewed by a selection committee, which chooses one national SHEro

Award recipient. That individual will be recognized onstage at the WIMNA Women with Drive Summit, presented by Mobil 1, which will be held December 8–10 in Indianapolis.

Since the event's 2023 launch, 36 women have been recognized for their outstanding contributions to motorsports, helping to inspire the next generation of women entering the industry.

Past national winners are Abigail Hempy, Powertrain Engineer at NASCAR's Research & Development Center (2023), and Vicky Martinez Muela, Founder of "Path to the Pits" (2024).

WIMNA executive director Cindy Sisson notes, "It's an incredible honor to recognize the extraordinary women of motorsports through the SHEro Award. The continued support from Jostens, AdventHealth, and now Mazda is a true testament to the growing awareness and appreciation of women's significant contributions in our industry. Giving these women the recognition they deserve is at the heart of WIMNA's mission."

To nominate, visit: womeninmotorsportsna.com/shero-2025



Jostens—official award provider for NASCAR, IndyCar, NHRA and numerous other motorsports organizations—returns for their third consecutive year to craft the unique SHEro Award. "We have had the pleasure of honoring these women since the program's inception and look forward to meeting the 2025 nominees and learning their inspiring stories," said Curt Bruns of Jostens.

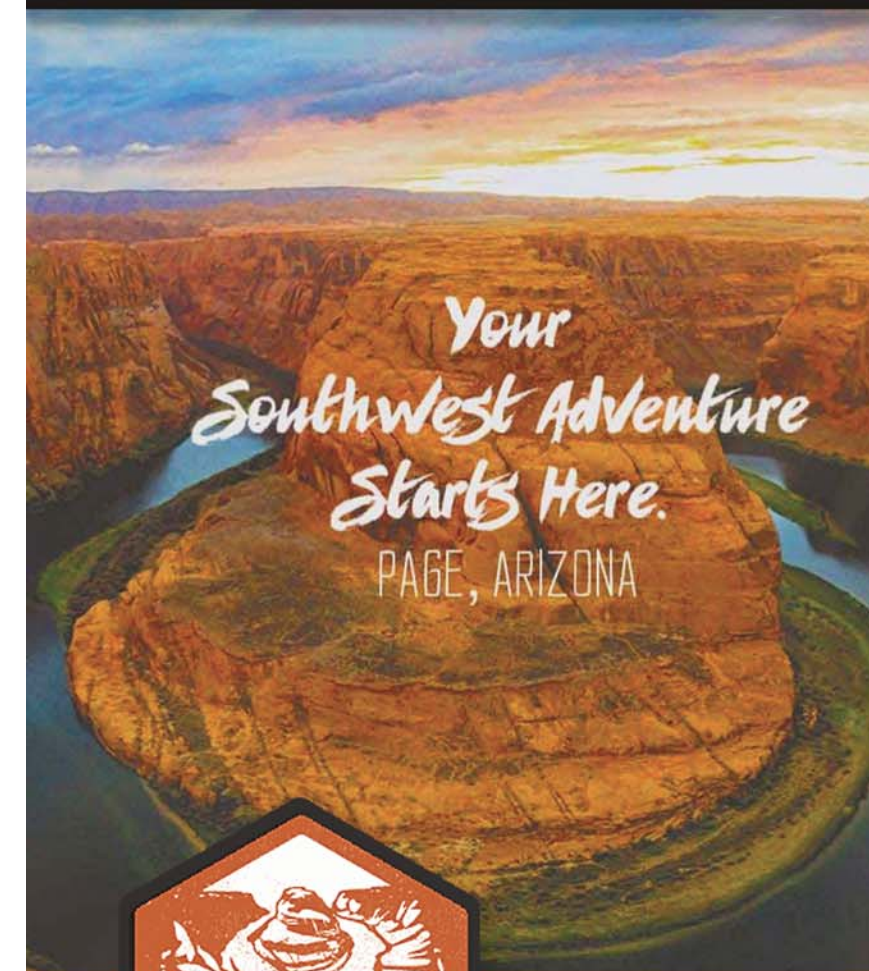
AdventHealth, a presenting sponsor since 2024, continues its support in 2025. Last year, they nominated three women, including Audrey Gregory PhD, RN and senior executive vice president and CEO of AdventHealth's Multi-Division Delivery Network. From championing AdventHealth's sponsorship of NASCAR driver Hailie Deegan, to launching the first-ever mothers' nursing rooms at Daytona International Speedway, Gregory has helped pave the way for women on and off the track.

Mazda joins as a new presenting sponsor for 2025, reflecting their longstanding role as advocates for women in motorsports through programs like the Mazda MX-5 Cup and Spec MX-5 Shoot-out. They will promote the SHEro Award and has donated \$25,000 to support the program. Mazda made the donation announcement during a special *Good Morning America* segment promoting their Prime Video docuseries, *First to the Finish*.

Women in Motorsports North America is a community of professionals dedicated to creating opportunities for women across all motorsports disciplines and founded as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2022, WIMNA supports and develops resources for women drivers, technicians, engineers, operations staff, business professionals, media members, and more. WIMNA is best known for its annual Women with Drive Summit, which provides mentorship, career connections, coaching and educational resources. ■



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Roughing it: EMBRACING ADVENTURE AT OUR FIRST LAND ROVER RALLY

By Sandra Muñoz-Dorée / Photos by William Dorée

We took a leap. Several of them, to be honest. First, we traded in our Bronco Badlands for a Land Rover Defender. Then, we dove headfirst into the Land Rover community to get the full feeling about what the rest of the World already knows. If you need to push back on the world's most challenging terrains, there is almost none better to do it in than the Land Rover Defender.

Why a Defender? Perhaps it was the Defender's off-road chase scene in the James Bond franchise, *No Time to Die*, where the Defender shows off its "unstoppable nature." Or the fact that, as an automotive journalist, my task is to test and review cars. It happens that Land Rover sent me a 2025 Land Rover 110 Defender to review, which led to our decision to purchase a Defender 130.



On the international stage, the Defender has carved a legendary reputation. Whether transporting personnel through the marble quarries of Carrara, Italy, or traversing farmlands in the UK, the Defender has been a steadfast companion for explorers seeking to venture beyond paved roads since its debut as the 110 in 1983. It was renamed the Land Rover Defender in 1990. You may recall the original Defender as a large, boxy conveyance. It was discontinued in 1997 owing to changes in safety regulations that included required airbags and side impact protections. Since then, it has undergone a significant transformation. This iconic workhorse was reintroduced in 2020 as an entirely new model, marking its first official return to the US market since the mid-1990s. We say "official" because for years, many were imported and rebuilt with Corvette engines and other modifications.

The modern Defender departs from its predecessors' utilitarian, body-on-frame design. The resulting model adopts a sleek, sophisticated aluminum unibody structure that enhances performance and efficiency. Under the hood, the Defender offers a range of powerful engine options. These include a turbocharged 3.0-liter inline-six and a fuel-efficient turbo 2.0-liter four-cylinder hybrid. For those who have their own oil company, there's the 518-horsepower supercharged 5.0-liter V8. Advanced features like all-terrain drive modes, an adaptive air suspension, and robust four-wheel-drive support its impressive off-road capabilities.

The Defender boasts a beautifully upgraded interior that blends luxury with function. High-quality materials, spacious seating, and cutting-edge technology create a welcoming environment ideal for city commuting and rugged outdoor adventures. Combining style, capability, and versatility, the modern Defender can tackle any journey, whether on urban streets or off the beaten path.

Not just an SUV, a lifestyle

Land Rover rallies vary from competitive events to social gatherings, but all celebrate the Land Rover brand's off-road heritage and community spirit. They provide opportunities for owners to test their vehicles, improve driving skills, and connect with fellow enthusiasts.

As eager newcomers to the brand, we signed up for a "Get to Know Your Defender" course, skillfully led by off-road expert Rick Butcher. A proud Arizona Land Rover Owners Club (AZLRO) member since the early 2000s, Rick brings decades of expertise, having maneuvered through rugged terrains since 1992. He drives a 2012 Range Rover, which he takes on various adventures, often seeking breathtaking camping spots in the great outdoors. Besides his off-road passion, Rick is a retired firefighter, and his wealth of knowledge and experiences enrich the course, making each session both informative and inspiring.

Since we were new owners, we thought it a good idea to jump headfirst into the pool by participating in our first Land Rover camping and off-roading rally. It's not that we needed to take the course; both of us are seasoned off-roaders and have experienced almost every kind of trail and terrain. But when you are going to hit a dirt trail with a brand-new \$90,000 vehicle, the last thing you want is a pinstripe or mishap. It makes you think twice.

As the new kids on the block with the newest vehicle in the group, we fielded tons of questions about our new 2025 Land Rover Defender. Its sleek design and rugged charm just begged for a bit of adventure, and we couldn't wait to explore the Sonoran

Desert in style.

The rugged terrain of eastern Arizona presents an exhilarating array of off-road challenges that showcase the SUV's impressive capabilities. Each twist and turn of the rugged trails reminded us how adept the Defender is at tackling diverse terrains. At the end of our adventurous day, we settled into our Gazelle Overland tent, a cozy and welcoming oasis for our overnight stay, just as we had expected.

Experiences are the best teachers

On the second day of the "Get to Know Your Land Rover" course, we were instructed by Jim West, also a retired firefighter and paramedic from Phoenix, AZ. Jim is not just any instructor; he is a legend in adventure driving. In 1992, his team represented the

(cont'd)



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USA in the prestigious Camel Trophy race. It is a series of arduous off-road competitions held in challenging locations around the world. Their skills and teamwork earned them a second-place finish and the coveted "Team Spirit" award, a testament to their camaraderie and perseverance.

West's journey continued the following year when he was invited back to scout the challenging terrains of Paraguay, Argentina, and Chile for the 1994 Camel Trophy. He meticulously plotted a comprehensive route book to guide competitors through the region's rugged landscapes. His expertise and engaging personality played a crucial role in the selection and training of every US team from 1993 to 1998, fostering a legacy of excellence in off-road adventure.

Over the years, he has built strong relationships with prominent organizations such as Land Rover North America, Wild Trackers, 7P Overland, and Cameron Advanced Mobility. He is also the principal behind MyQuest Adventures, where he shares his passion for driving by offering instruction and emergency medical support during events, ensuring participants are well-prepared for any challenge.

Throughout his 30-year career, Jim has navigated remote vehicle-based events in 30 different countries across five continents. Each of these experiences have added to his wealth of knowledge. His enthusiasm for teaching shines through in his diverse range of courses. They include emergency vehicle operations tailored for firefighters, off-road driving techniques, recovery strategies, vehicle selection, vehicle preparation, and wilderness medicine training for civilians. With every lesson, Jim inspires individuals to embrace adventure confidently and safely.

Our Trail leaders were top-notch Land Rover owners and enthusiasts. We were impressed with the quality of the instructors and event attendees, some of whom crossed the pond from England to attend this prestigious event. Oh, and yes, the array of vintage Land Rovers was drool-worthy.

Camping in the Wild West

Our camping accommodations at Goldfield Ghost Town were absolutely delightful. Our Gazelle Overland tent was nestled amidst the breathtaking landscape of the iconic Superstition Mountains. The campground offered a charming glimpse into the Old West, with sweeping views of rugged terrain and vibrant sunsets. At sundown, we indulged in hearty cowboy-style dinners at the rustic saloon, just a stone's throw from our campsite. This experience beautifully captured the essence of Land Rover's adventurous heritage, making our rally truly memorable.

As the day came to an end and the stars began to twinkle overhead, we gathered around a crackling bonfire for a cozy and welcoming meet-and-greet with fellow Land Rover camping enthusiasts. The warm glow of the flames illuminated the campers faces, casting flickering shadows as stories and laughter were shared, creating a sense of camaraderie that filled the cool evening air.

Our final evening was truly unforgettable, serving as the highlight of the rally. As we gathered for dinner and the exciting raffle night, fortune smiled upon us; we struck gold by winning two highly sought-after prizes. However, the real treasures were the friendships we forged amidst the laughter and camaraderie. We left feeling like excited adventurers, enriched with knowledge and proudly confident in our decision to invest in our new Land Rover.



HEIGHTENED EXPECTATIONS

ADVANCED TECH EXPRESSED IN ADVANCED STYLING BY JOE SAGE

We awaited our GV70 with enthusiasm, pre-arrival, posting online, “we’ve never met a Genesis GV70 we didn’t like.” After all, the first time we drove it, a 2022 model in fall of 2021, we hopped in for a simple local errand, but didn’t get out till we had driven for eight hours, up into the White Mountains and back. We had also driven it at regional comparo events in Texas and in the Pacific Northwest, both granting it trophies.

We had been impressed with its updated styling, which has now become very familiar companywide, but at that time was new—from the Crest Grille (finally extended to a full “V” where it used to be truncated) to the Quad Lamps and double-line treatment from tip to tail.

We hadn’t known beforehand, this time, which trim we would be getting, but had figured—based on the range available (see sidebar)—that you couldn’t go wrong with any of them, in turn seem-

ing to suggest that if you can afford it, you’d get the top one (a big “if,” perhaps, as pricing ranges almost 50 percent, from the \$40s to the \$70s).

Then again, the differences between two available powertrains are not that extreme—one at 300 hp, the other at 375, either towing 3,500 lb, any and all versions AWD. All are fairly heavy, and fuel mileage is only a point or two different.

We received this 2026 model in its top trim with the top 375-hp 3.5 Turbo drivetrain (the same as we had had in 2021), in its newest color (a mysterious subtle metallic called Ceres Blue, though appearing slightly purple or grey in most light).

The GV70 is loaded with tech features offering a wide array of functions—some readily, others less so, as is common these days. Its cutting edge personality is also reflected in interior style points—complex yet unified metallic door handles incorporating speaker grates are among typical details

that caught our eye as standout examples.

We were surprised, however, by our own drive notes—about double the normal volume, generally never a good sign, this time not so gushing with superlatives. Our next social media post accordingly took on a bit different tone, noting we would present “pros and nitpicks” in this next issue.

The shorter version of our notes included issues with AC (uncomfortably warm on hot days, then an icebox at night, and with vent controls at the far right that we wished were within driver’s reach); seat bolsters with a mind of their own depending upon mode; cameras bringing hard braking several feet shy of the end of parking spaces (not unique to this vehicle lately); locks that all too often took multiple tries; and the confused placement of two key knobs on the console (see callout). It may just be that high expectations can boomerang.

Driving was generally transparent, but with one glaring exception (which we had never noticed in previous GV70 drives). We had alarmed memo after alarmed memo about the steering—or likely it

was overly aggressive lane-keeping tech, in turn forcing steering—fighting us through curves and lane changes, regardless of drive mode (unfortunately fairly common with such systems), even inducing a serpentine path on straightaways (not common). Turning off drive assist systems might fix this, but we avoid killing safety tech if possible.

The good news is that much of this list can probably be conquered by an owner, through more settings experimentation than a week allows (also not uncommon these days). We were nonetheless surprised to have had such a list, in a vehicle that had earned “all As” in the past.

The GV70 was edgy and new when it came out. Has it changed? Or has the market overall simply evolved to where the innovative spirit of some features is now more mainstream, less magical?

Treating the nitpicks simply as background, the GV70 provides a pleasant and easy experience—it’s comfortable, well outfitted, and provides generally favorable drive and ride (that steering attribute aside). By the end, we realized that while we had nitpicked a lot of things, we still liked it. We can probably all think of personal relationships like that. Good friends are still good friends. ■



Metallic door handles, window and mirror controls, plus wood veneers and stitched leather, provide visual and tactile interior gratification points.



If we changed one thing on the GV70 (and its relatives), it would be this—these two dials need far better differentiation and placement, especially as one is the shifter, which should be usable eyes-off.



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY.....	Montgomery, Alabama
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	S Korea / S Korea
PARTS CONTENT ..S Korea 64% / US/Can 26%	
ENGINE	3.5L 24v DOHC six-cylinder turbo, dual CVT, GDI+MPI, alum/alum
HP/TORQUE	375 hp / 391 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	11.5:1
TRANSMISSION	8-spd automatic; paddle shifters; comfort, eco, sport, sport+ and custom modes
DRIVETRAIN.....	(standard) AWD
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson multi-link strut type, gas shocks; R: multi-link, gas shocks
STEERING.....	rack-mtd motor-driven PS
BRAKES	F: 14.2 vented, 4-piston; R: 12.8 vented, single-piston
WHEELS.....	(Sport Prestige) 21-inch alloys
TIRES	255/40R21 a/s
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	185.6 / 113.2 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	7.3 in
TURNING CIRCLE.....	37.7 ft
HEADROOM (F/R).....	39.6 / 39.1 in
LEGROOM (F/R).....	41.3 / 37.2 in
CARGO CAPACITY	28.9 / 56.9 cu.ft
TOW CAPACITY	(w trailer brakes) 3500 lb
WEIGHT	4738 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	premium unl / 17.43 gal
MPG	18/25/21 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$70,095
PAINT: Ceres Blue (ASA)	650
NFC KEY CARD	30
DESTINATION CHARGE.....	1450
TOTAL	\$72,225

2026 GENESIS GV70 LINEUP

GV70 2.5T AWD	\$47,985
" " Select AWD	50,885
" " Advanced AWD	55,435
" " Sport Prestige AWD	58,795
GV70 3.5T Sport Advanced AWD	\$63,415
" " Sport Prestige AWD	▼ 70,095



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MUDFEST WINNERS

Photos: Doug Berger / DBPics.com

This is an annual don't-miss event for us, except for this year, as something came up on the home front, and we had to cancel. Nonetheless, the results are of interest to all of us, as off-pavement-capable vehicle preferences in the Pacific Northwest inform our choices here in Arizona.

The two-day event is held at The Ridge Motorsports Park on the lower Olympic Peninsula of Washington, where members of NWAPA (the Northwest Automotive Press Association) evaluate a selection of vehicles in real-world conditions on engineered courses. Day One is paved, utilizing coned courses and a kart track (an exactly scaled version of their big track) to evaluate acceleration, handling, braking and road dynamics. Day Two is run on custom-engineered off-pavement courses in the Park's motocross area, focused on performance, traction, ground clearance, suspension articulation and advances in off-road tech.

What we don't know, by not going, is what the other vehicles entered were (which seems kind of like knowing who won the World Series or Super Bowl, without knowing who they played against, but this is their decision for this year). But we do know the winners:

TWO-ROW FAMILY SUV:

2025 Hyundai IONIQ 5 XRT

THREE-ROW FAMILY SUV:

2025 Jeep Wagoneer Series II Overland

LUXURY SUV:

2026 Genesis GV70 3.5T Sport Prestige

PICKUP TRUCK:

2025 Ram 1500 RHO Crew Cab 4x4

ELECTRIFIED ACTIVITY VEHICLE:

2025 Hyundai IONIQ 5 XRT

EXTREME CAPABILITY VEHICLE:

2025 Ram 1500 RHO Crew Cab 4x4

BEST VALUE OUTDOOR ACTIVITY VEHICLE:

2025 Subaru Forester Touring Hybrid

TITLE AWARD: NORTHWEST OUTDOOR ACTIVITY VEHICLE OF THE YEAR:

2025 Ram 1500 RHO Crew Cab 4x4

This truck had already been crowned in two categories—Best Pickup Truck and Best Extreme Capability Vehicle—before taking the top trophy.

Next up will be Drive Revolution in September, an open road paved performance event. ■



Complex simplicity.

BY JOE SAGE

It's an EV. It's made in China, by Geely, for Volvo, which the Chinese have owned since 2010. Our top trim has two motors, 422 hp, 265 miles of range and a full range of features. Its emphasis is on premium-cute styling outside and a super clean presentation inside—so clean, in fact, that there are almost no visible controls.

Our dual-motor Volvo EX30 is quick (like any EV), hitting 60 mph in just 3.4 seconds. No specifications are provided for steering, brakes or suspension, but all were generally fine—exceptions being occasional presence of torque steer, despite it being all-wheel-drive, and a favorably firm ride, al-

though it could telegraph every detail of even the smoothest roads. Power and torque are quite high for its size—and even for its weight. At just over two tons, it's heavy for its size, but not for an EV. Battery range and recharging are both good, per specs (we didn't push either to its max during our week). And prices are reasonable for an EV.

Volvo EX30 has been awarded World Urban Car of the Year; Eco Warrior of the Year by *Top Gear Magazine*; a *Popular Science* Best of What's New; and a Red Dot Best of the Best Design, among some 20 or more major accolades to date.

The spacious interior features one of the cleanest instrument panels you will find, aside from full autonomous, with virtually no switches, knobs or

controls. This, however, leads to deep screen dives for the simplest things, many needed while in motion, in turn leading to stops to make changes or access basic fundamentals. And this is what kept us from enjoying much of a honeymoon.

Several functions confounded us repeatedly. Mirrors have controls on the steering wheel, but there's a catch—you have to pull over and dig into many (not particularly intuitive) layers of screen interface, not to adjust them, but just to be granted access to those rare physical controls. It will not let you do this except in park, leaving you a sitting duck in parking lot cross traffic. AC may be adequate in other climates, but we were well over 100 degrees, and it was an oven, by default. This also required many layers of screen dive, to turn on Max AC (which takes it from automatic to manual and is quite loud, bringing another dive into fan

speed, all of this every time—but it does get cooler). Audio is another deep dive. It's not uncommon for stalks to combine functions, but turn signals would trigger the wipers more often than not (and then require multiple back-and-forths to defeat).

Most unusual is vehicle on/off, largely automatic. Powering on is automatic-only. You can deep-dive to turn the vehicle off manually (but hustle, or it may restart). So in most cases, it's still running as you walk away; and in all cases, it flashes showy lights, unlocks and is running before you get back to it—all seeming an open invitation to any savvy car thief lying in wait. (This system may use up power, too, as after a few days, we were locked out almost every time, having to use card access (tapped in a certain spot) to gain entry.

We made it through our week by avoiding what we could or pretending it just didn't have these features, not a great approach long-term.

All in all, style, in pursuit of simplicity, has been prioritized over function, sacrificing the latter. ■



The simple things you see are all complicated. —The Who: *Substitute*



SPECIFICATIONS

Incomplete info from manufacturer; some here sourced via NHTSA; all subject to final.

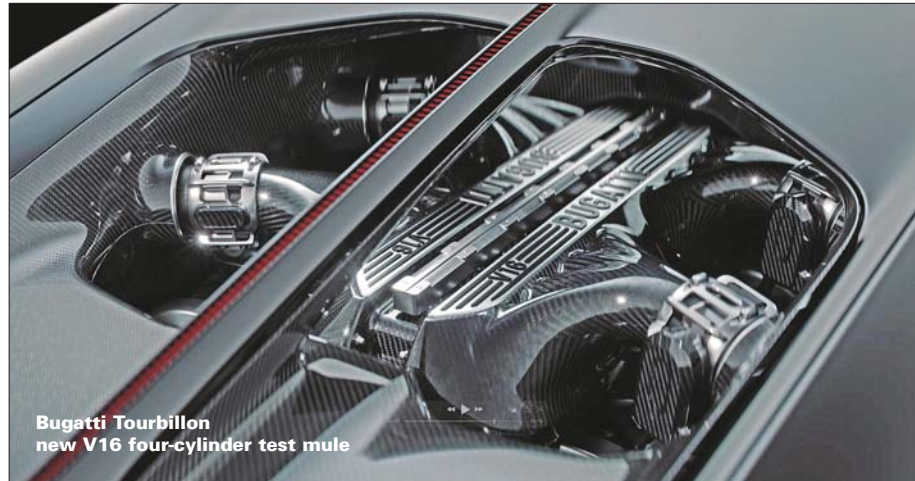
ASSEMBLY	Zhangjiakou, China
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD.....	China / China
PARTS CONTENT	China 100% / US/Can 0%
MOTORS	dual electric motors:
	<i>[only further info, per NHTSA, no differentiation front/rear]:</i> model E400V14, 315 kW
BATTERY	69 kWh (64 kWh usable),
	<i>[per NHTSA]</i> Lithium-ion 400V
HP	front 154, rear 268 = total 422 hp
TORQUE	(Twin Motor) 400 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	<i>[per NHTSA]</i> elec dir drive
DRIVETRAIN.....	AWD
0-TO-60 MPH	(Twin Motor) 3.4 sec
SUSPENSION	<i>[no information]</i>
STEERING	<i>[no information]</i>
BRAKES	<i>[no information]</i>
WHEELS	19-in
TIRES	245/45R19 Michelin Primacy a/s
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	166.7 / 104.3 in
HEADROOM (F/R).....	41.7 / 38.3 in
LEGROOM (F/R).....	41.4 / 32.3 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	6.5 in
TURNING CIRCLE	<i>[no information]</i>
CARGO CAPACITY	up to 31.9 cu.ft
WEIGHT	4140 lb
CHARGING TIME.....	DC Fast (10-80%) 26.5 min
RANGE	265 mi
MPG	(MPGe) 116/100/109 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$46,600
CLIMATE PKG	500
DESTINATION CHARGE.....	1295
TOTAL	\$48,395

2025 VOLVO EX30 LINEUP

Single Motor Extended Range	
Core	\$34,950
Plus	38,900
Ultra	40,600
Twin Motor Performance	
Plus	\$44,900
Ultra	46,600

THE INSIDE TRACK: BRIEFS & RUMORS



Bugatti Tourbillon
new V16 four-cylinder test mule

▼ For 116 years, **Bugatti** has pursued a convergence of artistry and engineering to push the boundaries of performance. This philosophy translates into a new era, with an all-new V16 standing at its heart. A journey to develop a powertrain to drive a new era of Bugatti hyper sports cars began in 2021 when Mate Rimac made initial contact with the high-performance internal combustion engine specialists at Cosworth. Unlike conventional early-stage testing, which often starts with assembly of a single-cylinder mule engine, Bugatti took a more ambitious approach, as described by powertrain chief engineer Marco Arnoletti at Bugatti Rimac: “Naturally, the number of cylinders and the displacement needed to be significant. That’s why we opted for a four-cylinder mule engine rather than just one. This approach allows us to better understand performance characteristics, sound quality and overall behavior.” The significance of this was not lost on the Bugatti team—firing up the first iteration of an all-new powertrain would be a milestone that defined the future of the brand. Unlike any other internal combustion engine in modern production, the Bugatti engine is a naturally aspirated V16 designed for performance and engagement. The plenum, a critical component in any naturally aspirated engine, became a key point of the design process. The subject of countless iterations, Bugatti worked to achieve the perfect balance between performance and aesthetics—every component had to func-

tion flawlessly while also embodying a level of craftsmanship that could stand alone as a piece of automotive art, worthy of display beyond the car itself. From the outset, chief technical officer Emilio Scervo and the powertrain team recognized that integrating a naturally aspirated V16 into a hybrid drive could ensure instantaneous torque. The culmination of this engineering is epitomized in the Tourbillon, where the all-new 8.3-liter V16 works in



harmony with advanced electric support, producing a combined output of 1,800 hp, with the V16 alone generating 1,000 hp at 9,000 rpm. Engineered for both power and precision, the combustion engine delivers 900 Nm (664 lb-ft) of torque, seamlessly complemented by three electric

motors that provide an additional 800 hp and instant torque. In the Tourbillon, this translates to a 0-to-62 mph time of just 2.0 seconds and a top speed of 276 mph.

▼ Beginning in mid-March, the **Stellantis North America** design team called on high school students from around the US to enter the 2025 **Stellantis** Drive for Design contest, their 13th annual, to create a dream Chrysler brand vehicle. Close to 30 eligible students shared sketches of their personal visions. The three winners are: First place, Ryan Panizzoli, 11th grade, Michigan; second place, Felix Bucaro, 11th grade, Wisconsin; and third place, Owen Bronson, 11th grade, Michigan. In addition to a summer design internship in the Ram Truck design studio, grand-prize winner Ryan Panizzoli also receives an Apple iPad Pro and Apple Pencil; a featured post on Stellantis NA social media channels; and an invitation to serve as a student judge at the prestigious EyesOn Design car show at Ford House in Grosse Pointe, Michigan. Prizes for the second- and third-place finishers include an Apple iPad Pro and Ap-

ple Pencil; a virtual networking opportunity with the Stellantis design team; a featured post on Stellantis BA social media channels; an invitation to serve as a student judge at the prestigious EyesOn Design car show at Ford House in Grosse Pointe; and a scholarship to College for Creative

Studies three-week Precollege Summer Experience “Transportation Design” program in Detroit this summer. Chrysler brand marks its 100th anniversary in 2025.



EV vs electric plane:
Porsche Taycan Turbo GT
races Pipistrel Velis Electro aircraft

▼ Reviving a format from their popular British motoring TV show, Richard Hammond and James May recently embarked on a race across the south of England, pitting the **Porsche** Taycan Turbo GT against the **Pipistrel** Velis Electro, one of the world’s first commercially available electric aircraft. Almost 20 years after the pair first staged a race between a car and an airplane, Hammond and May brought the idea into the electric age, in a new film for the *DriveTribe* YouTube channel. For the original race, the two were teammates, sharing the cockpit of a Cessna 182 as they raced from the Italian town of Alba to London against co-presenter Jeremy Clarkson in a Bugatti Veyron. This time, they were competing against each other, with May in the electric plane and Hammond in the powerful Taycan EV. Heading east across the south of England, the race began at Henstridge Airfield on the Somerset/Dorset border and finished at Dunsfold Aerodrome, former workplace of the two presenters and home of the famous TV test track. The 108-mile route (or 80 miles as the crow flies) wouldn’t be long enough to challenge the up-to-345-mile range of the Taycan. While the car would have to deal with traffic, construction and speed limits between the two airfields, the plane could make unimpeded progress. Leveling the playing field, however, was the aircraft’s maximum flight time of about 50 minutes—it would make a charging stop at Thrupton Aerodrome, about halfway. May was surprised by the rather uncom-

plicated pre-flight checks required for the electric aircraft. The Taycan took an early lead off the line and, having started on an airfield rather than a public road, Hammond was able to unleash the full accel-

eration provided by torque up to about 915 lb-ft with Launch Control, covering 0-to-62 mph in just 2.3 seconds. (With peak system output of 1093 hp with Launch Control with Overboost, the Taycan Turbo GT produces even more power than the Bugatti Veyron featured in the 2005 race.) As in the past, the presenters performed the head-to-head test for real. Respective journey times for both were roughly calculated beforehand to ensure a close contest.



The race was so close, in fact, that Hammond made use of the Taycan’s optional panoramic roof with Variable Light Control (with a liquid-crystal film to switch between clear and opaque) to search the skies for the plane. Throughout the race, the plane benefitted from a strong tailwind of about 20-30 knots, giving May confidence in his chances of victory—and prompting him to enjoy perhaps one cup

of tea too many during his charging stop at Thrupton. The aircraft’s swift progress, travelling much faster than the national speed limits that the car would be bound by, meant that the race remained too

close to call even right up to the final stages. And who won? You can find the full event on YouTube.

▼ Worldwide Olympic Partner **Samsung** is collaborating with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to inspire young people around the world to drive positive social change through technology and sport, part of their global youth innovation program, Solve for Tomorrow, launched in

2010 to encourage students to apply science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills to real-world issues in their communities. With more than 2.9 million participants across 68 countries to date, the initiative this year introduces two new global themes: “Environmental Sustainability via Technology” and “Social

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Change through Sport & Technology with the IOC,” selected in part through a public vote via the Together for Tomorrow, Enabling People digital community—a joint IOC-Samsung platform launched last year



GM and LG Ultium Cells joint venture lithium manganese-rich (LMR) prismatic battery cells

to connect and support young changemakers. Developed in close cooperation with the IOC, the newly launched sport and technology theme reflects a shared commitment to inspire young people to become changemakers by combining the unifying power of sport with cutting-edge innovation, and aligns with the IOC's Olympism365 strategy, which leverages sport to promote sustainable development. Selected participants in the challenge will be named Solve for Tomorrow Ambassadors, receiving mentorship and support from IOC Young Leaders and Samsung employees.

▼ **General Motors** and **LG Energy Solution** will commercialize lithium manganese-rich (LMR) prismatic battery cells for future GM electric trucks and full-size SUVs, in a new battery technology breakthrough, as GM aims to become the first automaker to deploy LMR batteries in EVs. Ultium Cells, a GM and LG Energy Solution joint venture, plans to start commercial production of LMR prismatic cells in the United States by 2028, with pre-production expected to begin at an LG Energy Solution facility by late 2027. The final production-design of these LMR battery cells will be validated at GM's Battery Cell Development Center in Warren, Michigan, expected to open earlier that year, as well as LG Energy Solution's facility. Battery cathodes require materials like cobalt, nickel and manganese, with cobalt the most expensive. LMR battery cells use a

higher proportion of more affordable manganese, while also delivering greater capacity and energy density. Battery engineers at GM and LG Energy Solution have developed a new LMR prismatic battery

cell that unlocks 33 percent higher energy density than the best-performing lithium iron phosphate (LFP) based cells, at a comparable cost. GM's electric truck platform has segment-leading range using high-nickel chemistry today. By integrating LMR battery technology and the manufacturing and space efficiency benefits of prismatic cells, GM aims to offer over 400 miles of range in an electric truck while achieving significant battery pack cost savings com-



ABB PixelPaint technology

pared to today's high-nickel pack.

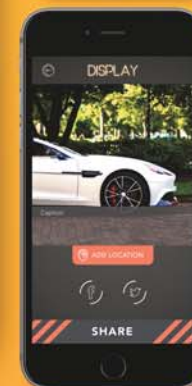
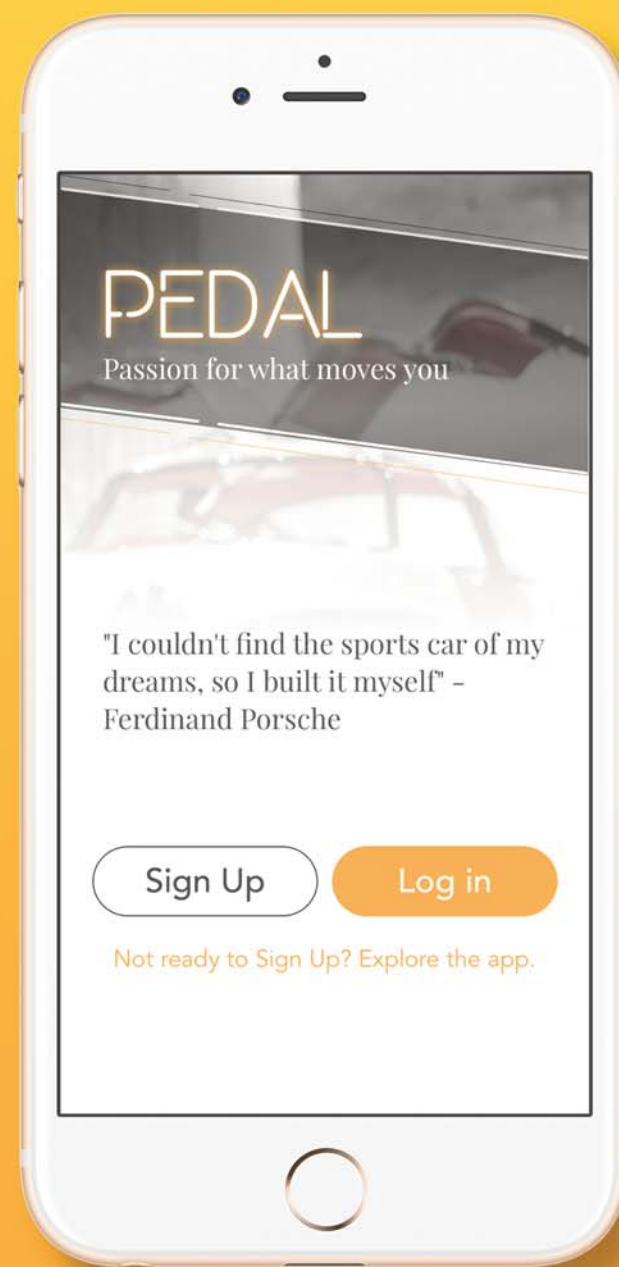
▼ Innovative PixelPaint technology by **ABB** has been deployed at the **Mercedes-Benz** Sindelfingen plant in Germany, where it complements the site's conventional painting processes by enabling the precise and efficient application of intricate paint designs. The sustainable and resource-saving technology has begun oper-

ation this year, as the Mercedes develops new personalized options for its most exclusive models. PixelPaint consists of a paint head with more than 1,000 tiny, individually controlled nozzles, mounted on an ABB robot such as the IRB 5500 paint series. Combined with ABB's 3D vision system and coordinated by ABB's RobotStudio planning and programming software, the head tracks very closely to the vehicle body to ensure that 100 percent of the paint is applied to the car, with no overspray or airborne misting. This eliminates the need for labor-intensive masking and repeat trips through the paint shop, resulting in zero waste, reduced environmental treatment requirements, and lower emissions overall. The technology can recreate even the most intricate designs with unprecedented precision, while ABB's 3D vision system enables a high degree of repeatability, assuring each painted panel appears identical. Mercedes-Benz will first use PixelPaint on the Mercedes-Maybach SL 680 Monogram Series. To further enhance the exclusivity of this model, the obsidian black hood is available upon request with an intricate Maybach pattern in contrasting graphite grey. This striking design would be impossible to achieve with a traditional process. PixelPaint is just one example of how

ABB's smart technologies are transforming the paint process, completing the final piece of the puzzle in digitalizing automotive manufacturing. Together with solutions such as the RB1000i-S digitally-enabled atomizer—which achieves up to 99 percent transfer efficiency, meaning less paint and materials are required—ABB is making manufacturers more sustainable, efficient and competitive. ■



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ADOT: I-17 widening and flex lanes update



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