

Going places doing things

On-road, off-road, green, luxurious or all of the above and more, being highly active is the common thread

Photos by Mark Elias or as noted

Over two dozen vehicles—ranging from full-size pickups to minivans, full-electric hatchbacks and compact crossover hybrids—recently competed in the 14th annual Active Lifestyle Vehicle of the

Year awards in Arizona. ALV is the only program in the US combining the input of automotive journalists with that of cyclists, runners and professional athletes to determine which vehicles currently in production best meet the needs of active buyers.

Vehicles entered in nine categories were put through their paces both on-road and on off-road trails and climbs at the Butcher Jones Recreation Site in Tonto National Forest near Saguaro Lake.

Athletes at the event included former Arizona Cardinals tight end and long snapper Mark Walczak, internationally-ranked cyclist Paul Thomas, elite triathlete and mountain biker Lewis Elliott, and race car driver and instructor Rodney Riley from the Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving.

Automotive media from Arizona and across the US—*Arizona Driver Magazine*, Phoenix-area lifestyle magazines, the *Boston Globe*, *Business Jour-*

nal, plus various radio and television outlets—added their perspective to the competition.

A team from The CARLAB, including automotive analysts Eric Noble and Maeve Ribas, designed the off-road course, set judging standards and tabulated the results.

The event has operated under different formats over the years, last year with media driving on one day and elite athletes on the other. This year, both groups drove on the same day, swapping on- and off-road duties at halftime.

“By compacting what had formerly been a two-day event into a single day, we were able to make this year’s program more focused, giving journalists, OEMs and athletes the opportunity to interact directly,” said ALV co-founder Nina Russin. “While it’s technically a car-of-the-year competition, ALV’s primary focus remains that of education, giving



automotive manufacturers the opportunity to interact directly with opinion leaders in the active community.”

Vehicles were scored after each drive, while impressions were fresh, on a scale of one to five each on attributes representing handling and performance specific to on- and off-road duties, as well as suitability to the core mission of the event: appropriate space for lots of active lifestyle gear, including specifically bicycles, as well as the vehicle’s perceived ease of cleaning after an active day. Unlike many such events, there were no judges’ selections for favorite or top three in each category. Rather, the numbers for all attributes were tabulated, either by straight arithmetic or perhaps by an algorithm unknown to us.

Vehicles were the newest model year available for each, a mix of 2018 and 2017 models.

Following are categories, contenders (alphabetically) and winners (indicated by ★ and in bold):

Best Value Off-Road

- ★ **2017 JEEP COMPASS TRAILHAWK**
- 2018 Subaru Crosstrek

Best Value Extreme Off-Road

- 2018 Chevrolet Colorado ZR2
- ★ **2018 NISSAN TITAN PRO-4X**
- 2018 Ram Rebel
- 2018 Toyota 4Runner

High Luxury Off-Road

- 2018 Nissan Titan XD
- ★ **2018 RAM LARAMIE LONGHORN SOUTHFORK**
- 2017 Volvo V90 Cross Country

Best Value On-Road

- 2018 Chevrolet Equinox
- 2017 Fiat 500X
- 2018 Honda CR-V Touring
- 2018 Nissan Pathfinder
- 2018 Toyota Camry XSE
- ★ **2018 VOLKSWAGEN TIGUAN**

Luxury On-Road

- ★ **2017 ALFA ROMEO STELVIO**
- 2018 Volvo XC60

Best Value Family

- ★ **2017 CHRYSLER PACIFICA HYBRID**
- 2018 Volkswagen Atlas

Luxury Family

- 2017 Acura MDX Hybrid
- ★ **2018 DODGE DURANGO SRT 392**
- 2018 GMC Acadia Denali

Green

- ★ **2017 CHEVROLET BOLT EV**
- 2017 Kia Niro

Urban

- ★ **2018 HONDA FIT**
- 2017 Kia Soul Turbo

According to The CARLAB’s Noble, “This was the most thoroughly judged and tightly scored ALV competition in the last five years. Kudos to the journalists and athletes.” ■

BEST VALUE OFF-ROAD: Jeep Compass Trailhawk



BEST VALUE EXTREME OFF-ROAD: Nissan Titan PRO 4X



HIGH LUXURY OFF-ROAD: Ram Laramie Longhorn Southfork



BEST VALUE ON-ROAD: Volkswagen Tiguan



LUXURY ON-ROAD: Alfa Romeo Stelvio



BEST VALUE FAMILY: Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid



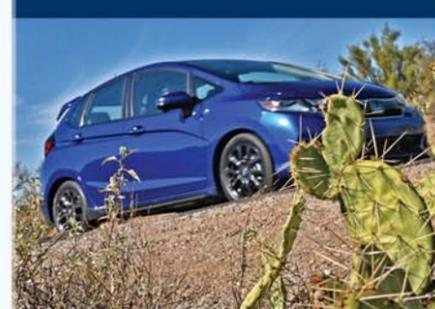
LUXURY FAMILY: Dodge Durango SRT



GREEN: Chevrolet Bolt EV



URBAN: Honda Fit



Volkswagen Tiguan photo: manufacturer

Chevrolet Bolt EV photo: Joe Sage