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Automobile

BABY BIMMERS

FIRST DRIVES! ALL-NEW, BMW-POWERED 2014 **MINI COOPER S**
AND THE **M235i**, THE BMW YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR



SUPERSEDAN SHOOT-OUT
AUDI S8 VS. JAGUAR XJR VS. MERCEDES-BENZ S63 AMG

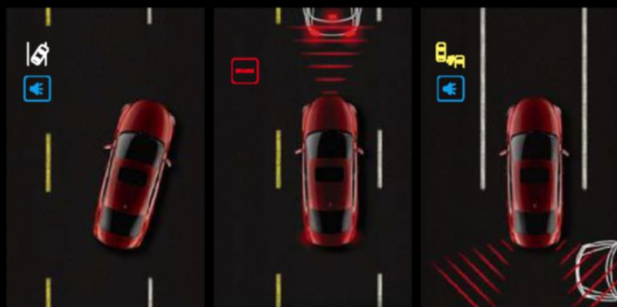
Bill Simpson

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A movie poster for 'Need for Speed'. The background is a dark, high-contrast image of a man (Aaron Paul) looking upwards, with a bright orange and yellow light source behind him. In the foreground, a silver Ford Mustang is shown from a low angle, with motion blur and sparks trailing behind it. The title 'NEED FOR SPEED' is written in a large, white, stylized font, slanted upwards. Below the title, the text 'IN THEATRES MARCH 14' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

NEED FOR SPEED

IN THEATRES MARCH 14

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Ignition

IS THIS FOR REAL?



Nine more questions from Detroit.

TOYOTA FT-1

Just for show?

SORT OF. Utter the words “Silk Road” to Toyota PR and you’ll get bewildered expressions. The term refers to the sports car partnership with BMW that will produce the next Z4 and the long-awaited successor to the Supra.

The Toyota FT-1, a BMW designer was quick to point out, is not part of that program. It’s too long and wide, and some of the deep indentations in the panels would be impossible to replicate in production. The concept predicts the orientation of the engine, at least: BMW sources say early mid-engine plans were ditched in favor of a flexible front-engine architecture that can support everything from a four-cylinder to a V-8. — Georg Kacher





Too bad the weight loss isn't accompanied by a more aerodynamic shape instead of the traditional cliff of a front end.
— Robert Cumberford

FORD F-150

Can Ford make money on an aluminum pickup?

YES, BUT OWNERS MIGHT LOSE OUT.

Pickup trucks and body-on-frame sport-utilities earn the highest profit margins in the industry, save for hyperluxury cars, so Ford will no doubt make money on its aluminum-bodied 2015 F-series. But the cost of aluminum, of retooling two assembly plants, and of retraining the UAW for the wholesale changes in assembly—including replacing most welds with rivets and industrial adhesives—will surely cut deeply into that bottom line.

Ford's defense is that it has “developed manufacturing efficiencies to reduce the cost as much as possible.” We'll have to wait until 2015 fiscal results are released in early 2016 before we know by how much those efficiencies have actually reduced costs. Key to Ford's “manufacturing efficiencies” is the money it will likely save in not paying federal Corporate Average Fuel Economy penalties when tougher standards take effect in 2016.

The cost of ownership is another matter. Although the lighter F-150 will be

more fuel-efficient, higher sticker prices and the cost of repairing aluminum bodywork could outweigh the savings at the pump. This is of particular concern to penny-pinching fleet customers (as in construction workers, not rental-car agencies), who account for about a quarter of pickups sold in the United States.

CEO Alan Mulally, the former Boeing executive who knows a lot about aluminum construction, has promised to stay on through 2014 and so will see the F-150 launch this fall. — Todd Lassa

F-150: DAVID ZENLEA

GMC CANYON

Can General Motors make money on mid-size pickups?

GM THINKS SO, but its investment in the GMC Canyon and Chevrolet Colorado mid-size pickups has competitors scratching their heads, as the segment has shrunk to fewer than 250,000 units. **“I'm not sure what kind of alternative lifestyle is really attracted to something that's going to get not much better fuel economy than a half ton, not much cost savings, and significantly less capability,”** says Ram president Reid Bigland. GM argues that its trucks will draw new customers. “What we've seen over the last decade or so is a lot of defections to vehicles like crossovers... to get more comfort and amenities,” says GMC marketing VP Tony DiSalle. — David Zenlea



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HOW ALIVE ARE YOU?



KIA GT4 STINGER

Will this make it to production?

"IT'S REALISTIC," design boss Peter Schreyer says. The rear-wheel-drive two-plus-two coupe concept has a turbocharged 2.0-liter four-cylinder making 315 hp. He adds that Kia, which is trying to distinguish itself further from Hyundai, has "always wanted to make a sports car." — Greg Migliore



AUDI Q3

Are premium subcompact hatchbacks the next big thing?

YES, if they're called crossovers. The Audi Q3 joins the upcoming Mercedes GLA-class, the year-old BMW X1, and the Buick Encore in a booming segment. Next up is a subcompact Jeep, which will debut in Geneva. — TL



MERCEDES-BENZ C-CLASS

Will the new C-class get a big price hike?

THAT WOULD BE A GOOD BET. The hot new CLA-class starts at \$30,825. The outgoing C-class is \$36,725, and then there's a \$15,600 jump to the E-class. With the C-class's new, junior S-class styling, a \$40,000-plus starting price would seem logical. — TL



See-through A-pillars appeared on the 2002 Volvo Safety Concept Car but are better executed here. Let's hope they enter production soon.

CADILLAC ELMIRAJ

Is Cadillac going to build the Elmiraj coupe or a big sedan?

"THERE'S STILL NO DECISION SO FAR," claims Cadillac's new global marketing chief, Uwe Ellinghaus, although a sedan has been captured in spy photos. He frames the debate: "In an ideal world, we'd do both. The volume will be with the sedan. The image effect will be with the coupe. It's almost a no-brainer from a marketing point of view—I give the

coupe a clear priority over a sedan. But...my colleague from sales sitting over there would kill me if I say this because he will remind me that the sedan segments, the world over, are far, far bigger. In China, coupes and convertibles are considered niche, niche, niche. This is the market where we clearly need the equivalent of an S-class or a 7-series or an A8." — DZ

ELMIRAJ



JEEP GRAND WAGONEER

How much can Jeep charge?

"I DON'T WANT TO PUT A CEILING ON IT," says Jeep president Michael Manley. The Grand Cherokee currently tops out at around \$65,000 and has been a huge profit generator. Manley says that's just the beginning. **"If you think of the prices that competitors are asking, ranging from \$65,000 up to \$100,000-plus—albeit at small volumes—I have no doubt that, with the right kind of vehicle, we can play with those kinds of spenders."**

Does he think the upcoming, three-row Grand Wagoneer can be that kind of vehicle? Manley nods his head and, just to be clear, intones, "He nodded." — DZ



IN-CAR TECHNOLOGY / *Can automakers spy on you?*

YES, according to Ford marketing chief Jim Farley. "We know everyone who breaks the law. We know exactly when you do it, because we have a GPS sensor in your car, we know who you are, and we know how fast you're driving," he said at CES in Las Vegas (an opening act for the Detroit show these days). He later added that this is only "hypothetical."

SPORT SEDAN CONCEPT *Can the Nissan Maxima be saved?*

MAYBE, because the samurai are back in charge. The Nissan Maxima used to be a very big deal. At its zenith—around the time of its 1989 redesign—it was, by this magazine's estimation, the best \$20,000 sedan in the world. Yet the Maxima lost its mojo after it adopted the Altima's platform in 2004, and now it just seems like a slightly nicer, more styled version of Nissan's top seller.

The Nissan Sport Sedan Concept—a thinly veiled version of the next Maxima—just might herald a return to relevance. It made a big statement at the 2014 Detroit auto show, just as you'd expect from a car with orange paint that looks practically radioactive. Like so many of the designs that have come from the studios overseen by Nissan/Infiniti design director Shiro

Nakamura, the message is drama, not elegance. It took us a while, but we find ourselves interested in this car because it's so defiantly Japanese, as if you had walked into a Zen-like design studio and unexpectedly found a samurai sword. Perhaps all this drama means that the next Maxima, even if it is still Altima-based, will be a car worth driving.

— Michael Jordan

Floating roof panel looks nice and will likely be reproduced on the production car.

The corner air deflector, which was first seen on the BMW i8 concept a few years back, is already becoming cliché.

This gigantic lump of chrome would look more at home on a Titan pickup than on what is meant to be a sport sedan. Needs to be toned down.





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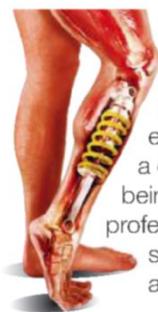
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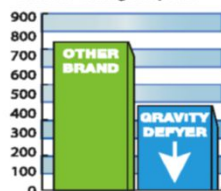


Energy Return
Propels You

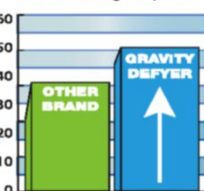
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SHOCK ABSORPTION STUDY HPW Biomechanics, 2012
Shock absorption: Measurement of maximum pressure (KPI).
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"After ordering and wearing your Gravity Defyer® [shoes], I have renewed faith that I will be able to continue my passion for senior softball. Thank you." – Ron B

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Compared with the outgoing model, the next E-class—predicted below by a spy illustrator—displays a more tapered plan view, a lower grille, and four headlamps framed by prominent LEDs.



E-CLASS, REBOOTED

Return of the in-line 6, hybrids galore, and a 600-hp V-8.



by **GEORG KACHER**

THE VENERABLE

E-CLASS was once the biggest moneymaker for Mercedes-Benz, but a shift toward the more affordable A- and C-class models has caused E-class sales to stagnate. In an attempt to reverse this, Mercedes is giving the next

E-class, due in 2016, extra sparkle.

The E-class will share its design language with the S-class and the just-unveiled C-class rather than the flamboyant CLA. That means a classy, if somewhat conservative, three-box shape, but it will still have sportier proportions than the current model at the expense of head- and legroom. We again expect a coupe and a softtop convertible. The coupe does without B-pillars, adding a distinctive touch when the windows are down. Most important, the two-door models will once again be real E-classes, rather than dressed-up C-classes.

All variants will ride on a new modular architecture. It should save money and increase flexibility but won't cut curb weight, as cost concerns limit the use of lightweight materials.

There will be plenty of technological innovations, many of which trickle down from the S-class. They include two large color screens, a semiautonomous driving mode, heated armrests, and a new telematics interface. Mercedes plans to abandon its click-wheel-based system in favor of a central touch pad—a camera relays hand movements to the instrument panel so that you don't have to take your eyes off the road. The E-class will even park itself with its driver standing outside.

Expect no fewer than three hybrid models worldwide, including two plug-ins. New diesel engines should yield 20 percent better fuel economy. Gasoline four-cylinders carry over, but the V-6 will disappear, mostly for cost reasons. The four-cylinder and a new in-line six were developed together and share 60 percent of their parts. V-8s will still be offered, but an internal forecast shows a take rate of less than two percent. The new 4.0-liter V-8, which essentially shares its cylinder heads with Mercedes' turbo four, should deliver 600 hp and 550 lb-ft of torque in AMG trim. A high-performance diesel, paired with electric motors, should exceed 375 hp. Don't expect EV or fuel-cell versions any time soon, even though Mercedes supports such technologies.

What's in a grille?

Apparently car manufacturers worldwide believe that there is potent juju in the time-honored Mercedes-Benz grille. Unlike the Rolls-Royce grille, which when appended to another car is simply seen as something silly, the Mercedes grille is superstitiously believed to convey magical powers that will lead to sales salvation. Below are some examples.

— Robert Cumberland



1956 STUDEBAKER COUPE

Studebaker, which actually undertook the U.S. distribution of Mercedes-Benz, grafted the Mercedes grille onto its 1950s coupe—an otherwise lovely design—to make the Hawk.



1975 FORD GRANADA

Ford applied the grille to its mid-size Granada in 1975, comparing it to the similarly sized (but far higher quality) Mercedes 280.



2011 HYUNDAI EQUUS

The Equus has been sold in the United States with very Mercedes-like horizontal bars.



2014 MERCEDES-BENZ S-CLASS

Of all these hopeless imitations, one stands out as being the ironic masterpiece: a really magnificent imitation of the classic Mercedes grille, with a very Korean-style fat chrome upper bar, appears on... the new S-class Mercedes.

For people with a higher risk of stroke due to Atrial Fibrillation (AFib) not caused by a heart valve problem

I was taking warfarin. But I wondered, could I shoot for something better?

NOW I TAKE ELIQUIS® (apixaban) FOR 3 GOOD REASONS:

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ELIQUIS and other blood thinners increase the risk of bleeding which can be serious, and rarely may lead to death.

Ask your doctor if ELIQUIS is right for you.

ELIQUIS is a prescription medicine used to reduce the risk of stroke and blood clots in people who have atrial fibrillation, a type of irregular heartbeat, not caused by a heart valve problem.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:

■ **Do not stop taking ELIQUIS without talking to the doctor who prescribed it for you. Stopping ELIQUIS increases your risk of having a stroke.** ELIQUIS may need to be stopped, prior to surgery or a medical or dental procedure. Your doctor will tell you when you should stop taking ELIQUIS and when you may start taking it again. If you have to stop taking ELIQUIS, your doctor may prescribe another medicine to help prevent a blood clot from forming.

■ **ELIQUIS can cause bleeding which can be serious, and rarely may lead to death.**

■ **You may have a higher risk of bleeding if you take ELIQUIS and take other medicines that increase your risk of bleeding, such as aspirin, NSAIDs, warfarin (COUMADIN®), heparin, SSRIs or SNRIs, and other blood thinners. Tell your doctor about all medicines, vitamins and supplements you take.** While taking ELIQUIS, you may bruise more easily and it may take longer than usual for any bleeding to stop.

■ **Get medical help right away if you have any of these signs or symptoms of bleeding:**

- unexpected bleeding, or bleeding that lasts a long time, such as unusual bleeding from the gums; nosebleeds that happen often, or menstrual or vaginal bleeding that is heavier than normal
- bleeding that is severe or you cannot control
- red, pink, or brown urine; red or black stools (looks like tar)
- coughing up or vomiting blood or vomit that looks like coffee grounds
- unexpected pain, swelling, or joint pain; headaches, feeling dizzy or weak

■ **ELIQUIS is not for patients with artificial heart valves.**

■ **Before you take ELIQUIS, tell your doctor if you have:** kidney or liver problems, any other medical condition, or ever had bleeding problems.

Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or plan to become pregnant or breastfeed.

■ **Do not take ELIQUIS if you** currently have certain types of abnormal bleeding or have had a serious allergic reaction to ELIQUIS. A reaction to ELIQUIS can cause hives, rash, itching, and possibly trouble breathing. Get medical help right away if you have sudden chest pain or chest tightness, have sudden swelling of your face or tongue, have trouble breathing, wheezing, or feeling dizzy or faint.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

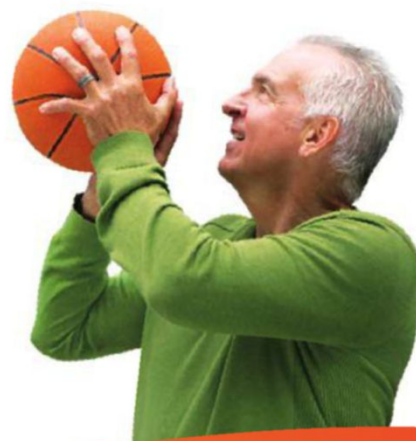
Please see additional Important Product Information on the adjacent page.

Individual results may vary.

**Visit ELIQUIS.COM
or call 1-855-ELIQUIS**

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Eliquis®
(apixaban) tablets 5mg



IMPORTANT FACTS

Eliquis. / **Rx ONLY**
(apixaban) tablets

The information below does not take the place of talking with your healthcare professional. Only your healthcare professional knows the specifics of your condition and how ELIQUIS® may fit into your overall therapy. Talk to your healthcare professional if you have any questions about ELIQUIS (pronounced ELL eh kwiss).

What is the most important information I should know about ELIQUIS (apixaban)?

Do not stop taking ELIQUIS without talking to the doctor who prescribed it for you. Stopping ELIQUIS increases your risk of having a stroke. ELIQUIS may need to be stopped, prior to surgery or a medical or dental procedure. Your doctor will tell you when you should stop taking ELIQUIS and when you may start taking it again. If you have to stop taking ELIQUIS, your doctor may prescribe another medicine to help prevent a blood clot from forming.

ELIQUIS can cause bleeding which can be serious, and rarely may lead to death. This is because ELIQUIS is a blood thinner medicine that reduces blood clotting.

You may have a higher risk of bleeding if you take ELIQUIS and take other medicines that increase your risk of bleeding, such as aspirin, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (called NSAIDs), warfarin (COUMADIN®), heparin, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) or serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs), and other medicines to help prevent or treat blood clots.

Tell your doctor if you take any of these medicines. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure if your medicine is one listed above.

While taking ELIQUIS:

- you may bruise more easily
- it may take longer than usual for any bleeding to stop

Call your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of these signs or symptoms of bleeding when taking ELIQUIS:

- unexpected bleeding, or bleeding that lasts a long time, such as:
 - unusual bleeding from the gums
 - nosebleeds that happen often
 - menstrual bleeding or vaginal bleeding that is heavier than normal
- bleeding that is severe or you cannot control
- red, pink, or brown urine
- red or black stools (looks like tar)
- cough up blood or blood clots

- vomit blood or your vomit looks like coffee grounds
- unexpected pain, swelling, or joint pain
- headaches, feeling dizzy or weak

ELIQUIS (apixaban) is not for patients with artificial heart valves.

What is ELIQUIS?

ELIQUIS is a prescription medicine used to reduce the risk of stroke and blood clots in people who have atrial fibrillation.

It is not known if ELIQUIS is safe and effective in children.

Who should not take ELIQUIS?

Do not take ELIQUIS if you:

- currently have certain types of abnormal bleeding
- have had a serious allergic reaction to ELIQUIS. Ask your doctor if you are not sure

What should I tell my doctor before taking ELIQUIS?

Before you take ELIQUIS, tell your doctor if you:

- have kidney or liver problems
- have any other medical condition
- have ever had bleeding problems
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if ELIQUIS will harm your unborn baby
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. It is not known if ELIQUIS passes into your breast milk. You and your doctor should decide if you will take ELIQUIS or breastfeed. You should not do both

Tell all of your doctors and dentists that you are taking ELIQUIS. They should talk to the doctor who prescribed ELIQUIS for you, before you have **any** surgery, medical or dental procedure.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Some of your other medicines may affect the way ELIQUIS works. Certain medicines may increase your risk of bleeding or stroke when taken with ELIQUIS.

How should I take ELIQUIS (apixaban)?

Take ELIQUIS exactly as prescribed by your doctor. Take ELIQUIS twice every day with or without food, and do not change your dose or stop taking it unless your doctor tells you to. If you miss a dose of ELIQUIS, take it as soon as you remember, and do not take more than one dose at the same time. **Do not run out of ELIQUIS. Refill your prescription before you run out. Stopping ELIQUIS may increase your risk of having a stroke.**

What are the possible side effects of ELIQUIS?

- See “What is the most important information I should know about ELIQUIS?”
- ELIQUIS can cause a skin rash or severe allergic reaction. Call your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following symptoms:
 - chest pain or tightness
 - swelling of your face or tongue
 - trouble breathing or wheezing
 - feeling dizzy or faint

Tell your doctor if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

These are not all of the possible side effects of ELIQUIS. For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

This is a brief summary of the most important information about ELIQUIS. For more information, talk with your doctor or pharmacist, call 1-855-ELIQUIS (1-855-354-7847), or go to www.ELIQUIS.com.

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A WORD WITH

MARK REUSS

**EVP, Global Product Development
General Motors**

Mark Reuss is not the new CEO of General Motors—that job went to his old friend Mary Barra. He is, however, the new head of global product development. **Jamie Kitman** met with him at the Renaissance Center high above Detroit to talk shop and, it turned out, to witness an historic good-bye.

On the Cadillac Elmiraj concept

The media have written that we're looking at doing something like that, and it's no secret we're going to fill out the Cadillac lineup. When and how efficiently we could do it is what we're looking at. Where we would do it, how it would be constructed, how much it would weigh, what the dimensions really need to be, what powertrains we have in that time frame. All that stuff.

On station wagons and unexplored segments

No one's done a wagon at a good price point, that's the problem... I wish I could get in the same room as all the journalists who told me not to bring the Chevrolet Spark here. We can't get enough of them. The other one was the Buick Encore. "That's a really bad idea," [they said]. Well, guess what, we're selling the heck out of it. I love doing things that make sense that no one else is doing.

[Outgoing CEO Dan Akerson walks in]

Akerson: I've come to say good-bye.

Reuss: Dan, this is Jamie Kitman.

Akerson: Oh, hi. I'm yesterday's news.

Reuss: No, he's not. Good job last night at *Automotive News* [World Congress remarks]. It went really well. [Akerson leaves].

On the aluminum Ford F-150

That would be one way to solve an equation on a line that doesn't get any better from a CAFE and grams of CO2 standpoint. We're doing this in a different way, creating models that are different in size [the mid-size Chevrolet Colorado and GMC Canyon], and therefore we'll get even more mass savings, and we'll also have different powertrains than what [Ford] will have in their big truck.

On hydrogen fuel cells

We know how to do fuel cells and have spent a lot of money. But the infrastructure is just not coming, and the fuel stack itself is still right around a hundred thousand bucks industry-wide. We've solved everything except infrastructure and cost. Cost comes with scale. It's a catch-22. If you don't have the infrastructure, you're never going to solve that cost equation.



PERFORMANCE WITH PROVENANCE

CORVETTE, CAMARO — AND THE CHEVROLET SS

A brand-new, seventh-generation Corvette Stingray debuted to a chorus of accolades. The restyled 2014 Camaro offers four formidable models, topped by the supercharged Camaro ZL1 with 580 horsepower. And coming Spring 2014: The reintroduction of the no-frills, race-ready Camaro Z/28.

So what do we do for an encore?

We build the 2014 Chevrolet SS, raising the bar even higher in the Chevrolet performance portfolio.

2014 CAMARO



2014 CORVETTE



“OUR GOAL WAS TO CREATE A CAR THAT DELIVERS INCREDIBLE GRIP AND HANDLING BALANCE WHILE CORNERING, WHILE STILL BEING COMFORTABLE TO DRIVE ON THE ROAD.”

David Leone, executive chief engineer of GM global programs



LS3 V8

“The Chevrolet brand was largely built on the strength of rear-drive performance sedans, yet it has been 17 years since we’ve offered one,” said Mark Reuss, president of General Motors North America. The 2014 SS is a high-performance four-door vehicle that will provide enthusiasts an exhilarating driving experience to go along with the premium sedan styling, comfort, convenience, safety and technology they crave.

Agreed, then: 17 years is too long, but we think you’ll agree this car is worth the wait. Quite a few Chevrolet models over the past two decades were worthy of having the SS “Super Sport” designation added to their name to signify performance versions, but the 2014 Chevrolet SS is the first model to earn the name outright. “The all-new

Chevrolet SS fills the void, and fills it better than any other vehicle in the brand’s rich history,” said Reuss.

Drawing on the global resources of General Motors, the Chevrolet SS is based on the new, award-winning Holden VF Commodore, built by Chevrolet’s Australian partner. In spirit, those who have characterized the Chevrolet SS as a four-door cousin of the Camaro SS may be on to something.

After all, it’s no coincidence that at the 2013 DAYTONA 500®, the Chevrolet SS was not only the Official Pace Car for the race, but it was also Chevrolet’s NASCAR Sprint Cup Series™ entry, and it debuted as a winner: Danica Patrick qualified her Chevrolet SS on the pole, and five-time

champion Jimmie Johnson won the race in his SS, followed closely by another SS driven by Dale Earnhardt, Jr.

The NASCAR Sprint Cup Series™ Chevrolet SS has a front-engine, rear-drive V8 configuration that is the same as the street-going SS – and Chevrolet is the only manufacturer in NASCAR® that can make that claim. In Australia, the Holden Commodore is achieving much success in the V8 Supercars series, similar to NASCAR® Commodore drivers are leading the points for the 2013 season against competitors from Ford, Mercedes-Benz and Nissan, and they won all four of the races the series ran earlier this year at the Circuit of the Americas track in Austin, Texas.



6.2L

LS3 V8

415

HORSEPOWER

49/51

WEIGHT BALANCE

Indeed, the performance is there, on the track or on the street. SS is powered by the muscular 6.2-liter, 415-horsepower Chevrolet LS3 V8. Torque, rated at 415 pound-feet, guarantees pulling power from low speeds. The engine is matched to a strong 6-speed automatic transmission that can be shifted manually using the TAPshift® paddles mounted on the steering wheel. Even the exhaust note had to be perfect, said Steven Manson, engineering manager for the SS at Holden. "We continually redeveloped the exhaust until it was exactly right." He knew it was when he took his 16-year-old son and his friends to school one day in his SS: "I cranked up the engine, and the boys went, 'Whoa!'"

The SS turns and stops as competently as it goes: Up front are big Brembo® brakes with ventilated 14-inch rotors and 4-piston calipers. The front suspension employs MacPherson struts, and the back features multilink independent geometry.

Manson said that his team revised the new Electric Power Steering and tuned it for an optimum balance of road feel and comfort – to the point where he considers it top-notch. And there's plenty of Z-rated Bridgestone® rubber on the road: fat 275/35ZR19 summer-only tires on the rear, with 245/40ZR19 summer-only tires up front, mounted on forged-aluminum

wheels. Weight distribution is nearly 50/50, made possible in part by an aluminum hood and rear decklid.

"Our goal was to create a car that delivers incredible grip and handling balance while cornering, while still being comfortable to drive on the road," said David Leone, executive chief engineer of GM global programs. "The perfect weight balance and lower center of gravity were a big part of that goal because it enabled the team to tune for a more comfortable highway ride without sacrificing handling or driver confidence while cornering at the limits."

Outside, the aggressive stance of the Chevrolet SS is due in part to the staggered front and rear wheels, which are pushed out to the corners. At the rear, the tapered, teardrop shape contributes to aerodynamic performance. Premium cues include jewel-like chrome accents and signature LED daytime running lamps as well as standard HID headlamps with a forward-looking ambient light sensor for more rapid automatic headlamp activation. "From every angle, the Chevrolet SS says power and performance, a combination of an aggressive rear-wheel-drive stance and bodyside attitude with the right balance of detail and refinement inside and out," said John Cafaro, design director for Chevrolet passenger cars.

DETAIL & REFINEMENT

"FROM EVERY ANGLE, THE CHEVROLET SS SAYS POWER AND PERFORMANCE, A COMBINATION OF AN AGGRESSIVE REAR-WHEEL-DRIVE STANCE AND BODYSIDE ATTITUDE WITH THE RIGHT BALANCE OF DETAIL AND REFINEMENT INSIDE AND OUT."

John Cafaro, design director for Chevrolet passenger cars

"The Chevrolet SS is not a 'Boy Racer' offering. Yes, the exterior styling is aggressive, but in a sophisticated manner. It's restrained but muscular, and it's both sporty luxury and luxurious sport," said Andrew Smith, SS design director.

Inside, there's a performance theme, but not at the expense of luxury and style. With 42 inches of front leg room and 39 inches of rear leg room, the Chevrolet SS can accommodate five adults. Leather is standard, as are 10-way power-adjustable front bucket seats with additional side bolsters, joined by sophisticated twin-needle stitching. Exquisitely detailed, the stitching reinforces the quality craftsmanship and attention to detail that went into this vehicle. The SS logo is prominently stitched onto the instrument panel, which features two distinct chrome

finishes: Galvano – a near-satin finish – and bright chrome.

Technology features abound, including an in-dash color touch-screen that supports Chevrolet MyLink™ and its next-generation navigation system. There's a 9-speaker Bose® Centerpoint® Surround Sound, 220-watt premium sound system and safety features that include Forward Collision Alert, Lane Departure Warning, Side Blind Zone Alert and a rear vision camera with Rear Cross Traffic Alert. The SS has a standard color Head-Up Display (HUD) that projects important vehicle information onto the windshield, allowing the driver to view it without looking away from the road.

The SS is the first Chevrolet to offer Automatic Parking Assist, which provides hands-free parking help using an ultrasonic sensing

system to detect the width and depth of either parallel or reverse right-angle parking spaces. Steven Manson, Holden engineer, said that his team helped develop a new version of Automatic Parking Assist, "and it has been one of the most remarked-upon features on the car." While the driver controls the throttle, transmission and brake, Automatic Parking Assist controls the steering input.

The all-new SS is engineered for performance enthusiasts who've been clamoring for a rear-wheel-drive sedan. Adding the SS to the lineup further solidifies Chevrolet's position as America's best-selling performance car brand.

Chevrolet already offers nearly one-third of the available rear-drive performance cars on the market. What a year it's been for Chevrolet performance cars – and it keeps getting better.

FIND NEW ROADS™

CHEVROLET





by **ROBERT
CUMBERFORD**

TOYOTA FT-1 VIRTUAL HIGH TECHNOLOGY.

nO, IT'S NOT REAL. Yes, it could be. Chances? No better than fifty-fifty, most likely. On the other hand, this dramatic pushmobile (it does have a little electric motor to move it onto auto-show stands) got this far because it's a great PlayStation character, and after "driving" it, Akio Toyoda himself decreed that it should exist as a realistic concept model. That costs real money (although not nearly as much as a complete, drivable car), showing the seriousness of the concept. Toyota has a long-running and highly irregular relationship with sports cars, starting with the charming little Sports 800 back in the mid-1960s, the 2000GT, three generations of MR2s, the last near-supercar Supra, the current shared-with-Subaru sport coupe (the Scion FR-S), and some amazingly good prototypes. I cherish the memory of driving—really fast—the fully realized 4500GT concept car at the Toyota proving

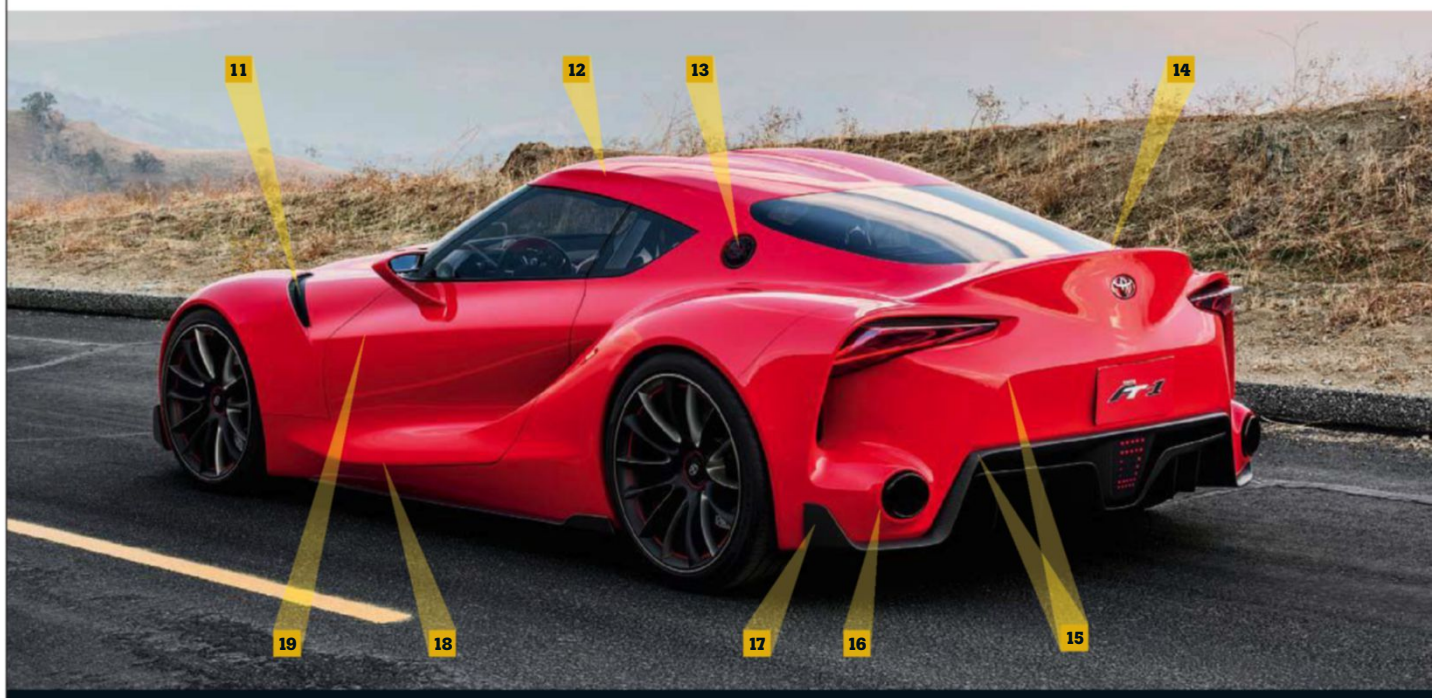
ground in the late '80s. It was completely engineered, but its aerodynamically superior body shape was "too strange" for most people, and the project was dropped.

While talking with the leaders of the California-based FT-1 design team—Kevin Hunter, president of Calt Design Research in Newport Beach, and project design manager William Chergosky—at the Detroit show in January, we learned that this truly is a stylistic fantasy. The FT-1 has never been in a wind tunnel, and it doesn't really have an engine (there is an artful cover for the imagined in-line six the team desires for its relationship to the engine in the 2000GT), nor is there an existing component set suitable for the race-car-like chassis they would like to see beneath its skin. Toyota's performance group, TRD, was called in to have a look, and they thought the FT-1 was "pretty good" as is but would have to test it to be sure.

So, like the original Viper concept car,

this "dream car" could evolve into a serious product (or, like the Dodge Copperhead, disappear forever). Let's take a look at what's here and imagine what could exist one day. It's interesting that the choice was to put the engine up front, Corvette- and Viper-style, rather than expand on the mid-engine scheme of Toyota Le Mans cars and the MR2. Many engineers and designers think that a front-engine car is much easier to live with on public roads, less likely to bite an inattentive driver in "ordinary" extreme situations. It also happens to give really good proportions, with a longer hood and a shorter rear.

The best part of the car is the interior, which is seriously thought out, beautifully made, and extremely satisfying to be in once you struggle past the wide sill. I would love to see a production version of the FT-1 with the exterior toned down a bit and perfected in a wind tunnel. It's not a complete design yet, but it's definitely on the right path.





FRONT 3/4 VIEW

1 The blunt center evokes thoughts of the classic Cord 810's "coffin nose"—and the Panoz Le Mans cars from a decade or more ago.

2 An awful lot of scoopin' goin' on in this front-end design: big holes on either side of the central nacelle and good-size ones cooling the front tires, apparently.

3 Triple round lamps recall Jean-Paul Oyono's Alfa Romeo design study for Zagato, later picked up by Giorgetto Giugiaro for his Alfa Romeo Brera and other Alfas.

4 Fake air-deflecting blades are all the rage among stylists right now, but these can't do anything real; they're solid to the body and just add drag.

5 Handsome huge wheels are not very race-car-like, generating far too much turbulence.

6 The door skins are exceptionally convoluted and become an impressive sculpture all by themselves if removed from the car.

7 So what's behind these huge holes that needs cooling? Radiators? Then why the huge holes up



front? Terrific styling, questionable design.

8 A particularly nice detail is the glass-to-glass joint outside the A-pillar, carrying a tint all the way around the sides.

9 Double-bubble roof is again a sort of must-have cliché, from Abarth to Zagato, with Corvette, Mazda, and others riding along.

10 Transparent covers for engine compartments are getting to be standard on high-level sports cars. Nice for bystanders, but one wonders about keeping them clean.

REAR 3/4 VIEW

11 Very small outlet for so much air scooped

in up front. There's no question that hot air has to get out, and this is probably not big enough.

12 These ribs are pure styling, Hunter admitted, but TRD says it might help push air toward the center and the gigantic retractable wing.

13 Yep, have to have a fuel filler as a design element. But for Le Mans, it ought to be on the right-hand side of the car...

14 The surface between this sharp line and the backlight is a wing mounted on four struts (presumably hydraulic) that lift and tilt the panel.

15 These squared-up corners clash more than

a little with the rounded spoiler, body, and fender cross-sections through the wheels and really don't make sense.

16 Bulbous surround for the exhaust pipes evoke 1950s "jet pod" details on show cars. Exhaust tips are cut at an angle, as though pointing outward.

17 Another nonfunctional air-deflector blade, again glued to the surface behind it so no air can pass between it and the body. But cool looking, right?

18 This sow-belly sagging curve recalls some BMW concept cars and the Z3. It doesn't appear to do

anything useful, but again, it looks serious.

19 The moderately tight radius running from the bottom of the front outlet to the top of the rear inlet gives some definition to the body side, and, of course, the convolutions beneath it strengthen the door panel.

INTERIOR VIEW

20 The pedal assembly is a work of beauty, all precision-machined. The bottom hinging is slightly out of the past, but it worked well for many of the world's best cars.

21 The feeling of a single-seat cockpit for the driver is emphasized by the metallic section that rises from the central tunnel and continues on the door.

22 The head-up display panel is configured like an old-time racing windscreen, a nice, rather poetic touch.

23 A clever and useful indicator in the steering-wheel rim tells what gear you're in and how quickly you're approaching the redline. Surprisingly, it's not at all distracting.

24 The seats aren't racing-car light but are very beautiful in execution.



by **JAMIE
KITMAN**

THE CAR-TRAILER BLUES.

u

NLIKE MOUNTAIN CLIMBING, arc welding, and the martial arts of old Asia, trailering is one of those manly pursuits that I actually find myself doing from time to time. Yet, I have to confess that I kind of hate it. Think less of me if you must, but there's just something about dragging a couple three tons of loaded car trailer that never ceases to remind me of when I was seven

and standing for the first time on the high board of the municipal swimming pool with a crowd of jeering bullies waiting for the fatal belly flop I knew was my fate. Every time I don't kill or embarrass myself mightily, I breathe a sigh of relief and think, never again.

However, when you own as many cars as I do, the possibility of earning money with them is deeply attractive. So when I answered the call to supply rolling stock to a popular TV show filming in Brooklyn and Queens the other week, I knew I'd again be a hauling man. Professional flatbedding was my first choice, even if it would dent profitability, but in the end the carriers I'd booked all bailed at the last minute owing to heavy snow—they were busy filling delayed orders that preceded mine. Time to fire up the 1968 International Travelall four-by-four. I'd used it to tow several times without incident. Thus, I had nothing to fear but fear itself. Which is pretty frightening.

This was the week when the so-called Polar Vortex hit the U.S.A. Nothing was certain or normal with the New York weather, as snow and blistering cold slugged it out with eerie warm winds and unseasonable highs. Wild climatic swings meant random interludes involving snow, slush, rain, sunshine, black ice, regular ice, fog, and slime. In other words, perfect trailering weather for a forty-six-year-old truck with manual drum brakes, a defroster that hardly works, and a right-rear passenger door that suddenly refused to properly close.

When I arrived at U-Haul at 7 a.m., the trailer we'd reserved was buried in snow. I helped dig it out along with my son Ike, a novice tow-man who forgot his gloves. Then we learned that ice wanted to form on the Travelall's windshield, despite its wipers' and defroster's best efforts. I was in for my ultimate trailering trial.

As if to prove it, we hit an epic traffic jam on the Major Deegan Expressway on the first of three runs. Wouldn't you know, a pilot had managed to safely ditch his dying Piper Cherokee on the northbound side of the highway, meaning our southbound rig had a front and center seat for the rubbernecking event of the century. We almost ran out of gas sitting in traffic, but that seemed a petty matter the next morning, when a rough-idling Corvette we'd borrowed for the show started sliding sideways down a hill as we attempted to get it to the bottom for loading.

To its credit, the Travelall ran like a champ, even when the mercury approached zero. Its 304-cubic-inch V-8 started every time, with enough grunt to pull down your house and the most remarkable 16,000-mile, 1982 Camaro Z/28 that I recently acquired. It's a beaut and snagged a starring role, so imagine my

concern when I learned that the International's brakes aren't up to much when it's subfreezing outside and you first use them while pulling a trailer. I missed a stop sign by about twenty feet. The stoppers got markedly better with use, but the jitters sailed ever onward.

The next morning, an eight-wheeled truck-and-trailer drift along the frozen roadway approaching the tolls to the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge marked a personal first for me. Then, after we dropped off the last car and set off for Yonkers to lose the trailer, we found ourselves stuck behind a disabled livery car on Steinway Street in Queens. As I attempted to back up, I encountered not only my own substandard trailer-reversing skills, but also a heart-stopping onslaught of grinding gear noises.

The failure of the clutch's hydraulic actuation system was a fitting end to our ordeal. But we made it home. I'd be less than truthful if I didn't allow as how we felt, for one joyous, exhausted moment, like manly men. Nevertheless, in the future, I'm sticking to the ancient Oriental art of tempura. **AM**





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by **EZRA
DYER**

HANDS-OFF DRIVING.

WHEN I MOVED INTO a new house a couple years ago, part of its appeal lay in a quality that doesn't show up on any real-estate listing: the final half mile of road before the driveway. The pavement spills down into a valley and then climbs up a blind roller-coaster ascent, with drainage dictating that several corners are paved all the way onto the shoulder, terminating with a soft berm to guide water on its way down the hill—paint some red-and-white stripes on it and it would look like corner curbing. My sway bars get a workout every time I leave the house. I estimate that this stretch of road raises my property value ten percent among people who know what sway bars are.

It also regularly demonstrates how many of our fellow citizens are either utterly uninterested in or just plain horrible at driving. I was on my way out the other day and nearly suffered the world's most stupid head-on collision because a woman on her way down the big off-camber left was cheating the inside—as I sometimes do myself—but her eyes were fixed at a spot perhaps two inches beyond the hood of her Chevy Tahoe. I crowded as far toward the ditch as I could and slowed to a crawl as I waited for her to register the hunk of metal occupying the oncoming lane. At the last moment, her face lit with surprise, she swerved right and continued on her way. And I thought, not for the first time: autonomous cars cannot arrive soon enough.

There's a school of thought that says self-driving cars are the antithesis of everything worthwhile about the automobile. Autonomous vehicles subvert the glorious freedom of the road, replacing visceral kinetic excitement with passionless robotic transport. We'll all become so many UPS packages en route from point A to point B. Just stamp a tracking number on my forehead, why don't you?

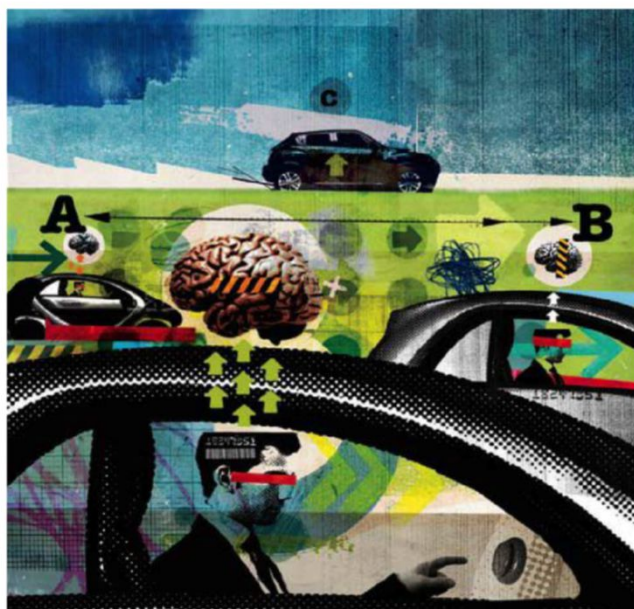
OK, I hear that. But here's the thing: the majority of people don't care about driving. They don't know much about cars, and they pick their noses in the fast lane. Pop quiz: would you rather have a Nissan Juke or a Rogue? The correct answer is the turbocharged, manual-transmission-offerin', funky-ass Juke. Yet last year the sedately inoffensive Rogue outsold the Juke by more than four to one. We who care about driving, we are Jukes, my friends. Jukes in a Rogue world.

So if all the drooling catatonics want to get into their cars and push a button that takes them straight to the lobotomy party, then let 'em at it. And you know what? Let me at it now and then, too, because even the most hard-core gearhead has to admit that driving is not all fun all the time.

Traffic jams. Interstates. Stoplight suburbia, speed limit 30.

Say, does your commute to work include the Tail of the Dragon? No, it does not. There's that one nice on-ramp, but the guy in front of you thinks that exceeding 0.15 g is strictly the stuff of daredevils like Cale Yarborough. Even rally races have transit stages, which introduce an extra element of realism by challenging racers to resist road rage when the car in front of them doesn't move even though the light changed five seconds ago.

Those are just some of the reasons why I love adaptive cruise control and its new partner, lane-keeping steering. During Automobile of the Year testing last fall, I drove the Infiniti Q50—or rather, it drove itself—nearly two miles before I had to intervene. I understand the ire directed toward that car's steer-by-wire system, but I strongly suspect that if Infiniti had slipped us a QX60 with the same setup, nobody would have noticed. However, because this very tangible harbinger of autonomy arrived in the shape of a sport



sedan, we took it personally. Perhaps our crossovers don't need us, but our rear-wheel-drive sport sedans? Car-formerly-known-as-G37, how could you?

I say there's no shame in embracing electronic driver assistance. If I'm sailing toward an immovable object and not hitting the brakes, I'm all for my car strobing the windshield with some freak-out lights and clamping the binders itself. I consider myself an alert driver, but I'll wager that Mercedes-Benz's predictive brake assist gave me an important edge when a moron in a minivan blindly pulled out into my lane and forced me to thread a CL550 up onto the adjacent sidewalk. Sorry, body shop, but technology helped save the day.

Our worry, of course, is that two rolls of toilet paper will fall off a truck and unspool a new "lane" that your robo-car will follow right off a cliff. And I can't guarantee that won't happen. But we're

playing the averages here, and over time our borg-mobiles are going to save our skins more often than not. Is it possible that Hugh Jackman might go all *Swordfish* and hack your Q50's steering? I just don't know. But I do know that the Q50 can watch the vehicle two cars ahead to prepare for emergency braking, and scanning two cars ahead is beyond the wherewithal of 99 percent of the driving public.

Ideally, when it comes to autonomous driving we'll have it both ways. You'll tell your BMW to go park itself at the airport, then you'll take the helm for a road trip to the Cherochala Skyway once you get home. Driving will be reduced to just the fun part, the tedium transferred to our chariots.

That's my hope, anyway—let my car drive me around town or schlep me to the airport, but when I'm on that last half mile from my house, I want to feel the wheel twitch in my hands when I hit that bump on the downhill left. I want to take the racing line across the drainage gutter. I want autonomy over my autonomous car.

A few years ago, we kicked around the idea of handing AUTOMOBILE MAGAZINE's Technology of the Year award to the off switch (as in, the ability to turn off stability control, traction control, and other electronic nannies). Maybe it's a good thing we didn't, because I have a feeling we'll want to revisit that nomination a few years down the road. Now home, Q50! **AM**



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NATIONAL HUMANE SOCIETY



A NEW MUSTANG, AN OLD RACING HAUNT, AND A BEAUTIFUL PHOTOGRAPH.



HOW TO STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

I HAVE SUBSCRIBED TO AUTOMOBILE SINCE JEAN WAS A LINDAMOOD, and I have received four other mainstream car magazines, plus *Consumer Reports*, for decades, not to mention the online version of Hemmings. Lately, it's apparent that all these publications are finding it harder and harder to distinguish themselves from the competition, especially when they all have equal and simultaneous access to high-profile products such as the 2015 Ford Mustang. That said, your in-depth coverage of that car [February 2014] was easily the best—thorough and beautifully presented. The historical perspective, including the bits about the Mustang's early Japanese and GM competition, was especially welcome. In addition, I find that Robert Cumberford, as one who has been there and done that, lends a professional weight to your styling analyses that the other publications cannot approach. Well done.

DICK STEWART
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

MUSTANG CRITIQUES

SO, THE ALL-NEW FORD MUSTANG has “virtually no carryover.” How about the sheer heft of the thing? I read your story three times (twelve pages) and *not once* do you mention the curb weight. Obviously, putting the old mare on a diet via downsizing wasn't exactly a high priority in Dearborn. A shame, really. It's no wonder the Fox-body steed was so popular—lightweight and nimble, two adjectives far removed from your 2015 preview. This whole shebang reminds me of another highly anticipated FoMoCo release. The 1989 Thunderbird (a.k.a. Fatbird) came to fruition, oh, a portly

400 pounds beyond its launch objective. History has just repeated itself. Although this time it's a case of lard legs instead of waxed wings.

GERRY AYERS, JR.
WILLIAMSPORT, PENNSYLVANIA

WHILE PICTURES DON'T ALWAYS tell the story, the photos of the 2015 Ford Mustang make me want to buy a Mustang—a 2013. No hockey stick? Camaro side view? Dodge Charger rear quarters? Stretched wheelbase? OK, they got the nose and rear end mostly right, but that's about it. And, yeah, it's got IRS now. But I don't see today's Mustang buyers



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Do not take VIAGRA if you take nitrates, often prescribed for chest pain, as this may cause a sudden, unsafe drop in blood pressure.

Discuss your general health status with your doctor to ensure that you are healthy enough to engage in sexual activity. If you experience chest pain, nausea, or any other discomforts during sex, seek immediate medical help.

In the rare event of an erection lasting more than 4 hours, seek immediate medical help to avoid long-term injury.

If you are older than age 65, or have serious liver or kidney problems, your doctor may start you at the lowest dose (25 mg) of VIAGRA. If you are taking protease inhibitors, such as for the treatment of HIV, your doctor may recommend a 25-mg dose and may limit you to a maximum single dose of 25 mg of VIAGRA in a 48-hour period. If you have prostate problems or high blood pressure for which you take medicines called alpha blockers, your doctor may start you on a lower dose of VIAGRA.

In rare instances, men taking PDE5 inhibitors (oral erectile dysfunction medicines, including VIAGRA) reported a sudden decrease or loss of vision or hearing. If you experience sudden decrease or loss of vision or hearing, stop taking PDE5 inhibitors, including VIAGRA, and call a doctor right away.

VIAGRA should not be used with other ED treatments. VIAGRA should not be used with REVATIO or other products containing sildenafil.

VIAGRA does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.

The most common side effects of VIAGRA are headache, facial flushing, and upset stomach. Less commonly, bluish vision, blurred vision, or sensitivity to light may briefly occur.

Please see Important Facts for VIAGRA on the following page or visit viagra.com for full prescribing information.

^{*}Data taken from the *Massachusetts Male Aging Study*. Of 1,290 respondents, 52% stated that they had some degree of ED.

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IMPORTANT FACTS



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Never take VIAGRA if you take any medicines with nitrates. This includes nitroglycerin. Your blood pressure could drop quickly. It could fall to an unsafe or life-threatening level.

ABOUT ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION (ED)

Erectile dysfunction means a man cannot get or keep an erection. Health problems, injury, or side effects of drugs may cause ED. The cause may not be known.

ABOUT VIAGRA

VIAGRA is used to treat ED in men. When you want to have sex, VIAGRA can help you get and keep an erection when you are sexually excited. You cannot get an erection just by taking the pill. Only your doctor can prescribe VIAGRA.

VIAGRA does not cure ED.

VIAGRA does not protect you or your partner from STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) or HIV. You will need to use a condom.

VIAGRA is not a hormone or an aphrodisiac.

WHO IS VIAGRA FOR?

Who should take VIAGRA?

Men who have ED and whose heart is healthy enough for sex.

Who should NOT take VIAGRA?

- If you ever take medicines with nitrates:
 - Medicines that treat chest pain (angina), such as nitroglycerin or isosorbide mononitrate or dinitrate
- If you use some street drugs, such as "poppers" (amyl nitrate or nitrite)
- If you are allergic to anything in the VIAGRA tablet

BEFORE YOU START VIAGRA

Tell your doctor if you have or ever had:

- Heart attack, abnormal heartbeats, or stroke
- Heart problems, such as heart failure, chest pain, angina, or aortic valve narrowing
- Low or high blood pressure
- Severe vision loss
- An eye condition called retinitis pigmentosa
- Kidney or liver problems
- Blood problems, such as sickle cell anemia or leukemia
- A deformed penis, Peyronie's disease, or an erection that lasted more than 4 hours
- Stomach ulcers or any kind of bleeding problems

Tell your doctor about all your medicines. Include over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal products. Tell your doctor if you take or use:

- Medicines called alpha-blockers to treat high blood pressure or prostate problems. Your blood pressure could suddenly get too low. You could get dizzy or faint. Your doctor may start you on a lower dose of VIAGRA.
- Medicines called protease inhibitors for HIV. Your doctor may prescribe a 25 mg dose. Your doctor may limit VIAGRA to 25 mg in a 48-hour period.
- Other methods to cause erections. These include pills, injections, implants, or pumps.
- A medicine called REVATIO. VIAGRA should not be used with REVATIO as REVATIO contains sildenafil, the same medicine found in VIAGRA.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF VIAGRA

Side effects are mostly mild to moderate. They usually go away after a few hours. Some of these are more likely to happen with higher doses.

The most common side effects are:

- Headache
- Feeling flushed
- Upset stomach

Less common side effects are:

- Trouble telling blue and green apart or seeing a blue tinge on things
- Eyes being more sensitive to light
- Blurred vision

Rarely, a small number of men taking VIAGRA have reported these serious events:

- Having an erection that lasts more than 4 hours. If the erection is not treated right away, long-term loss of potency could occur.
- Sudden decrease or loss of sight in one or both eyes. We do not know if these events are caused by VIAGRA and medicines like it or caused by other factors. They may be caused by conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes. If you have sudden vision changes, stop using VIAGRA and all medicines like it. Call your doctor right away.
- Sudden decrease or loss of hearing. We do not know if these events are caused by VIAGRA and medicines like it or caused by other factors. If you have sudden hearing changes, stop using VIAGRA and all medicines like it. Call your doctor right away.
- Heart attack, stroke, irregular heartbeats, and death. We do not know whether these events are caused by VIAGRA or caused by other factors. Most of these happened in men who already had heart problems.

If you have any of these problems, stop VIAGRA. Call your doctor right away.

HOW TO TAKE VIAGRA

Do:

- Take VIAGRA only the way your doctor tells you. VIAGRA comes in 25 mg, 50 mg, and 100 mg tablets. Your doctor will tell you how much to take.
- If you are over 65 or have serious liver or kidney problems, your doctor may start you at the lowest dose (25 mg).
- Take VIAGRA about 1 hour before you want to have sex. VIAGRA starts to work in about 30 minutes when you are sexually excited. VIAGRA lasts up to 4 hours.

Don't:

- Do not take VIAGRA more than once a day.
- Do not take more VIAGRA than your doctor tells you. If you think you need more VIAGRA, talk with your doctor.
- Do not start or stop any other medicines before checking with your doctor.

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liking it. Maybe the younger buyers Ford is after will.

CHUCK McGEE
MOULTONBOROUGH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

BEING A FAN OF MUSTANGS, I tried my best to get excited about the 2015 model, but, alas, no. I kept wanting to be impressed and excited, but the more I looked at it, the more it became obvious. The design of the Mustang has sadly evolved into simply a Ford Fusion fastback.

RICK GARNER
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH the Mustang's exterior styling that ordering it in black wouldn't fix. I'm not a big fan of the rear-end layering of red, black, red, black, and then back to that red under-thingy. Of course, the design of the front of the car would almost disappear into this "black sea" due to the absence of any chrome outlines. That could be really sleek. But the interior, specifically the dash, looks like it was lifted from a truck! How ungraceful and dated looking—the design by committee couldn't be more evident. I only wish there had been a committee to discuss adding AWD to the mix. That would be a big plus for this class. Not having it available is a Northeast deal breaker, as far as I'm concerned. I've learned that lesson the hard way!

JIM MAHON
LAKEWOOD, NEW JERSEY

RETRO SELLS

SEEING THE 1971 TOYOTA CELICA ST on page 50 in the February issue brought back memories. I owned several Celicas back in the day and have been a Toyota guy since the mid-'80s. However, the design of the new Corolla may force me back to American small cars. If Toyota took a page from other manufacturers, it would bring back the 1971 Celica design. Retro sells, and as far as I'm concerned, that Celica on page 50 looks better than a lot of new Toyotas on the market today. I'd buy that car over a new Corolla any day.

JEFF HATHAWAY
SOUTH BEND, INDIANA

TABASCO ON MULHOLLAND

MICHAEL JORDAN'S "THE GHOSTS on Mulholland Drive" [February 2014] tells of fantastic fun and risky times,

especially going into the 1960s. I can assure readers that we enjoyed the crazy stuff starting in the late 1940s. We high schoolers would hike into the canyons below the sharpest turns to scavenge parts from the cars of the 1930s and '40s that missed the turns. I practiced cornering up there in my Model A Ford in 1947, and even got in some wild sliding during a 1949 snowstorm. Our Road Burners car club would initiate new members with a ride inside the trunk smoking cigars and sipping Tabasco sauce during a hot swerving run in our '36 Fords. Later, in 1954, I'd de-camber the axles on my VW and lower the front tire pressures to go faster on Mulholland—other guys wanted me to set up their VWs after I gave them a hair-raising ride in mine. Your Robert Cumberland was part of this pack of early Art Center car-design students who'd challenge the performance limits.

BOB GURR
VIA INTERNET

SUBARU VS. ICELAND

I WONDER IF WE ARE LOSING OUR sense of reality. Reading your February article "New Frontiers: The Subaru XV Crosstrek Hybrid Takes on Iceland," I found myself wondering how far we are willing to go for advertising purposes. Don't get me wrong, I like and appreciate the Subaru brand and its ideas when it comes to creating an exciting brand image. Yet I believe that creating a false sense of purpose and abilities can lead to dangerous consequences. One needs to read the whole article to figure it out, though, not just glance at the pictures. I'm pretty sure that most XV Crosstrek owners won't attempt any rugged adventures off-road. Still, why not simply adhere to real-world, everyday situations when introducing a new technology or vehicle?

GEORGE PERFANOV
HOFFMAN ESTATES, ILLINOIS

NO OFFENSE TO SUBARU, BUT while reading your article on the XV Crosstrek Hybrid, I found myself wishing you had written about and showed pictures of the Toyota Land Cruisers and Land Rover Defenders on 44-inch tires. Now *that* is what you want to be in when you drive through Iceland.

SEAN CAIN
COLORADO CITY, TEXAS

A TIP OF THE CAP

I HAVE NEVER WRITTEN TO A CAR magazine before, and I have been reading them since junior high. I have loved cars for as long as I can remember and have never been stopped in my tracks like I was when I saw your opening photo of the McLaren P1. Absolutely stunning. The angle and lighting make for an unforgettable image. The car is breathtaking. My hat is off to photographer Charlie Magee.

WILLIAM PETROSKI
VIA INTERNET

FULL OF HOT AIR

I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED JAMIE Kitman's musings in your February issue about being a left-leaning automobile enthusiast [NVH, "Friend of the Friendless"]. I am definitely in his camp. Many years ago, I was a chemical engineer with Shell Oil Company, and I really liked its philosophy on regulations. Shell did not oppose regulations but merely wanted them to be applied fairly so the marketplace was equal. For example, strict emissions regulations were an opportunity to develop improved technologies that would give the company a competitive advantage over less sophisticated (or resistive) competitors. There was an old story back in the 1970s, when there was a regulatory push to take lead out of gasoline. The story goes that the American manufacturers claimed it could not be done, so they hired lawyers to prove their case. The Japanese hired their best engineers. Five years later, the Americans had lawsuits, and the Japanese had cars that met the proposed regulations. I much prefer the proactive approach.

STANLEY VEJTASA
ROSEBURG, OREGON

GIVEN KITMAN'S CLEAR SUPPORT for reducing pollution, I wonder if he would support a regulation banning political articles in car magazines. You could even consider removing all of his hot air from your magazine as a significant contribution to combating climate change.

BION STEWART
VIA INTERNET

Write: Automobile Magazine, 1995 Highland Dr., Ste. A
Ann Arbor, MI 48108 **E-mail:** letters@automobilemag.com
Letters may be edited for clarity and length.



Driven

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTYN GODDARD

Caterham Seven 160

**REDISCOVERING THE ORIGINAL FORMULA
OF MAXIMUM-GRIN MINIMALISM.**

With a tiny engine, the new Suzuki-powered Caterham points backward to the Seven's earliest ancestor, the humbly powered Lotus Seven Series 1, which was built between 1957 and 1960 and had an 1172-cc Ford side-valve four-cylinder.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTYN GODDARD



THE SUN
WITHDREW
AND THE
SKIES OPENED
UP. BITTERLY
COLD, DRIVING
RAIN WAS
FOLLOWED BY
LARGE AND
EXTREMELY
PAINFUL
HAILSTONES.
WE PRESSED
ON FOR AN
EXFOLIATING
HOUR.

CRAWLEY, ENGLAND

➔ **C**

aterham has built some pretty fast cars since 1973, when Colin Chapman sold it the rights to the seminal Lotus Seven design. The

wildest of these must be Caterham's latest, the 620R. With a 2.0-liter supercharged Ford Duratec four-cylinder huffing up 310 hp, this atomic roller skate reaches 60 mph in 2.8 seconds, Caterham says, and will likely spend much of its time deeply sideways. But we're not here today to talk about the 620R.

It is important to remember that when the Caterham Seven's revered ancestor launched fifty-seven years ago, it was a lightweight machine with an awesome chassis and deeply dull power from Lilliputian English Fords, just enough to entertain, but no more. Which is exactly why the new 160—one of the least powerful Caterhams ever and the cheapest in years—makes such a fascinating piece. Like its more powerful brethren, it is a time machine, but it alone harks back to the time when sufficient power and a rigid, really fun tubular spaceframe chassis was what you got for your money. The 160 is also the lightest Caterham, and it sounds almost affordable at \$28,900 for a basic kit (sans engine and transmission), which is available to order in the United States. (The 620R is, too, but will cost closer to \$75,000.)

Steel wheels with 155/65R-14 Avon tires, a live axle in place of the de Dion setup found in loftier Caterhams, and a curb weight of less than 1100 pounds give the 160's microscopic powerplant—a 660-cc three-cylinder refugee from a Japanese mini city *kei* car—a fighting chance. It sounds comically modest, but all turbo'd up it delivers 80 peaky ponies and a 7700-rpm fuel cutoff to the traveling party. The engine comes courtesy of Suzuki, which also makes the short-throw five-speed manual transmission. Too slow it usually isn't, although gear selection, resolutely pleasant and positive, is more frequent and important than usual.

I find it hard to say mean things about the 160, which is without doubt a lot less car than you, whoever you are, will be used to. You could call it discontented, but

Driven

I won't hear you, because anything on skinny-mini tires that weighs next to nothing already has me weeping loudly with tears of joy. Whether it takes 6.5 seconds to reach 60 mph, as Caterham claims, or 8.4 ticks, as *Autocar* found, in admittedly horrendous weather, is of little matter.

Speaking of foul weather, when we arrived at the train station in Crawley, West Sussex—a four-minute walk to the Caterham sales headquarters—it was raining. But the sun was threatening to poke through, so we decided to brave the



The Specs

ON SALE: Now
PRICE: \$34,000
(est., unassembled)
ENGINE: 0.7L
turbocharged I-3,
80 hp, 79 lb-ft
DRIVE: Rear-wheel
EST. FUEL MILEAGE:
32 mpg combined

Steel wheels suit
the entry-level
Caterham. Side
curtains (left) prove
robust in a freak
hailstorm that frosts
Kitman's chaps,
literally.



roads with side curtains up and top down. How were we to know that the sun would withdraw its threat and the skies would open up? Bitterly cold, driving rain was followed by large and extremely painful hailstones. We pressed on for an exfoliating hour, and the weather improved.

It could've been worse. As a grizzled veteran of fifty-year-old British car design, I was delighted to learn that the 160's climate-control facility actually made a difference. Wipers, in conjunction with an internally heated windshield, cleared the view. The heater puts up a valiant fight, too, but it costs \$500 or so. Lest there be any doubt, these Caterham guys are out to make a profit; don't be surprised when you learn that the easy-to-swallow \$34,000 base price (for a rolling chassis plus the powertrain) is basic indeed. The full weather equipment we'd

recommend—which includes the windshield—will set you back about \$1800. The formed side curtains included in the package are kind of ingenious in their functionality, ease of use, and apparent durability. By the looks of the rear fenders, completely slimed with leaves and road grime, I ought to be covered myself. But I am merely bruised by hailstones from above.

I defy anyone to say the 160 isn't fun on winding country lanes. Steering is legendarily quick, with 1.9 turns lock-to-lock, meted out through a tiny but perfectly sweet (and needless to say, optional) Momo wheel, with feel through the fingertips such as you've read about in books. The solid rear axle is live, rude, but not crude with a five-link design, including twin trailing arms, a Panhard rod, and coil springs. Brakes are small but adequate, with tiny drums at the rear.

Gearing is not always optimal and the engine is busy—almost 4500 rpm at 70 mph—but not dislikable, and when you think about its 660-cc displacement, how could it be otherwise? On a wet day, Suzuki's twelve-valve K6A three-pot will still chirp the skinny Avons in gears one through three. Whereas a Morgan 3 Wheeler's V-twin feels like a bank safe full of cluster bombs going off in front of you, the 160 is so silent and smooth at idle, even with a butch side exhaust to spread its good word, you look to its mini tachometer for proof that it hasn't stalled.

With more than 8000 miles under its very trim belt, our test car exhibited nary a clunk or rattle, although as a press car (finished in a very handsome heritage blue, a \$2500 option) it likely benefited from having its nuts tightened every night. Fella, if you had one of these for your evening commute, you would, too. — JAMIE KITMAN



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SKINNY-DIPPING ON A FROZEN LAKE.

ARVIDSJÄUR, SWEDEN

Test drives on a lake generally don't reveal much about a new car. In the case of the 2015 Volkswagen Golf R, a spin on ice more than thirty inches thick—stable enough to land an airplane on—tells you the first thing you want to know about how different the seventh-generation Golf's supersporty R flagship is from the Golf VI version. Can you completely shut off the new Golf R's electronic stability control (ESC) and escape any artificial intervention? Yes, you can.

In the previous Golf R, the stability control automatically reengaged at the first tap of the brakes. That didn't sit well with old-fashioned enthusiasts who prefer to save a car from a slide themselves, even though it surely saved the bacon of many a kid racer.

To give us a taste of the Golf R's

newfound capabilities, VW let a motley crew of automotive journalists slide and drift the cars on the lake. We also got to follow a rally instructor and pretend to be rally drivers ourselves as winter temperatures hovered between zero and 15 degrees Fahrenheit. Granted, the tires fitted to our test cars are not even legal in most states (studded rubber from Lappi Winter Tyres).

What we learned was this: The steering is quick, making it easy to snap the R into a drift. There is sufficient steering feedback and seat-of-the-pants feel to warn about all the different surfaces and levels of adhesion. The perfectly bolstered driver's seat holds you in place but doesn't hinder ingress and egress. The Audi-designed, 290-hp, 2.0-liter EA888 turbo four-cylinder, coupled to a smooth-shifting six-speed manual, puts down much more power

The Specs

ON SALE: Early 2015
PRICE: \$34,000 (est.)
ENGINE: 2.0L turbocharged I-4, 290 hp, 280 lb-ft
DRIVE: 4-wheel
EST. FUEL MILEAGE: 22/31 mpg, 22/28 mpg (manual, automatic)

Cosmetic modifications are subdued in that stereotypically German Bauhaus way. Still, the R won't be mistaken for lesser Golf models—it's 0.2 inch lower than the GTI, for instance.

2015 Volkswagen Golf R





than you need through the car's standard Haldex all-wheel-drive system. The Haldex clutch sends torque front to back, and the brakes control the flow side to side. Stability control is superfluous, even in the lightly intervening ESC Sport mode. It's a blast. At least, it is if you love driving on ice and snow.

Even with stability control on, the system allows some oversteer, and ESC Sport mode, which intervened once or twice on a couple of tight turns, is even better. But in the end, you, too, would have given in to the delights of a slick track and gone naked, turning off every possible stability control measure. The worst that could happen is that a Touareg would have to pull you out of a snowbank (didn't happen). That's how you go skinny-dipping on a frozen lake.

The Golf R will also be available with a six-speed DSG dual-clutch automatic transmission. It shaves 0.2 second off the six-speed manual's 5.1-second 0-to-62-mph sprint, VW says, but it also drops the highway estimate by 3 mpg. While the automaker is proud of its automatic and says it will continue to account for at least half of U.S. Golf R sales, all of the test cars on the lake were, tellingly, manuals. Both



Napa leather dresses up the already nice Golf interior. Keyless start and passive entry are among the standard features.

two- and four-door hatchback models were on hand, but only the latter will be available stateside, at least at launch. Weight is down by about 90 pounds versus the previous model, to a little more than 3000 pounds (closer to 3300 with the dual-clutch transmission). VW's R GmbH, a subsidiary like Audi's Quattro GmbH, designed and engineered the car.

We won't get the Euro-spec car's Eco mode, but we will get Normal, Individual (customizable), and Race modes. All operate separately from the stability control. The Race setting stiffens the chassis, speeds up the DSG's shift points,

and permanently opens the intake/exhaust resonators. Although the rally exercise prompted us to mostly use Race mode, Normal would be good enough for everyday situations.

With the Golf R, the Subaru WRX STI will once again have a true competitor, even as the Mitsubishi Evo rides into the sunset. The Volkswagen Golf R, which just a couple of generations ago was an overengineered German muscle car, has evolved into an attractive hatchback that balances power with handling finesse. At least, as far as a drive on a frozen lake can reveal.

— TODD LASSA

LOS ANGELES

2014 Ford Fiesta SE 1.0

FORD'S ENGINE NERDS MAKE MAGIC WITH ONLY THREE CYLINDERS.

W

e're motoring like one of those Finnish rally drivers who end up in a ditch twice a day, so hardly anybody would

guess that we're getting 45 mpg. Or we could get 45 mpg if we wanted to.

We're not talking about seeing the redshift as this car achieves light speed, but still, this Ford Fiesta SE 1.0 is getting after it in a way that's unexpected from the small, fuel-efficient transportation pods usually found at the cheap end of the price spectrum. This 1.0-liter engine not only delivers 8 hp more than a Honda Fit, but it also delivers 12 mpg more than the Fit on the EPA highway cycle.

Not bad from an engine with just three cylinders. Three is the magic number in engine design at the moment, and it certainly brings some magic to the refreshed 2014 Fiesta.

You can see the Fiesta's upgrade in the restyled grille and the revised dashboard, which can include MyFord Touch and its 6.5-inch screen. Yet the most important addition is the optional 1.0-liter EcoBoost engine (\$995 on top of the SE trim level) that really brings the Fiesta alive. Ford says that this is the most clever engine it makes, and the turbocharged 999-cc in-line three puts out 123 hp at 6000 rpm

and 125 lb-ft of torque at 2500 rpm. The car is rated at 32 mpg in the city and 45 mpg on the highway with a five-speed manual, the only transmission offered in the United States.

When you drive lazily, the littlest EcoBoost picks you up with plenty of thrust thanks to a tiny 1.5-inch turbocharger calibrated for performance at low rpm (90 percent of peak torque is available from 1350 rpm to 5375 rpm) plus variable valve timing on both the intake and exhaust side. At midrange rpm, crisp

throttle response comes from a relatively high compression ratio of 10.0:1 thanks to direct fuel injection, and some 148 lb-ft of torque is available for a few moments with a bit of turbo overboost. Then the engine revs out cleanly to redline, so you have excitement under your right foot all across the face of the tachometer.

The new three-cylinder Fiesta is a cheap and cheerful car, only the cheerfulness is more noticeable than the cheapness. It is the most fun you can have on the way to 45 mpg. — MICHAEL JORDAN

The Specs

ON SALE: Now
PRICE: \$17,400/\$17,900 (sedan/hatchback)
ENGINE: 1.0L turbocharged I-3, 123 hp, 148 lb-ft
DRIVE: Front-wheel
EPA MILEAGE: 32/45 mpg

All 2014 Fiestas get a new dash; best ones get three cylinders.





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2014 BMW M235i

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LAS VEGAS

→ **R**

ight off, we can tell you that there are two great things about the 2014 BMW M235i. First, when you lay into the gas pedal,

it doesn't jump straight up into the air like a bucking horse the way that the BMW 1-series M coupe used to. Second, it makes you think that you've taken a ride in the BMW wayback machine, since this car combines the intensely personal feeling of the 1970s 2002tii with the affordability and drivability of the legendary, late-1990s E36-chassis M3.

Of course, there will also be people telling you that these are the two worst things about this high-performance version of the new BMW 2-series. But as we were rubbing off the goodness of a nice, new set of Michelin Pilot Super Sport tires at Las Vegas Motor Speedway and feeling pretty heroic, we realized that the 2-series coupe is going to be a gateway into BMW ownership



The Specs

ON SALE: Now
PRICE: \$44,025
ENGINE: 3.0L
turbocharged I-6,
320 hp, 330 lb-ft
DRIVE: Rear-wheel
EST. FUEL MILEAGE:
19/28 mpg, 22/32 mpg
(manual, automatic)

The 2-series looks
a lot more grown-up
than the 1-series it
replaces. The
M Sport steering
wheel is oh, so nice.

for a whole new generation of drivers. This is because it looks like a 3-series instead of the potbellied pig that the former 1-series coupe resembled, and it is a car that encourages rather than intimidates. While plenty of people will be talking about the new M4 as the ultimate expression of the BMW way, the M235i is

the car that you're going to see on the street every day, not least because the price starts at \$44,025 and not in some distant fantasyland.

That is a lot of thinking to do while trying to remember if the next turn is a right or a left, so it's a good thing that this car goes about its business without any



**As we were rubbing off the goodness
of a nice, new set of Michelin tires
at Las Vegas Motor Speedway
and feeling pretty heroic,
we realized that the 2-series coupe
is going to be the new gateway
into BMW ownership.**

Driven

adolescent drama. The 2-series is really nothing more than a grown-up 1-series—longer, lower, and wider. The M235i version of the 2-series carries similar equipment to the feisty, 335-hp 1M coupe from 2011, including a 3.0-liter turbo in-line six, upgraded brakes, a more refined suspension setup with adaptive dampers, and eighteen-inch wheels.

If you're really into whipping the new speed-sensitive, variable-ratio electric-assist steering rack back and forth and generally burning up those nice Michelin tires, then you should choose the six-speed manual transmission and maybe select a couple of options from the BMW M Performance catalog, such as the mechanical limited-slip differential and the track-ready suspension with an even lower ride height and multiadjustable dampers.

If you're more into arriving at valet parking for a nice evening at the Mandarin Oriental hotel, you'll be happy with the sport version of the eight-speed automatic transmission (launch control included), plus all the stuff that comes standard with every M235i, like the smooth-riding active dampers, an electronic limited-slip, better-than-ever iDrive, a wide range of available active-safety stuff (automatic parallel parking and low-speed anticollision braking

among them), plus sport seats that allow your fashionably attired female companion to climb out of the car and emerge beneath the neon without causing a scandal.

The BMW M235i does plenty of great things whether you're driving fast or driving slow, but what it's best at is being a respectable BMW, not a half measure. No more waiting behind the red velvet rope for you, because you're in the BMW club at last.

— MICHAEL JORDAN



This is the M235i, not the M2. BMW sport trim ascends through M Sport, M Performance, and M levels. The M235i is an M Performance model, combining high performance with drivability.



2014 BMW 328i xDrive Gran Turismo

ABSTRACT ART FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY.

SEATTLE

→The Gran Turismo version of the BMW 3-series makes you squint a little, like when you're looking at a painting with tricky perspective. In this case, it's not an optical illusion but a car that looks like a 3-series sedan yet is 7.8 inches longer and 2.9 inches taller.

You only understand what the 3-series GT is about when you climb into the back seat. Compared with the 3-series sedan, there's 4.1 inches more rear legroom plus another inch of headroom, and you sit about two inches higher. Your mom won't complain when you pick her up at the airport and then slide her into the back seat, especially when she realizes that the hatchback affords access to 18.4 cubic feet of cargo capacity (56.5 cubic feet with the 40/20/40-split rear seat flipped down).

Your mom will also love the enhanced straight-line stability of the longer, 115-inch wheelbase; the comfort of the recalibrated suspension; and the all-weather traction of standard all-wheel

The Specs

ON SALE: Now
PRICE: \$42,375/\$46,675
(base/as tested)
ENGINE: 2.0L turbo I-4,
241 hp, 258 lb-ft
DRIVE: 4-wheel
EPA MILEAGE: 22/33 mpg



drive. Despite these changes, fuel economy from the 241-hp turbocharged four-cylinder engine remains the same as in the sedan (as it does with the optional, 302-hp turbo six). The Gran Turismo is the family-style 3-series sedan.

Once your mom leaves town, you can drive the Gran Turismo like a BMW. It

makes the right moves, although with slightly slower reactions. If you want it to be more BMW-like, get the M Sport trim package with aerodynamic bodywork, edgier suspension, and the taller, wider tires. Add metallic paint in Estoril blue, and people will think the Gran Turismo is just some kind of art project. — MJ

2014 BMW 435i convertible

ASPIRATIONAL DROPTOP.

The Specs

ON SALE: Now
PRICE: \$55,825
ENGINE: 3.0L turbo I-6,
302 hp, 295 lb-ft
DRIVE: Rear-wheel
EST. FUEL MILEAGE:
19/29 mpg, 21/31 mpg
(manual, automatic)



LAS VEGAS

→When you walk out to the rental-car lot at McCarran airport, you always hope that a BMW convertible will be waiting. It's no wonder that the inevitable Chrysler 200 droptop is such a downer.

The 2014 BMW 4-series convertible is the latest example of the top-down car to which Americans not only aspire but also believe will someday be within their financial grasp. BMW enthusiasts will say that this car is all about sportiness, sportiness, and sportiness, yet the real story is comfort and convenience. This car's three-piece convertible hard top combines anytime power-operated convenience, everyday park-it-anywhere security, and all-season weather insulation. Plus, the car looks dramatic in your driveway, top up or top down.

Just like the BMW 3-series sedan, the 4-series convertible offers such a wide range of equipment and options that you can make it into any kind of car that you want. Choose a 241-hp four-cylinder or a 302-hp six-cylinder, rear- or all-wheel drive, and your pick of four trim levels (M Sport for enthusiasts).

This is America's convertible. — MJ

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THE NEW **MINI**

BY GEORG KACHER

Is the **Mini** still magic?

BMW REVAMPS ITS CUTE, U.K.-BUILT CULT CAR WITH NEW ENGINES, CHASSIS UPGRADES, AND A HOST OF NEW FEATURES—SOME USEFUL, SOME GIMMICKY.



The new Mini Cooper is bigger, stiffer, and more balanced than previous generations. The Cooper S gets its own rear apron with a centrally located pair of tailpipes.

Despite the revolution that the Mini underwent in the transition from the final Alec Issigonis-designed derivative to the first model developed under BMW ownership, the car managed to remain a real icon, instantly recognizable the world over. As one might expect, then, the design of the third-generation “new” Mini takes no risks. The boxy Brit is slightly longer, wider, and roomier but otherwise familiar. For the first time, however, it shares key engineering elements with parent company BMW—specifically a bunch of new front-wheel-drive models that BMW is going to market starting later this year.



The optional multicolor head-up display can be customized to show important information including the car's speed, current radio station, navigation instructions, and route updates.



Design-wise, we like the improved interior room, the more usable rear seats, the less quirky instrument panel, and the bigger trunk. The integration of grille and bumper, on the other hand, looks more heavy-handed, the large taillamps and the lower diffuser have diminished some of the coveted visual simplicity at the rear, and the longer and taller snout is controversial rather than pretty.

The cockpit attempts to blend tradition with modernity. The large circular central instrument—which harks back to the original Mini—survives but no longer houses the speedometer, which moves to join the tach in a small cluster atop the steering column. This brings essential information closer to the driver's field of vision, but because of the small scale and the busy calibration, you may nonetheless feel compelled to buy the optional head-up display. On the credit side, the bigger climate controls are now easier to operate, and the window switches shift to the door panels.

The redesigned interior moves closer to BMW in functionality. The central controller's shape and logic are akin to the iDrive system on which it is based, and Mini now apes BMW with its driving modes (green, mid, and sport). The modes calibrate throttle response, steering action, shift speed, damper control, exhaust note, and even the ambient lighting. Speaking of lighting, one cannot ignore the LED ring that frames the main instrument binnacle. It reflects the selected driving mode by glowing red, green, or amber; changes to red or blue as you increase or lower the cabin temperature; and lights up bright red when the engine approaches redline.

The speedometer has been moved to a more typical—and useful—position behind the steering wheel and houses visual indicators for active driver-assistance systems.



THE NEW MINI

Slip into the comfortable and supportive sport seat, and the new Mini feels every bit as different from the competition as did its predecessors. Different, though, can sometimes just be wacky. Dial in Dynamic Music, for example, and the sound processor will match a chosen song to your driving style or to the turn-signal sequence. One also can earn points for at-the-limit cornering along with a computer-generated “Good job!” from the friendly spy in the cab. Silly? Yes, although these features can be switched off.

While the first- and second-generation models were wanting in the quality department, the materials are of a much better grade in this latest iteration, and the available equipment is more comprehensive. The touch controller is every bit as intuitive to use as BMW's iDrive, the 8.8-inch color monitor looks good, and the pricey LED headlights easily outclass the previous xenons. In addition to the larger trunk, owners are likely to appreciate the more generous leg and shoulder room up front and the 60/40-split rear bench (with optional recline), although getting into and out of row two still requires a certain amount of physical fitness.

Helping create that roomier cabin is a wheelbase that has been extended by 1.1 inches and a track that is up to 1.7 inches wider. To enhance that coveted go-kart handling, the engineers have increased torsional stiffness, improved weight distribution, lowered the center of gravity, and retuned the suspension (which again combines damper struts and a twist beam). Chassis assistants include torque-steer compensation and a brake-activated electronic differential lock. Extracost options include Dynamic Damper Control, which lets you choose between a sporty and a more comfort-oriented setting, as well as active cruise control with collision warning and automatic brake actuation.

We drove the Cooper S with the automatic transmission. Additional engine choices for U.S. buyers are a 1.5-liter three-cylinder in the base Cooper and the follow-up to the brawny John Cooper Works, with a 231-hp twin-turbo 2.0-liter. The 2.0-liter turbo four-cylinder in the Cooper S develops 189 hp between 4700 and 6000 rpm (with the limiter at 6500 rpm). The maximum torque of 207 lb-ft plateaus from only 1250 rpm to 4750 rpm, thereby covering nearly 60 percent of the rev band. Better still, there is a brief full-throttle overboost function that ups the twist action to 221 lb-ft. The autobox version is not only 0.1 second quicker than the manual to 60 mph (6.4 seconds), it's also more economical (in the European cycle, at least). The sport version brings shift paddles and faster gearchanges.

The test car felt generally more grown-up than the model it replaces, which occasionally wavered between agility and twitchiness. Pushed hard on the autobahn, the new Mini is more firmly planted, less susceptible to crosswinds and pavement grooves, and quite stable overall. Through high-speed corners, however, we once or twice experienced a disconcerting rear-end liftoff shrug—



Above: The Mini's cabin has been noticeably updated with improvements to quality and functionality.

Left: An LED ring around the 8.8-inch center display can glow in six colors in response to a number of situations.

Right: The Mini's multimedia systems are now accessed using a larger iDrive-like dial surrounded by shortcut buttons.



Rear legroom increases by nearly three inches, but headroom is reduced by almost an inch.

the kind of stuff that makes your neck hair bristle even though stability control remains totally passive. While wind and road noise are well suppressed, the intake rasp and the exhaust rumble are just about loud enough to remind you that this is the Cooper S. Still, on the autobahn the newcomer collected points for its solid braking performance and remarkable full-throttle grunt. As long as you keep the revs up by shifting down a gear or two, this little road shark will successfully chase much bigger fish.

On imperfect secondary roads, the seventeen-inch winter tires did nothing to help the rather brittle ride, and switching the dampers to comfort mode didn't help much. Although the new Mini copes much better with longer undulations, it needs a flat surface to excel. On a bumpy road, torque steer and a certain snappiness near breakaway speeds impair your confidence when you really push it. At the limit, understeer enters the scene before stability control eventually interferes with due subtlety. As it should be, the Mini III is a minimum-input, maximum-effect driving machine. A flick at the helm is all it takes to change direction, a stab at the brake squashes kinetic energy with vigor, and one pull at the downshift paddle summons enough revs for a slingshot acceleration maneuver. On smooth tarmac, the Mini is at its best, blending mind-boggling grip with ultrafast responses and amazing tactility. At the end of a ten-mile stretch of magical road, we instantly turned around and went back for an encore.

The range of Minis has grown with every generation, and this one is likely to again spawn two or three additional body styles. Later this year, Mini is expected to add a four-door hatchback. Due in 2015 are the four-seat convertible and the new Clubman, which this time gets four conventionally hinged doors and sits on a stretched wheelbase while retaining the split tailgate. Looking further out, we see follow-ups to the Countryman, the Paceman, and the two-seat coupe and roadster body styles. Still unconfirmed are other models, including a minivan and a sedan. In total, we could see as many as thirteen different body styles over the third-generation Mini's lifetime. Even so, you'll probably have no trouble recognizing all of them as Minis. **AM**



2014 Mini Cooper S

ON SALE: Spring

PRICE: \$24,000 (est.)

ENGINE: 2.0L I-4 turbo, 189 hp, 221 lb-ft

DRIVE: Front-wheel

EST. FUEL MILEAGE:

27/35 mpg



THE
**RECALLING ALEC ISSIGONIS, THE RADICAL
INNOVATOR BEHIND THE ORIGINAL MINI
AND ITS LESSER-KNOWN RELATIONS.**

BY JAMIE KITMAN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL BYRNE

ISSIGONIS EFFECT



More than anything, the third-generation “new” Mini being introduced by BMW is meant to pay tribute to one car, the first-generation “old” Mini, the fantabulous original of 1959 that soldiered on—fluffed, smogged, and lightly buffed but largely unchanged—for forty-one years. This, in turn, makes the newest Mini yet another homage to the memory of one man, the father of the genre-defining mini-machine, Alexander Arnold Constantine Issigonis.

Ongoing, even perpetual, celebration of “Alec” Issigonis is fitting in our view, if ironic. Although he changed small-car design forever and was 100 percent central to the Mini’s existence, Issigonis was pushed aside by the company that built his iconic machine not so long after he’d invented it, his trap-door demotion coming in 1968. Also, were he alive today, it’s fairly certain that Issigonis, the minimalist’s minimalist, would disapprove of the new car. The outspoken engineer loved his cars small and unadorned, and today’s Mini is nei-

ther. Truth is, if Issigonis hadn’t shut up (he died in 1988), they’d have had to shut him up.

Exiled from the Greek (now Turkish) city of Smyrna when Atatürk’s army invaded in 1922, Issigonis fled with his mother to Britain as a teenager. Although he would rise to a high place, becoming a Commander of the Order of the British Empire, roundly decorated by the Royal Society, Sir Alec knew what he wanted in his life (although his homosexuality went publicly unacknowledged). While he hoped, like Henry Ford, to move the working man ahead in the realm of creature comfort, Issigonis remained deeply, cantankerously spartan at heart; excess automotive size, weight, and frippery irritated the hell out of him. Strident asceticism would put him at loggerheads with marketing men, for on that point he was unapologetic. On the other hand, engineering complication in the search for simplicity didn’t scare him, either—but it troubled cost accountants. Thus, his key insights and greatest weaknesses as a corporate soldier were curiously intertwined.

An original Mini—
in this case a
late-build Cooper
from 2000—leads a
1966 MG 1100 and
a 1981 Austin
miniMetro down
memory lane.



Issigonis began training as a mechanical engineer in England with Humber in the 1930s, moving to Morris and then Alvis before returning in 1955 to the British Motor Corporation, which then owned Morris. It will be hard for many to believe today, but Britain was the world's second-biggest motor-manufacturing nation through the 1950s and into the 1960s. BMC, which represented the 1952 merger between William Morris's Nuffield Organization and the late Herbert Austin's eponymously named firm, was one of the largest car companies in the world. One reason was the Morris Minor, an excellent small car in its day (1948–1971) and a commercial home run, successful around the world; Issigonis had laid it out during his first stint at Morris.

At the behest of Leonard Lord, the Austin chairman ascendant in the post-merger reorganization, Issigonis was summoned back to BMC and quickly tasked. Horrified by the incursions of German and Italian microcars in the days following the 1956 Suez Crisis and the resultant fuel shortages, Lord challenged his new chief engineer to come up with a competitor. "God damn these bloody awful bubble cars," the celebrated British motoring writer L. J. K. Setright quoted Lord as instructing Issigonis. "We must drive them out of the streets by designing a proper miniature car."

Following on from his work on the clever but conventional rear-wheel-drive Minor, Issigonis had long pondered the space-utilization advantages of front-wheel drive and quickly delivered an advanced concept—notwithstanding that in 1957 and 1958, the period of the Mini's gestation, the computer was still an oddity and the slide rule the primary tool of the engineer's trade. With a team of eight at Austin headquarters in Longbridge, England, Issigonis and his freehand drawings guided the building of running prototypes in a scant seven months. In double time, he'd worked out the particulars of a small, two-box car whose engine was turned sideways and placed above its transmission (with which, fatefully, it shared lubrication). Wheels, small and cleverly suspended by rubber (and later fluid), would be pushed to the corners.

The rest of the story is the stuff of lore. Even though it would rarely earn its makers much—if any—money, the Mini would become a classless cultural icon and prove to be so popular that its amazing voyage as a salable commodity comprised four full decades with ports of call in two others. A work of packaging genius, it allowed a remarkable 80 percent of its tiny footprint (ten feet) to be devoted to passengers and their things. With out-of-the-box thinking about what happens inside the box, the Mini established principles of vehicle architecture that inform car design today.

That first car also suggested the layout of several Mini variants (wagon, pickup, van, and beach buggy), plus many larger corporate relations and a host of imitators. Leaving service in 2000, it spawned BMW's first Mini tribute of 2001, the opening salvo in what has been a committed effort to grow a more encompassing brand out of the most admired name in very small cars.

Few Americans will know, but from Issigonis's fertile brow also sprang a larger car called the Maxi as well as an intermediate model—known internally as ADO16 and sold under various name-

plates—that would often outsell the Mini, making it Issigonis's third greatest hit after Minor and Mini. Both Maxi and ADO16 would follow on from the basic principles laid down with the Mini, as would LC8 (a.k.a. the miniMetro), the petite 1981 concoction meant to be its replacement. In a further forward-thinking touch that ought to have turned out better for BMC than it did, the disparate cars even shared major componentry.

Ultimately, other manufacturers would learn to profit from these advanced design strategies where BMC failed, the cost and the complexity of its new cars for many years helping to drag the company—troubled in many other ways, it's only fair to note—down. What is it they say about why you want to be second to the market with new technology? Thanks to Alec Issigonis, BMC was there first, and to celebrate his achievements, we arranged to drive three examples of the great man's thinking. Although we couldn't lay our hands on a Maxi, our exploration of what we call the Issigonis Effect was made easier by the fact that I actually own two other examples of his oeuvre.

THE MINI BECAME
A CLASSLESS
CULTURAL ICON AND
PROVED VERY
POPULAR IN ITS
AMAZING VOYAGE
AS A SALABLE
COMMODITY.



Creative genius

Without Alec Issigonis (1906–1988), there'd be no Mini. The car's chief engineer and designer—raised a subject of the Ottoman Empire in what is now Turkey by his Greek father and Bavarian mother—was widely known for penciling freehand engineering sketches. The stubborn eccentric designed the original Mini by eye and despised mathematics. "You must not mix function with fashion in a car," he once said. "A car should take its shape entirely from the engineering that goes into it."

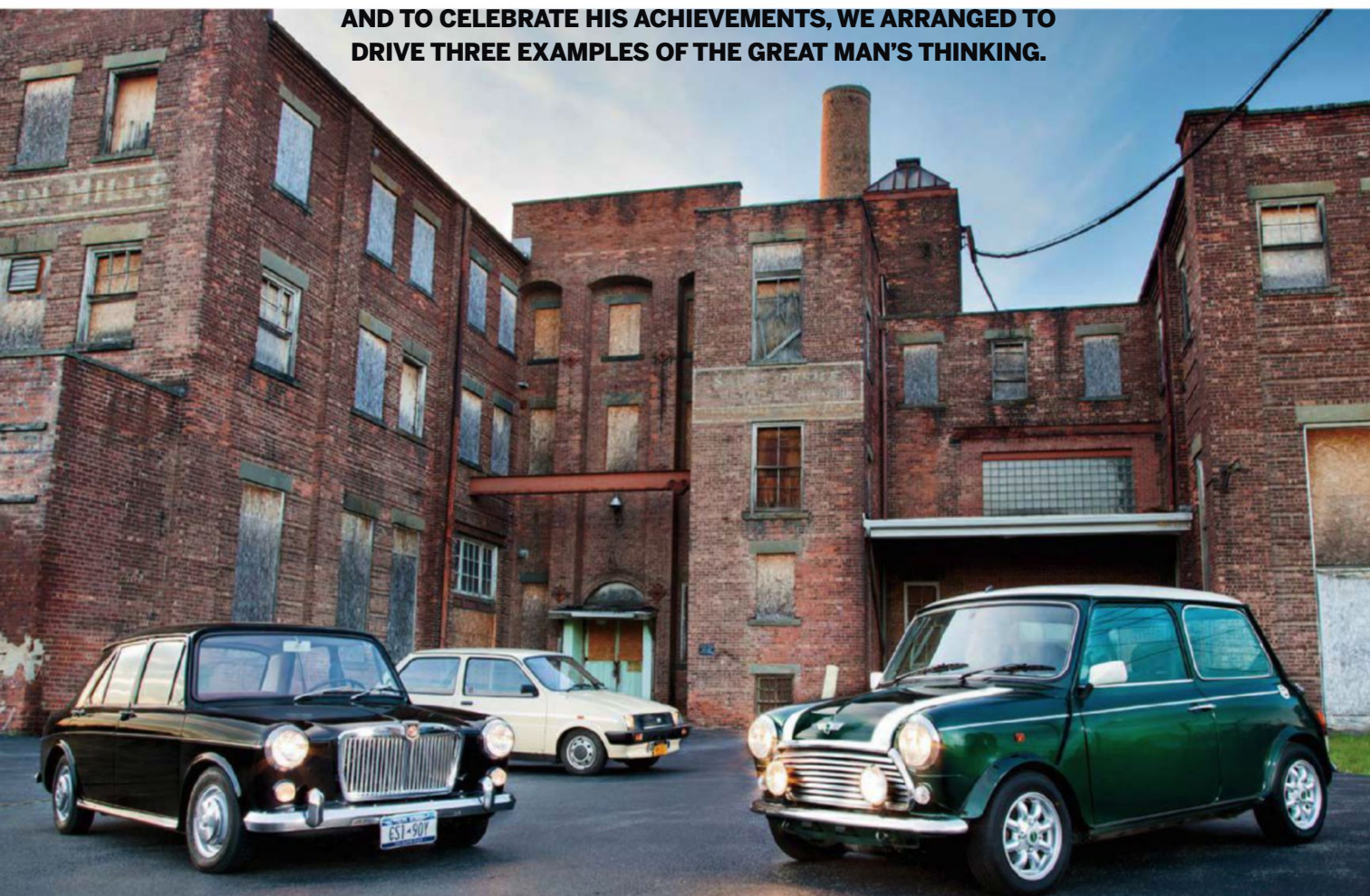
2000 **Mini** Cooper

First up, the original. Flatbedded our way from the corporate collection came what BMW terms a "Classic Mini." For some reason, that conjured in our minds a 1959 Austin Se7en or Morris Mini-Minor, as they were also first known. But what showed up from the company's New Jersey headquarters was a luxed-up 2000 Classic Cooper edition, one of the very last old-style Minis built. Roll-up windows and a full-width dashboard meant it lacked the early cars' solitary, centrally mounted speedometer pod, sliding door glass, and capacious door bins, of which Issigonis was particularly proud. It also came with twelve-inch wheels, huge next to the ten-inchers that graced earlier cars, plus—gack!—an airbag, a radio/cassette player, and air-conditioning, all obviously nonoptions in the car's formative years. Here was a Mini that would set Issigonis spinning in his grave—at least until he saw one of the 2015s.

Along with the original's microscopic dimensions, even final



THANKS TO *ISSIGONIS*, BMC WAS THERE FIRST,
AND TO CELEBRATE HIS ACHIEVEMENTS, WE ARRANGED TO
DRIVE THREE EXAMPLES OF THE GREAT MAN'S THINKING.





A composite dash, an airbag, and gauges in front of the driver help distinguish this build-out 2000 Mini Cooper from earlier examples of its ilk.

Mini



Like the big Mini it is, the MG 1100 makes maximum use of the space between its wheels to provide comfortable seating for full-size adults. The styling reveals the influence of frequent BMC collaborator Pininfarina.



1966 **MG** 1100

editions of the ur-Mini had bolt-upright seating and steering wheels canted as if for bus drivers. Issigonis liked to quip that he intended to ensure that drivers remained alert at all times. And, like its predecessors, the last old Mini was plenty fun to drive. Thanks to a wide track and a relatively long wheelbase, as well as a low center of gravity and a clever suspension, the Mini would deliver, its inventor posited, 70 percent more roadholding than conventional small cars of its era. In time, such tenacious grip would lead to the Mini's many competition successes (Monte Carlo Rally overall victories in 1964, '65, and '67, for instance) and a general reputation for cornering prowess, as well no doubt as an accident or two borne of overexuberance.

While it boasted the oldest design, this build-out special was nonetheless the newest and fastest car of our group. Its late spec meant that the overriding sense versus the other cars was modernity, its comparative urge (0 to 60 mph in thirteen seconds) a testament to an injected, 1275-cc A-series engine—larger than anything else here and, with 63 hp, more powerful. At roughly 1520 pounds, this Mini Cooper was heavier than early Minis. But it went, and even with but four gears, carefully selected ratios meant we were motoring at highway speeds without trouble or much engine roar at all. That was a surprise.

An old BMC ad said of the Mini, “[T]he bigness is in the proper place—inside!” True enough, but nowhere was Issigonis's space-efficient thinking more evident than in the Mini's bigger brother, launched in 1962 and code-named ADO16. A not very large but incredibly spacious evolution of the concept, its feasibility was enhanced by an emergency last-minute revision to the Mini's build spec—separate subframes.

With us today in four-door MG 1100 form, ADO16 distinguished itself in every one of the dozens of iterations in which it appeared—two-door, four-door, wagon; MG, Morris, Austin, Wolseley, Riley, and Vanden Plas—by actually having room for four or even five adults and their luggage. Such vast space in a car so short, mated to 35-mpg fuel economy and ample potential for driver amusement, is not an achievement to sneeze at. Its twelve-inch wheels might not be fashion correct anymore, now that sixteen-inch rims are standard fare on some lowly econoboxes. But, along with a uniquely compact “Hydrolastic” fluid suspension penned by Issigonis's eccentric associate, Alex Moulton, they help deliver a commendably smooth ride and a low-riding minimum of body roll, although the faintest pitching can be detected on rougher surfaces owing to the movement of fluid between its interconnected front and rear spheres.



WITH ITS SOLID
CONSTRUCTION
AND AIRY
ACCOMMODATION,
THE MG IS A
PLEASANT, EVEN
LUXURIOUS, CAR.

As a sporting, upmarket version of this unashamedly badge-engineered model, the twin-carb, 55-hp (twenty-second 0-to-60-mph time) MG is handsomely trimmed in red vinyl but resolutely spare even so; a strip-band speedometer, fuel and temperature gauges, and a quartet of toggle switches are all that adorn a thin, car-width dash covered in ersatz wood. But with its solid construction and airy accommodation, the MG is a pleasant, even luxurious, car in all respects save one, living proof that the British industry did not go down without moments of incredible inspiration. That one demerit: it's kinda screaming on the highway.

Purchased new by a small manufacturer in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, the 1966 1100 you see here was intended to be a high-school graduation gift for his daughter, bought in the hope that she would restore Christian virtue to her life. When she proceeded to flunk out of junior college and then get pregnant, her moralizing dad

yanked the keys, whereupon the car began twenty-five years of stationary repose in a corner of his factory. After he passed away in the early 1990s, it bounced between collectors. Seven years ago, one of them bumped into me. At the time, this car had 850 original miles. Today it has but 4200.

Britain's best-selling car for most of its 1962–1974 life span, ADO16 was quite successful in the Commonwealth. But some-

how it never set America on fire, selling slowly in MG garb and later, with more fanfare and hence more disappointment when it bombed, as the Austin America. It was the last of Issigonis's technologically nouvelle offerings to grace our soil.

I'm not sure because there is no tach, but it sounds like this 1100 approaches 9000 rpm at 65 mph in top gear. Badly blinkered (and wearing earplugs), British industry ignored the 1960s highway reality at its peril. That said, this is my favorite of the three, indeed one of my favorite cars.



A complicated plastic weave stylishly and expensively lines the MG's trunk floor, illustrating—along with a flashing indicator stalk (left)—that BMC didn't cut every corner it could. The interior is more nicely trimmed than Minis of the time, as well.



The miniMetro's styling, performed in-house, looked much different from the 1959 Mini's but lacked its enduring cuteness. The interior of the base car—a veritable riot of pumpkin-colored plastic and fabric seats—was modern for its day.



Metro

1981 **Austin** miniMetro

Naturally enough, the idea was that the Mini would one day be replaced. After several stillborn attempts, the Austin miniMetro—later just plain Metro—arrived in late 1980 with that express purpose. The last car that could fairly be said to be Issigonis-influenced (he'd consult on Mini replacements after being pushed to the side), it was successful enough in its own right to run for nearly twenty years. It can also be said to have saved the corporation long enough for it to be purchased by BMW. However, while it may have rescued Mini, it would never replace it. Like the Jeep Wrangler's audience, Mini buyers knew what they wanted and didn't care if, dynamically speaking, the world had passed them by.

Although it isn't remotely as cute as a Mini or as fun to drive, the miniMetro moved the game on just the same, being more ergonomic, quicker, and more practical than the original. Even in this entry-level L model, a mildly revised 998-cc A-series engine, the A-plus, makes the miniMetro good for a top speed of 87 mph, which is not as bad as it sounds owing to a surprising absence of wind noise. Along with a fully synchronized gearbox and a wonderful expression of '80s-style plastic minimalism for a dashboard, it offers first-class visibility out of a package that is perfectly usable yet by modern standards hilariously small. It also has a useful hatchback.

A determined understeerer like the rest, the Metro has less direct steering and requires considerably more wheel twirling than the Mini, making it a less sporting drive. A version of the hydro-elastic suspension—killed in the Mini for cost reasons—is in place.

Except where its spheres had previously been interconnected front to rear, the fronts were now connected to nothing, necessitating the addition of shock absorbers (partially defeating the cost/weight/complexity savings of Moulton's suspension) while the rear spheres were now interconnected, which did nothing to reduce roll. Later cars were improved, but the first miniMetro, one of the last cars badged Austin, still marked progress.

Britain's first motorway—the M1—opened in 1959, and by 1981 the Metro supermini arrived to prove that the country's largest carmaker had finally come to terms with the need for sustained highway speeds, even if it was twenty years too late. Locked into existing architectures and a decrepit tool box, a fifth cog was out of the question for what were then called BL Cars, but taller gearing was not. So, even with its modest complement of 46 hp and 52 lb-ft of torque, performance is passable and, even at 75 mph, engine and gear noise are fairly restrained.

I bought this car with 26,000 original miles on the clock in England in 2011 for next to nothing. Ironically, in the land of their birth, where miniMetros were portrayed at launch as the great saviors of British industry, they're now essentially worthless, quite unlike the Mini they were meant to—but didn't—replace.

Alec Issigonis may have eschewed fashion, but as a testimonial to his genius and a lifetime spent in the service of function, we have several fashionable machines to remember him by. Unfortunately, the miniMetro isn't one of them—yet. **AM**

when More *isn't* More

If money is no object, if power and torque matter more than a small carbon footprint, and if your dream car is an imaginary five-seat Porsche 911 with an extralarge trunk, you might consider making room in your garage for a

BY **GEORG KACHER**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TOM SALT**

Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG,

a Jaguar XJR, or an Audi S8.

Or maybe not.





We've

brought together the quickest and most powerful V-8 variants of three of the most desirable and prestigious full-size luxury sedans in the world, the Audi A8, the Jaguar XJ, and the Mercedes-Benz S-class. In doing so, we have stuck with the assumption that the essence of old-fashioned, white-knuckle, temple-throbbing driving pleasure in the year 2014 is still composed of howling V-8 engines, flickering stability control warning lights, and a lust factor

that grows in proportion with revs, acceleration, and speed. The Audi S8, the Jaguar XJR, and the Mercedes S63 AMG 4Matic have no interest in stitching up the yawning hole in the ozone layer, in saving baby whales or rain forests, or in setting a shining example of social responsibility and self-denial. Quite the contrary: in this particular seventy-two-hour contest, we staked out a remote, radar-free environment and targeted a set of breathtaking primary and secondary roads where we could drive the rubber socks off of three remarkable, 500-plus-hp, high-performance boardroom haulers on a no-holds-barred tour de force of rural Upper Bavaria, Salzburg, and Tyrol.

Although the 577-hp S63 eclipses the XJR by 27 hp and the S8 by 57 hp, the mean-looking Merc is actually quite jovial and obliging in character. Its big-bore twin-turbo engine runs so smoothly and quietly, you might think you're wearing a pair of wax earplugs. Throttle response even in sport mode is relatively restrained and relaxed, the transmission rides the torque surf in seven subtle steps, the suspension is firm yet supple, and the sound-deadening

materials give the term "splendid isolation" a whole new meaning. Whereas the eight-speed automatics used by Audi and Jaguar will shift up with near-whiplash force and lightning-like speed in sport mode, the Benz changes gears with rapid fluency and velvet-glove urgency. Despite these gentlemanly manners, the S63 can accelerate to 60 mph in 3.9 seconds with no trace of takeoff wheelspin, up to 664 lb-ft of physical punch between your shoulder blades, and only one gearchange.

The Audi, too, benefits from the traction bonus only four-wheel drive can provide. Against the stopwatch, the S8 is equal to the bigger and heavier Mercedes, according to their manufacturers. On slippery surfaces, through tight corners, and at the start of every traffic-light grand prix, both German contenders compete in a league of their own. In winter, only the rear-wheel-drive Jaguar struggles on icy on-ramps, when tackling snow-covered climbs, while easing into and out of unplowed roadside parking spots, or when attempting to merge with fast traffic. Fitted with a 4.0-liter twin-turbo V-8 redlined at 6400 rpm, the Audi is between five and





EVEN THOUGH THE AUDI HAS THE BEST FIT AND FINISH, THE CLASSIEST INSTRUMENTS, THE MOST TASTEFUL INTERIOR, AND THE BRIGHTEST HEADLIGHTS, THE FOUR RINGS DON'T SIGNIFY PERFECTION IN EVERY RESPECT.



All three of these six-figure stormers have lovely interiors, but the Audi's is perhaps the best overall. The S8 we tested in Europe exhibits the face-lift set to go on sale in the U.S. this summer as a 2015 model.





The Audi's full-LED headlamps will come to the U.S. for 2015. And, boy, are they bright.

The Specs

Audi S8

BASE PRICE: \$113,395

POWERTRAIN

ENGINE: 32-valve turbocharged DOHC V-8

DISPLACEMENT: 4.0 liters (244 cu in)

POWER: 520 hp @ 6000 rpm

TORQUE: 481 lb-ft @ 5500 rpm

TRANSMISSION: 8-speed automatic

DRIVE: 4-wheel

CHASSIS

STEERING: Hydraulically assisted

FRONT SUSPENSION:

Multilink, air springs

REAR SUSPENSION:

Multilink, air springs

BRAKES: Vented discs
(carbon-ceramic discs optional)

STOCK TIRE SIZE:

265/35R-21 101Y

MEASUREMENTS

L x W x H: 202.2 x 83.1 x 57.5 in

WHEELBASE: 117.8 in

TRACK F/R: 64.7/64.4 in

WEIGHT: 4685 lb

CARGO CAPACITY: 13.2 cu ft

EPA MILEAGE: 15/26 mpg

PERFORMANCE

0-60 MPH: 3.9 sec

TOP SPEED: 155 mph (electronically limited)

ten percent more economical than the other two V-8-powered sedans. During our test drives, it averaged 17 mpg versus the Jaguar's 15 mpg and the S63's 16 mpg. In terms of sheer power and torque, however, the S8 (520 hp, 481 lb-ft) cannot quite match the XJR (550 hp, 502 lb-ft) or the even brawnier S63 AMG (577 hp, 664 lb-ft).

Even though the Audi has the best fit and finish, the classiest instruments, the most tasteful interior, and the brightest headlights (full LEDs in this case), the four rings don't signify perfection in every respect. The MMI infotainment system, for instance, gets more complex with every round of modifications; access to the extensive Drive Select menu should be more intuitive; and the Tiptronic gear selector often needs two or three attempts to engage and stay in reverse. Standard equipment includes 21-inch wheels, air suspension with a sporty calibration, dynamic steering, a sport differential, a navigation system, and leather upholstery. You must pay extra for carbon-ceramic brakes, night vision, and most driver-assistance systems. The Audi has the smallest trunk (13.2 cubic feet) and the biggest tank (23.8 gallons), which grants it the longest range. The trunk of the Benz measures 16.3 cubic feet, while that of the Jaguar holds 15.2 cubic feet. All three cars ran on winter tires for this test. Our European-spec S8 was shod with 265/40R-20s all around; the XJR made do with downsized 245/45R-19s in front and 275/40R-19s at the back (twenties are standard); and the S63 was delivered with 255/40R-20s front, 285/35R-20s rear.

The Jaguar's cabin is a nice mix of Buckingham Palace tradition and Silicon



Carbon-ceramic brakes are new to the S8, as well. Choosing the driving mode is one of numerous functions controlled through Audi's Multi Media Interface (MMI).



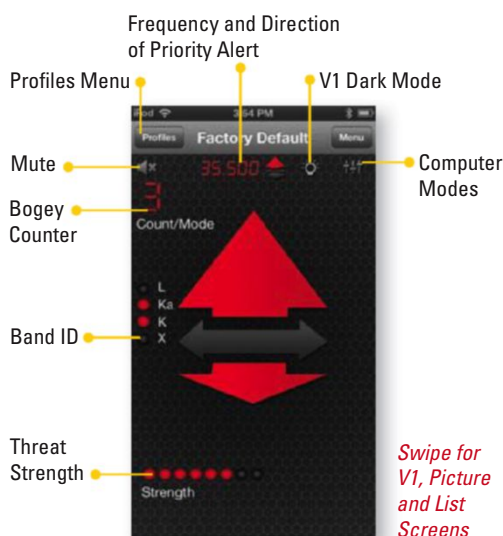
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— Autoweek

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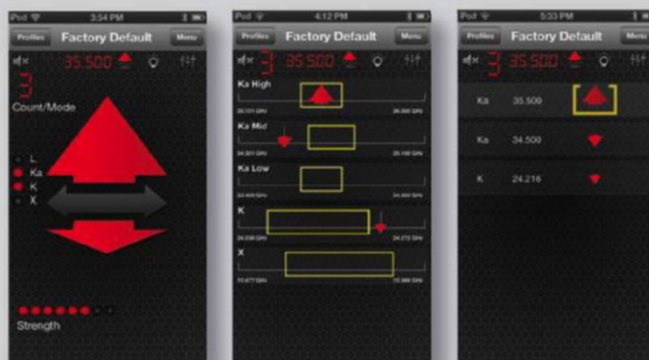
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List Screen—the Threat List shows all signals in range by numerical frequency, each with an arrow showing Direction.

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Valley modernity. At a glance, the XJR appears fully loaded. The cabin accents are fabricated of piano black and glossy metal; hide and suede covers everything else. The usual conveniences are paired with a decent sound system. When you zoom in and compare, though, the 550-hp Briton won't let you specify as many high-tech options as its German challengers. Even adaptive cruise control costs extra. The charmless digital instruments look out of place in such an upmarket environment, and the dynamic have-fun goodies are limited to a more lenient in-between stability control setting, an on-demand firmer spring and damper tuning, and quicker transmission software. There's no head-up display, no composite brake discs, and—perhaps most significant—no available all-wheel drive,

which can be ordered only with the V-6 XJ.

The Euro-spec, standard-wheelbase, rear-wheel-drive S63 AMG comes with Magic Body Control, Mercedes-speak for two cameras that scan the road surface to alert the suspension before it encounters obstacles such as potholes or transverse ridges. The long-wheelbase S63 AMG 4Matic, the only S63 offered in America (and the version we tested in Europe), is equipped with a spiced-up variant of the Airmatic air suspension. Other S63 ingredients include stronger brakes, a more attentive Speedshift transmission, more direct steering, and the ability to select sportier drive modes. In addition, the S63 has the full go-faster treatment: the seats have special leather, stitching patterns, piping, and emblems; the stylish body kit should be as

good at reducing drag as it is at turning heads; the four gleaming tailpipes are almost as big in diameter as foxholes; and, to avoid confusion with lesser Benzes, there are about two dozen AMG logos prominently scattered throughout the car. So far, so good. But when you put the S63 to the real test by waltzing through a set of hold-your-breath curves, a larger than expected portion of the promised sparkle is lost in translation. In sum, the cream-of-the-crop Mercedes actually dishes up a less invigorating menu than the loud and loose XJR. The S63 AMG is a complete and competent car, but it has been wrapped in too many neutralizing layers of cotton wool.

After almost 600 demanding miles, the Mercedes emerged as a luxury limousine with degrees in velocity, ride comfort, and



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M-B S63 AMG / JAGUAR XJR / AUDI S8

stability. In this features-galore mile-eater, the driver is constantly tailed by a battalion of electronic helpers that know how and when to stay in the lane, keep the correct distance, decelerate in an emergency, pull at the steering wheel if need be, and park the car automatically. Although fully autonomous driving is one of the brand's declared goals, the S63 thankfully still expresses interest in such AMG priorities as handling and roadholding, cornering grip and steering accuracy, brake bite and throttle response. The steam-hammer version turns in more eagerly than the S550, decelerates with added vigor, handles with

mutate from house cat to wildcat. The instant James the devoted chauffeur hands the keys to his alter ego Zorro the racer, the car's personality and attitude undergo a dramatic change. From one moment to the next, supercharger whine and exhaust trumpets set the tone, the nineteen-inch winter tires struggle to connect even on clear blacktop, and the quick steering develops a newfound lightness.

The limit arrives earlier and more suddenly than expected, and when it does, the Jaguar is notably more difficult to keep on course than the S8 or the S63. The paddle-operated gearbox isn't totally composed,



greater talent, is a true champion of acceleration, and can be coaxed into feeling quite chuckable for a behemoth weighing 4806 pounds. Despite all that, the 5.5-liter hypersedan feels too much like a very fast S-class and not enough like a raw and special driving machine prepared by the most talented power brokers in the trade. The smaller E63 AMG is much sharper and more communicative, a superior master of quick escapes and grand gestures.

The Jaguar epitomizes the very British art of waftability, but refined part-throttle cruising and posing at street-café pace are not its only skills. When asked to give chase, the XJR will instantly change down a gear or two, expertly flex and stretch its muscles, then slowly lower its head and aim at the horizon with the energy of a sprinter who has somehow managed to adopt the delicate balance of a high-wire performer. Be content to relish the car's communication skills this side of burn-outs and tail slides, and the XJR may become an ally, perhaps a friend. But if whips and spurs are your thing, the Jag is liable to





The Mercedes brims with high-tech treats. The La-Z-Boy option—sorry, Executive Rear Seat Package Plus—is particularly nice. And pricey.



The Specs

Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG

BASE PRICE: \$140,425

POWERTRAIN

ENGINE: 32-valve twin-turbocharged DOHC V-8

DISPLACEMENT: 5.5 liters (333 cu in)

POWER: 577 hp @ 5500 rpm

TORQUE: 664 lb-ft @ 2250–3750 rpm

TRANSMISSION: 7-speed automatic

DRIVE: 4-wheel

CHASSIS

STEERING: Electrically assisted

FRONT SUSPENSION:

Multilink, air springs

REAR SUSPENSION:

Multilink, air springs

BRAKES: Vented discs

(carbon-ceramic discs optional)

STOCK TIRE SIZES F, R:

255/40R-20 (101Y), 285/35R-20 (104Y)

MEASUREMENTS

L x W x H: 206.5 x 83.9 x 58.7 in

WHEELBASE: 124.6 in

TRACK F/R: 64.7/64.7 in

WEIGHT: 4806 lb

CARGO CAPACITY: 16.3 cu ft

EPA MILEAGE: 15/23 mpg

PERFORMANCE

0–60 MPH: 3.9 sec

TOP SPEED: 186 mph (electronically limited)

Fog makes this trio even more sinister than usual. However, despite their performance prowess, we have a hard time falling in love with any of them.



either. In sport mode, it feels more like a dual-clutch automatic than like the torque-converter automatic it is, holding on to a given ratio all the way to the engine's redline and then shifting with time-warp efficiency. The brakes bite with such unyielding force that one would not be surprised if the pads were basted with piranha teeth. Every acceleration from 50 to 75 mph leaves a deep dimple in the pit of your stomach, and the growling V-8 is inherently aggressive. All of which is another way of saying that this Jaguar is a very special animal, competent and controversial yet flawed in a quite charming way.

To summarize, the Jaguar is a great plaything for the twenty-mile Saturday-morning detour to the bakery and coffee house but leaves something to be desired as an all-weather 24/7 executive runabout; the Mercedes just does not have the same effect on our heart rate, blood thickness, and adrenaline flow as most other AMG products. Which brings us to the Audi S8 and its stature in this trio.

While the sporty S8 has great potential, it is not available in long-wheelbase form, so tall rear-seat occupants struggle for space. On a good day, one may be tempted

to describe the design as classic, but when you take off the rose-colored glasses, the aging cookie-cutter single-frame grille is inexpressive and ordinary. In theory, the driving dynamics should be spot-on, and yet in real life they form an odd mix of highs and lows. Take the handling, which ranges from defensive to indifferent, all the way from casual cornering exercises to terminal understeer at the very edge of adhesion. Feel the steering, which refuses to feed your palms with enough weight, self-centering action, and grip information. Try the brakes, which are very powerful and totally immune to fade but could do with more progressive pedal action. Experience the air suspension in all three available settings, and you will invariably wonder why not even the comfort mode provides a satisfactory level of compliance. At the end of the third day, the S8 was perceived by all four of our testers as a cold technocrat that takes particular pride in keeping its driver at arm's length. As best epitomized by its faultless drivetrain, this car is a somewhat empty and not entirely convincing triumph of efficiency over emotion.

Decisions, decisions. If you are a Bang & Olufsen type and love the clean Bauhaus

style, Germanic perfection down to the last detail, as well as special, no-cost-spared feel-good solidity, then the S8 may be worth a second look and a first test drive. In contrast, the XJR appeals to your inner hooligan, is the secret darling of affluent hipsters, and can either play the prestige card or do donuts until a neighbor calls the cops. The S63 AMG has what it takes to be the best of all worlds, and yet it isn't. Instead, you pay dearly for a token 0.9-second acceleration advantage over the S550.

When it was all over, we debated long and hard about crowning a winner...and decided there wasn't one. Why? Because the \$113,395 Audi S8 is not really that much more desirable than a 420-hp A8L 4.0T (\$88,495) or even the 333-hp A8L 3.0T (\$79,695). Because the \$116,895 XJR makes the 470-hp XJ Supercharged (\$91,495), not to mention the 340-hp XJ AWD (\$78,595), look like conspicuously smart buys. Because the \$140,425 S63 AMG doesn't cast a sufficiently tall shadow to blot out the 449-hp S550 4Matic (\$96,825). What we have here is, therefore, a rare case of less is more, of three oversexed and underdesirable flagship sedans, of half-kept promises and transitory illusions. **AM**



The Specs

Jaguar **XJR**

BASE PRICE: \$116,895/\$119,895 (swb/lwb)

POWERTRAIN

ENGINE: 32-valve supercharged DOHC V-8

DISPLACEMENT: 5.0 liters (305 cu in)

POWER: 550 hp @ 6500 rpm

TORQUE: 502 lb-ft @ 2500–5500 rpm

TRANSMISSION: 8-speed automatic

DRIVE: Rear-wheel

CHASSIS

STEERING: Hydraulically assisted

FRONT SUSPENSION:

Control arms, coil springs

REAR SUSPENSION:

Multilink, air springs

BRAKES: Vented discs

STOCK TIRE SIZES F, R:

265/35R-20 (99Y), 295/30R-20 (101Y)

MEASUREMENTS

L x W x H:

201.9/206.8 x 83.1 x 57.3/57.4 in (swb/lwb)

WHEELBASE: 119.4/124.3 in (swb/lwb)

TRACK F/R: 64.0/63.1 in

WEIGHT: 4123/4153 lb (swb/lwb)

CARGO CAPACITY: 15.2 cu ft

EPA MILEAGE: 15/23 mpg

PERFORMANCE

0–60 MPH: 4.4 sec

TOP SPEED: 174 mph (electronically limited)



THE XJR APPEALS TO YOUR INNER HOOLIGAN, IS THE SECRET DARLING OF AFFLUENT HIPSTERS, AND CAN EITHER PLAY THE PRESTIGE CARD OR DO DONUTS UNTIL A NEIGHBOR CALLS THE COPS.



The Jaguar is significantly lighter and more playful than its all-wheel-drive German rivals. Our short-wheelbase test car wore winter tires on nineteen-inch wheels.



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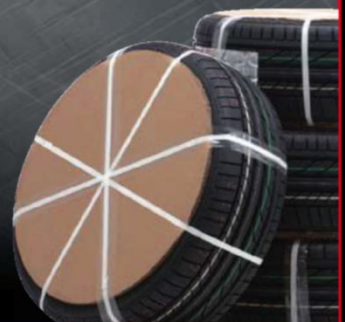
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SUSPENSION



BRAKES





WINTER WONDERCARS

THE **JAGUAR XJL** AND THE **MERCEDES-BENZ GL450**
POSIT TWO DIFFERENT TAKES ON THE
ALL-WHEEL-DRIVE LUXURY CAR.



BY **JOE LORIO** | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MARTYN GODDARD**

Monitoring up ice-slicked Vermont Route 108 outside of Stowe, we were not surprised when we saw that a minivan had slid off the road and was getting shoveled out of a snowbank. It was a sight that brought on a mixture of sympathy and smugness; if we're being completely honest, it was more of the latter, as we were in the commanding perch of a four-wheel-drive Mercedes-Benz GL450. We were confident that what happened to that guy would not be happening to us. That's what four-wheel drive does for you.

The extra measure of confidence and ability that four-wheel drive provides has taken it from novelty to necessity in much of America. Although all-wheel drive is increasingly popular at all price points, it is in particular becoming a fixture at the high end. What good is a luxury car that doesn't impart a feeling of mastery over one's environment—and even over the weather?

WINTER WONDERCARS

Four-wheel drive came out of the woods and onto America's highways with the rise of the SUV. Among luxury sedans, the notion of four driven wheels was pioneered by Audi's Quattro, with Mercedes-Benz's 4Matic and BMW's xDrive not far behind. It's now offered across the board in the luxury-sedan arena.

With AWD a commonality between high-end sedans and SUVs, we wondered: has there been a convergence between the two?

We had only to look at our Four Seasons motor pool to find two of the latest examples of each: the aforementioned Mercedes GL and the Jaguar XJL. With both carrying as-equipped prices in the vicinity of \$80,000, they represent a major choice facing high-end buyers: all-wheel-drive luxury sedan or four-wheel-drive luxury SUV?

Both of these cars are at least partly a response to U.S. demand. Jaguar, which never had an all-wheel-drive model to sell in the United States other than the short-lived X-type, recently added all-wheel drive to both its XF and XJ sedans. "All-wheel drive has been pivotal for us," says Jaguar's North American brand VP, Jeff Curry. "It has been the single biggest factor igniting XF and XJ sales over the past year."

The Alabama-built Mercedes-Benz GL, which has been made bigger and bolder with its second iteration, strikes one as a model that exists wholly to serve the American market. Go to Germany, and you see a lot of Mercedes-Benz automobiles—a lot—but the GL seems not to even exist. Over here, it's a different story. "This is the

American S-class," quipped executive editor Todd Lassa when our Four Seasons tester arrived in the fleet.

For our meditation on the luxury of all-wheel drive, we set a course for Stowe, a winter destination since the 1930s, one that is both suitably swank—note the absence of chain stores—and predictably picturesque. We also came to Vermont seeking winter weather that would give our all-wheel-drive steeds a suitable test. Sure enough, the state delivered, welcoming us with an extended bout of freezing rain that gave the roads a thick, Krispy Kreme glaze. That was followed by some rain-slicked black ice but, surprisingly, very little good, old-fashioned snow.

Deep snow would have given the GL an edge, owing to its 8.5 inches of ground clearance, which can increase to 11 inches at the touch of a button. On the ultraslick ice, however, neither car had an inherent advantage. Even where it was too slippery to walk, both all-wheel-drive machines proved highly capable of holding the road—with proper winter rubber, of course [see sidebar for our winter-tire choices]. The GL's optional on-/off-road package includes a winter mode, which alters throttle mapping, shift strategy (to include second-gear starts), and traction/stability control, but it was not on our test car, nor was it needed.

The XJ's winter mode similarly affects throttle, transmission, and traction/stability control. It also changes the all-wheel-drive system's default torque split to send 30 percent of the power to the front. Nor-

2013 Jaguar XJL Portfolio AWD

PRICE: \$84,595/\$86,470
(base/as tested)

POWERTRAIN

ENGINE: 3.0L
supercharged V-6,
340 hp, 332 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION:
8-speed automatic
DRIVE: 4-wheel

CHASSIS

STEERING:
Hydraulically assisted
FRONT SUSPENSION:
Control arms, coil springs
REAR SUSPENSION:
Multilink, air springs
BRAKES: Vented discs
TIRES: Bridgestone
Blizzak LM-32
TIRE SIZES F, R:
245/45R-19 102V,
275/40R-19 101V

MEASUREMENTS

L x W x H:
206.8 x 74.8 x 57.3 in
WHEELBASE: 124.3 in
PASSENGER VOLUME:
109.0 cu ft
CARGO CAPACITY:
15.2 cu ft
WEIGHT: 4364 lb
EPA MILEAGE: 16/24 mpg

mally, Jaguar's system defaults to 100 percent rear-wheel drive when cruising.

Of the XJ's three engine options—a supercharged V-8 in two strengths and a supercharged V-6—only the six-cylinder can be had with all-wheel drive. In the long-wheelbase car, the engine's 340 hp and 332 lb-ft of torque motivate a relatively svelte 4364 pounds. Jaguar says that all-wheel drive adds 0.4 second to the 0-to-60-mph time. At 6.1 seconds, it's not as explosively fast as the eight-cylinder XJs but is certainly up for any reasonable acceleration demands. The ZF eight-speed automatic transmission is, as ever, a paragon of self-shifting decorum.

Four-wheel drive is standard in the GL, so it can come with any of the model's four engine options. The GL450's 4.6-liter bi-turbo V-8 is the most modest engine in the GL pantheon after the 3.0-liter turbo-diesel. It makes 362 hp and 406 lb-ft, which proves to be enough for quick moves in the freeway cut-and-thrust, despite the GL's porky, 5566-pound curb weight. The 4.6-liter and the seven-speed automatic are a Fred-and-Ginger combo, a smooth and polished pair.





THE MERCEDES GL AND THE JAGUAR XJ REPRESENT A MAJOR CHOICE FACING HIGH-END BUYERS: ALL-WHEEL-DRIVE LUXURY SEDAN OR FOUR-WHEEL-DRIVE LUXURY SUV?



Winter in Stowe brings snow and ice and freezing temps. Both of our AWD steeds proved sure-footed (above). The Trapp Family Lodge (below) glows in the cold twilight, while the GL450 takes in the view (bottom).



Would that the Benz's chassis were anywhere near as graceful. The electrically assisted power steering is so light that it feels loose; perhaps this is designed to create the impression of easy handling. In fact, that's really not necessary, because this big machine actually scribes a pretty tight turning circle. Furthermore, the combination of the standard backup camera and optional (and much welcomed) overhead-view camera impart a lot of confidence maneuvering in tight spaces.

It's once you're underway that the GL chassis disappoints. This big SUV bobs woozily on its suspension, which is almost to be expected since it's so tall and heavy. But the upside of that soft tuning and the GL450's 55-series tires should be the ability to smother bumps. Instead, the GL hops over frost heaves and delivers sharp impacts in potholes. The situation might have been improved with the optional active antiroll bars (the Active Curve System), but our car was not so equipped; then again, it likely would have been worse had we been rolling on the 21-inch wheels that you get with the GL550.

For an SUV-versus-car driving-dynam-

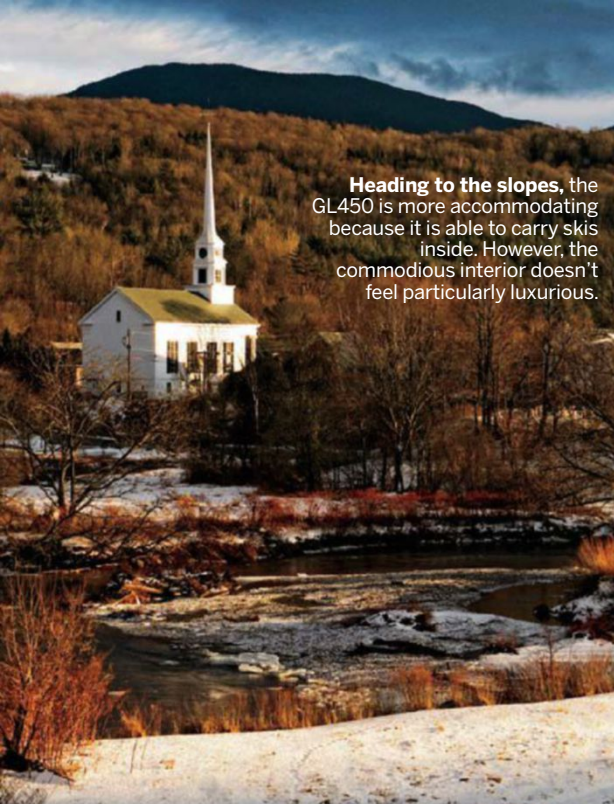


TRIP NOTES

Nestled in the middle of the Green Mountain State, Stowe is the Vermont ski town of your imagination, with a Main Street full of century-old buildings anchored by a church with a white steeple. Stowe has been a winter destination since the 1930s; the first ski trail was cut into Mount Mansfield by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933. Although there's plenty of fabulousness here (most obviously at the Stowe Mountain Lodge), you'll also find young snowboarders brown-bagging it at the rustic Mount Mansfield base lodge.

STAY
THE GREEN MOUNTAIN INN
greenmountaininn.com
Located right on Main Street, the Green Mountain Inn is classic old New England. It dates from 1850 (the original building is from 1833). The attached Whip Bar & Grill received the town's first liquor license when Stowe at last went "wet"—in 1950.

TRAPP FAMILY LODGE
trappfamily.com
Yes, this Stowe institution really was started by the Austrian expat von Trapp family, of *The Sound of Music* fame—and the family still owns and runs it. The original building was replaced by a new one in 1981, and although it's large (ninety-six rooms), it was designed to feel intimate in scale.



Heading to the slopes, the GL450 is more accommodating because it is able to carry skis inside. However, the commodious interior doesn't feel particularly luxurious.



ics battle, the GL couldn't have picked a tougher adversary than the Jaguar XJ. Even among its fellow luxury sedans, the XJ is notable for its winsome combination of athletic handling and buttoned-down ride. The low-profile (45-series front, 40-series rear) tires exact a bit of a ride-quality penalty, but the Jaguar's standard adaptive dampers help minimize the harshness. At the same time, this big sedan feels like a natural extension of the driver when you bend it into a curve, thanks in no small part to the naturally weighted steering. The Jaguar only gets unwieldy when it's time to park; the long-wheelbase XJ starts out with a larger turning circle than the GL, and adding all-wheel drive makes it even worse.

As well as the Jaguar is to drive, if you're ferrying a crowd the GL is your car—even more so than most SUVs. Its standard third-row seat is adult-habitable, and its second row is a genuine three-person bench rather than the more limiting two captain's chairs. You lose two passenger spaces if you want to carry long winter sports gear like skis or snowboards inside, power-folding half the

→ WINTER FOOTWEAR



JAGUAR XJL
Our all-wheel-drive Jaguar is wearing the Bridgestone Blizzak LM-32. The Tire Rack's Woody Rogers suggested these Blizzaks, a relatively sporty winter tire ideal for high-performance sedans—and which work well in the XJL's staggered tire sizes.



MERCEDES-BENZ GL450
For our GL, Tire Rack recommended the Pirelli Scorpion Ice & Snow, a performance winter tire well suited to SUVs and crossovers. It's engineered to preserve dry-road handling (not that the GL handles all that well to begin with).

third row and one-third of the second row, but even then you can still carry five.

The GL's interior versatility makes it a family-friendly bus, and it appears to have been designed with that duty in mind. Its industrial-grade (and, ahem, extracost) leather, surprisingly hard surfaces, and rudimentary wood trim create an environment that easily withstands crushed Cheerios and muddy gear but hardly makes one feel as if they're reveling in luxury. For that, one must step up to the Designo interior. The Benz does get full marks, however, for its Comand interface, which has become quite easy to use—even though on this trip, the in-car technologies we were most appreciative of were the heated seats and steering wheel (in both cars).

The XJ cabin, by contrast, is a feast for the senses. The low dash is topped by a dramatic arc of wood trim and is punctuated by huge bull's-eye vents you can't help but touch. The seat leather, with contrasting piping, is smooth and luxurious, and the pillars and ceiling are covered in a rich synthetic suede. The long-wheelbase XJ adds five inches of



The XJ's cabin is luxurious even by luxury-car standards. The shallow trunk, however, can't carry skis, as the rear seatbacks don't fold down and there is no pass-through.

2013
Mercedes-Benz
GL450 4Matic
PRICE: \$64,805/\$78,290
 (base/as tested)

POWERTRAIN

ENGINE: 4.7L twin-turbo V-8, 362 hp, 406 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION: 7-speed automatic
DRIVE: 4-wheel

CHASSIS

STEERING: Electrically assisted
FRONT SUSPENSION: Control arms, air springs
REAR SUSPENSION: Multilink, air springs
BRAKES: Vented discs
TIRES: Pirelli Scorpion Ice & Snow
TIRE SIZE: 265/55R-19 109V

MEASUREMENTS

L x W x H: 201.6 x 84.3 x 72.8 in
WHEELBASE: 121.1 in
PASSENGER VOLUME: 143.6 cu ft
CARGO CAPACITY: 16.0/49.4/93.8 cu ft (behind third/middle/front rows)
WEIGHT: 5566 lb
EPA MILEAGE: 14/19 mpg

rear-seat legroom over the standard-wheel-base variant, making for generous space for even the lankiest passengers, although you'll want to limit their number to two. The only letdown is—yes—the electronics, as Jaguar's touchscreen interface suffers some flawed logic and the instrument cluster's digital rendition of gauges, in place of actual gauges, is rather cartoonish.

Pop the trunk, and the XJ's practical limitations immediately become clear. The car's rounded rump encloses a cargo hold that is modest at best. And forget about putting any long sports gear inside—the rear seatbacks don't fold down and there isn't even an available ski pass-through. You'll need a rack for your board or your sticks—or you'll have to rent equipment when you get there.

Rather than converging, the two AWD luxury automobiles paired here strongly evidenced the relative strengths and weaknesses of their ilk. They are each at the far end of their respective classes. The GL is a commodious carrier, a blocky beast of burden for ferrying masses of people and stuff.

But its clumsy dynamics are from the SUV old school, and its interior is a style-free zone. The GL is a highly capable workhorse that falls short on luxury.

The XJ, on the other hand, couldn't be more sedanlike. The low and sleek four-door is a head-turning style maven inside and out. All-wheel drive has done nothing to diminish the Jaguar's athleticism, which stands arguably at the top of its field. Aside from its ultraroomy back seat, though, the Jag otherwise shrugs its pretty shoulders at the notion of hauling anything. Its cargo hold isn't just stingy compared with SUVs; it's stingy compared with most other mid-size and larger sedans. And the omission of fold-down backrests or even a pass-through truly limits the big cat's versatility.

What have we learned, then? The Mercedes GL is a very SUV-ish SUV, and the Jaguar XJ is a most sedanlike sedan, and all-wheel drive is most welcome on each. Oh, and Stowe, Vermont, is a nice place to visit, even in nasty New England winter weather, provided you don't have to shovel your car out of a snowbank. **AM**

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CROP BISTRO & BREWERY

cropvt.com

Fries up a mean burger and brews some decent beers to wash it down.

HARRISON'S RESTAURANT & BAR
HarrisonsStowe.com
 Reservations are essential at this small, and packed, restaurant on Main Street with a casual atmosphere but seriously good food.

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vtssm.com
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stowemercantile.com
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PLAY
STOWE MOUNTAIN RESORT
stowe.com
 Stowe's eponymous ski resort offers 116 trails over two mountains, Mount Mansfield (Vermont's tallest peak, at 4395 feet) and Spruce Peak. Spruce Peak has the fancy base lodge and soaring, craftsman-style hotel you'd expect from a high-end ski resort. Mount Mansfield retains a modestly scaled lodge that dates from skiing's early days.

TRAPP FAMILY LODGE
trappfamily.com
 The lodge's on-site cross-country ski center was the first in America when it opened in 1968. Today, it has thirty-seven miles of groomed trails, a warming hut that serves hot food and drinks, and, naturally, equipment sales/rentals, lessons, and tours.

Gap

Top

ENGINEER **LUKE LAMBERT** LEADS A NEW BREED OF TECHNICALLY SAVVY CREW CHIEFS WHO ARE TEACHING NASCAR'S OLD DOGS NEW TRICKS.

From his perch high atop the team hauler, NASCAR Sprint Cup crew chief Luke Lambert rotates in place like a lazily spinning LP to keep his eyes fixed on the number 31 Chevrolet SS howling around the high banks of Homestead-Miami Speedway.

"When I lift," driver Jeff Burton radios during the first practice session before the Ford EcoBoost 400, "I go up the racetrack. Then, when I go back to the throttle, I'm a little bit loose."

Lambert keys his mic: "OK. I think we should change the ride height."

Holding a Microsoft Surface tablet covered with notes, Lambert glides down two sets of ladders and hustles into the garage just as the number 31 Chevy arrives. There, calmly but authoritatively, he issues orders to mechanics, compares notes with engineers, and confers with Burton.

At thirty-one—younger than his driver and most of his crew—Lambert is in the vanguard of a new generation of college graduates whose training and computer savvy is revolutionizing a form of racing that has long relied on received wisdom and seat-of-the-pants wrenching. Car owner Richard Childress now employs about three dozen degreed engineers, with more on the way. "The sport has become so technical," he says, "that you can't compete without them."

Childress is credited with hiring NASCAR's first engineer—Bobby Hutchens—back in 1988. Several other teams followed suit during the 1990s, and engineers became commonplace during the 2000s. They analyzed data, manned shaker rigs and shock dynos, and served as race engineers. But high-profile crew-chief positions were generally reserved for salty veterans who'd been promoted from the shop floor and mastered the mysterious art of "redneck engineering."

"This isn't a sport that's rooted in higher education," Burton says drily. "And there's been some resentment against guys who haven't gone through the school of hard knocks." Despite the widespread reliance on high-tech tools and computer simulation, only three of the thirteen crew chiefs in last year's Chase were degreed engineers.

Lambert grew up in North Carolina—NASCAR country—and committed himself early on to pursuing a career as a crew chief, but instead of following the traditional route as a mechanic or a fabricator, he earned a mechanical engineering degree from North Carolina State University. He was hired by Richard Childress Racing immediately after graduating in 2005.

It didn't take long for him to move up the ranks at RCR. This was a testament, in part, to his technical know-how. But it was also a result of his ability to turn wrenches—

a talent that's helped him "bridge the gap," as he puts it, between engineers and mechanics—and his appreciation for the nuances of redneck engineering.

"So much has happened during the last five years in terms of simulation tools that have gotten better and engineering that's become more accurate," he says. "But we still can't abandon the basics of racing logic. Sometimes you have to say, 'All right, let's get practical.' And you have to make some off-the-cuff decisions to think your way out of a problem."

In the middle of a frustrating 2011 season, Lambert was unexpectedly promoted to the top spot on the pit box for Burton's car, making him Cup's youngest crew chief. The next year, he moved to the second-tier Nationwide Series to get some seasoning, and he crew-chiefed Elliott Sadler to second place in the championship. This past year, Childress was impressed enough by Lambert's technical acumen and leadership qualities to bring him back to Cup.

"He's very special," says Kent Day, the former RCR technical director who approved the promotion. "As an engineer, he's smart and driven. But he's also got really good people skills. He understands how to deal with delicate situations in times of stress, which is what racing is all about." As Burton says: "Luke is going to be one of those guys who everybody looks up to." **AM**





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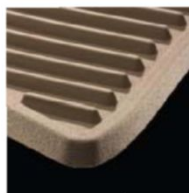


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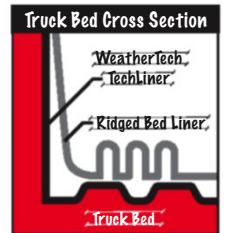
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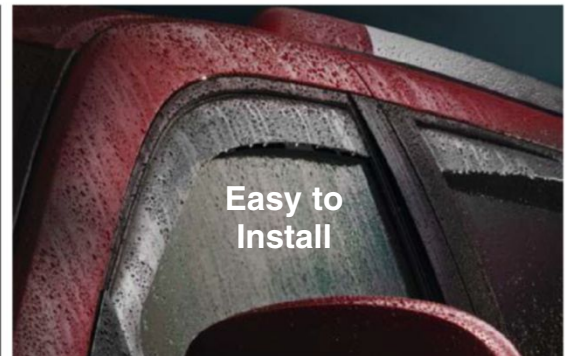
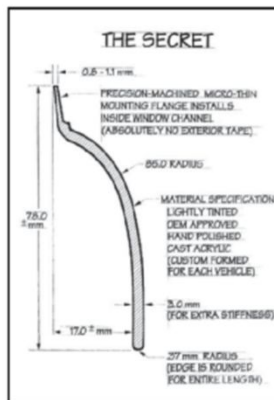
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Upshift 4



2013

Dodge Dart SXT

SO CLOSE.

Even as the segment creeps up in size, price, and packaging, the Dart is still on the large side. Lassa called it a “mid-size compact,” while road test editor Chris Nelson simply said, “It’s damn big.”

 **T**he 2013 Dodge Dart SXT is close to being an excellent compact car. If it were a football team, the cliché about being “one player away” from championship contention would apply. In the case of the Dart, that missing piece is the transmission. We enjoyed many elements of the car during its twelve-month stay with us, but we just couldn’t get past the Dart’s hesitant and clunky, dual-dry-clutch six-speed automatic gearbox.

“I really like the rest of the Dart, but the transmission just seems to get worse each time I’m behind the wheel,” senior web editor Phil Floraday said.

That neatly sums up our time with the Dart. Even though we had the gearbox reflashed eight months into our test—Chrysler issued a recall to address complaints—it didn’t make things any smoother or quieter.

Dodge isn’t alone in dealing with a dual-clutch controversy. Ford faced similar issues with the dual-dry-clutch unit in the Focus, as buyers found the shifts unpredictable. Good dual-clutch automatics like those from Volkswagen and Porsche are virtually indistinguishable from conventional automatics from behind the wheel, but less expensive and more efficient dual-dry-clutch setups tend to be far less pleasant.

The Dart’s 1.4-liter SOHC turbocharged four-cylinder engine didn’t help. Deputy editor Joe DeMatio called it “coarse, hoarse, and gravelly,” while others were annoyed with the turbo lag and throttle mapping. Oh, and another thing: Dodge recommends using premium fuel.

Powertrain problems aside, our Dart rolled up 24,766 miles and spent a lot of time on the open road, where it shines. “It’s a much better freeway car than it is an urban car,” DeMatio said. “On the freeway, all the transmission issues fade into the background.”

DeMatio was the first to stretch the Dart's legs, taking it on a 300-mile round-trip to northern Michigan shortly after it arrived in December 2012. That was soon followed by winter jaunts around the Midwest before executive editor Todd Lassa drove the Dart to New York for the auto show in late March. Graphic designer John Kalmar took the Dart to the Kentucky Derby in the spring and then to the Big Ten football championship game in Indianapolis late in the fall. In between, nearly everyone had a summer beach adventure, cider-mill outing, or, in the case of associate web editor Evan McCausland, a random run to Canada to pick up a set of Japanese-market grab handles for a first-generation Honda CR-V. Don't ask.



Despite its intrusive gooseneck hinges, the Dart's spacious, 13.1-cubic-foot trunk could swallow cases of soda and beer almost as easily as our editors.

GENEALOGY

→The legendary Dodge Dart and its twin, the Plymouth Valiant (1960–1976), were stalwart small cars famous for their bulletproof slant-six engines and optional small-block V-8s. Dodge revived the name because it still resonates with consumers, but the new Dart is actually a successor to the cheeky Dodge/Plymouth Neon and the poorly executed Dodge Caliber.



Neon (1995–2005)

The Neon brought Chrysler small cars into the modern era. Sold under the Dodge and Plymouth brands, the Neon achieved sales and critical success almost immediately, with more power and more interior space than anything else in its class. The '95 model launched as a sedan in January 1994 and had a 2.0-liter in-line four-cylinder rated at 132 hp. A coupe with a 150-hp 2.0-liter joined later that year. The Neon's performance editions included the track-focused ACR, which had chassis and mechanical upgrades, and the R/T, which had some of the ACR's athletic improvements but was designed for the street.

The second generation (2000–2005) got a redesigned suspension, new steering and brake systems, and an improved interior. The body structure was upgraded to meet impact regulations, and styling was updated but

familiar. R/T and ACR editions with Magnum 2.0-liter four-cylinder engines were added for 2001. With the demise of Plymouth, the Neon was sold only under the Dodge brand from '02. The ultimate performance Neon came from 2003–2005, when Dodge created the very cool SRT4, which had a turbocharged 2.4-liter I-4 making 215 to 230 hp.



Caliber (2007–2012)

The Caliber followed the Neon but failed to match the accomplishments of its predecessor. Unlike the Neon, the Caliber was sold as a hatchback. It launched with a 148-hp, 1.8-liter I-4 and a 158-hp 2.0-liter. An R/T variant producing 172 hp from a 2.4-liter I-4 with all-wheel drive was also available in 2007. A turbocharged SRT4 version with 285 hp and a six-speed manual (2008–2009) could reach 60 mph in about six seconds flat.

Pros & Cons

- + Attractive styling inside and out
- + Nicely equipped
- + Good on the highway
- Clunky transmission
- Coarse engine
- Hard-to-read speedometer

These long expeditions, during which we had a lot of time to settle in and play around with things, showed off cool interior features such as the full-color Uconnect infotainment system with an 8.4-inch touchscreen. It's simple yet clever, and Dodge wisely kept redundant knobs and buttons for the radio and climate functions.

"I can't think of any other car where it's as easy to cycle between the navigation map and the audio controls," Lassa said. "Once I grew tired of what was on NPR, Real Jazz, and Chill, I got my iPod to work seamlessly with Uconnect."

The Uconnect system was the centerpiece of a quiet cabin. Lassa called the sound level "impressive for what is now considered an economy-car price," a thought echoed by other drivers.

The interior is handsome, and an illuminated red accent surrounding the instrument panel impressed our



passengers during nighttime outings. The design flair offset some of the hard plastics that one expects to find in cars at this price point. The seats were commended by most of our staff for their comfort, support, and positioning. Plus, there were a lot of places to stow your phone, coffee mug, iPad, or purse, including an ingenious hidden compartment under the front-passenger-seat cushion.

The only real annoyances were the hard-to-read analog speedometer, which forced many to resort to using the digital readout in the gauge cluster, and the blocky A-pillars, which hampered visibility in urban areas. According to the EPA, the Dart is technically a mid-size car, and it's longer than competitors like the Chevrolet Cruze, the Ford Focus, and the Honda Civic. Even as the segment creeps up in size, price, and packaging, the Dart is still on the large side. Lassa called it a "mid-size compact," while road test editor Chris Nelson simply said, "It's damn big."

Its size had benefits, as copy editor Rusty Blackwell learned when he stuffed 254 empty bottles and cans into the trunk to return to the store, and videographer Sandon Voelker once jammed three bicycles into the Dart with the seats folded. Dodge is correct in assuming that Americans want as much cargo space as possible, regardless of the segment. Even though the Dart doesn't handle like a traditional compact car, we concluded



The interior of our Dart SXT was handsome, comfortable, and nicely equipped. We liked Dodge's Uconnect infotainment system, which had an intuitive touchscreen and attractive graphics. Below: The sheep and cows were disappointed that we weren't hauling hay in the Dart's sizable trunk.



There's a lot to like about the Dart. We just kept coming back to the weaknesses of the powertrain, which kept us from truly falling for it.

PRICES & EQUIPMENT

BASE PRICE
\$18,790

PRICE AS TESTED
\$23,195

TRADE-IN VALUE
\$13,400*

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Air-conditioning; halogen headlights; power windows, mirrors, and door locks; tilting/telescoping steering column; six-speaker AM/FM/CD/MP3 stereo with auxiliary input; 2.0-liter I-4 engine; seventeen-inch aluminum wheels; split-folding rear seats; front, side, side curtain, and knee airbags

OUR OPTIONS

1.4-liter MultiAir I-4 (active grille shutters, underbody aerodynamic treatment, dual exhaust), \$1300; dual-dry-clutch automatic, \$1100; 8.4-inch touchscreen, \$595; navigation system (SD slot, USB port, illuminated IP surround, backup camera), \$495; popular equipment group (trip computer, cruise control, leather-wrapped steering wheel with audio controls, remote start, illuminated front cupholders), \$495; LED taillamps, \$225; one-year SiriusXM, \$195

*Based on information from intellichoice.com



Upshift



The interior was filled with places to stash our goods, including an innovative, semisecret compartment under the passenger seat.

Our **Pirelli Sottozero winter rubber** was handy as we weathered the snow. When conditions were better, the Alfa Romeo-sourced chassis provided some of the sportiest handling in the segment.



RUNNING COSTS

MILEAGE 24,766

WARRANTY

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5-yr/100,000-mile powertrain
5-yr/100,000-mile roadside assistance
3-yr/unlimited-mile corrosion

SCHEDULED MAINTENANCE

5908 mi: \$65.00
14,529 mi: \$115.00
23,160 mi: \$65.00

WARRANTY REPAIRS

None

RECALLS

17,628 mi: Reprogram PCM to tune cylinder firing and spark timing; fix possible rattle from fuel-filler door; reprogram transmission for better shifts and less noise

OUT-OF-POCKET

180 mi: Purchase, mount, and balance Pirelli Sottozero W240 Serie II winter tires, \$897.92
3152 mi: Purchase Mopar all-weather floor mats, cargo mat, and cargo liner, \$193.00
5721 mi: Replace dented left rocker panel, \$684.37
5927 mi: Mount and balance stock Continental tires, \$100.00
17,628 mi: Align front wheels, \$58.57
21,115 mi: Remount Pirelli winter tires, \$100.00

FUEL CONSUMPTION

EPA city/highway/combined
27/37/31 mpg
Observed **29 mpg**

COST PER MILE

(Fuel, service, winter tires) **\$0.18**
(\$0.58 including depreciation)

that its size was a good thing. With 97.2 cubic feet of interior volume, the sedan has one of the roomiest cabins in the segment, with almost as much interior volume as the more traditionally mid-size Dodge Avenger's 100.2 cubic feet. By comparison, the Ford Focus sedan has only 90.7 cubic feet of interior volume.

Dodge also hit the sweet spot with its equipment and trim levels. The base 2013 Dart SXT was nicely decked out for \$18,790, but our long list of options, including a rearview camera, automatic headlights, remote start, and satellite radio, boosted the price to a still-reasonable \$23,195. The "racetrack" LED taillights (a \$225 option) are borrowed from the Charger, and they gave the Dart some design attitude.

There's a lot to like about the Dart. We just kept coming back to the weaknesses of the powertrain, which kept us from truly falling for it. We weren't the only ones. Initial sales were disappointing, and reviews were critical. Dodge realized that the Dart was struggling and smartly limited the dual-clutch unit and 1.4-liter engine to the fuel-conscious Aero model for 2014. Dodge also plans to give the Dart a nine-speed automatic, although it hasn't happened yet. Regardless, this is a solid car. A different transmission alone won't vault it to the top of the segment—football teams are never really just one player away—but it will make the Dart much better to drive. For now, if you're in the market for a Dart, your best bet is to take one with a conventional six-speed manual or automatic. You'll be much happier than we were.

— Greg Migliore

2013 Dodge Dart SXT

RATING



Overview

BODY STYLE 4-door sedan
ACCOMMODATION 5 passengers
CONSTRUCTION Steel unibody

Powertrain

ENGINE 16-valve SOHC turbo I-4
DISPLACEMENT 1.4 liters (83 cu in)
HORSEPOWER 160 hp @ 5500 rpm
TORQUE 184 lb-ft @ 2500–4000 rpm
TRANSMISSION 6-speed automatic
DRIVE Front-wheel

Chassis

STEERING Electrically assisted
LOCK-TO-LOCK 3.3 turns
TURNING CIRCLE 36.5 ft
FRONT SUSPENSION Strut type, coil springs
REAR SUSPENSION Multilink, coil springs
BRAKES F/R Vented discs/discs
TIRES Continental ContiProContact
TIRE SIZE 225/45R-17 91H

Measurements

HEADROOM F/R 38.6/37.0 in
LEGROOM F/R 42.2/35.2 in
SHOULDER ROOM F/R 58.2/56.1 in
L x W x H 183.9 x 72.0 x 57.7 in
WHEELBASE 106.4 in
TRACK F/R 61.7/61.6 in
WEIGHT 3294 lb
WEIGHT DIST. F/R 60.6/39.4%
PASSENGER VOLUME 97.2 cu ft
CARGO CAPACITY 13.1 cu ft
FUEL CAPACITY 15.8 gal
EST. FUEL RANGE 460 miles
FUEL GRADE 91 octane

Our Test Results

0–60 MPH 9.0 sec
0–100 MPH 25.1 sec
1/4-MILE 17.0 sec @ 83 mph
45–65 MPH 4.5 sec
PEAK ACCELERATION 0.53 g
SPEED IN GEARS 1) 25; 2) 46; 3) 73; 4) 108; 5) 118; 6) --- mph
SKID PAD 0.83 g
60–0 MPH BRAKING 123 ft
PEAK BRAKING 1.20 g

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4



2014 Acura MDX RETURN OF A FAVORITE.

→ **T**he three-row luxury crossover is the great automotive confluence of a cossetting cabin and people-carrying practicality, and the last-generation Acura MDX was one of our favorites. A 2012 model easily bested contenders from BMW, Infiniti, and Lincoln in an April 2012 comparison test, and as if to confirm our decision, the MDX has been Acura's best-selling model since 2010. No wonder we were so eager to get behind the wheel when the brand-new 2014 MDX debuted at last year's New York auto show.

New from the chassis up, the Acura MDX has smarter styling, a more modern interior, a few hundred pounds less mass, and better fuel economy. For the first time ever, Acura launched a front-wheel-drive version alongside the all-wheel-drive model. The MDX's wheelbase is longer, its cabin better insulated, its equipment list more comprehensive, and its chassis designed for improved handling. Acura even claims that the new MDX is eight seconds faster around the Nürburgring than its predecessor, a metric almost comically irrelevant to crossover buyers.

When ordering our ideal MDX, we

knew we'd rather have Super Handling All-Wheel Drive (SH-AWD) than front-wheel drive, and then we opted for the Advance and Entertainment packages. That pushed the price to \$57,400, or \$14,215 more than an entry-level MDX. That's certainly a hefty sum, but as a result our Four Seasons MDX is overflowing with high-end gadgets.

We opted for SH-AWD because the system automatically shuffles torque side-to-side to improve grip and handling. The system soon proved to be a blessing because the car arrived just before the Polar Vortex froze Michigan's snowy



From the rear, the MDX looks anonymous. Distinctive headlamps and Acura's signature grille dominate the car's front end.

PATRICK M. HOEY



FOUR SEASONS INTRO



The Specs

PRICE: \$57,400
ENGINE: 3.5L V-6,
 290 hp, 267 lb-ft
DRIVE: 4-wheel
EPA MILEAGE:
 18/27 mpg

Our MDX's cabin
 is bursting with
 features, including
 GPS-linked
 climate control,
 lane-keeping assist,
 and rear seat
 heaters.

roads. On top of that, our MDX is equipped with touchscreen navigation, heated and cooled front seats, push-button starting, a 16.2-inch rear screen with DVD player, a twelve-speaker sound system, and adaptive cruise control with automatic emergency braking.

Immediately after taking delivery, we dropped more money on our fathom blue pearl MDX to prepare it for winter. First was a set of durable rubber floor mats, which set us back \$199.28 but should keep slush from ruining the carpets. Next came a set of Bridgestone Blizzak DM-V1 winter tires from our wheel-and-tire

partner, Tire Rack, which cost \$825.34 to purchase and mount.

There's no doubt that a well-appointed, spacious crossover will be in high demand as staff members schedule their road trips, so we expect the MDX to rack up tens of thousands of miles in dozens of states over the next twelve months. Just days after its arrival, for instance, the MDX was commandeered by staff photographer Patrick Hoey for a whirlwind feature-story assignment that took him from Michigan to South Carolina by way of Nashville. The car has rarely been stationary since. **AM**

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COLLECTIBLE CLASSIC

1991 – 2005

Acura NSX

DESIRABLE, STILL VERY DRIVABLE.

Twenty-five years ago, the notion of a modern Japanese supercar was inconceivable. That changed in February

1989 at the Chicago Auto Show, when Honda stunned the world with something called the “New Sportscar eXperimental.” The NSX was born.

It was a watershed moment. The mid-engine NSX was Honda’s moon shot, the most ambitious project in its then forty-one-year history, summoning all of its racing and technological prowess into a single car. It was even more perception-altering than the Chevrolet Volt would become for General Motors two decades later. The NSX changed the definition of the modern supercar, and it foreshadowed Honda’s growing strength as a global automaker capable of competing with anyone, anywhere.

Launched as a 1991 model and sold in the United States under the premium Acura brand, the NSX was claimed to be the first production car to use an aluminum body and chassis. Honda also added antilock brakes, traction control, titanium connecting rods, variable valve timing and lift, and forged-aluminum wheels that were 13.2 pounds lighter than comparable cast-alloy wheels. The 99.6-inch wheelbase meant that a six-footer could comfortably fit inside, and you could even wedge two golf bags in the trunk. Handbuilt in Tochigi, Japan, the 1991 NSX cost \$62,000, making it the most expensive Japanese car ever to that point.

All of this left the automotive world slack-jawed. Even into the early 1990s, supercars remained unruly, unreliable, and expensive. The NSX was none of



The NSX had a simple interior that was similar to those of other Honda and Acura products of the era. A mobile phone was one of the available accessories.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY | MARTYN GODDARD

those. It was as easy to drive as a Honda Prelude yet could hit 60 mph in 5.5 seconds. In our first test, we pushed it to 150 mph on a state highway and concluded that “any coordinated five-year-old could steer this vehicle.”

On top of that, the NSX was far cheaper than a Ferrari 348, which cost \$122,180, or a Lamborghini Diablo SV, which went for \$211,000. The NSX put the Italians, the Germans, and other makers of exotic cars on notice: modernize your cars or risk having Honda eat your lunch. *Honda*. In recognition, we gave the NSX our 1991 Automobile of the Year and Design of the Year awards, and Honda president Nobuhiko Kawamoto was named our Man of the Year.

Early NSXs (1991–96) had a 270-hp, 3.0-liter V-6 paired with a five-speed manual or a four-speed automatic with a 252-hp 3.0-liter. It was far less powerful than the Chevrolet Corvette ZR-1 and the Porsche 911 Turbo of the era, but neither were as refined as the NSX. Later stick-shifted versions would get another gear and a larger, but still restrained, V-6.

Doug Fox, the owner of this NSX and Ann Arbor’s Acura dealership, bought his ’91 in 1994 for about \$32,000, and he’s put fewer than 300 miles on the car. Aside from a new air filter, Fox’s striking red NSX remains exactly how it was delivered from Japan. And when he does take it for a spin: “It’s always exciting for me,” he says. “It’s like rediscovering the car.”

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COLLECTIBLE CLASSIC

It goes without saying that Fox's NSX is immaculate. When we arrive for our test-drive on a spectacular autumn morning, the car is backed into a spot outside the dealership, where the now-vintage exotic usually holds a prime spot in Fox's showroom alongside brand-new Acuras.

We slide into the driver's seat. It's low but not ridiculously so. Visibility is excellent, with thin A-pillars. The seating position is nice. The instrument cluster is simple. Directly behind the steering wheel there are two large black gauges with white numbers and red needles that display speed and rpm; they're flanked by four smaller dials. You could be in almost any Honda or Acura product from the early 1990s. We feel ready to drive. Dip the clutch, turn the key. The engine fires up behind our ears. Not in a loud and obnoxious manner, just quietly powerful. The cabin is well-insulated, and there is a vertical dual-pane window that separates the passengers from the engine bay. We release the parking brake and ease into first. The clutch is heavily weighted,

but it's easy to get used to. We pull out onto a wide multilane boulevard, accelerate, and work through the gears with the accurate five-speed manual. The shifter is topped in black leather with baseball-style stitching. We grip it like we're preparing to throw a two-seam fastball. The steering is light, and there's play on-center, although it gets heavy through turns, especially slow ones. We open the throttle and hit 60 mph on smooth, clear roads, the fall colors blurring as the engine growls from behind the cockpit.

The NSX is imposing, proud, and potent, but it's not abusive like other supercars of the time. It's drivable, but that doesn't make it any less desirable—precisely as Honda intended. Acura is bringing back the NSX in 2015 as a high-powered, ultramodern, American-built supercar. It will be quite different from its predecessor. Undoubtedly the new car will inspire a new generation of NSX fans, but it has a lot to live up to before it can achieve the legendary status of the original.

— Greg Migliore



Upshift

The Specs

ENGINES

3.0L (182 cu in) DOHC
V-6, 252–270 hp, 210 lb-ft
3.2L (194 cu in) DOHC
V-6, 290 hp, 224 lb-ft

TRANSMISSIONS

5- or 6-speed manual
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DRIVE

Rear-wheel

FRONT SUSPENSION

Control arms,
coil springs

REAR SUSPENSION

Control arms,
coil springs

BRAKES

Vented discs, ABS

WEIGHT

3000–3200 lb

Acura stuck with pop-up headlights on the NSX for more than a decade. Finally, in 2002, the supercar received fixed HID headlights as part of an exterior freshening.

The NSX put the Italians, the Germans, and other supercar makers on notice: modernize your cars or risk having Honda eat your lunch.

The Info

YEARS PRODUCED

1991–2005

NUMBER PRODUCED

18,737

ORIGINAL PRICE

\$62,000/\$89,765
(1991/2005)

VALUE TODAY

\$25,000–\$65,000

Prices mimic those of regular used cars—the newer the model, the more valuable. Targa-topped cars (which debuted for 1995 and include all 2002–2005 NSXs) carry a slight premium, as do stick-shifted examples.

WHY BUY?

Few supercars from the past are this drivable. Regardless of the year, the NSX represents the ambition and technological prowess of Honda, all wrapped in an enthusiast-oriented package. Expect a resurgence in demand with the launch of the new NSX in 2015.

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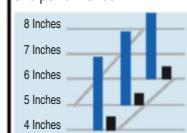


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V12



Bonhams

LONDON, ENGLAND | DECEMBER 1, 2013 | *by Dave Kinney*

FEATURE CAR

1964 FACEL VEGA FACEL II SOLD AT \$552,538

SN HK2B160. Dark metallic red over beige leather interior. 390-hp, 413-cubic-inch V-8; four-speed manual transmission. Power steering, chrome disc wheels. Webasto sunroof added in the 1970s. Fewer than 1000 miles since its most recent restoration less than a year ago. Excellent paint and chrome. Well-done interior, although the worn original seats do stand out a bit.

THE STORY BEHIND THE SALE

Facel Vega was a specialty manufacturer based in Paris, and it was popular with the same crowd that might be attracted to a Bentley today. Most of the "big" Facel Vegas, such as this car, were powered by Chrysler V-8s. Although many different models were available, perhaps fewer than 3000 cars in total were built from 1954 through 1964.

The Facel II has become one of the most desirable of the company's cars. At \$11,550 in 1963, it was about twice as expensive as a Jaguar XK-E and was priced similarly to a Mercedes-Benz 300SL. This particular car's first owner was Richard Starkey, better known as Ringo Starr, drummer for the Beatles. When he took delivery of the ex-show car in late 1965, the Beatles already had a series of number-one hits, both in the United Kingdom and in the United States. He kept the car until May 1968.

This is huge money for a Facel II, and it's difficult to determine how much of it to assign to former Fab Four ownership. Stylish, quirky, and unusual but with plenty of admirers; these are attributes that can be assigned to both the car and to its original owner.



1960 COMMER TS3 ECURIE ECOSSE THREE-CAR TRANSPORTER SOLD AT \$2,936,229

SN T99A2181. Metallic blue with white trim over brown vinyl driver's compartment. 105-hp, 3.2-liter supercharged diesel six-piston three-cylinder; six-speed manual. A purpose-built race-car transporter with coachwork by Walter Alexander of Falkirk, Scotland. Built on a bus chassis and modified to provide sleeping quarters while retaining much of the original aluminum bodywork. Recent full restoration with excellent paint, trim, and graphics.

Made famous back in the day as a Corgi toy, this transporter has been to near death and back in the years since 1960. It's very doubtful anyone thought this rig would ever sell for anywhere near \$3 million. In this era in which the big boys aren't afraid to spend money on their toys, even the box the toy came in brought huge money.



1959 ASTON MARTIN DB4GT
SOLD AT \$2,569,507

SN DB4GT0102R. Medium green over parchment leather. Modified 4.2-liter in-line six; four-speed manual. Overall a very nice look. Neither new and sparkly nor 100 percent stock but rather pleasantly worn in and upgraded for touring. Very good paint and brightwork. Seats and carpets show appropriate use wear. Nicely detailed under the hood, this Aston looks to have been well cared for, at least in the past few years.

The DB4GT was shorter and thus lighter than a standard DB4. By removing five inches from the wheelbase, Aston Martin created a very serious two-passenger car that could compete with many of the Italian marques of the day. Only 100 DB4GTs were built, including race cars. Even without an ejector seat, the sky seems to be the limit on Aston Martin cars from the James Bond era and thereabouts.



1934 ASTON MARTIN ULSTER TWO-SEATER
SOLD AT \$2,129,441

SN L4525U. Black over red leather. 85-hp, 1.5-liter four-cylinder; four-speed manual. Subject to some recent restoration work; mechanicals and cosmetics were done at different times by different specialists. Very good paint, chrome, and gauges. A race-bred car that has been used its entire life in competition, with an extremely well-documented history.

Of thirty-one Ulsters built, it's said that twenty-eight survive, an incredible number. The history file on this car is now the size of a book, with entries back to the first registered owner. An unbroken historical record on an important car of this era can add huge value. If a Blower Bentley is not your style or is just a bit out of reach, this is a logical option.



1938 BMW 328
SOLD AT \$1,285,981

SN 85302. Silver with black top over black leather. 80-hp, 1971-cc in-line six; four-speed manual. Left-hand drive. A few years after its restoration, this car is very nice but no longer fully show quality. Good exterior trim, although there's not much of it. Very nice leather. Detailed under the hood. Thought to be one of fewer than 200 survivors.

From 1936 to 1940, some 460 BMW 328s were built. Despite the low production number, the prewar model had an outsized effect on the world of postwar sports cars; it even endured mechanically in Frazer Nash, Bristol, and AC products of the 1950s. This is yet another car from this sale that brought well over its high estimate. It looks like the rest of us will have to stick to the windup Schuco version until, and if, prices come down.



1952 FRAZER NASH TARGA FLORIO
SOLD AT \$442,522

SN 421200175. Green over green leather. 120-hp, 1971-cc in-line six; four-speed manual with overdrive. Color-change repaint; unfortunately, the paint didn't completely take and is now bubbling in places. Engine rebuilt and interior retrimmed within the past few years.

America's Cup captain, race-car driver, and classic-car collector Briggs Cunningham bought this car off the stand at the Earls Court motor show in October 1952 and shipped it home to the United States on the *Queen Mary* that December. One of only fourteen Frazer Nash Targa Florios, this one became part of Cunningham's team and raced at the 12 Hours of Sebring in March 1953 but retired after only twenty-eight laps.



1952 JAGUAR C-TYPE
SOLD AT \$4,769,837

SN XKC042. Dark blue over brown leather. 200-hp, 3442-cc in-line six; four-speed manual. Restored but still has some patina, a very nice mix. One of just fifty-four C-types (both race and road versions) built by Jaguar. Part of the Dick Skipworth Ecurie Ecosse collection that was the focal point of this auction.

Ecurie Ecosse, which in French (go figure) means "Team Scotland," was a successful race team from, yes, Scotland. Edinburgh race driver and businessman David Murray and mechanic Wilkie Wilkinson started the team in 1952. The team competed in Formula 1 and won the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1956 and 1957. The price paid here was not a surprise. Like almost all limited-production European racing cars of the '50s, values are edging upward on an almost daily basis.



**1956 BENTLEY S1 CONTINENTAL
FIXED-HEAD COUPE**
SOLD AT \$479,194

SN BC11BG. Carriage green over green leather. 175-hp (est.), 4887-cc in-line six; automatic. Remarkably original, with the exception of an added electronic ignition. Paint has stone chips, some cracks, and areas polished through to the primer. Very worn upholstery.

Whereas the British would call this Bentley nicely worn in, most Americans would call it ready for a repaint. It actually would be a serious mistake to restore this car at this point, though, as it has aged evenly throughout. With right-hand drive and an automatic transmission, it's not the one that most collectors are seeking, but this survivor was a decent buy in this condition.



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by JEAN
JENNINGS

Watch Your Step

A cautionary auto-show tale.

ITEND TO FALL DOWN and go boom with annoying regularity. It is often because my head is spinning off my neck stem, trying to catch the action around me. You can imagine what happens at an auto show, especially this year's Detroit show, which was overrun by 5169 journalists (from sixty countries, including Mongolia and Qatar) battling for a scrap of quote, a minute of a designer's time, floor space, press kits, and all the cool USBs they could grab. The humanity (oh, the humanity!) was the stuff claustrophobia is made of. And I can't say enough bad things about video crews from Russia.

You can only imagine. But not really. Here's the blow by blow.

This year's auto show was particularly dangerous for the airheads among us—those whose focus is right where the carmakers want it to be—above the fray at eye level, staring at the gorgeous new Mercedes-Benz C-class, the shocking aluminum Ford F-150, the Audi Allroad Shooting Brake concept, the wild Kia GT4 Stinger, the transformative Chrysler 200, the luscious Cadillac ATS coupe, Acura's TLX teaser, the aggressive Lexus RC-F coupe—and on and on. Lights blazed and flashed, music blared a siren's song, and we all looked up.

We stumbled from carpet to rubber to hard-polished laminates, half tumbled from steps where the eye saw no step, banged into foot-high clear plexiglass fences around concepts, and windmilled arms to stay upright as we stumbled off turntable drop-offs that blended with the floors around them. The harsh lighting, blinding LED movie walls, monochromatic floors, and the difficulty of negotiating floor surfaces as varied as the cars themselves had me feeling like I had vertigo. I just missed going ass over teakettle at Chevy. I jerked my spine lurching from the Audi stand where I thought there wasn't a step and there was. I nearly went down like a sack of laundry at the Chrysler stand, the Acura stand (which had dire warnings laminated on the edge of every step but the one I was on), and the Mercedes-Benz stand.

Nissan was my Waterloo. It was a shining white laminated Mayan temple of a center stage surrounded by theater seating. Atop the rather too-short white steps sat the Sport Sedan Concept, striking in all but name. I met design chief Shiro Nakamura at the top of the temple to video his comments on what we were all calling the next Maxima. The steps terrified me after two days of near-misses everywhere else.

"Those stairs were diabolical," design editor Robert Cumberford said. Deputy editor Joe DeMatteo concurred: "That stand was notorious. The steps were sharply curved and had very narrow tread depth. One wonders if they met building codes."

I did fine, and I handed Shiro off to the next journalist while I relaxed with our crew in the surrounding seats. This is when I should have heeded the classic skier's caution to call it quits an



After the fall: Dan Bedore, director of product communications at Nissan North America, joins me on the fateful stair. Above: It's OK. Only six more weeks until the walking boot comes off.

hour before the hill closes. I was beckoned by the journalist interviewing Shiro, turned, trotted up the temple, and executed a massive face-plant, whacking my ankle on the edging of the top step and splatting practically at the feet of the chief designer. No, I was not wearing a dress.

Shiro ran over and got down on his hands and knees next to my head. "Jean! Jean!" he said, so horrified that I finally got embarrassed. "Go away, Shiro. Go away. I'm OK. It's OK." I slowly rolled to my back, like a turtle on its shell, to see the crowd in the cheap seats stunned into horrified silence. I don't recall seeing anyone gloating, but I could be wrong. It was dead silent as I came to a sitting position and announced that everyone should "go back to what you were doing. Everything is fine here."

Two Nissan PR guys rushed over and sat on either side of me, like we all meant to be sitting around on the steps. One apologized for not having any ice. "I have this cold beer bottle you could use on your ankle," he said.

"Bring me a cold water bottle and open that damn beer," I suggested. And we had a beer and pretended everything was cool.

My ankle was broken, which I found out after I walked out of Cobo Center, drove fifty miles home, and went to the doctor the next day.

The walking boot comes off in six weeks, when it should be all better. The mortification might take a tad longer. **AM**

For more of Jean at the Detroit auto show, go to JeanKnowsCars.com.



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