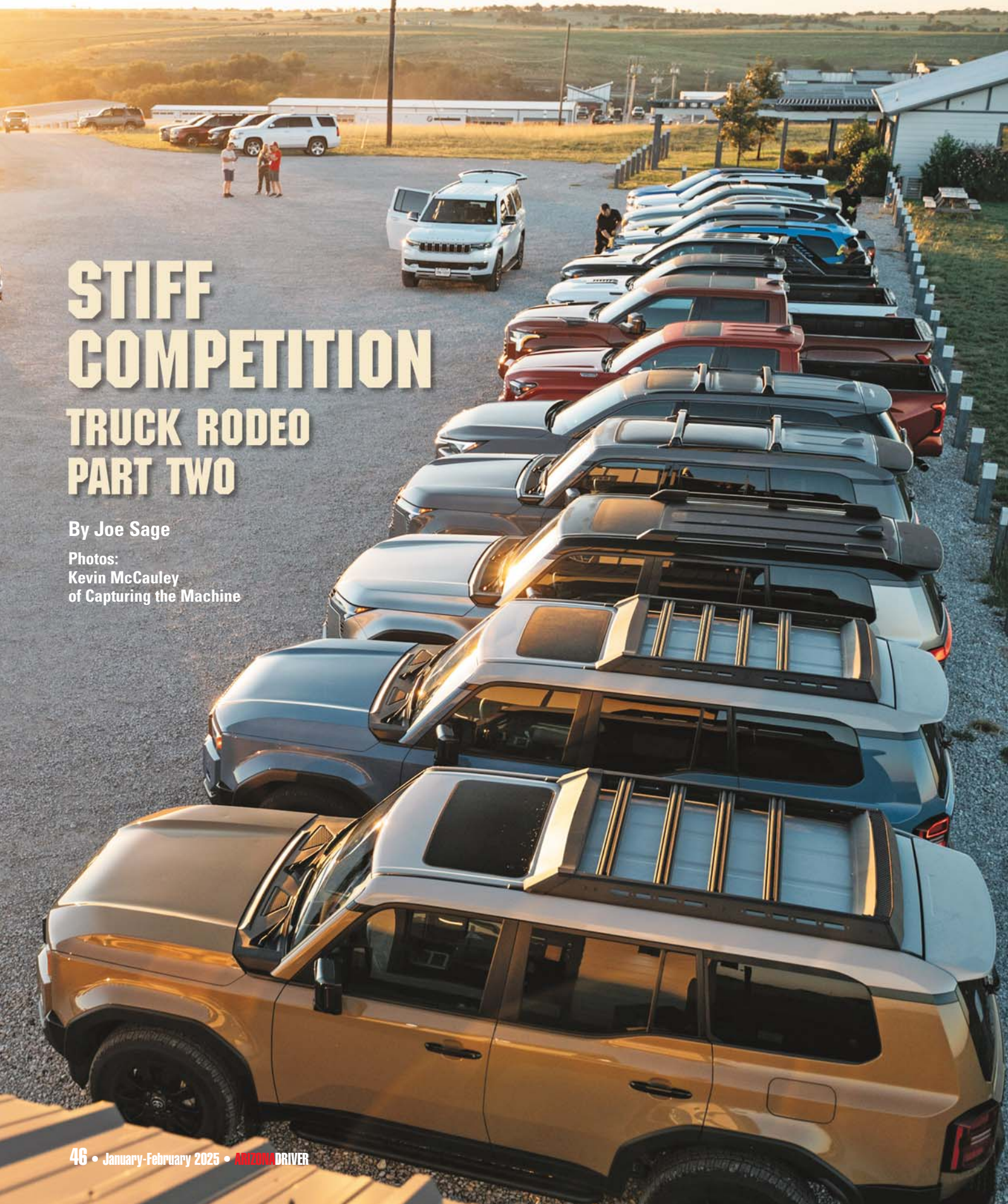


STIFF COMPETITION TRUCK RODEO PART TWO

By Joe Sage

Photos:
Kevin McCauley
of Capturing the Machine



SUV Category Winners at right (top to bottom): Nissan Kicks SR (Subcompact), Genesis GV80 (Luxury), Lexus GX (Midsize), INEOS Grenadier (Off-Road).

In late September, we joined the Texas Auto Writers' Association (TAWA, of which we are a member) for their annual Texas Truck Rodeo, long one of our don't-miss-it comparo events. A total of 41 drivers got behind the wheel of 29 vehicles in 11 categories (14 SUVs and eight pickups by brand and model, with multiple variants of several). We're including our earlier commentary ("original analysis") with each group as reference. Refer to our November-December 2024 issue for a complete event overview and details of each vehicle.

There are winners in each category and two grand trophies for SUV of Texas and Truck of Texas. But rather than announcing upon completion, as they did for years and as other groups' similar events do, they have decided to string it out for months, with awards in phases. We now have the category winners, presented here with a recap of the entries and our pre-announcement commentary at that time. Grand trophies will be announced later still.

SUVS

	hp	comb mpg	prices as tested
Subcompact SUV	141	31	\$31k

Nissan Kicks managed to have this hot-selling category all to itself.
WINNER: Nissan Kicks SR (uncontested) 141 31 \$30,705

Midsize SUV	240-409	14-38	\$43-88k
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Genesis GV80, Honda Pilot TrailSport, Honda Prologue Elite, Hyundai Santa Fe, INEOS Grenadier Trialmaster, Kia EV9, Kia Sorento, Lexus GX (2 versions), Lexus TX, Toyota Crown Signia and Toyota Land Cruiser (2 versions).

ORIGINAL ANALYSIS: Several brands appear to be competing against themselves here—two Hondas, multiple Toyotas and Lexuses, multiple Kias as well as cousins Hyundai and Genesis. But one Honda and one Kia are EVs and also entered in the separate Electric SUV category. Toyota-Lexus, having almost half the vehicles in this category, may appear to dominate it, but actually are splitting their votes—Land Cruiser goes against close cousin Lexus GX, while two GX trims are voted as one model, but go up against their TX.
WINNER: Lexus GX 550 349 17 \$72-85k

Luxury SUV	282-375	14-27	\$79-85k
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Genesis GV80, INEOS Grenadier Trialmaster, Lexus GX, Lexus TX.

ORIGINAL ANALYSIS: Three in this category are also entered in the Midsize SUV category, and the fourth (Genesis) has its Coupe sibling in that group, making this whole category basically a subset, but its winner will still be meaningful.
WINNER: Genesis GV80 375 19 \$82,150

Off-Road SUV	277-470	14-23	\$43-108k
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Honda Pilot TrailSport, Hyundai Santa Fe XRT, INEOS Grenadier Trialmaster, Jeep Wrangler Rubicon 392, Kia Sorento X-PRO, Lexus GX 550 Overtrail, Toyota Land Cruiser (2 versions).

ORIGINAL ANALYSIS: Jeep is the only one in this category that is not also in one of the size-based categories. Raw capability gets attention on the course, in this group, although cross-referencing prices may or may not also influence votes. As in the Midsize SUV category, Toyota and Lexus are likely to be splitting their votes here between close cousins Land Cruiser and GX.
WINNER: INEOS Grenadier Trialmaster 282 14 \$83,855

Electric SUV	288-379	MPGe 80-92	\$59-78k
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Honda Prologue, Kia EV9.

ORIGINAL ANALYSIS: Both of these are also entered in the Midsize SUV category, but their more focused presence is here as EVs (other than for any shoppers who may be freely comparing EV and gasoline alternatives). The two have notably different sizes, personalities and prices. Kia EV9 has been around for a couple of years now and is an established multiple trophy winner, but the new Honda Prologue (which we also drove at NWAPA Drive Revolution, along with its Acura cousin) brings an appealing and economical new formula to the table.
WINNER: Kia EV9 379 MPGe 80 \$78,430

(cont'd)



Pickup Category Winners (top to bottom): Toyota Tacoma (Midsize), Hyundai Santa Cruz (Compact), Ram 1500 (Full-Size), Ram 2500 (HD), INEOS (Luxury).

PICKUPS

	hp	comb mpg	prices as tested
Compact Pickup	281	21	\$42k
Midsize Pickup	280-326	14-23	\$47-68k
Full-Size Pickup	420-540	19/tba	\$74-91k
Heavy Duty Pickup	370	na (HD)	\$93k
Luxury Pickup	282-540	15-24/tba	\$56-91k
Off-Road Pickup	280-437	15-23	\$46-82k

Compact Pickup28121\$42k
Hyundai Santa Cruz has some commonality with the midsize Honda Ridgeline as a unibody pickup, but had the compact category to itself.

WINNER: Hyundai Santa Cruz (uncontested).....281.....21.....\$41,605

Midsize Pickup280-32614-23\$47-68k

Honda Ridgeline TrailSport, INEOS Grenadier Quartermaster Fieldmaster, Nissan Frontier PRO-4X Crew Cab, Toyota Tacoma (2 versions).

ORIGINAL ANALYSIS: The midsize pickup category, long a second fiddle to full-size, has expanded mightily in recent years. Though not all possible pickups participated, there is considerable variety here—one completely new truck, one unibody and three conventional veterans from two brands. We watch this category with great interest.

WINNER: Toyota Tacoma (2 variants).....326.....23-24.....\$56-68k

Full-Size Pickup420-54019/tba\$74-91k

Ram 1500 (3 versions), Toyota Tundra.

ORIGINAL ANALYSIS: Even moreso than the midsize pickup category, there are notable brands that did not participate. Three Rams with a range of attributes were entered as one contender against Toyota.

WINNER: Ram 1500 (3 variants).....420/540.....tba.....\$82-91k

Heavy Duty Pickup370.....na (HD).....\$93k

2024 Ram 2500 Rebel (6.7L Cummins TD).

ORIGINAL ANALYSIS: Another category of one, its winner a foregone conclusion—but a worthy contender it is, especially considering how well the Ram 1500 Rebel has always done. (And not charted here, it has 850 lb-ft of torque.)

WINNER: Ram 2500 Rebel (uncontested).....370.....na (HD).....\$92,900

Luxury Pickup282-54015-24/tba\$56-91k

INEOS Grenadier Quartermaster Fieldmaster, Ram 1500, Toyota Tacoma.

ORIGINAL ANALYSIS: As seen with several SUVs, these vehicles are all also entered in other categories. Regrouped here, the three deliver their luxury quotient via very different size, style and personality—a wild card trophy group.

WINNER: Ram 1500 Tungsten540.....tba.....\$91,085

Off-Road Pickup280-43715-23\$46-82k

Honda Ridgeline TrailSport, INEOS Grenadier Quartermaster Fieldmaster, Nissan Frontier PRO-4X, Ram 1500 Rebel, Toyota Tacoma TRD Pro, Toyota Tundra TRD Pro.

ORIGINAL ANALYSIS: If any one category represents the traditional heart of the TAWA Texas Truck Rodeo, it is this one. All of these also appear in their size categories, but this feels less like a subset—we're talking prime purpose here. And there's not a bad one in the bunch. Some represent different points in the evolution of the category itself. Group consensus could be interesting.

WINNER: INEOS Grenadier Quartermaster Fieldmaster282.....15.....\$72,409

SELF-NOMINATED FEATURE AWARDS

These categories are chosen by the manufacturers. Although others can then join in, to compete in any, this year each had its category to itself.

BEST TOWING TECHNOLOGY: Toyota's Wireless Trailer Camera System

BEST POWERTRAIN: Ram's 3.0L Hurricane High Output Straight-Six Turbo

BEST DRIVER ASSIST OR SAFETY FEATURE: Toyota's Safety Sense 3.0

AND THE BIG WINNERS? Although these used to be announced right away, so manufacturers could include a win in e.g. their Super Bowl advertising, TAWA is now saving last fall's highest honors—SUV of Texas and Truck of Texas—to be announced at the Houston Auto Show during January. ■

