

TALLEST IN THE SADDLE

By Joe Sage / Photos by Kevin McCauley of Capturing the Machine

A can't-miss drive event on our schedule—which we nonetheless missed this year due to airline issues—is the Texas Auto Writers' Association (TAWA) Texas Auto Roundup, a pavement-oriented comparison of sedans, coupes, sports cars, crossovers and SUVs.

Other than a lack of snowy high country—or major elevation changes in general—Texas driving has a lot in common with Arizona, from wide open terrain and smooth pavement, to hot temperatures and wild weather, to customer markets and vehicle preferences in general. Results of these events are useful back home, plus it's a neighborly bunch to spend a few days with over there.

In all comparos—as with elections or other popularity contests—you can't win if you don't play. Manufacturers entering their wares this year included 24 vehicle entries from ten manufacturers, if you count Toyota and Lexus separately. Just one American manufacturer participated—Stellantis—though their four vehicles (or five, if you count two variants of Dodge Hornet, which was one category entry) bore the badges of three brands, including Alfa Romeo, which could be counted as domestic or as European, as well as three samples of two Dodges and a Chrysler. Fully European entries were three, two from Volkswagen and one

from Volvo. The Koreans had entered just one vehicle at first, but ended up entering a second, both Genesis. And Japan sent all the rest, a total of 15, seven from Toyota-Lexus (two Lexus, five Toyota), four from Honda, two from Mazda and one each from Nissan and Subaru.

Categories were many—basically 13 for those 24 vehicles, resulting in a few categories with just two or even just one entry. Odds of a win were, uh, very good in those. Others—crossovers, green vehicles and electric—had quite a few more entries. An individual vehicle was often entered in more than one category, such as a certain size sedan or crossover also entering as a luxury vehicle, green vehicle or electric, while others entered those specialized categories only—manufacturers had that kind of latitude in choosing where they thought they would best compete.

Category Awards are determined by media driver-judges' tallies of each vehicle as charted per a wide variety of attributes.

For Calculated Awards, pertinent numbers are isolated from category votes to calculate which cumulatively scored best in certain attributes.

Ultimately, the top Vehicle of the Year Title Awards are determined by a new and separate subjective vote, independent of the complex math

in the original Category Award tallies.

All were 2023 models except the Alfa Romeo, a 2022 as noted. Categories below show how many entries were in each. Winners are as follows:

CATEGORY AWARDS

Luxury Vehicle \$50,000-\$75,000 (2 ENTRIES)
2023 Lexus RX 500h F Sport Performance AWD

Luxury Vehicle \$75,000+ (2 ENTRIES)
2023 Genesis G90 3.5T E-Supercharger AWD

Performance Coupe (2 ENTRIES)
2023 Toyota GR Supra 3.0 Premium

Performance Sedan (1 SOLO ENTRY)
2023 Genesis Electrified G80 AWD

Performance Hatchback (1 SOLO ENTRY)
2023 Honda Civic Type R

Midsize Vehicle (2 ENTRIES)
2023 Toyota Prius Limited

Full-Size Vehicle (1 SOLO ENTRY)
2023 Toyota Crown Platinum

Compact CUV (5 ENTRIES)
2023 Mazda CX-50

Midsize CUV (5 ENTRIES)
2022 Alfa Romeo Stelvio Veloce

Luxury CUV (1 SOLO ENTRY)
2023 Lexus RX 500h F Sport Performance AWD

Minivan (1 SOLO ENTRY)
2023 Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid Pinnacle

Green Vehicle (7 ENTRIES)
2023 Lexus RX 500h F Sport Performance AWD

Electric Vehicle (4 ENTRIES)
2023 Genesis Electrified G80 AWD

CALCULATED AWARDS

Best InteriorGenesis G90 3.5T
Best ExteriorGenesis G90 3.5T
Best PerformanceDodge Challenger SRT
Best ValueHonda Civic
Highest Personal Appeal .Toyota GR Supra 3.0

TITLE AWARDS

(photos at right)

Vehicle of the YearGenesis G90 3.5T
Performance VehicleDodge Challenger SRT
Crossover Utility VehicleDodge Hornet
Electric VehicleNissan Ariya

Luxury, Green and Electric Category votes can always potentially produce different winners from the more general categories.

More interestingly, both the Calculated Awards and the Title Awards, determined by different processes than the Category Awards, can produce their own anomalies. Examples are Dodge Challenger having lost both the Performance Coupe category and Highest Personal Appeal score to the Toyota GR Supra 3.0, yet winning this year's Performance Vehicle of the Year top title; Genesis winning the EV category award but losing to Nissan for the EV of the Year top title; and Dodge Hornet having lost to Mazda in the Compact CUV category, but winning the Crossover of the Year top title. This type of situation is not that common, but it's also not that hard for such things to happen, statistically, especially with small categories.

Some similar events have moved toward fewer categories with more vehicles in each, as "car" volume has shifted toward crossovers and SUVs for some years now, and all are drifting toward Green and/or Electric categories. We might expect to see this evolve here next year. Or not. ■



VEHICLE OF THE YEAR : GENESIS G90 3.5T



PERFORMANCE VEHICLE OF THE YEAR : DODGE CHALLENGER SRT



CROSSOVER UTILITY VEHICLE OF THE YEAR : DODGE HORNET



ELECTRIC VEHICLE OF THE YEAR : NISSAN ARIYA

This year's TAWA Texas Auto Roundup was held at Eagles Canyon Raceway, a private FIA Spec club and event facility with a 2.7-mile road course, 15 total turns, over 200 feet of elevation change and a 2200-foot-long back straight, about 13 miles outside Decatur, Texas.