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The world may have taken a detour over the last 20 months, but there's no denying the staying power of the incredible project vehicles, limited editions and specialty builds that showcase the industry's latest products and trends. See Sketchbook on page 50.

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**Jef White**  
Executive Editor

[www.theshopmag.com](http://www.theshopmag.com)

## New Car Dealers are Doing Just Fine

**I**f your excitement for the 2021 SEMA Show is being tempered at all by reports of uncertainty in new car production, don't be alarmed. Your local car dealership customers are likely doing just fine.

Research by Haig Partners shows that for the 12-month period that ended in June 2021, average adjusted dealership profits reached \$3.1 million—a record high and more than double average profits in 2019, before the pandemic.

The Blue Sky value for a typical privately owned dealership has increased 52% since 2019 to reach \$10.3M, according to Haig Partners' estimate, also a record high level. (Blue Sky value is defined as any intangible/goodwill value of an automobile dealership over/above the tangible book value of the hard assets.)

And an estimated 422 dealerships sold in the same 12-month period, a 41% increase over 2019.

"It's an odd time when an empty lot means an overstuffed wallet. Consumers have cash to spend, but automakers are not able to produce enough units to meet demand due to a lack of microchips. Dealers are enjoying these unprecedented conditions of high margins and low expenses, which are leading to record-high profits and record-high dealership values," says Alan Haig, president of Haig Partners.

Buyers are eager to acquire more stores, he adds.

"Prior to the pandemic, we were tracking 75-90 dealerships sold per quarter, and in Q2 2021 alone we saw 120 dealerships change hands," Haig reports. "And since the lack of inventory is projected to last through the end of the year and beyond, we are expecting to see elevated profits and Blue Sky values for some time."

Other key findings from the Q2 2021 Haig Report include:

- Unprecedented conditions continue in auto retail, fueled by inventory shortages and strong economic recovery
- Public company spending on U.S. auto acquisitions in the first half of 2021 was almost \$2 billion, 756% more than was spent in the same period in 2020
- Public equity valuations are 109% higher than they were before the pandemic

This new dynamic at local dealerships means that aftermarket shops working with wholesale accounts may have to update their business-as-usual approach. Opportunities remain, but new techniques may be required.

Josh Poulson has the full rundown in his excellent article *Restylers to the Rescue!* on page 42. **TS**

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# YOUR SHOP — ON THE GO

The importance of a mobile-ready website.

By Barry Alt



Outdated websites can make viewers question your professionalism.

It can be tough to keep up with the changing times and promote your shop online. One thing that doesn't change, however, is the need for a mobile-ready website.

Our recent research of more than 450 aftermarket auto restoration, performance and restyling shops online had some surprising findings, including the revelation that over 40% of shops don't have a mobile-ready website.

Having a website is excellent, but many people are accessing information from the comfort of their phones these days. Based on data compiled by Statista, 83% of the U.S. population in 2021 uses a mobile device to access and search for products and

services on the internet, and that number is expected to reach 87.66% by 2026.

So, having a mobile-friendly website is incredibly important—it can even be the difference between signing on a new project or losing it to the competition.

If you're a shop owner and your website doesn't work well on mobile devices, then you could be losing out on new clients.

## WHY MOBILE-READY?

There are many reasons why you should want a mobile-ready website. It's not just to make it easier for your customers to access your site, but also to ensure that you always look professional.

A mobile-ready website tends to have more page views per visit, plus it has a lower bounce rate, which basically means people spend more time browsing on your site and learning more about your products and services.

Mobile devices, such as phones and tablets, are also often used for researching products and services before a consumer decides to commit. So, before they even consider working with you, they'll check your website to see what your company is all about.

We've spoken to a number of shop owners over the years, and they tell us that they get most of their work via referrals. While that's great, you can bet the majority of those referrals will almost always check out your site before committing to a product or service.

Your audience will want to see what your shop offers compared to the competition, as well as the products and services you carry so they can make an informed buying decision. And, many times, it's just way more convenient to browse businesses on a mobile device than on a computer.

Prospects can browse while working on their project in the garage or while at a car show when inspiration hits. Having a mobile-ready website means that when a client sees your work at a show, they can find you easily on their phone and learn about the company behind the badass ride they're looking at.

**OVER 40 PERCENT OF AFTERMARKET SHOP WEBSITES AREN'T MOBILE-READY. IS YOUR SITE ONE OF THEM?**

Why not having a modern mobile-ready website will affect your bottom line and brand

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More often than not, people will use their mobile phones to quickly scan your website to make up their minds and then switch to a desktop to contact you.

**PRO TIP:** If your website isn't mobile-friendly, your users might not even be able to find you on Google. This is because Google ranks sites that are mobile-ready higher than those that are not mobile-ready and/or poorly designed.

### ARE YOU ALREADY MOBILE-READY?

The easiest way to figure out if your website is mobile-ready is to view your site on a smartphone or tablet.

Does it look right on your phone, or is

it cut off? Do you have to zoom in to read the content? Is the text hard to read? Are the buttons or links challenging to click?

If so, there's a good chance that your website isn't mobile-ready, and you could be losing clients because of it.

If you don't trust your judgment, you can always ask a friend to take a look at your website for you. Google also offers a free service where you can test your website to see if it is mobile-friendly. It'll tell you if your:

- Content is wider than the screen
- Links are too close together
- Text is too small to read
- Videos play OK
- Images are readable

We recommend figuring out if your website needs updating as soon as possible. The quicker you make your website mobile-friendly, the fewer potential clients you'll lose.

**PRO TIP:** Having a mobile-ready website means having a website that loads quickly, so make sure yours loads within 3 seconds. Around 53% of mobile sites are abandoned by users if they take longer than 3 seconds for the site to load.

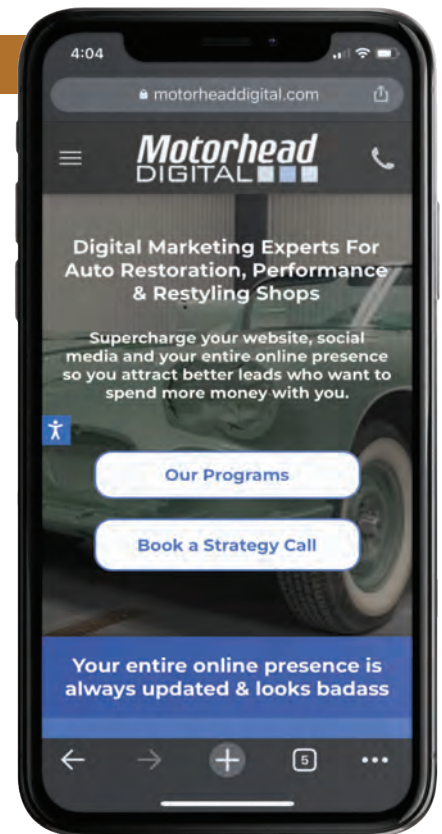
### MAXIMUM EFFECTIVENESS

If your website isn't mobile-ready, then you're going to end up losing customers; that's just a fact. But having a mobile-ready website doesn't just improve your chances of retaining customers. It also has a lot of other benefits, too.

**1 Customers Come Back for More**

If people can easily access your website from the comfort of their phone without any stress or issues, then they're going to revisit your website. They'll regularly check in on your site to see if you've added anything new or to view your latest projects.

A quality mobile-ready website conveys a professional image and allows users to find information quickly and easily, whether on their home computer or mobile device.



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Here's a before-and-after look at the website of one of our clients, RJ CARS. The new, polished site design is a much nicer showcase for the quality work the shops produces.

It's usually easier for them to search for you on their mobile device than turn on their laptop or desktop. So, if you provide them with a space to see all your work from their phone or tablet, they'll have no issues finding you again.

**PRO TIP:** Approximately 80% of smartphone users will buy from companies with easy-to-navigate mobile sites. So, by

giving them a mobile-friendly website, they'll stay on your site longer and they're also more likely to work with you.

**2** *Reduced Bounce Rates*  
People will leave your website quickly if it looks terrible on their phone. They'll also leave if they can't read your text, view your images or navigate your site with ease.

If your website looks great on small mobile devices and your user doesn't need to zoom in to read your text, then they'll stay on your site longer, and may even watch a video, read some of your blog posts, browse more of your products or check out your project galleries.

Navigation also has to be easy on mobile—otherwise, they'll simply decide not to call you.

Make your navigation as simple and stress-free as possible, so your user can quickly fly through your website and find everything they need from the palm of their hand. Keeping your prospective customers on your site longer is proven to increase conversion rates.

**3** *Improved SEO Rank*  
Google loves mobile-responsive sites because users prefer them. If you have a website that works perfectly on mobile, then you're going to appear higher on search results.

On the flip side, if you don't have a mobile-ready website, then your site might get penalized by Google and moved lower down in search results or, worse, to the dreaded second page!

The more traffic you get to your website because your site is easy to use on mobile, the more Google will love you and the higher on the search engine results page you'll go, so make sure you have your site perfected for mobile.

**4** *Attract More Clients*  
Users don't want to work with a shop that has a terrible mobile website. It looks unprofessional, and they might automatically assume that because your website is

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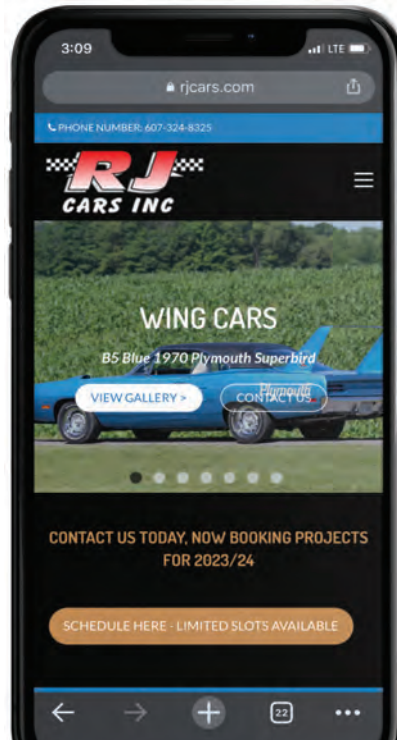
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The new design is, of course, 100% mobile-friendly, giving potential customers an easy-to-read, easy-to-navigate experience on their phones or iPads.

amateurish, so are the products and services you offer and the work you produce.

So, by making your website mobile-ready, you'll be able to attract more clients to your business and, in turn, make more sales.

**5 Improved User Experience**  
Having a mobile-responsive website means that your website is going to have a more user-friendly design.

By improving your user experience and hence the customer journey, you're going to increase the number of happy clients you get into your shop. The happier your clients, the more positive reviews they'll leave about your website, and the more clients you'll attract.

Those that rely on social media to promote their business should also know that 80% of social media browsing is done on mobile devices, so when users click a link that goes back to your website, they'll be much more likely to stay and convert if the mobile website experience matches that of the mobile social media app they just came from.

### PRO LEVEL

Your website doesn't just need to be mobile-responsive; it also needs to look professional.

Nearly 95% of your audience's first impressions come from your site's design.

From our research, only 45% of the websites we audited looked professional, leaving 55% of those websites looking unprofessional. If you have an unprofessional website, you're not doing your company any favors.

Don't scare away your potential customers or future team members with a poorly designed website. Even if it's mobile-ready, if it doesn't look good or is hard to navigate you're going to end up losing a lot of potential clients and employees.

If you're a car builder, restorer, restyler or a business that delivers super-high-quality, high-end projects or services, a great site design and user experience is even more important because you'll want your website to reflect the caliber of product you deliver.

**PRO TIP:** While you may think your website looks great, you might be a little biased! It's best to get some honest feedback, possibly from a peer or even trusted clients who will say what they really think.

### MAKE CHANGES TODAY

Creating a professional, mobile-ready website is an important task. If you want to increase the number of clients visiting your

website, now is the time to start making a few changes.

Check your website to see if it works perfectly on mobile devices, and if it doesn't, start forming a plan of action on how you can make the upgrades to create a mobile-responsive site. If you need some help building a website that works great on mobile devices, our team can help. **TS**



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There are ways to motivate employees that produce longer-lasting results than offering a little more money or threatening their jobs.

# Motivating the Unmotivated

Don't give up – search for clues instead.

By Liz Uram

**W**hen Mary started with the company, she was enthusiastic, energetic and consistently the top salesperson on the team. She got along well with her coworkers and was known for her superior customer service skills.

Over time, something changed. Mary began starting work late, leaving early and taking long lunches. Her brief interactions with her coworkers usually turned into complaint sessions. She ignored phone calls and didn't respond to emails. Customers were frustrated. Mary spent more time on her cell phone than doing the work she was getting paid for.

John, Mary's manager, was at his wit's end. He wanted Mary to get back to the level of work he knew she was capable of. He went from one extreme to the other. First, he tried money. Then, he tried disciplinary action.

Both resulted in short-term improvements, but they didn't last.

Does this situation sound familiar? If so, don't give up on your employees too soon. There are ways to motivate employees that produce longer-lasting results than

offering a little more money or threatening their jobs.

The challenge is determining what motivates employees. Asking them outright what motivates them usually doesn't work. Most people haven't given it much thought.

Instead, act like an investigator and look for clues, so you can identify the motivational factors of each individual.

Here are six common motivational factors and the clues to look for:

**1 BELONGING**  
People who are motivated by a sense of belonging get energized by being part of a group.

You might notice them coming up with creative ideas for celebrations or suggesting get-togethers. "When's the last time we went out for Happy Hour?" they might say.

Listen for what they do outside of work. Do they spend a lot of their free time with friends and family? Do they participate in group events like book clubs or sports teams?

Keep this employee motivated by asking them for ideas, designating them as the cel-

ebration coordinator and including them in company projects.

**2 INFLUENCE**  
A formal leadership title isn't needed to have influence. Many people are happy with an informal leadership role where they can influence others.

You can identify them by their willingness to speak for the group. They are often the go-to person when others need answers or reassurance. They are the person the team looks to for direction and advice.

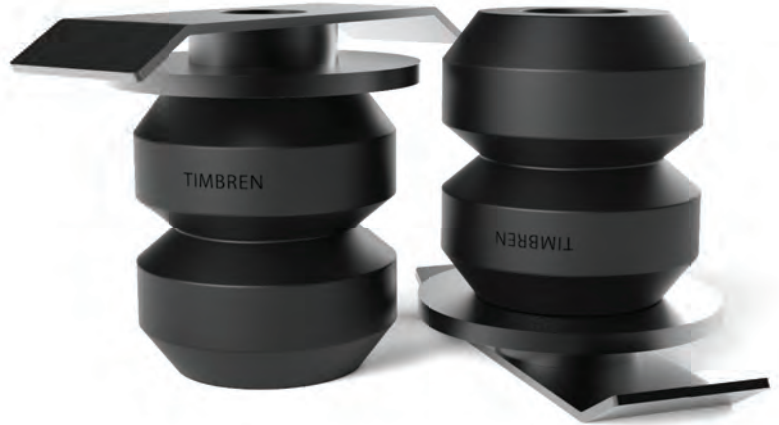
Keep this employee motivated by asking them for their opinion on matters that affect the group. "How do you think the team is going to react to this change?" is a simple yet effective way to let this person know that their position within the group is clear.

**3 APPRECIATION**  
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# Motivating the Unmotivated



People who are motivated by a sense of belonging get energized by being part of a group.

factor. They just want acknowledgement for their efforts.

Employees who are motivated by appreciation talk a lot about their accomplishments. They might come to their one-on-one meetings with a list of what they've done. Managers who don't understand what clues to look for may mistakenly assume the person is full of themselves or just bragging.

That usually isn't the case. These employees are looking for some appreciation.

Keep these employees motivated by giving sincere, specific and timely appreciation for their efforts. Catch them in the act of doing something right and comment on it immediately.

## 4

### ACHIEVEMENT

People who are motivated by achievement are always looking to outdo themselves. While they enjoy friendly competition, they are more interested in pushing themselves to be better than they were the day before.

They are usually self-starters who take an interest in their productivity. They tend to set goals both professionally and personally. They love the feeling of accomplishment when they can check off a goal and then move on to the next one.

Keep them motivated by communicating key performance measures, encouraging them to set bigger goals and sharing their progress with them on a regular basis.

## 5

### SECURITY

People with this motivational factor have a high need for job or financial security. Anything that threatens their sense of security can demotivate them.

They might obsessively worry about their performance. They ask a lot of questions. They are excessively concerned about change.

Some managers assume the person is needy. In a way, they are. They need security, reassurance and confidence in their abilities.

A manager can help this employee by taking the time to answer questions, communicate changes early and often, and boost their confidence by giving them opportunities to prove they are capable.

## 6

### GROWTH

These employees aren't satisfied with the status quo. They have career goals, and they want opportunities to advance.

One of the most obvious clues is that they ask about career advancement when they interview for a job. They're willing to take on extra responsibilities in order to prepare themselves for their next step.

Keep them happy and motivated by talking to them about what they are inter-

ested in doing next and creating a career path for them that clearly outlines a plan for advancement. Delegating projects is a way to provide growth opportunities if a promotion isn't an option.

### MEET THE CHALLENGE

Back to John and Mary. Once John took the time to look for the clues, he realized that what Mary really wanted was appreciation.

John wasn't known for giving out verbal praise, but he was willing to give it a try. Instead of waiting until Mary told him about her accomplishments, he looked for opportunities to praise her. Before long, John saw improvements in Mary's attitude and she began to have the same energy and enthusiasm she had when she started.

It wasn't easy for John to get out of his comfort zone, but it was a lot less expensive and stressful than what he had been doing.

Before you give up on an unmotivated employee, challenge yourself to search for clues about how to motivate them. You might be surprised at what a big change can come from a small adjustment to handling motivation issues. **TS**



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People who are motivated by achievement are always looking to outdo themselves.

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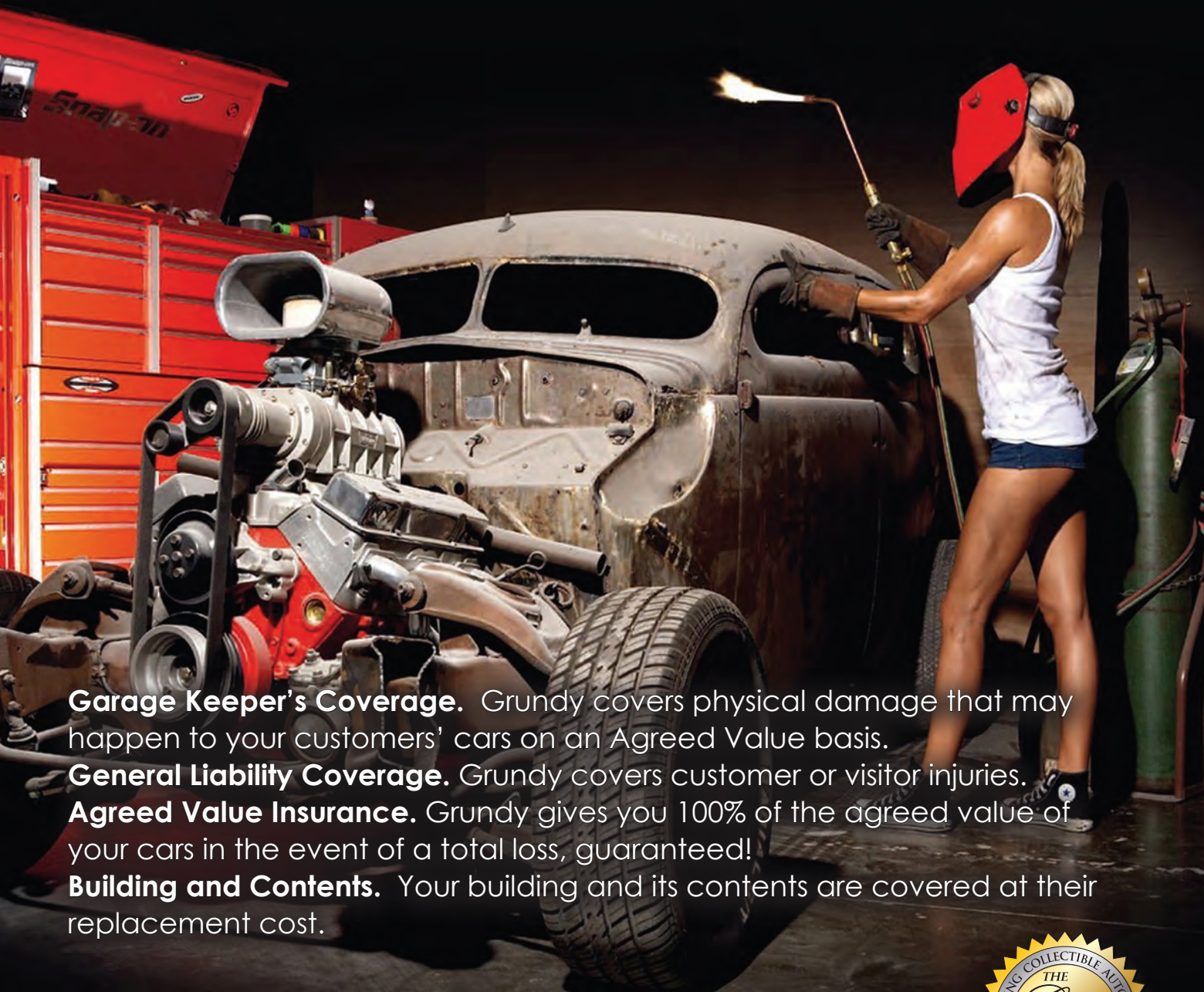
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# ALONG FOR THE RIDE

Hook up your customers with the latest towing & hauling systems.

By John Carollo

If many parts of the automotive aftermarket flourished during the pandemic, the towing and hauling market exploded. Cooped-up residents hit the road in record numbers, finding safety and solace in the great outdoors.

For shops, towing and hauling is an attractive niche that checks all the boxes for a brick-and-mortar visit. Product selection, professional advice and safety considerations are vital first steps before drivers hitch up and go.

From race teams to overlanders, towing and hauling connects with a wide variety of automotive enthusiasts. Here's some advice on how to best meet the wants and needs of clients anxious to take it all with them.

## PANDEMIC PUSH

It's almost impossible to overstate the effect the pandemic has had on the towing and hauling aftermarket.

"With the struggles of flying to destination vacation spots, people have turned to camping and other ways to enjoy their time off with their families," says Greg Sarkozi, product manager – towing & electrical products for Horizon Global in Plymouth, Michigan. "Rather than sitting at home, people are electing to go for bike rides in parks or kayaking down a river. Unless they have a large SUV or pickup truck, they

The towing market has flourished during the pandemic.



The future of the towing market appears strong. (Photo courtesy Horizon Global)



The market continues to see historic demand for towing products. (Photos courtesy CURT Mfg.)



“A key discovery is that many new RV owners are from a younger demographic who may be towing for the first time, and they are seeking professional installer opinions on how to set up their towing vehicle for a safer and more comfortable ride,” notes Brian Berry, vice president of sales and marketing for Air Lift Co. in Lansing, Michigan. “While many vehicles are designed for everyday driving versus laden towing and hauling situations, an adjustable air suspension setup can be a smart move for a safer and more comfortable driving experience.”

With supply chain issues dominating headlines, it’s important to note that manufacturers are working hard to keep shop shelves stocked, says Adam Weisner, chief commercial officer at SuperSprings International in Carpinteria, California.

“Like many businesses, it’s been a challenge keeping up with consumer demand,” adds Kristi Feeney, channel marketing

need something to assist them in getting their favorite outdoor products to wherever they’re traveling.”

RV sales have gone through the roof over the past 20 months, sending flocks of travelers to campgrounds and national forests, notes Gahre Scudder, product manager for Husky Towing Products in Exeter, Pennsylvania.

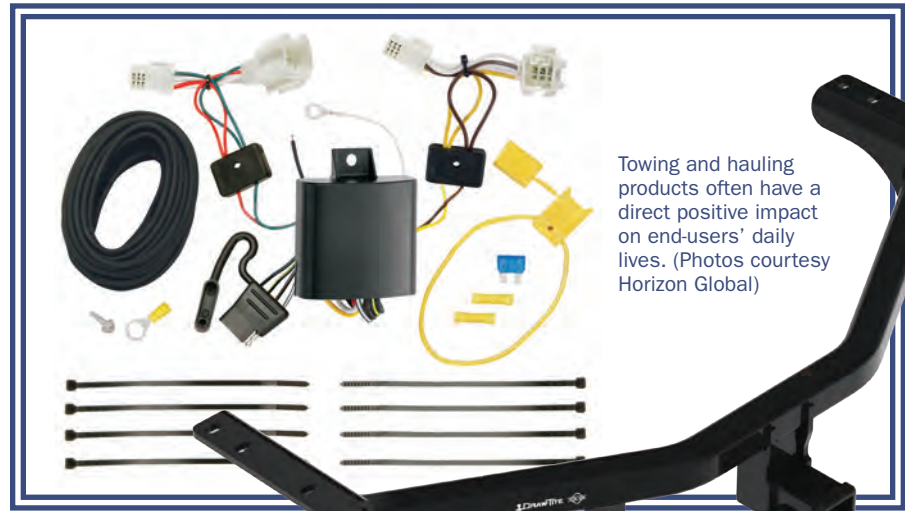
“The travel limitations of 2020, coupled with the ability for many employees to work from home (or anywhere, for that matter) encouraged more people to experience RVing either for the first time, or to revisit previous memories,” he says. “This

resulted in a massive increase in sales of all types of RV units across the country; to the point where they were becoming scarce on dealership lots. This strain on the supply chain has been felt throughout the RV and automotive industries. However, it has also provided companies with a chance to streamline their production and grow their business. In Elkhart, Indiana, for instance, new production buildings are being built and companies are hiring.”

Part of the movement is an attractive demographic for all markets—younger consumers.



New solutions aim to revolutionize how people tow, and their overall hauling experience. (Photo courtesy CURT Mfg.)



Towing and hauling products often have a direct positive impact on end-users’ daily lives. (Photos courtesy Horizon Global)





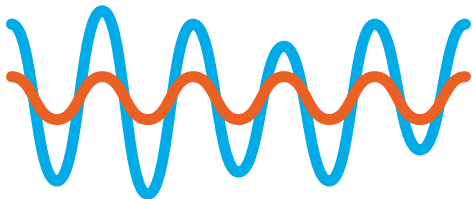
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When it comes to proper setups, customers need the advice and guidance of towing professionals. (Photo courtesy Air Lift Co.)

manager at CURT Manufacturing in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. “We continue to see historic demand for towing products, and making sure our dealers have inventory to meet this demand is our top priority.”

## WORKING OUT

A whole new generation of haulers are visiting aftermarket shops for a variety of reasons.

“Outside of the RV realm, 2020 and 2021 saw more people working on their homes and properties,” says Scudder. “Many of these people purchased a cargo or utility trailer to haul mulch and other supplies, and like any piece of equipment, they will need maintenance. This means shops can offer bolt-on items that are easy to install like replacement electric brake assemblies, spare tire carriers, coupler rebuild kits, replacement taillights/lenses and wiring repairs.”

With properly trained technicians, shops can also offer more complex services such as replacing axles and welding frames, he continues.

“Many states require trailers to pass a yearly inspection, which can also be a new business avenue for many shops and provides a public service in keeping people safe,” Scudder says. “In

the towing market, the ability to upsell

products is nearly limitless, as every customer has their own unique needs and wants in regard to their trailer’s function and use. Even something as simple as a receiver hitch pin can turn into a sale for a locking receiver pin, and then a locking coupler pin for the trailer as well—and they might as well get a lock for the gate/door of the trailer while they’re at it.”

The next wave of customers may also be arriving in less-traditional tow-ready vehicles.

“There is a new opportunity for many shops, as consumers are seeking solutions for their towing/hauling/overlanding needs with some smaller SUV/CUV tow vehicles,” Berry explains. “The lesser-rated towing vehicles can more easily squat or sag when towing, which creates an opportunity for shops to offer adjustable towing solutions.”

Sarkozi reminds shop owners that the work they do is important.

“The biggest benefit for shops is knowing the towing/hauling products you’re selling and/or installing have a direct impact on the end user’s livelihood,” he says. “Whether they’re using the product to go on vacation, move their child to college, go out for a bike ride, or for their business to make them more successful, towing and hauling products are used for business or pleasure, and the shop is providing that opportunity for them.”

Teaching the towing masses has never been more important, Feeney believes.

“With the influx of new towers on the road, education is critically important. Ensuring your customers have everything they need to tow safely is a great opportunity to build incremental sales. People are seeking convenience and smarter towing solutions that make their lives easier.”

As in all important relationships, the goal is to build trust and credibility.

“You’ll experience increased loyalty and repeat buying of more *flashy* products when you can make your customers’ rides and towing experiences better than the next shop,” Weisner predicts.

## WIDE HORIZONS

There’s no telling how long the towing and hauling market can keep the good times rolling.

In the towing market, the ability to upsell products is nearly limitless, as every customer has their own wants and needs. (Photo courtesy Husky Towing Products)



## HOT TOWING PRODUCTS

### ■ HOT PRODUCT: Air Lift ProSeries

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Air Lift Co.

Brian Berry

Vice President of Sales

### ■ HOT PRODUCT: PowerRide

30K Fifth Wheel Hitch

■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Quick and easy install with no need for welding or fabrication; rail and puck system options available; provides maximum towing power and performance.

CURT Mfg.

Kristi Feeney

Channel Marketing Manager

### ■ HOT PRODUCTS: Draw-Tite

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■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Application-specific, custom-fit hitches and wiring; built on 75 years of quality; core product line consists of brake controllers, electrical wiring and trailer brakes.

Horizon Global

Greg Sarkozi

Product Manager – Towing & Electrical Products

### ■ HOT PRODUCT: Husky Center Line

TS Weight Distribution System

■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Built-in sway control; can be used on any A-frame-style trailer; allows vehicles to safely carry more weight; levels the truck and trailer, and also provides sway control; quiet; lightweight; included handle can be used to hook up and remove bars.

Husky Towing Products

Gahre Scudder

Product Manager

### ■ HOT PRODUCT: SumoSprings

■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** USA-made progressive springs; available for trucks and towables; zero maintenance; manufactured from microcellular polyurethane; prevent rear end sagging; reduce body roll, sway and vibration.

SuperSprings International

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ELITE REAR BUMPER



With supply chain issues dominating headlines, it's important to note that manufacturers are working hard to keep shop shelves stocked. (Photo courtesy SuperSprings International)

Strive to make your customers' ride and towing experiences better. (Photos courtesy SuperSprings International)

"The future of the market is stronger than ever," says Horizon Global's Sarkozi. "Sales of boats, campers and accessories like bike racks are once again breaking records in 2021. With the auto manufacturers pushing to create more EVs, we're planning for the future and creating towing solutions for these vehicles as well. The future is very bright."

CURT's Feeney sees a traditional market that's embracing new opportunities.

"There are many things in the towing industry that have remained unchanged over the last few decades," she says. "Our innovation team is excited about what new solutions we can provide that will revolutionize how people tow, and their overall experience."

Weisner from SuperSprings reveals that to find opportunity, simply take a look around.

"It's a largely untapped resource," he says of towing and hauling services. "Drive down the road and you'll see vehicles sagging every day."

Husky's Scudder says optimism is high throughout the industry.

"Many RV and trailer manufacturers are reporting that they are producing at record numbers, and they see no end in sight. There are new RV parks opening up around the country, and many people have found a new pastime that can be relaxing, and something shared with the whole family, even if they just travel to their local RV park or forest," he says. "Positive word of mouth advertising is a great marketing opportunity that does not cost anything beyond excellent and competent service. If one person has a great experience at your shop, they will tell their friends who also have trailers."

Summing it all up, Air Lift's Berry believes there has never been a better time

to hook up your customers—literally.

"RV sales are up, and more people are getting into entry-level towables, likely graduating into larger towables in the future. Most new vehicle transactions involve a trade-in, which creates opportunities for aftermarket installers and manufacturers to present towing and hauling solutions to consumers," he says. "In addition, when normal vacationing returns to cruises and airline travel, we believe many of those who bought RVs

in the last 18 months will potentially sell them, creating a significant used RV market to again present aftermarket installers and manufacturers opportunities with consumer solutions. There is a younger demographic entering into camping. They are more inclined to spend time outdoors, buy smaller campers and have smaller tow vehicles, which creates suspension opportunities, and they are seeking professional advice from professional installers." **TS**

## LOCK THEM UP

Quality towing products can be irresistible temptations for thieves. BOLT Lock helps owners protect their investments with a system that utilizes the vehicle's factory key, eliminating the need for a full key ring for doors, hitch pins and other lockables.

"BOLT Lock's hottest towing products are the 5/8-inch receiver lock and the coupler pin lock," says Crystal Wiken, marketing coordinator. "The receiver lock is great for locking your hitch and hitch accessories to your vehicle, while the coupler pin lock is perfect for securing your trailer while traveling. They both work with your vehicle ignition key and set to your key in a matter of seconds."

Featuring automotive-grade, weather-resistant materials, the systems utilize a plate tumbler sidebar to prevent picking and bumping, and serve as an attractive add-on sale for towing and hauling customers.

"Over the last year, people have had more time to be outside and to travel, especially by vehicle. With more vehicles on the road, and families taking time to travel, the need for towing and hauling has increased, and so has the need for vehicle security," Wiken says. "This creates a great opportunity for shops to offer that something extra."

—John Carollo



BOLT Locks are set using the vehicle's factory key to protect valuable towing and hauling products from theft or vandalism. (Photos courtesy BOLT Lock)



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Showroom displays should convey your shop's specialties while encouraging customers to consider package and add-on sales, like these complementary products from Orca, GCI Outdoor and Klymit at the Outdoor Retailer Show in Denver.

# EYES WIDE OPEN

Ways to improve in-store displays Story and Photos by Jason R. Sakurai

**R**etailing has become so competitive that your visuals need to not only stop people in their tracks and compel them to buy, but also motivate them to talk about it with their friends and/or share their impressions online.

How you merchandise your store must be memorable to the point that customers come back because they want to see what's new, what you've curated and how it's organized.

No matter how well products are presented in your showroom, however, the display cannot be considered effective unless

it showcases merchandise that you have in stock and that your customers want to buy.

Unsure of which items you should highlight? Use sales reports from your POS or inventory management system to help make informed display decisions, and trust your instincts when it comes to creating something eye-catching yet practical.

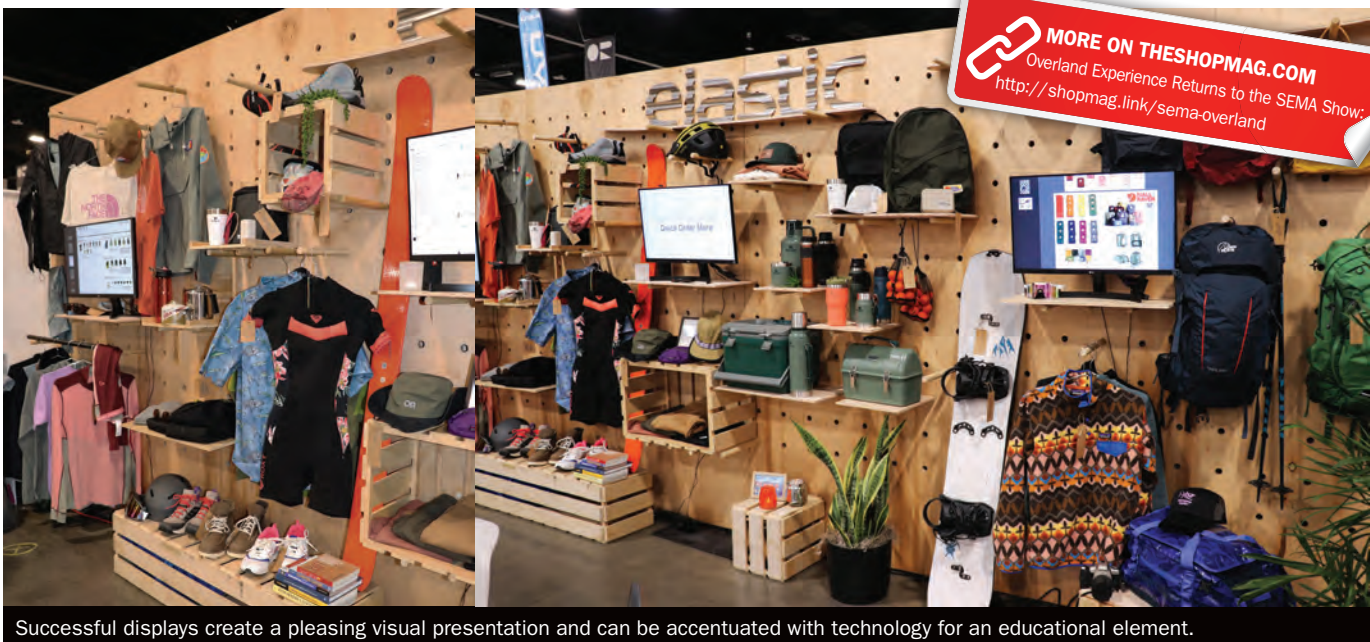
According to researchers Dr. L.D. Rosenblum, Dr. Harold Stolovitch and Dr. Erica Keeps, the amount of information each of our senses processes in comparison to our other senses is:

- Sight – 83%
- Hearing – 11%
- Smell – 3.5%
- Touch – 1.5%
- Taste – 1%

It shouldn't come as a surprise that we prefer visual images over our other senses. Stolovitch and Keeps use this example to illustrate the point:

Imagine you're in an open field. Now, how far can you see? About 50 miles. How far can you hear? Maybe a mile or two. How about smell? Maybe 10-20 yards, without wind. How far can you touch? About an arm's length. And taste? Only a couple of inches away.

Clearly, the visual presentation in your store makes a difference—in the perception of the brands you carry, and the customer experience you want to impart. Done correctly, it fosters more word-of-mouth recommendations and greater social media sharing.



Successful displays create a pleasing visual presentation and can be accentuated with technology for an educational element.

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Vandoit's presence at Outdoor Retailer reinforced its hands-on commitment.

The Outdoor Retailer trade show held in Denver in August provided plenty of great merchandising ideas that you can use in your automotive store to increase traffic, views and sales. Refer to them in any order throughout the year to encourage more creative and organized product presentations.

### **Encourage Customers to Touch Your Products**

According to a Ripen eCommerce survey, the main reason consumers shop at brick-and-mortar stores instead of online is that retail stores allow customers to touch and feel the products. Van conversion company Vandoit believes in this concept wholeheartedly, having brought one of its vans to the show all the way from Blue Springs, Missouri to provide a true in-person experience.

Use this tactile connection to your advantage. Create displays that encourage shoppers to touch and feel products. Take items out of their packaging, and prepare shoppers to experience your merchandise.

If products such as helmets are stored in boxes, or T-shirts and other wearables are stacked neatly on shelves instead of hanging where they can be seen and felt, you are missing an opportunity to connect with your customers.

The Coleman Powersports exhibit at the show, for example, provided ample space for people to be exposed to its vehicles. Coleman had its complete lineup of minibikes, ATVs, go-karts and SxS machines arranged at the entrance to the show to ensure attendees could have a chance to sit on or in them.

### **Create Immersive Environments Within Your Store**

One of the best ways to make a lasting impression is to immerse your customers in a particular environment or setting.

Wolverine made use of a simulated firepit, a couple of comfortable chairs and aluminum barrels to create a contemplative space reminiscent of relaxing outdoors. The display was simple yet effective, using only a few racks to make it easy to access the company's footwear and clothing.

### **Use Signage & Displays to Educate Your Customers**

If you're introducing a product that's new to the market, or that requires more information, it's a good idea to use your displays to educate shoppers.



Bertucci Field Watches concentrated on a limited number of styles. Sparse, elegant displays can convey a sense of exclusivity for high-end products.

The Kijaro presentation did exactly that. It used larger signs that organized its collection and product groups. The approach was also designed to convey the quality of its products, and to deliver sustainability messaging from the brand.

Smaller product-specific signage like that for the Hodari Tarp had callouts with features and benefits to quickly answer questions customers might have.

### **Upcycle Whenever Possible**

Upcycling is when old or discarded materials are used to create something new. Think of displays or wall coverings made from pallets or skids and repurposed corrugated metal. Ignik Products, maker of Growler propane containers, used wood from pallets to form the walls of its exhibit.



Coleman Powersports rolled out its entire lineup to familiarize potential retailers with all it has to offer.



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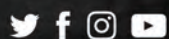
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Wolverine's campfire setting placed the observer in a relaxed outdoor environment, allowing them to visualize the opportunities.



Kijaro's exhibit was an example of a company highlighting its products and brand messaging.



Do you have old materials lying around the shop that could be turned into effective displays? Ignik Products used upcycled wood from pallets to showcase products.

While you may still need conventional racks and fixtures, take a moment to look around and see what can be done with old materials you have around your shop. Reusing them can make your displays stand out, especially if you're using reclaimed wood, or hardware from eons ago. Besides the vintage appearance, making it yourself also saves money.

At the show, Planetary Designs cleaned and sanded pallet wood and used it to form shelves for its Brutek coffee presses and containers.

### *Use Portable Displays*

If you lack square footage within your store, you might want to consider using portable displays to maximize every square foot. Displays on wheels are easier to relocate, allow you to quickly revise the appearance of your showroom and can be temporarily removed in favor of newly arrived products you might want to feature for a time.

Portable displays can also help keep your visual merchandising focused and on-point. With limited space, you're forced to display only the most important, highest-impact products.

### *Cross-Merchandise to Increase Sales*

Cross-merchandising is a great way to promote product discovery. It entices shoppers to look at items that complement what they're already buying.

To implement cross-merchandising, you can arrange items that logically go together, just as Quiet Kat did with its eBikes, an iKamper rooftop tent, a Camp Chef portable table and a Bear Paw Campers adventure trailer.



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Planetary Designs also gave pallet wood a second life, cleaning it up and using it to create display walls.



Have a small retail space or one you like to rearrange frequently? Consider using display units on wheels.



Standalone products such as Stansport's freestanding stove can also make interesting additions to a retail area.



Some products just naturally go together. Here, Quiet Kat is paired with iKamper, Camp Chef and Bear Paw trailers.

Better still is when all the elements are part of the same company, as Orca, GCI Outdoor, and Klymit now are. Orca's coolers, GCI's outdoor furniture and Klymit's sleeping bags were combined for a seamless cross-merchandising display that created natural tie-ins and encouraged add-on purchases.

### Use Technology to Boost Your Retail Presentation

Do you have a lot of products you want to showcase, but not a lot of space to do it in? Technology may be the answer to help enhance your presentation.

Use of touchscreen displays is one way to highlight several items without them all being physically on a shelf in front of you. An exhibit by Elastic at the show demonstrated that electronic visual displays are effective merchandisers.

### Use Space to Convey Value

In retail, the more space there is in a store or display, the higher the perceived value of that product. This is why luxury retailers often showcase a select few items in standalone cases, while discounters stuff their shelves full of merchandise to the point of overkill.

Determine how you want your products to be perceived, and then display them accordingly. Think of ways your specialized products or services can be called out for the greatest impact.

At Outdoor Retailer, Dakota Grizzly went with quality over quantity for its apparel display, as did Bertucci Field Watches. Its arrangement featured a limited number of watches and variants, with minimal signage or other distractions. The approach conveyed a higher perceived value.

### Have Fun with Visuals

To grab attention, incorporate some fun into your presentations. Luno, a maker of car camping gear, offers car and van air mattresses. Allowing your shop mascot to lounge on one of these mattresses is a great way to showcase its toughness and coziness.

When done right, a demonstration like this complements your products and encourages shoppers to take a closer look at unique items.

### A RETAIL APPROACH

The idea behind all of these suggestions is to encourage you to think about your product displays and the first impression customers get when walking into your showroom space.

An effective display for fall, for instance, could incorporate a few cold-weather items on and around your shop truck, some fake snow and a splash of your shop colors. Look for ways to create a singular, unifying theme. The overall effect is powerful, and your customers will react positively to the message you've chosen, creating that immersive experience.

Remember, it doesn't have to be fancy or expensive to be effective. Having a strong theme, and ensuring that all the elements in your shop are aligned with the story you wish to tell, will allow you to create compelling, engaging experiences that grow your customer base. **TS**



**JASON SAKURAI** heads up Roadhouse Marketing, a marketing, advertising and sales solutions firm dedicated to the automotive aftermarket. A frequent contributor to *THE SHOP*,

Jason's byline appears in many enthusiast and trade publications, in print and online.

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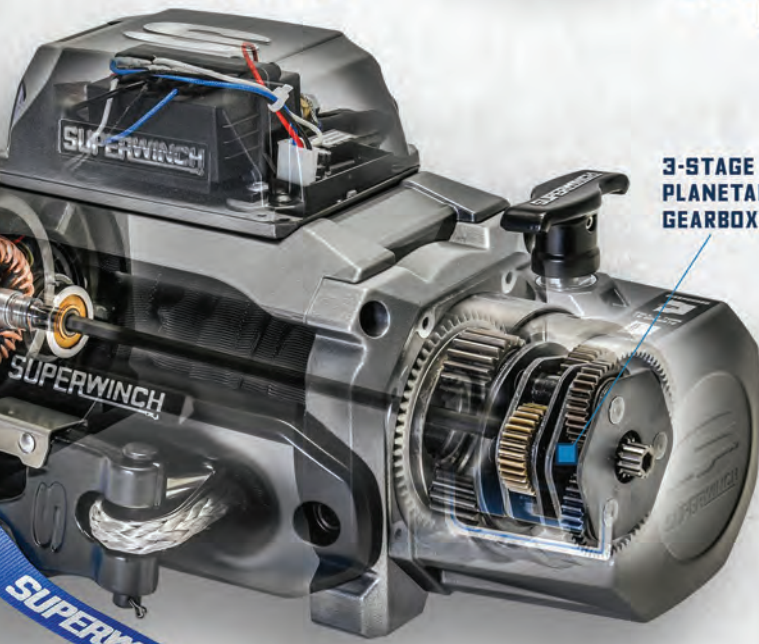


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### Multilayer Vehicle Covers

**Covercraft Industries**, Pauls Valley, Oklahoma, introduces a new line of Custom Vehicle Covers featuring premium non-woven, multilayer fabrics. The covers provide custom-fit design for a precise fit and are available in three options—5-Layer Indoor that protects against dust and is designed for garage storage; 3-Layer Moderate Climate that is designed for outdoor use in moderate climates to help protect against dust and moisture; and 5-Layer All-Climate Softback that delivers exceptional dust, moisture and UV protection with a soft inner liner.



### Gladiator Side Steps

**Quadratrac Inc.**, West Chester, Pennsylvania, presents the new Brute Strength Side-Steps Kit for 2020-'21 Jeep Gladiator JT models. The premium side steps offer an easy DIY installation and are manufactured from stout steel tubing with aluminum step panels on the top and bottom. Lightweight and durable, they feature a black, light-textured powder-coat finish to match the factory bumpers. Raised dimples incorporated into the aluminum step pads provide grip in all conditions.



### Rear Bumpers

**Westin Automotive Products**, San Dimas, California, presents its line of Pro-Series Rear Bumpers. The off-road-style rear bumpers deliver a *high and tight* appearance, featuring a lightweight, slim, one-piece design that adds a modern, aggressive look. Built to improve ground clearance and departure angles when driving on rugged terrain, the Pro-Series is fully compatible with OEM parking sensors, hitches and most OEM blind spot monitors. The bumpers also include two LED license plate lights and can accommodate FM6 LED auxiliary lights (sold separately).



### Bronco Steps & Boards

**Go Rhino**, Brea, California, introduces its lineup of Side Steps, Sliders and Running Boards for 2021 Ford Bronco models. The versatile Dominator Xtreme Series gives a sleek, modern tube design combined with pushed-steel plates for safely entering or exiting the vehicle. Cab-length RB Running Boards deliver a solid step platform while enhancing the vehicle with a rugged look. OE Xtreme and 1000 Series steps provide a timeless, classic appeal while offering value and quality.



### Gladiator Replacement Camera

**Metra Electronics**, Holly Hill, Florida, presents a new Replacement Camera from **iBEAM Vehicle Safety Systems** for 2020-up Jeep Gladiator JT models. When replacing the radio on these vehicles, the factory LVDS back-up camera presents a challenge for aftermarket screens and can be expensive to retain using an interface. iBEAM's JP-JTKT camera replaces the factory camera to provide an affordable solution that allows the driver to see their back-up video on a compatible aftermarket screen when in Reverse gear.



### Gladiator Soft Top

**MasterTop**, Golden, Colorado, introduces the Bimini Plus and Wind Stopper Combo for Jeep Gladiator JT applications. Designed to block out the sun and offer extra weather protection from sudden showers without the hassle of a hardtop, the easy-to-install soft top and rear windscreen system is available in two fabric options: a 25-ounce pinpoint Black Diamond Sailcloth fabric or exclusive 30-ounce, three-layer luxury MasterTwill fabric. Both styles feature reinforced straps and heavy-duty rubber seals for additional weather protection.

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### Non-Winch Bumpers

**WARN Industries**, Clackamas, Oregon, presents its line of Ascent XP non-winch bumpers, now available for 2019-current Chevrolet Silverado/GMC Sierra 1500 and 2014-current Toyota Tundra applications. Designed, engineered, tested and made in the USA, the low-profile bumpers provide an aggressive style that complements the trucks' lines, allow for oversized tires and add protection to the front end. They are made from thick 11-gauge and 1/4-inch steel and accommodate a 30-inch light bar in the center slot as well as up to four 3-inch cube lights.



### Off-Road Lights

**KC Lights**, Williams, Arizona, presents its new Cyclone V2 off-road lights. The versatile line is adventure-proof, with a higher output and replaceable polycarbonate lenses. A universal design permits the lights to fit in any application, while an efficient high-output-to-draw allows multiple vehicle placements, from under the hood and within wheel wells to inside the cabin. Replace broken lenses or update colors on the fly while enjoying an IP68 water and dust protection rating and redesigned housing.



### Gladiator Bed Tie-Down Kit

**Mac's Tie Downs**, Sagle, Idaho, presents the VersaTie Track bed kit for new Jeep Gladiator applications. The pre-drilled VersaTie Track installs easily into the factory threaded inserts with no drilling required. The system provides adjustability in 1-inch increments, and the tie-down rings are cleaner and easier to adjust along the track than the factory system. Kits include three pieces of VersaTie Track (two for the side rails and one for the front), six single-stud tie-down rings and stainless-steel installation hardware.



### Roof Rack System

**ARB USA**, Auburn, Washington, introduces the BASE Rack roof rack system, now available for 2019-'21 Ford Ranger, 2007-'14 Toyota FJ Cruiser, Range Rover Classic, Jeep Cherokee XJ and Toyota Land Cruiser 60 Series applications. Featuring a unique, side-mounting dovetail design, the system is designed to provide a new level of simplicity for cargo loading. The strong, ultra-low-profile racks are available in a range of sizes, accessories and attachments.



### Car Care Products

**Champion Oil**, Clinton, Missouri, introduces a pair of car care products—Interior Detailer Spray and Fabric Cleaning Foam. Safe and easy-to-use, the cherry-scented Interior Detailer Spray is formulated to protect and shine vinyl and plastic surfaces in vehicle interiors.



Fabric Cleaning Foam is an effective, easy-to-use fabric cleaning formula that quickly penetrates soiled carpet areas. It removes soils from upholstered fabric without soaking in and leaves a wintergreen scent.



### Bronco Sport LED Mounts

**RIGID Industries**, Gilbert, Arizona, offers an A-Pillar LED Light Mount Kit for 2021 Ford Bronco Sport models that allows for a clean install of RIGID's line of high-output LED lighting products. The mounting kit fits RIGID 4-inch 360-Series, D-Series and Radiance Pods. Mounts are made with stainless steel and covered with a UV- and abrasion-resistant powder-coat for years of service in the harshest conditions. Professional installation is recommended.



## Overlanding Box

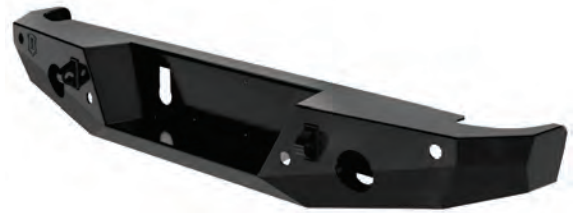
**STEP 22 Gear**, Poway, California, introduces three new versions of its Stingray Flat Box, the latest in the company's line of adventure travel and organizational solutions. The soft boxes offer storage for any type of trail rig, neatly stowing spares and belts, cooking gear or miscellaneous campsite necessities. The semi-rigid boxes feature a main compartment, a removable center divider and a zippered lid. Four separate handles make them accessible from any angle, and the boxes can be folded down to a quarter of their size to save space when not in use.



## Gladiator Rear Bumper

### ICON Vehicle Dynamics,

Riverside, California, presents a new PRO Series Rear Bumper for Jeep Gladiator JT applications, part of the company's ICON Impact Armor line. Designed to add strength, clearance and functionality, the rear bumper works with the stock tow hitch and includes provisions for retaining the OE tow harness receptacle and reinstalling the factory backup sensors.



## Recovery Ropes

### VooDoo Offroad,

Phoenix, introduces Santeria Series Recovery Ropes. Now greener with greater fade resistance, the ropes are treated with UV-resistant polyurethane for an extended period, allowing deeper penetration into individual strands for maximum protection against water and sun. End sheathes minimize abrasion and fraying, while thicker diameters result in increased strength. The ropes include machine-tensed soft shackle knots that minimize knot slippage while under load. **TS**



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# A Clear Path to Success

There are always risks involved in adding a new product line.

By Courtney Pahlke

“I’d like Brad Marion to please stand up,” Eric Holmes of Eastman Performance Films announced in front of our Restylers United National Top 20 group during our Indianapolis meeting at the GRAPHICS PRO EXPO. “On behalf of LLumar films and your outstanding achievement with our paint protection film, we’d like to present you with this award, honoring DealerWorks as our LLumar’s National Restyler of the Year for North America.”

Brad Marion smiled at his son Garrett before standing up in front of the crowd. Everyone cheered his accomplishment, as we’d watched him successfully build and grow a new extension of his business in a short time.

It was only four years earlier, during an RU meeting in Columbus, Ohio hosted by Auto Additions,

when a LLumar presentation inspired Marion to introduce PPF to his list of shop services back home in California.

## YOU’LL NEVER KNOW UNLESS YOU TRY

From an article on LivePlan.com released in July 2021, *Why Entrepreneurs Should Take Risks*, countless entrepreneurs have taken risks to get their businesses to where they are today.

The article states that the actual reason why entrepreneurs decide to take risks can be narrowed down to five categories. The first reason seems simple enough: you’ll never know unless you try.

No one can really be sure if taking a risk will pay off, no matter how calculated it may be. Many businesspeople want to take the first step, but don’t because they fear the financial repercussions from failure will be greater than the possible rewards.

Marion, however, grabbed risk by the horns and chose to take that first step, even while understanding there could

be financial consequences, and possibly even permanent damage to his long-term/established accounts. His decision to move forward meant the acceptance of a possible negative outcome, but he recognized that, if done right, it could significantly grow his business while providing further options for his existing customers.

The article goes on to say that one reason why companies reap success from taking risks is because those who try new things already have a competitive advantage. DealerWorks has been servicing new car dealerships in the Sacramento area for 27 years, installing high-quality products including leather interiors, seat comfort options, dash trim, window tint and high-end 12V accessories, adding new items along the way.

A key element serving as a safety blanket behind Marion’s decision was knowing he was building from a strong backbone. Being a known and respected, family-owned, well-established business, Dealer-



It was just four years ago that Brad Marion of DealerWorks in California was inspired by a presentation from Eastman Performance Films to add paint protection film to his list of services. This year he received LLumar’s National Restyler of the Year Award for North America.



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The shop installs high-quality products including leather interiors, seat comfort options, dash trim, window tint and high-end 12V accessories, adding new items along the way.

Works would have a greater chance of recovery should its venture into PPF fail.

### FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

Upon initial consideration, taking on PPF may not seem like much of a risk for an established business like DealerWorks. I've seen occurrences in my own market areas of Illinois and Wisconsin, however, of shops failing in similar attempts.

Installing paint protection film is an intricate process. Word will spread quickly regarding poor installations or product performance, and repeated failures can ultimately fracture the overall perception of the product in an entire region.

Brad, Garrett and the team at DealerWorks not only devised an effective formula for installing PPF, but have been sharing it with other shops around the country (more on that later). Looking back to the beginning, Brad recalls his biggest concern was in finding the proper employees to do the job well.

"When launching PPF, I found the biggest challenges were going to be staffing and growing our staff with the business," he says. "The right employees are always going to be hard to find when you're in need of this type of installer and building this type of department. My advice is to always anticipate—there could be a constant need for another technician/installer."

DealerWorks has been servicing new car dealerships in the Sacramento area for 27 years.

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Marion's decision to add PPF was made easier knowing he was building from a strong business base with loyal customers.



Back to the LivePlan.com article, while the results of taking a risk are unknown at the time, companies can plan ahead to help mitigate the possibility of failure. Developing a business strategy, exploring financial scenarios and revisiting initial performance are just a few ways to help navigate the unknown.

Marion agrees these were all true when he made the move into PPF.

“You don’t have a crystal ball and can’t predict what challenges you will face, but having a great product and great support from our manufacturers was enough to convince us that this was the right move,” he says. “We also have the (positive) relationships with our dealerships.”

## PRODUCT SUPPORT

Finding suppliers that will do what it takes to help you succeed also alleviates some of the risks involved in launching a new

product. Marion says he leaned on LLumar throughout the entire PPF implementation process—from pre-launch to start-up and early offerings, during challenges and then later for future planning.

For example, he and his team had a dealership group customer that abruptly increased its PPF volume, which led to an immediate need for more hands on deck. To overcome this challenge, DealerWorks had been encouraged to cross-train employees on at least the basics of the product—even just simple door edge guards and handles—so installers with at least a bit of experience touching the product could jump in to help with a rush, if needed.

He credits LLumar’s manufacturer training with anticipating and solving this issue in advance of it actually occurring.

Marion also appreciates his industry network for reminding him that he wasn’t alone in his new venture.



Developing a business strategy, exploring financial scenarios and revisiting initial performance are just a few ways to help navigate the unknown.

“What really pushed me into doing this was the support and enthusiasm from both Restylers United and the SEMA PRO Council—that’s why I moved forward with it,” he notes.

We usually think of peers as competitors, but through these groups restylers across the country work together to share best practices and offer advice and encouragement to their fellow business owners.

In that spirit, Brad and Garrett are paying it forward—currently helping with the pre-launch of the new PPF department at my company, Top Coverage! So, thank you Brad and Garrett Marion—congratulations and you guys keep rocking out in Cali! **TS**



## COURTNEY LEIGH PAHLKE

and her brother are second-generation partners of their father’s 46-year-old company, Top Coverage. Their locations service nearly 350 dealerships in Illinois and Wisconsin, where they work hard to grow their father’s empire. Learn more at [TopCoverageNorth.com](http://TopCoverageNorth.com).

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# RESTYLERS TO THE RESCUE!

Strategies for helping dealerships with limited new car inventories.

By Josh Poulson



**T**his year has been challenging for restylers and manufacturers that rely on new car sales for their companies' profits, and it doesn't look like it's going to get better anytime soon.

Some reports are saying it may be until Q2 or even Q3 of 2022 before car dealerships reach the inventory levels they really want. Even then, most dealers and OEs have said that they never plan to return to the types of inventory levels on dealers' lots that they have had in the past.

Frankly, the OEMs and dealers are making much more money with the current high demand for vehicles, as opposed to trying to discount cars to get them off of their floorplans.

So, what does the future hold for us restylers and manufacturers that rely heavily on the volume of vehicles sold through our dealer networks? Here are three strategies to look at to make sure you remain successful now and in the future:

## **1** STRATEGY #1 - BE A TRIM LEVEL GAP-FILLER

With low (or no) inventory at the dealerships, and really no hope for a full rebound in the future, it is more important

This year has been challenging for restylers and manufacturers that rely on new car sales for their companies' profits, and it doesn't look like it's going to get better anytime soon.





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It's more important than ever that dealerships know you can be the partner they need to fill any gaps in existing new-car inventories.

than ever that your customers know how you can be the partner they need to fill any gaps in existing inventories.

As an example, maybe a Chevy dealer has an LT Silverado coming in, but it doesn't have leather and the customer doesn't want to wait an extra two or three months for an LTZ to arrive. You can be that gap-filler!

Spread the word that you offer a lot of the products that customers want but may not be able to get because the dealerships simply can't walk them to a higher trim level vehicle on their lots right now.

Another example is a new SUV on a lot that doesn't have a backseat entertainment system. To get one, the dealership either has to order another vehicle that could take months to arrive, or try to order the factory accessory through its parts department, only to learn the parts are on back order, maybe forever.

Again, in this instance, you can be the

gap-filler. Make sure your dealers know you have seatback or overhead video systems in stock ready to be installed the next day, with the same factory-matched warranties.

The big thing here is to just keep reminding your dealerships that you likely have what they need—everything from traditional products like leather, sunroofs and heated seats to 12V electronics. There are also opportunities in mainstream truck products that the OEMs still have on back-order, like tonneau covers, step bars, mud flaps, floor liners, etc.

**2 STRATEGY #2 - PRELOAD**  
I know what you're thinking—preload what, on what vehicles that aren't there!?

It's true, right now we're not being asked to help set apart one or two of 10 identical vehicles on a dealership lot. In fact, the lot might not have 10 vehicles total anymore,

let alone 10 that look exactly the same! Still, preloads can be in demand. Some dealers remain aggressive, knowing they will sell their vehicles at full MSRP but understanding their options for dealer trading are limited. Adding a few preloaded accessories allows those dealerships to make their vehicles even more attractive and unique, as well as more profitable.

Meanwhile, for less-aggressive dealers, you can set up a preload program with smaller products and more modest markups that add value without really changing the vehicle.

These smaller products can include door edge guards, door cups, pinstripes, window tint, paint protection film, paint coatings and others. Consider any product that allows a mobile install by your techs, or even the opportunity for the dealership employees to do the installs themselves after you set them up with a *box* program where you provide the products and training.

This kind of program requires cooperation with the dealerships and, more importantly, agreements that they will do every car that comes in so that the volume grows as vehicle inventories start to come back.

It's more of a long-term strategy, but can add some great sales right now if you can get programs going with even just a handful of dealers.

**3 STRATEGY #3 - PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE**

What will the car selling process be like in three to five years? Will the OEMs push for the European model where consumers order their vehicles ahead of time the way they want them and then wait three months for delivery? Will the trend of buying vehicles without ever going into the dealership grow and take over?

If these methods continue to gain traction, restylers and manufacturers may wonder how it will impact sales. The answer is that scary five-letter word: *change*.

Now is the time to embrace technology as part of our overall sales, ordering and shop processes. We have to become more technologically sound and savvy if we want to survive.

Start by making sure your social media is working well and bringing in business. Review your website and make sure it isn't detracting from your business.



Preload programs are still attractive to dealers.

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Now is the time to embrace technology as part of our overall sales, ordering and shop processes.

Investigate the ways apps and software can help you become more efficient and transparent. Determine ways you can help dealers capitalize on accessory sales, and make sure those sales funnel to you instead of other vendors or even their internal parts and service departments.

Consider an auto accessory configurator to help you market your products and services. These systems easily allow dealers to sell your offerings, place orders and streamline the entire process.

Some configurator suppliers can even give you your own app for a digital price guide instead of having to make price lists or waste money printing catalogs.

The point is, everything is digital, and you should be, too.

This is the future, and we have to start now to keep up. Do your research and figure out how to maintain relevancy in the coming years of the ever-changing, ever-unknown car industry. **TS**



**JOSH POULSON** is the principal of Auto Additions in Columbus, Ohio, which was named Restyler of the Year, 2012-'13. Auto Additions offers a complete line of product upgrades

including 12V and appearance packages with a specific focus on the dealership segment. Josh is chairman of the SEMA PRO council and was named 2015-'16 Person of the Year at the 2015 SEMA Show.

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### Floor Pit Jacks

**Stertil-Koni**, Stevensville, Maryland, presents Air Hydraulic Pit Jacks equipped with telescopic pistons. The company's freestanding rolling pit jack products deliver a lifting capacity of 33,000 pounds and are specifically designed to safely operate on the pit floor, entirely independent of pit edges or walls for support. Lifting is done by an air-driven, fully hydraulic pump actuated by tandem foot pedals, and the system does not use the vehicle's wheels as lifting touch points, allowing their free movement and removal.



### Air Compressors

**BendPak**, Santa Paula, California, presents the Patriot Series of industrial-strength air compressors made in the USA. Each unit features an energy-efficient motor and large reciprocating cylinder heads running at slower speeds to provide powerful, cool compressed air. A rugged 1/2-inch anti-vibration pad keeps noise to 75dB, and available power options include a choice of 5-, 7.5- or 10-hp motor. Body cooling fins, a built-in intercooler and a precision-balanced flywheel with fan blades deliver additional forced air cooling.

TECHNOLOGY & ELECTRONICS



### Universal Safety Coupler

**Milton Industries**, Chicago, presents its 5-In-1 Universal Safety Coupler (1750 Series) that securely fits all 1/4-inch-style plugs and prevents damaging hose whip by creating a controlled exhaust of air prior to releasing the plug. The couplers are built of a rugged, anodized steel alloy with a push-connect and locking safety sleeve to withstand harsh automotive and fleet repair environments. The five-in-one design securely fits all 1/4-inch-style plugs with virtually no loss of power.



### Portable Charger with Adaptive Boost

**CTEK**, Chicago, presents the CS FREE truly portable battery charger and maintainer with Adaptive Boost technology. Within 15 minutes, the CS FREE can take a car from a dead battery to back on the road without being tied to a power outlet. It is designed as a four-products-in-one portable unit—Adaptive Boost safe start, battery charger, smart maintainer and high-tech power bank. With USB-C connectivity, it fully recharges quickly and easily, and holds a charge for up to a year.

### Updated Cutting Software

**Hypertherm**, Hanover, New Hampshire, presents a minor version update to ProNest 2021 advanced CAD/CAM nesting software for automated cutting. The new release contains targeted features and enhancements designed to make customers more efficient and profitable, including Undo and Redo, Drag Leads, Search for Jobs and CSV Quotes.





### Combination Shear/ Long-Nose Pliers

**Xuron Corp.**, Saco, Maine, presents a combination Shear and Long-Nose Pliers that brings together several functions in a single tool to increase efficiency. The tool features a bypass shear-action cutter and a 0.86-inch-long nose pliers with radiused outside forming edges. Capable of cutting, bending and forming up to 12 AWG (2.05mm) soft copper wire, the ergonomic hand tool provides the necessary control for precision assembly work and field repairs.



### Magnetic Hex Drivers

**Malco Products SBC**, Annandale, Minnesota, presents its expanded line of C-RHEX cleanable, reversible magnetic hex drivers, now available in 7mm and 8mm hex sizes. The new millimeter models are offered in 2-, 4- and 6-inch lengths and were created in response to end-user feedback.

## GRILLE OVERLAYS

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### Garage Inflation Station

**Slime**, San Luis Obispo, California, presents the Pro-Series Garage Inflation Station. Featuring a 25-foot retractable hose, a powerful and quiet motor and an easy-read digital display, it can be placed anywhere in a garage or mounted to a wall. Safe for use with tire sensors, the powerful motor inflates a car tire from flat to full in 4 minutes and plugs into any 120V wall outlet power source.



### Low Silicate GMAW Solution

**Lincoln Electric**, Cleveland, offers a Low Silicate GMAW solution that delivers high-speed, low-spatter welds with low-surface silicates to reduce post-weld cleanup and improve paint adhesion. The solution addresses heightened industry requirements for increased corrosion life on automotive frames, subframes and suspension components. It combines a new Rapid X LS waveform and a specially formulated SuperArc XLS filler metal.

### Rounded Fastener Extractors

**Crescent Tools**, Sparks, Maryland, part of the **Apex Tool Group**, presents the new Crescent Bolt Biter Impact Nut Extractor and Driver. With an innovative design that grips any nut or bolt no matter how damaged, the bi-directional gripping tool quickly and easily removes or tightens worn and rounded fasteners. A tapered flute grabs onto damaged fasteners, and the 1/4-inch hex shank is compatible with impact drivers and drills.



### Twin-Grip Pliers

**KNIPLEX Tools**, Buffalo Grove, Illinois, presents its TwinGrip Pliers. The slip-joint pliers with five-adjustment push-button activation feature both front and side gripping areas—the front for gripping stripped screws and bolts, and the side jaws with opposing teeth for gripping round, square and hex materials with maximum force. With five adjustment positions, the TwinGrip offers a gripping capacity for diameters and widths across the flats, from 5/32 to 7/8 inch, at the push of a button.



### Pliers & Wire Stripper

**CHANNELLOCK**, Meadville, Pennsylvania, presents a line of three new SpeedGrip Pliers and the CHANNELLOCK 968 Forged Wire Stripper. Created with pros and DIYers in mind, the made-in-the-USA pliers are available in 8-, 10- and 12-inch sizes, plus the wire stripper. Featuring a tongue & groove design, they are made from 100% forged high carbon U.S. steel for strength, and are specially coated for rust prevention.

TECHNOLOGY & ELECTRONICS



### Tongue & Groove Pliers

**GEARWRENCH**, Sparks, Maryland, part of the **Apex Tool Group**, presents PitBull Auto-Bite Tongue & Groove Pliers. Available with dual-material comfort-grip handles, the pliers are designed for easy one-handed use—with a squeeze of the handles, the jaws automatically adjust for a precise fit. The thumb-operated Auto-Bite lever doesn't protrude, giving the tool an extremely slim profile. Auto-Bite pliers are available in 6-, 8-, 10- and 12-inch sizes, as well as in a four-piece set.

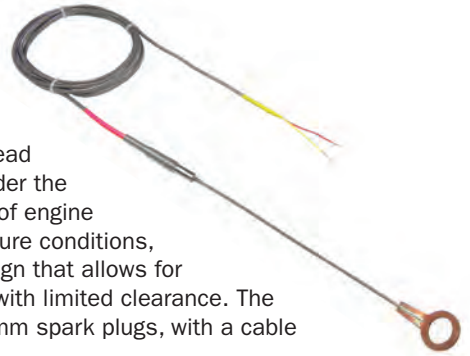
### Setting Micrometer

**Goodson Tools & Supplies for Engine Builders**, Winona, Minnesota, presents a fully re-engineered Setting Micrometer for the 3-D Fast Cut Valve Seat Cutting System. The setting micrometer has a 0.800- to 3.000-inch range capacity and features a carbide-tipped anvil for accuracy and durability. A 0.375-inch-diameter precision drill bushing is included for the calibration standard or pilot to ride on. The micrometer is accurate to 0.001 inch, and an optional 1-inch calibration standard is also available.



### Cylinder Head Temperature Probe

**The Sensor Connection**, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, a division of **Harold G. Schaevitz Industries LLC**, presents the CHT-FS series Cylinder Head Temperature (CHT) Probe. Installed under the spark plug or head bolt for monitoring of engine performance and critical over-temperature conditions, the probe includes a flexible stem design that allows for installation in high-temperature areas with limited clearance. The sensors will fit most 10, 12, 14 or 18mm spark plugs, with a cable lead length of 6 feet (1.8 meters). **TS**



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# PROJECT VEHICLE SKETCHBOOK

FALL 2021


## Let's get rolling again.

The world may have taken a detour over the last 20 months (and counting!), but the creativity of the automotive aftermarket continues to race full speed ahead.

Automotive shows and events have been held in fits and starts over the last two years, but there's no denying the staying power of the incredible project vehicles, limited editions and specialty builds that showcase the industry's latest products and trends.

With the goal of always moving forward, here's our latest collection of show-stopping creations, ready to impress, excite and inspire.



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## Toyota 4Runner & Honda Africa Twin

**Overland Expo**, a premier event series for do-it-yourself adventure travel enthusiasts, revealed its two **Ultimate Overland Builds**: a **Toyota 4Runner TRD Off-Road** and a **Honda Africa Twin**.

Over the last six months, official builder **MULE Expedition Outfitters** transformed the 4Runner into Overland Expo's vision of the Ultimate Overland Vehicle. Simultaneously, the Africa Twin was given an equally intensive workover by Overland Expo's Adventure Motorcycle Ambassador **Eva Rupert**.

Ultimate 4Runner parts suppliers include: **Firestone, Mayhem Wheels, 7P Overland, ALP Generators, REDARC, ARB 4x4 Accessories, KC-Adventure Further, Alu-Cab, OK4WD, MagnaFlow, Garmin, Westin, Superwinch, Wagan Tech, TOTAL CHAOS Fabrication, XPLOR, Radflo Suspension Technology, CBI Offroad, Prinsu Design, Atlantic British/Clearview USA, Helux and Midland Radio.**

Ultimate Africa Twin parts suppliers include: **Outback Motortek, Jesse Luggage, Denali Electronics, Garmin, Wolfman Luggage, KonTour Seats, Heidenau Tires and Superwinch.**





## 2020 Toyota GR Supra



**Titan Motorsports** was founded in 1999 to provide Supra enthusiasts with ultra-high-performance modifications and accessories. It's celebrating the return of Toyota's iconic sports car with a **2020 Toyota GR Supra** project.

The car, which has won two **A90 Shootouts**, features a Titan Motorsports-built 3.2L B58 short-block and the company's prototype stock location turbo upgrade, supplementary fuel system, port injection controller (with **FuelTech USA**), upgraded transmission, upgraded torque convertor, rear multilink suspension (with **SPL Parts**), wet nitrous system, upgraded axles, parachute mount kit, billet main caps, six-port head, roll-bar and seat brackets (with **Tillett Racing Seats**).

Participants include: **Brian Crower** (100mm billet crankshaft); **CP-Carrillo** (connecting rods with 3/8 bolts, stroker pistons with upgraded wrist pins); **ACL Race Series** (rod bearings); **ARP** (head studs, main studs); **Ferrea Racing Components** (exhaust valves, intake valves, springs & retainers kit); **CSF Radiators** (5-piece cooling package, prototype main radiator, heat exchanger, transmission cooler, auxiliary radiators, CSF and **VF Engineering** billet intake manifold); **HKS Suspension** (drag coil-overs); **EOSpeed**, **ATI**, **Ticon Industries**, **Eventuri**, **Cometic**, **Nitrous Express**, **BC** and **Ignite**.

It runs on Titan Motorsports or **Weld RT-S77** beadlock drag pack wheels and is tuned by in-house tuner **Darin Double-D Dichiaro**.

## Electric GT40



**Everrati**, a technology company specializing in redefining iconic automobiles through the integration of advanced electric vehicle powertrains, and **Superformance**, a manufacturer of 1960s-era continuation component sports cars, have formed a strategic partnership, with the first new model being an electrified version of the legendary **GT40**.

A prototype chassis is being comprehensively adapted from ICE power to advanced electric propulsion at Everrati's UK development center. Detail is being applied to key factors such as battery location and weight distribution to maintain and enhance the character and soul of the original.

"I'm very excited about the partnership. **Justin (Lunny)**, Everrati founder and CEO) and the team at Everrati have a compelling vision for the future, along with the engineering pedigree and expertise to reimagine this automotive icon for the 21st century. While I will always love a V-8-powered vehicle, there is no doubting the ultra-high performance of Everrati's advanced EV powertrains," says **Lance Stander**, CEO, Superformance.



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## Chevrolet Tahoe



What might an *urban overlander* look like? **Murray Pfaff** presents *Urban Decay*, a **Chevrolet Tahoe** that benefits from upgrades to enhance the journey as it travels the gritty streets of Detroit and serves double-duty as the **Pfaff Designs** mobile entertainment hub at car events across the country.

Starting with a set of **Detroit Steel Wheel** Delray 20-inch rims wrapped in fat, aggressive rubber, **Belltech** lowering struts, a **Lund** front bull bar and an **A.R.E.** Ascend roof basket hosting a full cadre of off-road lights from **KC Lights**, the SUV announces its presence long before arriving with an **MRT Performance Exhaust** system.

**Axiom Graphics** is responsible for the Pfaff-designed woodgrain-turned-industrial-metal sheeting on the flanks. **Katzkin** leather seating and a **KICKER** audio system highlight the interior, while a **JMS Chip** PEDALMAX throttle enhancer and rotors from **EBC Brakes** add performance.

Other participants include: **AMSOIL** (fluids); **Hellwig** (sway bars); **Husky Liners** (floor liners); **Pilot Transport** (transportation services); and **Tred Wear** (tire graphics).

## Dodge Ram TRX



Installer **Shareef Khan** of **SS Customs** in Redwood City, California, used paint protection film to bring *full matte attitude* to a new **Dodge Ram TRX**.

Using PPF with innovative effects, such as adding color accents and finishes, creates new opportunities for full vehicle wraps with protection and swagger—and, in this case, an attractive matte appearance. Khan used **Avery Dennison** Supreme Defense Matte Paint Protection Film.

## 2021 Kia Sorento



The **Vaccar** company has teamed up with the **MVP (Motor Vehicle Performance)** department of **City Kia of Greater Orlando** to deliver a competitive **2021 Kia Sorento** build for this year's **SEMA PRO Cup Challenge**.

The project's goal is to spark fresh ideas applicable to aftermarket parts programs, such as the packages already offered by this partnering Florida dealership.

Highlights include a vehicle-specific roof rack by **Hobbs Off-Road USA**, powered running boards by **Wing Step USA**, **TruXXX** lift kit, **Axe Wheels** with **Toyo Tires**, custom rebadging, **Roadwire** interior and **Armordillo** bull bar.

SEMA's **Professional Restylers Organization (PRO)** council will host the PRO Cup Challenge in booth #50185 in the new West Hall at this year's SEMA Show.

## 1968 Chevrolet C10



**John Wargo** of **The Custom Shop** in Flanagan, Illinois sends info on a **1968 Chevrolet C10** project called *C/Tanium*. The truck features a full custom chassis, **ProCharger**-equipped LS3, a ZL1 carbon fiber hood, and carbon fiber bed inserts and ground effects.

Participants include: **ProSpray** (titanium paint); **Sony** (audio); **Toyo Tires**; **Pypes Performance Exhaust**; **Apex Leather**; **Cera-kote**; **Composite Envisions**; **C-Tek**; **Dakota Digital**; **Eddie Motorsports**; **Fairchild Industries** (weatherstripping); **Flaming River**; **Goodmark Industries**; **Hedman Hedders**; **Heise**; **Holley Performance Products**; **Ispc**; **Install Bay**; **Lokar**; **MBM Brakes**; **McGard**; **Metra Electronics**; **Nu-Relics**; **Ohio Speed Shops**; **Prismatic Powders**; **POR-15**; **Seatbelt Planet**; **Schott Wheels**; **Shuriken Batteries**; **Spectra Performance**; **Thermo-tec**; **Tanks Inc.**; **Vintage Air**; and **U.S. Chemical**.

## 1995 Nissan 240SX



Sponsors **Dress Up Bolts** and **McLeod Racing** help introduce a **1995 Nissan 240SX** LS swap project car featuring an S15 metal front-end conversion, a custom starlight headliner, a heads-up display and a Silvia S14 lighting package.

Participants include: **Sikky Mfg.** (engine, exhaust, drivetrain, chassis parts); **Vortech Superchargers** (centrifugal supercharger, bypass valve); **ZPE** (supercharger pulley); **ARP** (hardware); **GM** (cam, springs); **Michigan Motorsports** (heads, gaskets); **MAHLE** (pushrods); **Bosch** (injectors); **FAST** (intake); **Nick Williams** (throttle body); **Chase Bays** (radiator); **Jet-Hot** (coatings); **Vibrant Performance** (muffler, pipes); **Link Engine Management** (ECU); **Panic-Wire** (jumper); **TREMEC** (T56 6-speed transmission); **McLeod Racing** (twin-disc clutch, flywheel, throwout bearing); **Rays Nismo** (LMGT4 wheels); **Federal Tires** (front tires); **Hoo-sier Racing Tire** (rear drag radial tires); **Rampage Fabrication** (titanium lug nuts); **Brembo** (calipers); **StopTech** (track day pads, rotors); **TOMEI** (strut bar); **GTSPEC** (fender braces); **NISMO** (power brace, gauge pod, shift knob); **Autopower Industries** (cage); **PBM** (diff mounts, rear drop knuckles, limit brake, suspension arms); **Energy Suspension** (poly subframe bushings); **Fortune Auto** (coil-overs); **Gktech** (front grip knuckles); **Megan Racing** (front lower control arms); **GReddy** (front lip); **Ganador** (sideview mirrors); **Illumaesthetic** (LED lights); **Status** (seats, harnesses); **LRB Speed** (rear panel delete); **Techno Toy Tuning** (C-pillar bar); **FitMint** (floor mats); **Infinity** (speakers); **JV Auto Body**, **Humble Engineering** and **Jason Oefelein** (tuning).

## Jeep Gladiator



**AWE Tuning** presents its *Project JT Gladiator*, a **Jeep** that's a great commuter and an even better crawler.

It can be outfitted with either of two AWE exhaust systems—the Trail Edition Exhaust for when it's eating up rough terrain and needs maximum clearance, and the Tread Edition Exhaust with 5-inch diamond black tips for daily driving.

Participants include: **Adams Driveshaft** (front 1350 CV drive-shaft); **ARB USA** (**Dana** M220 32-spline air locker differential, on-board twin high-performance 12V air compressors, air locker manifold kit); **DV8 Off-Road** (stand-up tire carrier); **Falken** (WILDPEAK M/T tires 38x17x13.5); **Fuel Off-Road** (Zephyr matte black wheels); **G2 Axle & Gear** (Hammer front and rear differential covers, **Dana** 44 AdvanTEK M210 front and rear differential master install kit, JL Dana 44 front and rear 5.13 ring and pinion); **MetalCloak** (3.5-inch Game-Changer suspension 6Pak Edition, overland rocker, front and rear overland tube fenders, front and rear high-clearance inner fenders, frame-built front bumper, low-profile modular rear bumper, rear quarter rockers, chromoly dog-legged tie rod, UnderCloak integrated armor system); **RIGID Industries** (360-Series 6-inch driving LED lights, 360-Series 6-inch spot LED lights, 41656 cowl light mount, Rock Light kit); **S&B** (cold air intake); **sPOD** (BantamX HD); **Superchips** (PULSAR controller); and **WARN Industries** (Zeon 10-S winch, Epic Side-winder with isolator).

## Morgan Plus Four CX-T



**Morgan** unveils the **Plus Four CX-T**, inspired by the company's history of competing in all-terrain endurance trials. Following the launch of the Plus Four in 2020, Morgan partnered with **Rally Raid UK**, a creator of Dakar race cars, to jointly design and engineer the Plus Four CX-T.

Just eight vehicles will be built and supplied in full overland specification. The exterior is designed to maximize luggage and equipment-carrying capacity and provide the occupant the protection necessary for extreme environments. Most prominently, the rear panel has been replaced with an equipment rack, with unique side body panels reminiscent of the classic four-seater Morgan.

An improved suspension and five-piece underbody system protect the chassis. A full bespoke exhaust system with rear side exit improves departure angles and contributes to more than 9 inches of ground clearance.

The Plus Four CX-T uses a **BMW X-Drive** electronic differential with bespoke software and three modes—Road, All-Terrain and All-Terrain Extreme.

## Electric Bronco



**Gateway Bronco** introduces its next-generation EV powertrain with the unveiling of a premium **LUXE-GT** electrified classic **1972 Ford Bronco**. It boasts a 300-plus-mile range while going from 0 to 60 mph in just 4.7 seconds.

Built on an entirely new chassis, the Bronco features: a custom electronic ride control suspension developed in partnership with **JRi Shocks**; 220kW electric motor; **Wilwood** four-wheel disc brakes; 18-inch sport wheels with 33-inch **Toyo Tires**; **Focal** sound system; power windows; air conditioning; rear back-up camera; color-matched custom Bimini top; LED lighting package; push-button start; custom Ranger stripes; barn wood bed, tailgate and quarter panels; genuine **Porsche** leather-covered dash, seating and console; and four-point roll bar with baseball stitch leather.

## 1956 Chevy 3100



**MONIK** is a 1956 **Chevy 3100** truck that was torn down to bare metal and is now being rebuilt from the ground up. **Ricardo Lopez**, owner of **Customs By Lopez** in Compton, California is building the truck for his wife, **Monica**, as an expression of his appreciation for the decades of support and assistance she has provided to help grow the family business to what it is today.

The truck will be powered by a small-block Chevy 383 stroker engine equipped with **Hedman Hedderts** stainless mid-length headers, a **Ridetech** full coil-over setup, **Baer Brakes** front and rear, a **MagnaFlow** stainless cat-back system with straight-through performance muffler, **Budnik Wheels** and **Nitto** tires.

See it in the Hedman Performance Group booth #22342 at the 2021 SEMA Show.

## 1970 Chevrolet Blazer

**Ringbrothers** has created a custom **1970 Chevrolet K5 Blazer 4x4** powered by a 430-hp LS3 engine. The vehicle was built for an **Omaze** sweepstakes experience to support **Team Rubicon**, a non-profit organization that mobilizes veterans to continue their service by helping people prepare, respond and recover from disasters.

“We began building Blazers a few years back, and they’ve really taken off in popularity since then,” said **Jim Ring**, Ringbrothers co-owner. “This is the first time we are building a vehicle that will be given away. The finished product is mild and classy, yet any enthusiast will instantly know it’s not stock.”

Participants include: **Motul** (engine oil); **Flowmaster** (exhaust); **HRE Wheels** (forged wheels); **General Tire** (Grabber all-terrain tires); **QAI** (suspension system); **3M** (auto body products); **BASF** (Growler Green paint); Ringbrothers (body modifications, parts including door handles, hood hinges and dash bezel); **Upholstery Unlimited** (custom interior); **Bowler Performance Transmissions** (automatic transmission); **Holley/Earl’s Performance Plumbing** (fittings, hoses); **Painless Performance** (wiring harness); **Vintage Air** (A/C system); **J.W. Speaker** (headlights); **RedHead** (steering box); **Heatshield Products**; **Baer Brakes**; **WARN Industries** (4WD lockouts); **Global Finishing Solutions** (GFS paint booth system); **Advanced Plating** (chroming); **Pioneer Metal Finishing** (anodizing); **Dakota Digital** (gauges); **IDIDIT** (steering column); **Dynamat** (sound control material); **Kenwood** (head unit); **KICKER** (speakers, amplifier); **California Car Covers**; and **Miller** (welding).



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## Ford Bronco Restomods



**Classic Recreations** introduces a production line of early-model **Ford Bronco** restomods. The classic 4x4 off-roaders, which start with original 1966-'77 donor bodies, honor the timeless look of the original Bronco while infusing innovation and engineering.

The Broncos feature **Roadster Shop** chassis components and brakes, and fuel-injected **Ford Performance** Gen 3 5.0L Coyote crate engines that produce more than 460 hp before included modifications.

Participants include: **VaporWorx** (fuel pump); **Be Cool** (cross-flow radiator with two electric cooling fans); **Atlas** (4x4 transfer case); **MagnaFlow** (muffler); **FOX Racing** (2.5 Factory Race Series coil-overs tuned with RS-specific valving, ATS Steering Stabilizer kit, 2.0 Bump Stop kit); **Currie Enterprises** (Rock Jock High Pinion **Dana** 44 front and 60 rear axles); **BFGoodrich** (KO2 All-Terrain tires); **American Racing** (wheels); **TMI Products** (seats); and **Focal** (FPX 5.1200 5-channel amp, Access Series speakers, Flax subwoofer with ported box).

## 1965 Volkswagen Bus



**Osprey Custom Cars**, usually known for its custom-built Defenders, shows its versatility with a **1965 VW Bus** restoration that includes a new engine, new body, new chassis, high-end interior features and more.

The van was blacked-out underneath while the outside was treated to a navy-blue-and-white finish. All-new glass with stainless frames was installed, along with safari windows in the front. Outside lighting was completely upgraded with LEDs, plus new lenses in the backup lights.

The 1600cc, four-cylinder engine was given a complete rebuild with all new parts to push past 65 mph. Inside are custom hidden cubbies underneath the seats, along with cupholders and storage bins in the back armrests. A bright LED dome light was added, and the seats are upholstered with **Sunbrella** material. Interior front panels are all custom-stitched to match the seats and backed with **Dynamat** sound barrier material, which is also found under the custom bamboo floors.

“You will never meet a stranger with this van”, said **Aaron Richardet**, founder and managing director of Osprey. “It gets more attention than a Ferrari and is well-loved by car and non-car enthusiasts alike.”

## 2021 Ram 3500

**Aaron Vaccar** unites the passion of powersports with the culture of customizing cars with this **Indian Motorcycle/Ram 3500** collaboration.

The *race support* theme channels design cues from the two-wheel manufacturer's **FTR Carbon R** bike, featuring real carbon fiber and signature red accents. Meanwhile, the rig must be built for form and function, as it will haul motorcycles and a trailer across the country to events in 2022.

Highlights include a vehicle-specific roof rack and chase rack from **Hobbs Off-Road USA**, custom push bar with FTR lamps, **Axe Wheels** with **Toyo Tires**, performance upgrades from **K&N** and **MagnaFlow**, suspension upgrade from **ReadyLIFT** and livery by **MVP** in Florida.

Hobbs Off-Road USA is the presenting sponsor, hosting the truck and motorcycle in feature vehicle spot #W752 outside a main entrance to the new West Hall show area at the 2021 SEMA Show.



## Jeep Wrangler & Gladiator



Oracle Lighting has rolled out its new **Jeep Wrangler** and **Jeep Gladiator** demo vehicles, featuring a wide variety of the company's LED lighting products, interior components and off-road accessories.

The matching Sting Grey Jeeps are splashed with custom Oracle Lighting graphics installed by **PGNOLA**. Both vehicles are modified and lifted with custom 20-inch **Fuel Wheels** and 35-inch tires, and feature bumpers from **Rugged Ridge**.

See them at various events throughout 2021, including the SEMA Show.

## Black Marble BMW



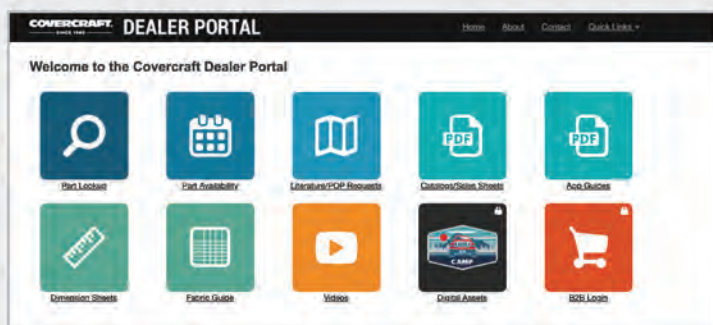
Avery Dennison presents an eye-catching **Black Marble BMW** wrap project.

Custom black marble printed graphic accents highlight the BMW's classic profile. Installer **Blake Madsen** of **Remix Wraps** in Apple Valley, Minnesota, used Avery Dennison MPI 1105 Easy Apply RS with DOL 1360Z overlaminate.

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## Camaro ZL1



**Hennessey Performance Engineering** will offer 30 customers extra-special versions of its iconic *The Exorcist Camaro ZL1*.

Each Hennessey *The Exorcist* 30th Anniversary Camaro—the final 30 in a 100-car run—will feature an anniversary logo on the car's front flanks, set behind each front wheel. In addition, each of the 1,000-hp models will be individually numbered with an Anniversary Edition chassis plate denoting each of the 30 models' build number.

*The Exorcist* was created by Hennessey to *slay the Dodge Demon*, with a 217-mph top speed, 2.1-second 0-60 mph time and 9.57-second quarter-mile.

"*The Exorcist* is the epitome of the American muscle car and has the off-the-line performance to embarrass almost any car on the planet," says **John Hennessey**, company founder and CEO. "We've been making fast cars faster since 1991, so our 30th anniversary *Exorcist* pools all we know into one ferocious supercar slayer."

## 2006 Dodge Ram 3500

**Jake Hopkins** submits the **FASS Diesel Fuel Systems/FASS Motorsports 2006 Dodge Ram 3500** race truck.

Originally built in 2006 by **Brad Ekstam**, the founder and president of FASS Diesel Fuel Systems, the Ram 3500 lived its early life as a 1,200-hp open road racing and land-speed vehicle. After it sat in storage for 10 years with only 10,000 original miles, **Spencer Ekstam**, the head of FASS R&D, decided to revive the truck for quarter-mile and roll racing.

The goal for the new build is to compete at events like **WannaGoFAST**, **TX2K** and **FL2K**—and promote the new FASS Motorsports YouTube channel. It went sleeved and deck-plated 6.7L Cummins (technically a 6.4L with the sleeves), and triple **Garrett** turbos. (The goal on fuel-alone is about 3,000 hp, but that may push the built OEM block beyond its limits.)

Highlights include: a roll cage; **PRP** racing seats; custom fuel system; **Randy's Transmissions** Stage IV 48RE; **Top Tier Suspensions** Spidertrax axles, **Tubeworks** third members; **Dynomite Diesel Products** injection components and **Industrial Injection** turbochargers.



## 2021 Shelby F-150 Super Snake



**Shelby American**, a wholly owned subsidiary of **Carroll Shelby International Inc.**, unveils its 775-hp **2021 Shelby Super Snake** truck, based on the **Ford F-150**. With all-wheel drive and a supercharged 5.0L V-8, the two-door Sport version of the limited-edition pickup (a four-door version is also available) can go from 0-60 mph in 3.45 seconds and 0-100-0 mph in 8.3 seconds.

Partners including **FOX**, **Ford Performance** and **Borla** helped transform the project with power, refinement, technology and handling upgrades. Purpose-built to be the toughest, most productive F-150 ever, the Shelby Super Snake has all-new features including allowing for over-the-air updates.

The interior was completely redesigned to elevate the truck owner's experience with style, comfort and utility. Enhanced materials, new color choices and more storage were also added.



## GT3 RS Rally Car



Now available from car enthusiast and collector **Harrison Woodruff**, the **Global Motorsports Group GT3 RS** is a custom **Porsche** designed as the ultimate rally machine with added power in a lighter carbon fiber race-ready design courtesy of **1016 Industries**.

An exclusive **Gintani** engine tune increases output to more than 580 hp. GMG also enhanced the original vehicle's engine block with straight-piped headers to further improve efficiency. A sleek rear wing and front splitter by **Dundon Motorsports** provide added on-road stability.

Exclusive GMG race mirrors and a custom roll cage lead the rally-related gear, which also includes a custom radar and scanner system from **Uniden** and under-glow lighting from **LEDGlow** in green to match the **3M** paint scheme for the race car's livery.

1016 Industries integrated custom carbon fiber work throughout the front and rear bumpers and hood, and engineered blacked-out, intricately webbed bespoke wheels. Interior accents also incorporate the eye-catching factory Lizard Green, mimicking the matching green brake calipers.

## Armored Hennessey VelociRaptor



Founded by Special Operations and law-enforcement veterans, **AddArmor** specializes in turning work, family and new vehicles of all kinds and price points into mobile saferooms. The company's newest offering is the **AddArmor VelociRaptor**, outfitted with the company's Full Protection Package, a VelociRaptor 600 performance package from **Hennessey Performance** and **Brembo** brakes.

To minimize weight and maximize ballistic protection, **Dyneema** composite material was used—a high-strength synthetic fiber that is capable of protecting an individual or vehicle from threats like an improvised explosive device or rounds from an AK-47.

Other cutting-edge security features include a counterattack sound cannon, electric shock door handles, concealed front and rear bumpers, run-flat tires capable of driving up to 50 miles after they are punctured, a dual battery system, siren and strobe lights, an operational intercom system and bomb scanning capabilities.

## Hennessey Ram TRX SUV

Texas-based hypercar manufacturer and high-performance vehicle builder **Hennessey Performance Engineering** has unveiled the **2021 Hennessey Mammoth 1000 SUV**. The exclusive and luxurious seven-seater, based on the **Ram TRX**, boasts 1,012 hp from its supercharged 6.2L V-8 capable of 0-60 mph in 3.2 seconds.

Bespoke bodywork extends the roofline to meet a new C-pillar that sits above the rear taillights. The conversion incorporates a sizable rear-side window and adds a rear screen while retaining luggage space behind the third row of seats. Only 20 vehicles will be produced.

"I have a big family with five kids and have always enjoyed owning big, powerful SUVs. In 2012, we converted the first-generation Ford Raptor into our *VelociRaptor SUV*. I still own one today and love it," says **John Hennessey**, company founder and CEO. "Now, we are excited to offer something very similar, but with a lot more horsepower, using the new Ram TRX truck as our base vehicle. Creating this king of SUVs offers our customers the ultimate combination of space, power and exclusivity."



## HUE 166 Defender



**Defender** builder **HIMALAYA** unveils the company's newest handmade truck, paying homage to the **Land Rover HUE 166**. The restored SUV features luxurious upgrades engineered to make it a joy to drive in modern roadgoing conditions.

Sporting the Grasmere Green paint of the original rig, "the HUE 166 is our answer to enthusiasts looking for modern drivability and comfort in a classically cool vintage truck," says **Greg Shondel**, HIMALAYA president.

Powered by a new LT4 Corvette engine smoothly paired with an 8-speed transmission, the reimagined HUE 166 incorporates a four-link coil-over suspension, **Dynatrac** axles and a powerful **Brembo** disc brake setup. Modern additions include custom fender flares, rock sliders, power folding boards, a modified Jeep power steering box, dual air conditioning systems, a state-of-the-art audio system and a handstitched interior.

## Lamborghini Urus Custom



**1016 Industries** presents a custom **Lamborghini Urus** featuring completely custom carbon fiber work inspired in part by the **Green Hornet**. Commissioned by **Harrison Woodruff**, the widebody **Green Urnet** includes special engine and exhaust upgrades to significantly boost the SUV's performance.

Woodruff installed a special **Gintani** engine tune that adds 150 hp to the twin-turbo V-8's baseline of 641 hp. Other noteworthy adjustments from the high-performance tune include reprogrammed torque management parameters and smoother overall engine operation.

The **Green Urnet** incorporates an exhaust system designed by **Voodoo Industries** that includes special downpipes that further increase power while belting out a menacing, crackling engine note. The interior header of the car is highlighted by an **RFS Motorsports** starlight kit that lights up the interior roof like the night sky.

## 2021 Ford F-250 Super Duty



**Seth Gortenburg** sends word on a **2021 Ford F-250 Super Duty** project from **DEFECO Trucks** located in Kaiser, Missouri. With assets purchased from the Colorado-based DEFECO Trucks conversion company specializing in F-250 and F-350 conversions, the build features one-off front fenders, hood and quarter panels.

Participants include: **Goodyear** (43-inch tires); **Stazworks Extreme Offroad** (wheels); **Road Armor** (bumpers); **RIGID Industries** (lighting); **Superlift** (suspension lift); **King Off-Road Racing Shocks** (coil-overs); **Royalty Core** (grille); **Billet Badges** (emblems); **Air Lift Co.** (ride control); and **Chris Carlson Hot Rods** (bodywork, paint).

See it at the 2021 SEMA Show, along with a **DEFECO F-450** build.

## Jeep Wrangler YJL



**Quadratrec** presents a one-of-a-kind **Jeep Wrangler** build called **YJL**. The YJ-inspired **Wrangler JL Sahara** features a host of Quadratrec-exclusive hardware, custom sheet metal, interior styling cues and a trail-ready suspension, and is a tribute to Quadratrec founder **Ted Wentz II**'s 1989 Jeep Wrangler YJ Sahara that kickstarted his vision for the company.

The build pays homage to Quadratrec's roots with classic YJ styling while numerous modern touches highlight the company's latest product lineup.

## 1957 Chevy 210



Now with his own restoration business nicknamed *The Shop*, **Millo Bertini** introduces *The Project X2* build, a 1957 Chevy 210 he's doing with restorer and close friend **George Mugsy Romano** in celebration of the 1980 movie *Hollywood Knights*.

The car is yellow with a blown small-block. The team tracked down **Gary Dyer** to supply the exact supercharger used in *Popular Hot Rodding Magazine's* original *Project X* series of articles. Next came a **Liberty's Gears** 5-speed and **Ford** 9-inch rear end. Horsepower on the dyno surpassed 640 hp.

Participants include: **Aeromotive Inc.**, **American Autowire**, **Auto Custom Carpets**, **eBay**, **Holley Performance Products**, **Mobil 1**, **Milodon**, **Rust-Oleum**, **Speedway Motors**, **Steele Rubber Products**, **AFR** (aluminum heads), **RAM Clutches** and **New England Dry Stripping** (media blasting, powder-coating).

## 2017 Wrangler JKU Rubicon



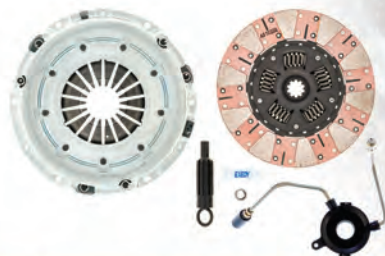
A **McLeod Racing** clutch, flywheel and hydraulic throwout bearing are part of the *Recon Edition* 2017 Wrangler JKU Rubicon off-roader project.

Participants include: **ICON Vehicle Dynamics** (wheels, 4.5-inch lift, bumpers, tire carrier); **Falken Tires** (37-inch tires); **KC Lights** (lights, light bar); **American Adventure Lab** (storage platform, drawer system); **WARN Industries** (winch); **JE Reel** (driveshafts); **Rhino-Rack** (Pioneer Platform); **Rock Slide Engineering** (power steps); **RPM Steering** (steering kit); **Reid Racing** (Dana 44 knuckles); **Kleinn Automotive** (on-board air, horn system); **Bushwacker** (fenders); and **Adventure Imports** (Maxtrax boards, Indeflate system).

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## Land Rover Defender 110



**E.C.D. Automotive Design** has delivered a custom **Land Rover Defender 110** with a white gloss exterior and white interior designed to match the client's **Aston Martin**.

The full-custom Fuji White standout, nicknamed **Project RC**, features a 565-hp 6.2L LS3 engine, as well as a fully upgraded E.C.D. air ride suspension system with performance disc brakes from **EBC Brakes**, **Wolf** 16-inch steel wheels, a mesh grille, a slimline front bumper with two daytime running lights and a gutter-mounted **Safety Devices** roof rack with rear ladder. Adding to the classic aesthetic, the build rides on **Continental** tires.

Inside is a luxurious white-and-navy **Spinneybeck** leather interior, a white suede headliner, a 15-inch **Exmoor** Evander Wood steering wheel with a custom **RC** stamp on a leather-wrapped center cap, two heated and ventilated front Defender Puma modular seats, four inward-facing jump seats in the rear, and a fully wrapped center console. Electronics include **Apple** CarPlay and **JL Audio** components.

"The interior of this 110 is truly stunning. The overall look and feel our client has created here is one of timeless elegance. **RC** is a true one-of-one E.C.D. build," says **Tom Humble**, co-founder.

## OC110 4x4



**Osprey Custom Cars** introduces its **2021 Osprey Custom 4x4 OC110 Station Wagon**, a rugged off-roader with classic looks, great power, modern accessories and family-sized hauling capabilities. It is a new truck and carries a 2021 VIN.

Power comes from a high-revving 6.2L Corvette LS3 V-8 mated to a smooth-shifting 6L80E 6-speed automatic transmission controlled by a push-button gear selector with LED display. The heavy-duty LT230 transfer case distributes constant power to all four wheels, ensuring every bit of the 435-plus hp and 445-plus pound-feet of torque hit the ground.

Chassis enhancements include upgraded, heavy-duty **TDCi** front and rear axles, and **Terraforma** springs, shocks and related components. The bespoke interior is complete with custom white diamond-stitched black leather front sport seats and matching center bucket seats, a **Viper** keyless entry system and more.

"Wherever your adventures make take you, this vehicle will handle it all," says **Aaron Richardet**, founder and managing director of Osprey. "And it will do so with power, style, refined comfort and rugged, go-anywhere abilities."

## 1970 Dodge Challenger



**Robert Ellsworth** of **Ellsworth Racing** sends info on a **1970 Dodge Challenger** widebody build by **Hemi Autoworks**. Stretched 2 inches per side and dropped onto a modified **1996 Dodge Viper GTS** chassis, it will feature a Stryker Purple paint job when completed.

Power comes from a Hellcat supercharged 6.2L V-8 with a ported and built supercharger by **SDG Motorsports**, **Granatelli Motor Sports** throttle body, thermostat and coils, upgraded injectors, harmonic damper and supercharger pulley. Custom headers and exhaust were built in-house and then coated by **Race Coatings**. Once tuned with a **HP Tuners** system, output is estimated to be around 1,000 whp.

Participants include: **Forgeline Wheels**; **BFGoodrich** (tires); **Complete Performance Motorsports** (Viper suspension, Viper brakes, Viper T56 transmission); **Hawk Performance** (brake pads); **Viking Performance** (triple-adjustable coil-overs); **Mantic Clutch USA** (triple-disc clutch); **Northern Radiator** (cooling system); **LIQUI-MOLY** (fluids); **Ron Francis Wiring**; **Hot Rod Fuel Hose** (plumbing); **Thermo-tec** (heat control); **Stewart Warner** (gauges); **U.S. Race Gear** (**RaceQuip** seats, harnesses); **Ultra Chiller** (personal cooling system); **YEARONE** (restoration parts); and **Pegasus Auto Racing Supplies**.

## 2018 Mazda Miata



*Project Mia* is a 2018 Mazda Miata build from Carlos Medrano for his second daughter (his first daughter got one as well!). It features **ColorBond** paint products used to restyle the interior.

Participants include: **Toyo Tires**, **Velox Wheels**, **SoCal Garage Works**, **Cquence Brakes**, **Cipher Auto**, **MagnaFlow**, **Voodoo Ride**, **XKGLow** and **BlackVue**.

## BRABUS 800



The new **BRABUS 800** is designed to be a wolf in sheep's clothing. Based on the **Mercedes E 63 S 4MATIC+**, performance upgrades take it to 588kW/800 hp, and a 0-60 time of 3 seconds.

Highlights include: a naked carbon aerodynamic enhancement package; 21-inch forged wheels; high-performance exhaust system with electronic sound management; specially configured high-performance turbochargers; plug-and-play BRABUS PowerXtra module with special mapping for injection, ignition and boost pressure control; carbon air intakes integrated into the radiator grille; two vertical red signature stripes; rear spoiler on the trunk lid; carbon diffuser insert for the rear fascia that frames the four tailpipes; stainless steel scuff plates with backlit BRABUS logo; aluminum door pins and pedals; and choice of leather and interior color.

A station wagon upgrade is also available. **TS**

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By James Maxwell

# SEMA SHOW

## *Beginnings*

Part I: Competitors learn to work together.

The sport of drag racing and a handful of speed equipment parts manufacturers combined to *give birth* to the SEMA organization back in May 1963. SEMA, at that time, stood for Speed Equipment Manufacturers Association.

Some say the history of SEMA hasn't always been accurately explained in detail, and some of the tales of how it all got started haven't been totally factual. As the old saying goes, "success has many fathers," and now seems like a great time to share the story, as it was told in the 1970s by then SEMA communications director, Donna Imrie.

"Credit for getting the industry's manufacturers together must be given to an outsider, so to speak—a gentleman by the name of Henry Blankfort, who was then employed by Revell Inc., a manufacturer of (among other things) model race car kits," she wrote in one of her informative bulletins.

Here's the rest of the story, as relayed by Imrie:



Founded in 1963, SEMA was the first alliance between aftermarket equipment manufacturers, dealers, wholesalers and salesmen in the speed equipment field.

"Henry, and a gentleman named Lew Glaser, president of Revell, were trying to determine how they could get race car

product manufacturers' permission to produce their decals for inclusion in their race car model kits. In a meeting with Dean Moon (of Moon Equipment Co.) and Roy Richter (of Cragar Industries Inc.), Henry learned that the manufacturers of race car parts didn't have an association, and with the *glue-sniffing* legislative problems that the model car industry was having at the time, he couldn't imagine how a group of manufacturers involved with race cars could get along without the strength created by a unified effort. Dean Moon's initial reply was that it would never work, "...our people are simply too competitive to work together like that."

Imrie picks up the story after an initial meeting with manufacturers sponsored by Revell, which was located in nearby Venice, California, with subsequent meetings that grew in size and included Moon, Richter, Willie Garner, Vic Edelbrock, Phil Weiand, Al Segal, Ed Iskenderian, Bob Hedman, Dempsey Wilson, Ruth Ellen Smith, John Bartlett, Louie Senter, Fred

There was a time when our industry was a mere fledgling, generally unknown to exist. Most of us remember the days gone by when an equipment manufacturer was merely an avid enthusiast developing and manufacturing the products of his own ideas out of a backyard garage—his factory. There was also a time, in some parts of the country, when a speed shop was nothing more than an outlet for mufflers and perhaps dual exhaust kits, installed as a means to improve a car's performance. But now all of that is history. Today our area of trade stands as a giant among many industries, international in scope. Petersen Publishing and its magazines are proud to be instrumental in the progress of the speed and custom equipment industry, proud to have had an opportunity to play an important role in its phenomenal growth during past years, and proud indeed to present the first annual High Performance & Custom Trade Show at Dodger Stadium.

Robert E. Petersen, President, Petersen Publishing Co., January 1967

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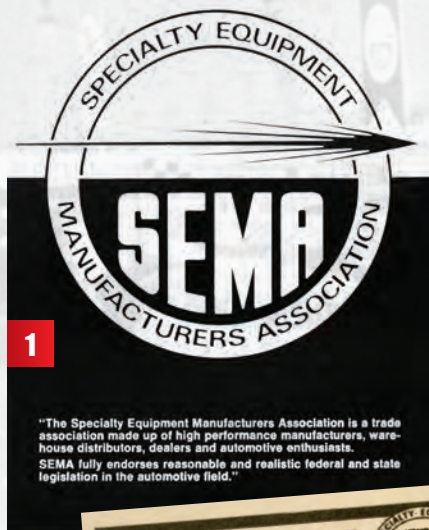
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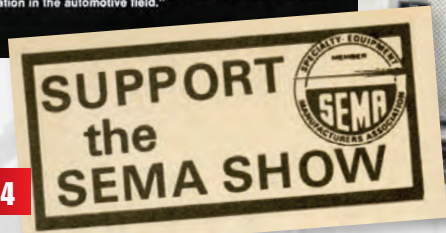


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1

"The Specialty Equipment Manufacturers Association is a trade association made up of high performance manufacturers, warehouse distributors, dealers and automotive enthusiasts. SEMA fully endorses reasonable and realistic federal and state legislation in the automotive field."



4

## SEMA COMING OF AGE

2



## HOT ROD INDUSTRY NEWS

voice of the automotive high performance and custom industry

3



High Performance & Custom Equipment  
**TRADE SHOW ISSUE**

1. The word "Speed" was updated to "Specialty" starting in 1968 to better represent to the government that the organization consisted of "responsible" companies. 2. Ed Iskenderian guided the new organization through its formative stages as the first president of SEMA. Isky cams were well-known at the time, adding instant credibility with speed shop owners and warehouse distributors across the country. 3. The time had come for the first fully sponsored and official SEMA Show, which was held in January 1967 under the grandstands of Dodger Stadium. *Hot Rod Industry News* reported that gross sales of speed equipment in 1966 had increased 330% as compared to 1961, an impressive figure that helped support the event's creation. 4. The newly formed trade show was an instant success.

SEMA stands as a tribute to the original hot rodder whose ingenuity and creative thinking founded the very speed business which the association represents, and built businesses upon this foundation and whose research and knowledge are a major contributing factor to Detroit's success in the field of high performance.

Bob Wyman, W&H Engineering, Charter Member of SEMA, 1966 SEMA Newsletter

Offenhauser, Els Lohn and other industry members.

"Revell offered its Model Association of America bylaws to the race car parts industry as a guide to establishing the SEMA bylaws," Imrie continues. "The founding fathers of SEMA were, at best, apprehensive about the prospects of success for their idea, but thanks to a handful of *believers*, who probably had no concept of what it is today, the association was well on its way to national recognition—by industry, and later by government."

The president of Grant Piston Rings, John Bartlett, who was also an attorney, drew up the first SEMA bylaws, and the very first organized meeting of SEMA members took place at the Revell headquarters.

### FRIENDLY COMPETITION

SEMA's original founding fathers were, in Imrie's words, "apprehensive about the success for their idea. The initial 35 charter members realized that unless these highly competitive firms and individuals were brought together under a mutual interest banner, their very basic industry/sport could very well disappear, just when it was poised for a dramatic launching."



Valvoline Oil's booth at the first SEMA Show was pretty basic—a card table and a couple of 55-gallon barrels holding up the wheel-stander 1966 Dodge Dart belonging to Bill Shrewsberry.





Among the exhibitor booths at the first SEMA Show was the Shelby American Inc. display, featuring a Ford GT40 sports car fitted with wire wheels and a 289-ci Ford small-block. Part of the reason Carroll Shelby was there was to find sales reps for his cars and products.

Luckily, the association was well on its way to national recognition, and by government regulators. SEMA had to deal with the Motor Vehicle Pollution Control Board, which had mandated special emissions-related controls for California, later to be required for all 50 states.

Looming fears of the government *out-lawing* the speed equipment industry were a major concern for SEMA's early members, and particularly California's DMV regulation 27156, which made it illegal to make an emissions control device inoperable.

The organization provided a united front to stand against what was seen at the time as unfair legislative measures that could potentially kill the industry.

Ed Iskenderian of Isky Cams was SEMA's first president, followed in 1966 by Moon and then Els Lohn of Eelco Mfg. All the while, a feeling of unity was growing—even as the industry grew.

"SEMA can be a great force in helping to unite dealers and manufacturers in creating a larger industry, but only if we work together," said Lohn in late 1966, as reported in *Hot Rod Industry News*. "Our goal this coming year is to bring the dealers closer together so we can help them."

#### A SHOW IS BORN

Lohn approached Robert E. Petersen of Petersen Publishing Co. in 1966 to discuss producing a SEMA trade show. That first event took place at Dodger Stadium (under the official SEMA banner) Jan. 10-12, 1967, with 98 display booths and approximately 3,000 attendees.

In addition to the parts and equipment displayed, as well as the numerous cars that were brought onto the show floor to support various manufacturers, there was a preview and first showing of the Dodge *Thunder Charger* set to appear in the upcoming auto racing motion picture *Thunder Alley*, which was released in March 1967.

Meanwhile, in 1968, Eric Grant led SEMA's charge in working with government regulators. Hired because of his vast experience in such matters, he was named

executive director and was instrumental in replacing the word *Speed* in the organization's title with *Specialty*, which is how it remains today.

As Earl Kitner, SEMA's corporate council, mentioned at the time, "bureaucrats (were) not likely to appreciate the swinging generation's preoccupation with speed."

To kick-off the 1968 SEMA Show, located at the Anaheim Convention Center, Robert and Margie Petersen hosted a cocktail and dinner party for exhibitors at the Balboa Bay Club in Newport Beach.

When writer Bob Leif of *Hot Rod Industry News* reviewed the show, he noted that one of the trends at the event was "smog-friendly speed parts."

"It looks like a good year coming for both the high-performance business and the smog legislators, now that it's been found that we all can work together to solve some of our common problems."

On the show floor, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) had a booth with a VW Squareback that was fitted with a new fuel injection system, and Jardine Headers had some headers on display that featured openings for the installation of OE air pump fittings.

While the SEMA Show was definitely growing in size, at this '68 gathering it used only about half of the available 100,000 square feet of the convention hall.



Valley Head Service, located in the San Fernando Valley, was part of the first show. The company was run by the talented Larry Ofria.



The Mr. Gasket Co. of Cleveland was a pioneer SEMA Show exhibitor. Here's Joe Hrudka (second from left) with his brother Tom (left) and two salesmen ready to greet speed equipment dealers.



B&M Automotive was founded by Bob Spar and Mort Schuman, and soon brother Don Spar joined in. Their booth here at the first SEMA Show featured bellhousings, adapters, manual valve bodies and the company's Super Shifter.



Dean Moon with Melba Ogle at the SEMA Show.

By 1970, the show had grown to about 7,000 attendees and a record 490 booths. The early '70s shows saw the basic *card table and a few products* booth theme go away, to be replaced by more stylish, sophisticated designs—as well as attractive female models, also known as *booth babes*, assisting in showcasing the exhibitors' products.

Along with the core performance parts, an influx of mini-trucks, small cars, 4x4s and custom vans helped the SEMA Show widen its audience. Sunroofs, off-road shock absorbers, spoilers, truck roll bars—there was a lot more product variety compared to years prior.

Carl V. Olson, a former Top Fuel Dragster driver and SEMA technical coordinator, described the 1976 SEMA Show as “a far cry from the humble beginning. Over 500 booths have been contracted for, making

the 1976 show a sellout. While the actual show will run over a three-day period, from January 21 through 23, convention activities will span the entire week. The highlight of the convention week will be the annual SEMA Awards Banquet, which last year drew over 1,500 guests. The banquet filled the Disneyland Hotel's Grand Ballroom to capacity. This year's banquet is again expected to be sold out before the show begins.”

### GOOD BUSINESS & GOOD TIMES

Because the vast majority of exhibitors at the SEMA Shows of this era were based in Southern California, they loved the Anaheim location, as it was cheaper and easier to set up and staff their booths each day of the event.

Sheldon Knoblett was an avid supporter of SEMA and industry causes, and he also

liked to put on a good party. He and his companies, S/C Performance Wholesale and Service Center Speed Shops, were well-known for hosting some of the wildest after-hours SEMA Show parties at the Disneyland Hotel.

Also of note were the bashes put on by Doris Herbert, publisher of *Drag News*, which were definitely considered *must-attend* gatherings by drag racing and industry members of the day.

In fact, reports show that the parties at those Anaheim SEMA Show events were serious affairs! Stories are told of one party requiring anyone who wanted to enter to drink a tall Harvey Wallbanger (a strong cocktail of the day with vodka as the main ingredient) at the door.

Another epic tale centers on an unnamed industry veteran who became so intoxicated that, when he finally passed out, his

“The three-day trade show centered around a mammoth display area in the Anaheim Convention Center, which housed 192 individual displays. Last year, 106 manufacturers were on hand to greet dealers. This in itself says much about the growth of the industry and importance of the show. The show was not open to the public. There were no vegetable grinders for sale, no slick giveaway contests in an effort to build a mailing list. The atmosphere was businesslike and to the point—the point being that speed equipment dealers from every state in the Union could sit down and get the facts from the men who make the equipment. In a way, the trade show was like the world's largest speed shop.”

—John Thawley, *HOT ROD Magazine*, March 1968



PREMIUM CAR CARE

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The 1968 show attracted 140 exhibitors.



Hedman Heddners company founder Bob Hedman (left) with head engineer Bill Million.



The Argus Publishers Corp. (*Popular Hot Rodding Magazine*) booth in 1969 featured its famous *Project X* test car.

SPECIAL REPORT: THE SEMA SHOW

colleagues grabbed a chair out of a room and placed him on it in the hotel elevator, so for the remainder of the night he accompanied riders up and down to all the floors well into the wee hours of the morning.

## IT HAPPENS IN VEGAS

With sell-outs in 1975 and again in 1976, it became apparent that the show was outgrowing its Anaheim location.

As *Hot Rod Industry News* reported in the April 1977 edition: “Booth space was at a premium, exhibits had to be restricted in size, products could not be displayed properly and, in many cases, companies who wanted to be in the show were left out because there was no more room available.”

Industry icon Leo Kagan, who served as SEMA’s president from 1975-’79, said discussions were already under way to find a larger location.

“I had met a member of the Las Vegas

Convention Center and started talking about moving SEMA to Las Vegas,” Kagan recalls. “When I brought up the idea of moving the show, I had a tremendous number of people tell me I was going to be the ruin of SEMA, saying that manufacturers in Southern California were not going to go all the way over to Vegas! Some of the trade publications said, ‘Kagan is going to be the cause of SEMA disintegrating.’”

Nevertheless, he was able to convince the SEMA board that it was the right thing to do.

“The Las Vegas convention people were very cooperative. They worked with us, and they told us that we’d have that big Central Hall—larger, of course, than what we had in Anaheim. The first show we had in Las Vegas was 1977. We had a big splash. A local high school band opened the show by playing marching music. Bob

Petersen and I drove in on an old hot rod. We made it pretty exciting. It started out with a real bang because everything was top drawer.”

The move from Anaheim to Las Vegas proved successful, with the 1977 SEMA Show having 802 booths, as compared to the 591 booths at the last Anaheim show. Participants enjoyed the glitz and glitter of Las Vegas, the convenience of the nearby airport and access to the Las Vegas Hilton with its 2,139 deluxe rooms and suites, restaurants, showrooms, lounges and casino—all a mere 278 feet from the entrance to the Las Vegas Convention Center.

Looking back at that first Las Vegas SEMA Show, Kagan recalls: “I had some people come up to me after the first week of the show to apologize for the things that they had said about me, which was very interesting!”

## A GROWING INDUSTRY

The move to Vegas also benefitted the annual SEMA Awards Banquet. Knoblett was running the banquet at the time, and he staged the 1977 show at the Sands Hotel, with entertainment featuring Norm Crosby. He also developed the overall design for the SEMA trophies.

A review of the exhibitor list of the 1978 show reveals how much it had grown and expanded. The then 12-year-old trade association now included exhibitors that manufactured specialty products and components for street, off-road and marine applications.

“They’re all a part of the specialty industry, and they always have been part of it,” said Dick Wells, SEMA’s executive director at the time.

The 1979 banquet was held as a hosted

SEMA Show, SEMA Show, SEMA Show. For Chrissakes, all I hear or read all year long is SEMA Show. What's it all about? Having been involved with *Hot Rod Industry News* and the SEMA Show for five years now, I feel qualified to tell you, the average hot rodder, what the SEMA Show is all about. It is an annual exposition of automotive specialty equipment placed on display by the manufacturers. New products, new ideas, new promotional displays, all the things you see in the speed shop during the rest of the year are first exposed to the dealers at this gathering of the manufacturers. The show itself is designed to locate the entire industry in one place on a given week to afford the dealers (speed shop owners) a place to see all the available equipment all at once. Urge your dealer to attend the SEMA Show as he will get a firsthand look at the new merchandise, get to feel it and ask questions about it. So, I recommend that you entice your speed shop owner to attend the SEMA Show, November 16, 17, and 18. Everybody wins.

Don Prieto, Editor, *Hot Rod Industry News*, Summer 1972

cocktail reception, with top-name entertainment featuring Dick Clark's History of Rock n' Roll. More than 1,500 people attended. As a tribute to her overall contributions to the specialty equipment industry, Dick Wells (1977 recipient) presented Imrie with the Person of the Year Award for 1978.

Also in 1979, Nile Cornelison of National Custom Warehouse Inc. in Creston, Iowa was SEMA's innovations day chairman, and his vision for SEMA was to become involved with the Detroit automakers. His efforts to expand the reach of the organization took him on numerous trips to Michigan, where he explained the ABCs of the automotive aftermarket to company heads.

Part of his message was that SEMA members were not in competition with the OEMs' various parts departments at new car dealerships.

Lee Iacocca was the first keynote speaker for 1980, bringing Chrysler into play as part of the SEMA scene. The following year, a new concept for SEMA was Cornelison's idea of a *show within a show* section.

The main concept was to showcase all the newest products from the various exhibitors in one area. With Cornelison's years of experience as a buyer for the speed shop he and his wife ran, and then the warehouse, he predicted that it would be a great service to SEMA visitors to be able to see all the new products for the year in one central place—setting the stage for the New Product Showcase, which remains one of the show's biggest draws to this day.

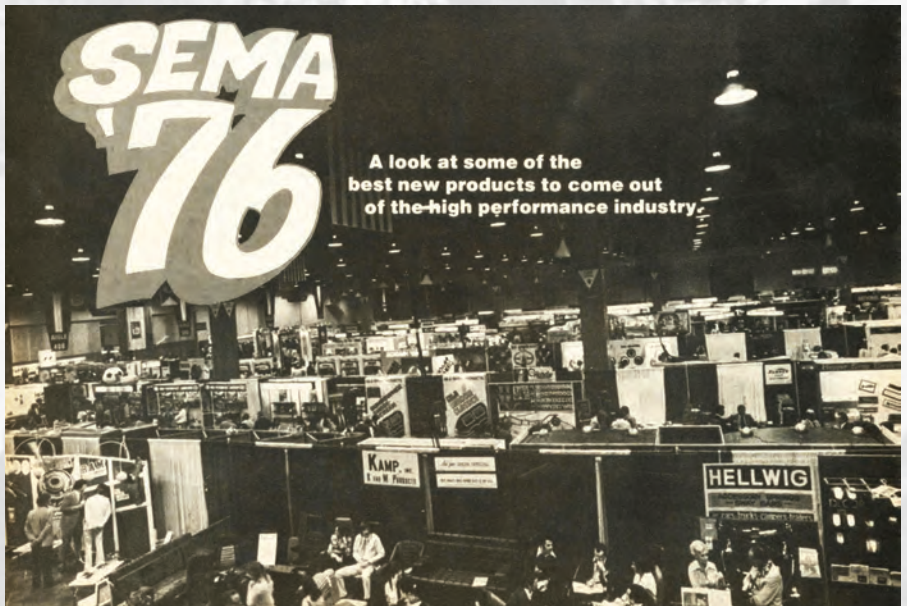
Cornelison was named SEMA Person of the Year for 1981.

Next time, we'll explore the SEMA Show from the 1980s and beyond. **TS**

**JAMES MAXWELL** is an automotive journalist and historian based in Southern California. Contact him at [imax@roadrunner.com](mailto:imax@roadrunner.com).



From left: Dick Day, *HOT ROD Magazine* publisher; Leo Kagan, SEMA president; Robert E. Petersen, chairman of the board, Petersen Publishing Co.; Dick Wells, SEMA executive director; and Alex Xydias, SEMA show director at the inaugural Vegas show.



The 1976 SEMA Show was the last one in Anaheim. Over the three-day run some 13,000 people attended.

## The 13 Companies that Founded SEMA

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B&M Automotive Products .....	Bob Spar
Cragar Industries Inc. ....	Roy Richter
Eelco Manufacturing and Supply.....	Els Lohn
Grant Industries .....	John Bartlett
Ed Iskenderian Racing Cams.....	Ed Iskenderian
Milodon Engineering.....	Don Alderman
Moon Equipment Company .....	Dean Moon
Schiefer Manufacturing.....	Paul Schiefer
Trans Dapt .....	Willie Garner
Weber Speed Equipment .....	Harry Weber
Weiland Power & Racing.....	Phil Weiland
Dempsey Wilson Racing Cams .....	Dempsey Wilson

# PERFORMANCE

NOVEMBER 2021

Supply Chain p.78

Products p.84

Concours d'Elegance p.88

By Jef White

Pro-Touring enthusiasts want the old-school look, but with the amenities of a modern vehicle. (Photo courtesy Wilwood Disc Brakes)

## A SPECIAL BLEND

Pro-Touring continues to bring the past into the future.



**C**elebrating modern technologies while never forgetting hot-rodding's roots is what Pro-Touring is all about. A special blend of old and new strikes a balance between nostalgia and progress in a market that continues to drive forward.

Older vehicles with newer components deliver the best of both worlds—

thumbs-up-and smiles from passers-by, and the confidence and peace of mind that comes with reliability and state-of-the-art performance.

Manufacturers are optimistic about the future of Pro-Touring—from the profit potential it presents for shops to the long-term contributions it's making to keep car culture alive and well. Is the

future of your business tied to making connections with the past?

### WHY SHOULD I CARE?

From opportunities to staying power to plain old fun, there's a lot to like about Pro-Touring.

"It's a wide-open market," says Mike Buca, product manager for Design Engi-



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A SPECIAL BLEND



Suppliers are doing their part by finding opportunities to work together. (Photo courtesy Wilwood Disc Brakes)



An LS-powered 1969 Camaro built and run by George Reiss of Reiss Racing in Escondido, California features a set of upcoming long-tube headers from Hedman and shows the appeal of Pro-Touring vehicles. (Photo courtesy Hedman Performance)



Pro-Touring allows builders plenty of design freedom. (Photo courtesy Hedman Performance)

neering Inc. “You have cars and trucks at all levels being built for events and to be driven daily. These customers not only want fast cars, but they want them to handle and stop just as well. This opens up the products that they are looking for and keeps builds from being just one-dimensional.”

The allure of classic cars from the 1960s and '70s seems almost timeless, says Michael Hamrick, events and promotions manager, Wilwood Disc Brakes, but what's not to like about adding today's latest performance and safety features?

“People love muscle cars,” he says. “Because they love the aesthetics of these cars and know how much of an impact they made back in the 1960s and '70s, and how they've directed what modern muscle cars have become today, they want that old-school look, but with the amenities of a modern vehicle.”

**BUILDING BRIDGES**

Pro-Touring is the confluence of classic vehicle styling and modern technology. It also has the power to bring together enthusiasts from different eras.

“Pro-Touring has bridged the generation gap due to various technological innovations in the last 20 years. Whether you were a hot-rodder in the 1960s or a street racer in the '90s, Pro-Touring has rekindled the movement,” says Alex Ortega, director of business development for AERO Exhaust. “Hot-rodders were running glasspacks in the '60s; street racers were running compression-bent tubing in the '90s. In the modern world, you can now find 304-grade mandrel-bent stainless steel exhaust systems with precision-tuned mufflers, recreating the opportunity for enthusiasts to once again upgrade their applications.”

And, speaking of bridges, the market also connects drivers who love the nostalgia of older vehicles and those who want to go fast.

“Pro-Touring is a nice bridge between racing and classic restoration, so it taps into both market segments,” observes Trent McGee, marketing manager for Centerforce. “With the power and reliability of late-model engines in general, and LS engines in particular, people are now able to access impressive amounts of performance potential at a fairly conservative price point.”

It's one reason why many believe the future of hot-rodding is in good hands.



# HOT PRO-TOURING PRODUCTS

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** AERO Turbine Performance Muffler Line

■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Patented; designed and engineered by fellow performance enthusiasts; unique cylindrical body fully constructed from premium 304-grade stainless steel; crafted for weight reduction, sound control, performance advantages and space limitations.

AERO Exhaust

Alex Ortega

Director of Business Development

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** Solid Street Twin (SST) Clutch Line

■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Budget-friendly twin-disc system; rated for up to 925 pound-feet; increased holding power; light pedal feel; unique floater anti-rattle technology; geared toward weekend racers; lighter-weight flywheel and lightweight discs.

Centerforce

Trent McGee

Marketing Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** DEI Floor and Tunnel Reflective Heat Shield

■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Offered in raw aluminum and high-temp black; peel-and-stick adhesive system—trim to size and stick in place; conforms to odd shapes and curves; holds up well under the car; blocks engine and exhaust heat.

Design Engineering Inc.

Mike Buca

Product Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** Engine Swap-In-A-Box Kits

■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Focus on LS swaps in classic American muscle car and truck applications; include application-specific headers, engine mounts, transmission mount and LS swap oil pan, all with a single part number; tech support.

Hedman Performance

Marc Lewis

VP, Marketing

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** Swing Mount Tandem Brake and Clutch Pedal Assembly

■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Race-inspired appearance that looks like a balance bar pedal set; correct leverage for manual brakes; foolproof tandem master cylinder; correct volume and pressure transmitted through the correct bore size master, selected with the dealer/builder.

Wilwood Disc Brakes

Michael Hamrick

Events and Promotions Manager

“Our experience at the autocross track shows that the Pro-Touring look is very appealing to the younger generation, and they are the customers of tomorrow,” notes Marc Lewis, VP, marketing for Hedman Performance.

The final bridge is between Pro-Tourers and the professional partners they choose to help make their dreams a reality.

“Because the customer is putting the shop in charge of this small piece of history it will be building for them, a friendship evolves that goes beyond usual

builder/customer starts,” says Hamrick. “We see that when a builder contacts us to ask about the best brakes for the customer’s use and the look they are trying to obtain, it may start in one place and go to another. That does not just happen—it happens as the customer builds trust with the shop and knows it is looking out for their best interests. This builds a relationship that the customer will come back to. It is extremely important and an unexpected benefit that some shops don’t recognize at first.”

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Pro-Touring customers tend to be less price-conscious and are willing to spend more for quality parts. (Photo courtesy Centerforce)



Pro-Touring serves as a bridge between the racing and classic restoration markets. (Photo courtesy Centerforce)



Pro-Touring has bridged the generation gap due to various technological innovations in the last 20 years. (Photo courtesy AERO Exhaust)



In the end it's all about personalization. (Photo courtesy AERO Exhaust)



People build these cars and trucks to be used, not to sit in a garage somewhere. (Photo courtesy Design Engineering Inc.)



Pro-Touring includes cars and trucks at all levels being built for events and to be driven daily. (Photo courtesy Design Engineering Inc.)

## IT'S YOUR CHOICE

Another exciting facet of Pro-Touring is that there are few rules to follow, so shops can help drivers creatively customize their rides.

"The Pro-Touring market will remain popular for a long time because there really is no right or wrong," Lewis predicts. "There may be good or bad quality, but there is no right or wrong. Whatever a builder wants to do is acceptable, as long as everything is properly engineered."

What allows this freedom of choice?

"It's the versatility of the cars," says Buca. "You can do events like the Power Tour and Drag Week, autocross or just drive and

have fun. Week-long events are becoming more and more popular, and people build these cars and trucks to drive them."

It's a market that allows for personal expression.

"Driving our 2016 Mustang GT is not the same as driving our 1966 Wilwood Pro-Touring Mustang," Hamrick notes. "The feel of both cars is not the same, although they use very similar drivetrains and brakes. We also do not get as many thumbs-up driving the newer Mustang as we do with our 1966 Mustang."

Personal expression is often reflected in the parts drivers choose.

For instance, when it comes to exhaust tone, "we all know everyone's preference for sound is extremely subjective—no different from your favorite genre of music," says Ortega. "Some enthusiasts prefer an aggressive or moderate tone, while others would rather focus on the performance aspects. In the end it's all about personalization, and this opens the door for shop owners to offer their customers a broad menu of performance exhaust options."

An attractive aspect for shops is that most Pro-Tourers are serious about their vehicles and plan to use them often.

"Many Pro-Touring projects represent quite an investment for the consumer, providing a large pool of lucrative potential customers," McGee says. "Pro-Touring people tend to be less price-conscious and are willing to spend more for quality parts. Plus, like all forms of racing, the demands placed on the car are much greater than an everyday street application, so there's the potential for frequent return maintenance visits in addition to the initial and nearly continual upgrades to the vehicle."

## BITTEN BY THE BUG

As the Pro-Touring market has evolved, it's become apparent that many customers never stop dreaming bigger.

"The melding of late-model technology in classic vehicles yields a vehicle that's infinitely more fun to drive and is ultimately more reliable than when most of the classic muscle cars left the showroom floor originally," says McGee from Centerforce. "And, with the classic muscle car market maintaining steady growth, consumers are more likely to make an investment in

their vehicles, knowing that they'll be able to recover a great deal of that investment should they decide to sell or go a different direction."

The inclusive nature of the scene makes it attractive to all types of gear heads.

"The scope of what a Pro-Touring car is has evolved and will keep doing so—people want a vehicle that can do it all," says DEI's Buca. "You are seeing trucks, muscle cars, even Volvo wagons being built and driven. Look at the OPTIMA Challenge series, the Power Tour and all the Drag Week events. These are all growing, and you are seeing generations and families getting involved."

The changing nature of the Pro-Touring market is what keeps it relevant.

"It is our belief that this freedom of design will simply evolve over time, but the concept of building powerful, low-slung, asphalt-grabbing muscle cars will never go out of style—well, we hope it never does!" says Hedman's Lewis.

And suppliers are doing their part by finding opportunities to work together.

"Manufacturers are making more and more new products that are easier to install and that work together with other manufacturers' components in a seamless way," says Hamrick. "Wilwood works closely with chassis manufacturers to make sure that what they are using for suspensions will accommodate easy bolt-on brake applications that they can either sell with the chassis or allow the shop to order and bolt-on with no issues. Customers want it now, and if we can help be a part of getting their builds done quicker, everyone wins."

Whether looking to shave seconds off at the track or impress neighbors at a show, Pro-Tourers are in it for the long haul.

"It's never going to come to an end," says Ortega from AERO Exhaust. "Personalization means everything, and an enthusiast who once ran a small-block V-8 with a 2.5-inch exhaust system may now be looking to switch over to a fuel-injected LS motor that requires a 3.0-inch setup. An owner of a GM A-body running the factory transmission may be interested in switching over to a TREMEC 6-speed, which will most likely require him or her to reroute their existing exhaust system. These are two very common scenarios that require the knowledge and expertise of an experienced shop owner. This creates new business opportunities on a greater scale." **TS**

## 1990 250GD WOLF G-WAGEN

Expedition Motor Co. (EMC) presents a 2021 iteration of its vintage Wolf G-Wagen restorations with the introduction of the 1990 250GD. The new truck is designed to feature the quietest, smoothest application of an automatic transmission ever found in a vintage military-grade Wolf.

It started as a total strip-down restoration. All-new fuel and brake lines were installed, along with fresh body mounts. Factory truck axles were media blasted and refinished with new internals. Brake calipers were re-engineered and bolstered with new rotors and drums. Upgraded springs and shocks deliver improved ride comfort.

The restoration is powered by the company's OM602 diesel engine mated to a Mercedes-Benz 5-speed 722.6 automatic transmission and original gear-shift lever found in performance-oriented S-Class vehicles.

The stormy dark Vesuvio Grey paint provides spartan elegance paired with durable dark brown vinyl-covered seats and doors, offset with bright orange touches of color throughout the interior cabin. Highlights include a modern HVAC system and an upgraded entertainment system with new Bluetooth, USB and device plug-in capabilities.



EMC performed a total strip-down restoration to bring new life to a 1990 250GD Wolf G-Wagen.



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# SUPPLY CHAIN OVERVIEW

Why it's so hard to get parts right now. **By Phillip M. Perry**

**B**usinesses are grappling with recurring supply chain issues in the wake of a rebounding American economy. Faced with robust consumer and commercial demand, companies are beefing up costly inventories and wooing second-level suppliers to help close the gaps when shortages arise.

Product shortages and delays—and associated price hikes—have been no strangers to companies in recent years, thanks to international tariffs. The bottlenecked ports and shuttered production facilities of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, have transformed an exercise in efficient materials distribution into a full-scale crisis.

“Everyone in manufacturing and wholesale distribution seems to be dealing with supply chain disruptions,” says Bill Conerly, principal of his own consulting firm in Lake Oswego, Oregon (conerlyconsulting.com).

The economic rebound now under way in the United States, while a welcome development, has increased delivery pressures just as many companies were starting to get things under control.

“Many companies are telling me the problem seems to be getting worse as pent-up demand creates additional pressures,” says Conerly.


And the steep production cuts in early 2020—instituted to obviate excess inventories—only made the establishment of reliable delivery patterns more difficult.

## BROAD EFFECTS

The supply chain imbroglio has engaged a broad spectrum of industries.

“For a number of years our member

companies have been dealing with disruptions caused by factors such as tariffs and higher energy costs,” says Tom Palisin, executive director of The Manufacturers’ Association, a York, Pennsylvania-based regional employers’ group with more than 370 member companies (mascpa.org). With its diverse membership in food processing, defense, fabrication and machinery

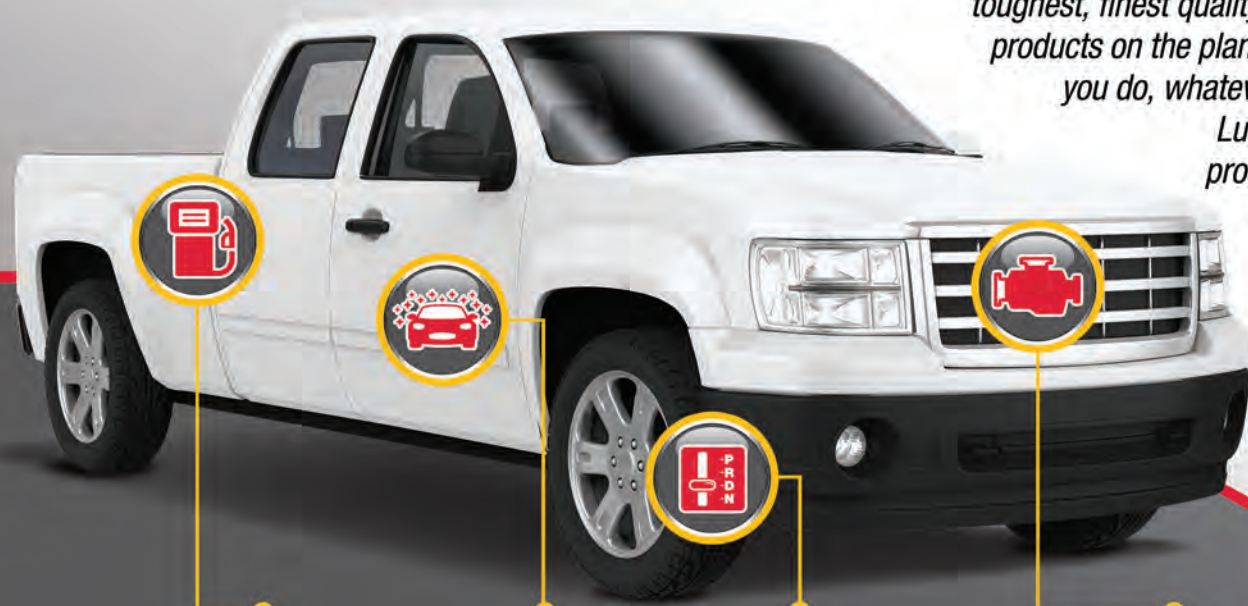


Everyone in manufacturing and wholesale distribution seems to be dealing with supply chain disruptions.



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The bottlenecked ports and shuttered production facilities of the COVID-19 pandemic have transformed an exercise in efficient materials distribution into a full-scale crisis.

building, Palisin's association can be viewed as a proxy for American industry.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has given the supply chain a whole new level of priority. Companies in just about all sectors have experienced pauses and shutdowns. Some have even gone out of business."

Labor shortages are one of the most persistent causes of distribution slowdowns.

"One banker told me that his four manufacturing customers could each hire 50 additional workers if enough applicants were to show up," says Conerly. "When a company I work with in Portland was awaiting a shipment of brass from Los Angeles, it turned out there was no driver for the truck."

The reasons for labor shortages are varied.

"Part of the problem is that people are not yet willing to come back to work," says Conerly. "But the fact is that there were not as many pandemic-related layoffs in manufacturing as in, say, food service. A larger issue is demographics. Older people are retiring, and younger people don't want to go into dirty, noisy factories. And then you have government cash payments for people who get laid off. And finally, there are childcare issues."

The labor shortage has caused an increase in automation as a way to produce goods with fewer man hours.

"In recent months there's been a surge of business orders for capital equipment," says Conerly. "The fact that manufacturing production has not reached all-time highs, though, indicates that the new equipment

is not intended to boost capacity. So, I think a lot of the business capital spending is intended to replace empty positions with machines. The idea is, 'If I can't hire somebody to assemble this product, maybe I can hire a robot to do it.' And I think that's a good strategy."

A decline in the cost of automation has helped fuel this trend.

"The cost of labor has gone up while the cost of electronic equipment has gone down," says Conerly. "Something that did not pencil out a few years ago may well do so today."

## NEW STRATEGIES

Companies are responding to the supply

chain challenge by doing more with less, running machinery beyond its prime and collaborating with vendors to predict shipping delays. Such moves strike a familiar chord with Palisin at The Manufacturers' Association.

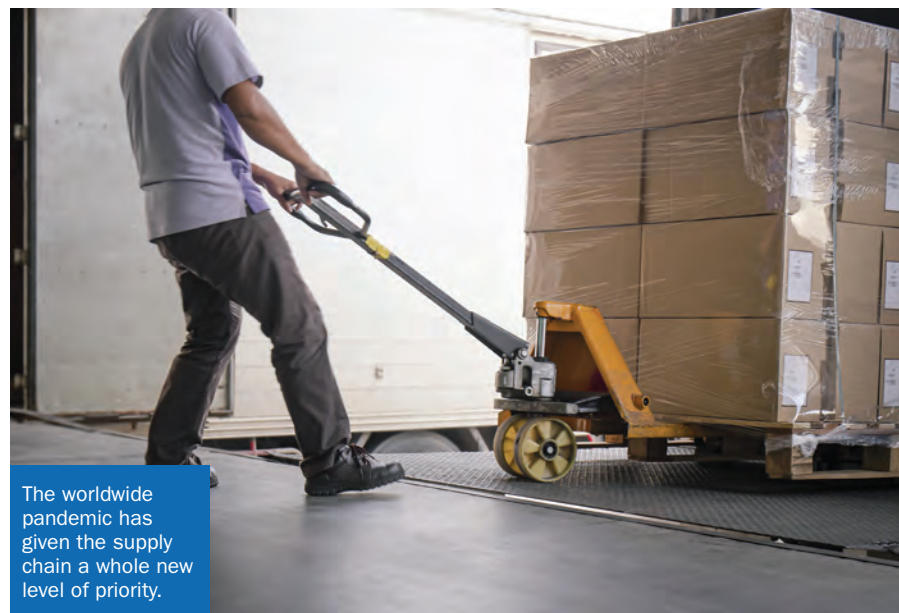
"The pandemic has really highlighted the need to develop strategies to mitigate potential disruptions in the flow of critical components," says Palisin. "That means doing a deep dive into the supply chain, mapping the geographical locations of the first tier of suppliers and learning about the reliance of the second tier as well."

Pandemic-related shortages have affirmed the need for backup vendors, even for lower-volume items.

"Instead of relying on one supplier, a company might have three to manage risks," says Jim Hannan, practice leader of the manufacturing, distribution and logistics service group at consulting firm Withum (withum.com). "We expect this trend to continue with the advent of environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards at larger companies."

When deliveries are spotty, companies are tempted to keep more stock on hand.

"Companies should no longer rely on just-in-time inventory strategies, which too often have become just-too-late failures, and stockpile more supplies both in the United States and abroad," says John Manzella, a consultant on global business and economic trends in East Amherst, New York (john-



The worldwide pandemic has given the supply chain a whole new level of priority.

manzella.com). “This approach reduces efficiencies but favors risk reduction.”

Companies are willing to turn the traditional views of inventory control upside down, given the increased risk of shortages and potential loss of customer goodwill.

“Many companies are investing more cash in inventories, and banks seem content with lending against that,” says Hannan.

While businesses pay the price for bolstering inventory levels, such costs must be balanced against operational expenses such as the need to pay higher prices for goods when a company scrambles to fill customer orders—or lost revenues when an unhappy customer jumps ship for a competitor.

As they balance such costs, many companies are viewing higher cashflow on the shelf as acceptable.

“Risk mitigation has become more important than efficiency gains,” says Manzella.

Furthermore, the three historic costs of



Labor shortages are one of the most persistent causes of distribution slowdowns.

inventories—interest, obsolescence and shrinkage—no longer universally apply.

“The interest rate you get for having cash in the bank now is approximately diddly squat,” says Conerly.

And obsolescence would only be an issue if something were expected to go out of fashion.

“Many products in short supply today are the same products as last year’s model and they are not going to become obsolete.”

Shrinkage, he adds, is not an issue in some industries and in others can be controlled with requisite security steps.

Cheap or not, inventory storage must be allocated selectively.

“Companies need to be thinking, ‘What might be in short supply when we try to ramp up our production?’” says Conerly. “They may well buy a year’s supply of a relatively cheap item that is a small part of what a company uses but is vital to producing a finished product.”

Despite the inventory mind shift, business owners feel that a return to the days of warehouses bulging with expensive inventory is not in the cards.

“Everybody has become accustomed to reducing costs by minimizing touch points, moving goods from the ship straight to the distribution facility and on to the customer,” says one operator.

Indeed, cooperative efforts with suppliers

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Pandemic-related shortages have affirmed the need for backup vendors, even for lower-volume items.

and customers may well help bring back a greater emphasis on just-in-time.

“I believe that the economy will eventually get back to that just-in-time concept as market disruptions lapse and the continued collaborative partnerships with vendors and suppliers remain a priority,” says Hannan.

## THE ROAD AHEAD

Businesses face a conundrum as the world looks to emerge from the pandemic: How quickly will demand increase for products and services, and will the increase be steady or erratic?

The wrong answers could result in a pileup of inventory or lost revenues and customers.

“The risk is especially great for consumer and business goods requiring long lead times, where businesses can’t easily turn the supply chain spigot on and off,” says Hannan.

The solution, he says, is to develop a playbook to address possible disruptions and evaluate risks up and down the supply

chain, then develop a plan to address those risks.

And management must grapple with other unknowns, such as whether the recent surge in the price of manufactured

goods can be passed along to consumers. All this may soften profits until everything shakes out.

“Revenues will probably hold up or even increase because of higher demand,



Companies are responding to the supply chain challenge by doing more with less.



When deliveries are spotty, companies are tempted to keep more stock on hand.



may well return to spending on vacations instead of home improvements, as they did in 2020 when demand for household furnishings and building materials challenged the whole supply chain,” he says. “Consumers who have already completed their projects will be spending their money elsewhere.”

Indeed, many operators feel that with the pandemic hopefully coming to an end in the near future, now is the right time for businesses delivering quality service to gain market share.

Says one: “We’re assuming the worst and hoping for the best. Our overriding goal is to protect the health of our people and service our customers. Those things haven’t changed a bit. And we’ll do what it takes to get it done.” **TS**

but margins will likely be hit because of increases in the costs of raw materials, labor and inventory,” says Palisin. “It’s a very unusual situation where all of these cost increases are happening at once—and at a time when tariffs are still in place. Com-

panies just can’t pass along everything to customers.”

As for the road ahead, Conerly anticipates a gradual improvement in the operating environment.

“Now that people are able to travel, they



New York City-based journalist Phillip M. Perry publishes widely in the fields of business management and law.






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### Cat-Back Exhausts

#### Holley Performance Products,

Bowling Green, Kentucky, introduces new **Flowmaster FlowFX** Extreme stainless steel cat-back exhaust systems, including applications for 2009-'21 Ram 1500 4.7L and 5.7L and Ford F-150 V-6 and V-8 trucks. The systems include a FlowFX muffler for a deep, powerful sound and increased performance, and 3.0-inch mandrel-bent 409 stainless steel tubing for maximum exhaust flow and durability. The systems have a turndown-style dump exit right after the muffler to eliminate the over-axle tailpipe.



### Sport Compact Pistons

**JE Pistons**, Cypress, California, presents its Ultra Series pistons, available for BMW, Ford, Honda, Mitsubishi, Nissan, Subaru and Toyota applications in a variety of compression ratios and bore sizes. Designed to deliver custom piston features with shelf-stock convenience, Ultra Series pistons are engineered to handle high boost levels and nitrous oxide. They are forged from race-proven 2618 alloy using proprietary Aligned Grain Flow technology and are up to 20% stronger than conventionally forged pistons.



### GM Control Arms

**Ridetech**, Jasper, Indiana, introduces new options within its StrongArms control arms portfolio that are designed to fit factory coil springs and shocks on a

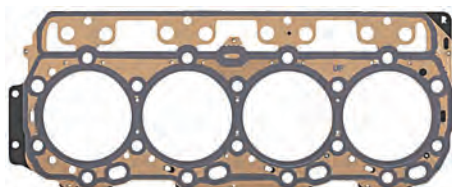


number of classic General Motors vehicles. The new tubular front lower control arms allow ride height adjustment with the addition or removal of included spacers located under the coil spring. StrongArms are also compatible with Ridetech dual-rate springs, as well as factory coil springs.

### GM Head Gaskets

**Engine Pro**, Wheat Ridge, Colorado, introduces a new line of performance multi-layer steel Head Gaskets specifically designed to meet the high thermal demands and combustion pressures of GM LS and LT engines. The gaskets feature

three, five or seven layers of metal to provide high thermal stability in extreme conditions including severe-duty, nitrous, supercharged and turbo applications. The head gaskets are made of beaded, elastomer-coated spring steel layers for macro-sealing and include elastomer coating technology to provide micro-sealing.



### Chevy HEI Distributor

#### PerTronix Performance Brands,

San Dimas, California, presents the Flame-Thrower HEI Distributor, now available for small- and big-block Chevrolet applications. Features include an adjustable vacuum advance canister, high-dielectric-strength red cap and rotor with brass terminals, dependable coil and module that exceed OEM specifications, welded mechanical advance pins for durability, and a simple single-wire hook-up.



### TREMEC Adapter Plate

**California Pony Cars**, Ontario, California, presents an Adapter Plate for 1965-'70 **TREMEC** TKO T-5 transmission conversions using a six-bolt bellhousing. Made in the USA, the kits include the adapter plate and hardware. The plate does not require any modifications to the bellhousing.



**High-Temp Spray Adhesive Design Engineering Inc. (DEI)**, Avon Lake, Ohio, presents professional-grade Spray Adhesive. The high-temp adhesive is designed for use when installing the company's line of heat and sound control solutions—as well as other materials including foam, fabric, metal and wood—in automotive interior and related projects.

An improved nozzle provides a web pattern spray for coverage on all materials, with a tack time of 2 to 4 minutes and heat resistance up to 200 degrees.

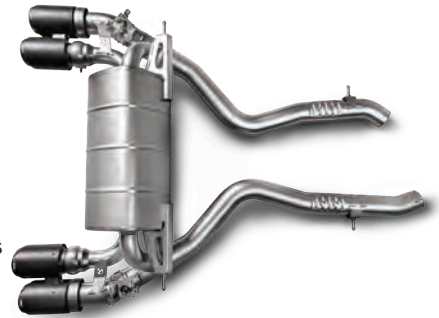


**Lithium Iron Phosphate Battery**

**PPE**, Montclair, California, presents a Lithium Iron Phosphate (LiFePO<sub>4</sub>) Battery. Suitable for vehicle, marine, solar, RV and backup power use, the LiFePO<sub>4</sub> battery combines thermal stability, safety characteristics and electrochemical performance, and has a non-toxicity rating compared to other traditional deep-cycle battery options including lead-acid, absorbed glass mat (AGM) or lithium-ion (Li-ion). It offers an extended life cycle and a very constant discharge voltage that stays close to 3.2V.

**BMW M2 CS Slip-On Exhausts**

**Akrapovič**, Horsham, Pennsylvania, presents its Slip-On Line (Titanium) Exhaust System, available for BMW M2 CS models. Made from titanium, the system reduces the weight of the exhaust while delivering extra power and lower backpressure. It provides a sporty tone in the middle and upper rpm ranges without droning. Carbon fiber tailpipes offer added dynamics. Cutting of the stock exhaust is required.



**New Software**

**AEM Performance Electronics**, Hawthorne, California, presents DashDesign Software v2.2, now available for download. Features of the new software include the ability to transmit live channel values over user-defined CAN messages from the dash, reduce the number of screens displayed on the dash to minimize toggling through screens when you want to use fewer than the normal four pages, support for the 2020 Can-Am Maverick X3 and automatic update checks. Additional work was performed to improve the functionality of the Simulator tab.

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**GM Spindles**

**Wilwood Disc Brakes**, Camarillo, California, presents a new 2-Inch Drop ProSpindle for General Motors second-generation 1970-'81 F-body, 1973-'76 A-body, 1975-'79 X-body and related B-body cars using Wilwood brakes. The rigid, high-strength cast steel spindle eliminates the factory sliding caliper mount, allowing multiple Wilwood brake upgrades. The steering arm has also been strengthened for more accurate steering and better handling with modern tires.



**Updated Racing Oil**

**Motul**, Cypress, California, presents a new and improved version of its flagship 300V High-Performance Racing Oil. The updated 300V builds upon Motul's ESTER Core technology and comes in an expanded range of viscosities with increased engine protection, reliability and power. Marked by a 50% improvement in shear stability, it ensures maximum oil film resistance and consistent oil viscosity, reducing wear to vital engine components. The high detergent level improves cleanliness while increased oxidation and thermal resistance prolong oil life.



**Toyota/BMW Charge Pipe**

**Mishimoto Automotive**, New Castle, Delaware, introduces a Charge Pipe for 2020-newer Toyota Supra and 2019-newer BMW Z4 platforms. Designed to reduce restriction over the factory setup by up to 42%, the system features 3-inch mandrel-bent piping with internal transitions for reduced turbulence and improved flow.



Two pre-installed bungs can be drilled and tapped for boost sensors, nitrous or methanol injection, and the included coupler is constructed with steel wire reinforcement to prevent ballooning under high boost pressures.

**Cummins Turbo**

**aFe Power**, Corona, California, presents the BladeRunner GT Turbo, available for 2003-'07 Dodge Ram 5.9L Cummins applications. The bolt-on replacement turbo was shown to add 51 hp and 124 pound-feet of torque with a performance tune and no other major modifications. Billet aluminum construction allows for weight savings and added durability.



**2017-'19 GM Diesel Tuning**

**Superchips**, Ogden, Utah, presents the all-new Flashpaq 2847-DS, offering tuning for 2017-'19 Chevrolet Silverado HD/GMC Sierra HD L5P Duramax applications. By adjusting torque outputs at lower pedal inputs, the tuners deliver better throttle response, while rail pressure and injection timing tweaks offer more power and torque throughout the rpm range. New Keep Drive modes remember the last driver settings for Exhaust Braking, Tow/Haul mode and Grade Braking. Drivers can adjust throttle pedal sensitivity, command a manual DPF regeneration and more.



**Ram Dual Wheel Hub Assembly**

**Torque King 4x4**, Billings, Montana, presents a new, high-performance Dual Rear Wheel (DRW) Hub Assembly for 2012-'18 Dodge Ram 3500 trucks. Made in the USA from premium billet steel, each assembly is CNC-machined for strength and includes preinstalled wheel studs and high-quality **Timken** bearing cups.



**Miata Ignition Upgrade**

**AMP EFI/DIYAutoTune.com**, Gainesville, Georgia, introduces the new MaxSpark plug-and-play ignition upgrade for 1990-2005 Mazda Miata applications. Featuring the IGN-1A SMART race coil, the system delivers a significant ignition upgrade, with a maximum voltage output of 81,000V. Output energy is 103 mJ and maximum current is 1.9 amps. The new kit may improve vehicle reliability by moving ignition system high-current demands away from the failure-prone main relay and onto a new, dedicated relay.

**Sway Bar Link Kit**

**SuperPro Suspension Parts**, Australia, presents the TRC1085 Sway Bar Link Kit. The 10mm ball joint adjustable link has a minimum length of 140mm and a maximum length of 185mm. The system is designed to maximize the benefits of roll control adjustable sway bars and be used in place of OE links from BMW, Mazda, Mitsubishi and more. A spanner provision allows for on-car adjustment, and the kit can be used on lowered or raised vehicles.



**Yokes**

**Strange Engineering**, Morton Grove, Illinois, offers chromoly Transmission and Pinion Yokes. Manufactured from high-quality forgings and fully heat-treated to achieve maximum tensile strength, the transmission and pinion yokes are CNC-machined to assure concentricity and balance for ideal driveshaft operation. Options for Powerglide transmission yokes include removable caps for quick driveline changes and special case hardening heat treatment for roller bearing tail housings. **TS**



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# Cream of the Crop

The high-end world of Concours d'Elegance restorations. ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ By John Gunnell



A famous ad showing a 1955 Chevy mingling with Pebble Beach Concours entries.

A famous automobile print advertisement shows a 1955 Chevrolet Bel Air convertible at that year's Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. A caption below the illustration reads, "THE FRENCH HAVE A PHRASE FOR IT: – 'Concours d'elegance' – a competition in automotive style and luxury. Here, against the background of a "concours" at California's fashionable Pebble Beach, is the new Chevrolet convertible – a car that fully reflects, in line and spirit, the great tradition of custom car design."

Actually, the Chevrolet copywriters had it wrong, as do many people—including shop owners. Concours d'Elegance (French: *concours d'élégance*) means a competition of beauty and elegance and can refer to women, fashion, art, boats, carriages or anything that can be judged for such attributes.



A 1929 Duesenberg Model J owned by Greg Ornazian.



Special cars like the Studebaker National Museum's 1928 Commander "mileage champion" add to the excitement at a Concours.



A "capital-C" Classic Auburn 12 at the Milwaukee Concours d'Elegance.

It's true, however, that over the years, *Concours d'Elegance* has become a term for shows where collectible automobiles are judged on their appearance. These events are particularly popular in the United States today, and are often organized as competitive car shows that raise money for various charities.

To illustrate how misunderstood the term *Concours d'Elegance* is, the spell checker on most phones and computers will reject *concours* or change *d'elegance* to *elegance*. Also, until very recent times, a Coral and Shadow Gray '55 Chevy, as mentioned earlier, would not have been accepted for display at most *Concours d'Elegance*-style events. For years they were limited to *capital-C* Classics and high-end sports cars.

(*Capital-C* Classics refers to specific year and model cars on lists made up by the Classic Car Club of America and the Antique Automobile Club of America.)

### BEST OF THE BEST

While the rules regarding which types of cars can compete in a *Concours*-style event have changed over the years, what hasn't changed is the fact that certain restoration shops are known for their track records of winning awards at these shows.

Those particular shops can be assured that they will always have clients willing to bear the cost of the craftsmanship it takes to win an award at events like Pebble Beach, Amelia Island, St. John's, 10,000



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Jack Rans' 1921 Marmon roadster at the Milwaukee Concours d'Elegance.



Restoration of exotic sports cars at Bennett Coachworks in Milwaukee.



Vintage Woodworks does Chrysler Town & Country convertible tops.



A 1930 Stutz Speedster entered in a Concours by Carl and Carrol Jensen.



A 1941 Cadillac owned by Ron De Woskin was entered in the Milwaukee Concours.



A Rolls-Royce approaches the Concours judging stand.

Lakes, Newport, Benedict Castle, Forest Grove, Hershey, Geneva, Hillsborough, Greenwich, Gasparilla, Hilton Head, Keels & Wheels and other Concours events.

Concours judging is done by a team of experts that can include shop owners, racing drivers, celebrities who know cars, automotive historians, journalists and well-known collectors. The cars are usually judged on a point system, where a perfect car would merit a specific number of points (often 100 or 1,000). In most cases, the judges start at a perfect score and then examine the vehicles looking for imperfections that prompt point deductions.

Car owners prepare their cars by meticulously cleaning them, removing swirls and scratches and having other flaws repaired in advance of the show. Car owners can expect to have their engines examined, seats moved, and all parts checked for authenticity.

Original parts with factory numbers stamped on them won't gain points, because that's what the judges expect. But a reproduction Corvette knock-off wheel





L'Cars in Cameron, Wisconsin has turned out several Pebble Beach Concours cars.



A 1956 Ferrari 290MM award-winner owned by Ed and Leslie Davies.

cover that every collector knows doesn't exactly match factory specs won't cut it at a Concours.

Accessories *do not* add points and may lead to deductions if they have aftermarket origins, such as a period-correct, but non-factory, Fulton outside sun visor. This is true even if a factory-authorized dealer installed the accessory.

However, everything the car originally came with should be aboard including the owner's manual, a spare tire (unless it's a racing car or state trooper car), factory tool kits, tire-changing equipment and so on.

Judges look at the quality of the paint, chrome (or other) plating and door gaps, and also examine details such as the rubber pad on the brake pedal or the fasteners to make certain they are of the type used in the era when the car was built.

Shops that restore cars for Concours participants should understand that points may be deducted for things such as applying too much dressing to make a tire look overly shiny. Car show judges are



Sports cars like this Alfa Romeo qualify as Concours cars.



Master restorer and TV host Wayne Carini judged at the Milwaukee Concours.

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“Concours d’Elegance” has become a term for shows where collectible automobiles are judged on their appearance.

like tax auditors—they are *expected* to find something wrong with *every* car.

### THE DEVIL’S IN THE DETAILS

As a shop owner, you should advise your client to stay by his or her car in case the judges raise questions about the authenticity of something that doesn’t seem like original equipment.

For instance, early 1954 Corvettes came with three small, separate chrome air cleaners, but a running production change to a carburetor manifold that held two larger air cleaners was made to reduce noise and eliminate fire dangers. It’s possible that the original owner of an early ’54 Corvette had

## Las Vegas Concours d’Elegance Returns for 2021



The 2021 Las Vegas Concours d’Elegance expects to attract more than 100 beautiful and famous collector cars to the entertainment capital of the world.

Now in its second year, the event is scheduled for Oct. 21-24 and is open to the general public. Two days of pre-show Concours d’Avant advance celebrations and upscale special events are also planned.

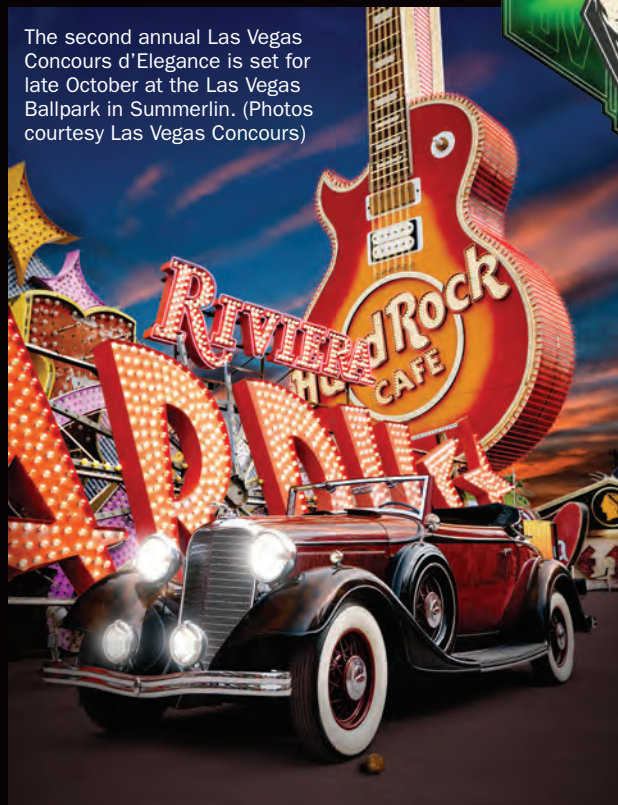
“We initially set out to ensure our inaugural event would earn its rightful place among the famed Concours showings and competitions from around the world, and we achieved our goal,” says Stuart Sobek, founder. “Now we are focused on elevating our second year to even greater heights.”

Sobek’s planning includes a new show venue that blends 71 years of famed Concours-quality elegance with one of today’s most advanced sports facilities—the Las Vegas Ballpark in Summerlin.

The recently completed \$150 million stadium, owned by Howard Hughes Corp., features a lush grass infield for spectator viewing and a large Daktronics LED video screen overhead with nearly 4,000 square feet of visual display for close-up vehicle coverage.

Entries are expected from exclusive private collections and famous automotive museums, and this year’s Las Vegas Concours d’Elegance, presented by Towbin Motorcars of Las Vegas, will benefit Miracle Flights, a locally based nonprofit providing free air transportation to children and adults who need help reaching specialized medical care far from home.

“Concours d’Elegance is the *crème de la crème* of automobile shows. It transcends basic motoring history and elevates truly outstanding and amazing vehicles to a captivating art form,” Sobek says. “We have over 100 of the greatest collector cars from around the world—many that have never been seen before in Las Vegas—and 15 classes of cars ranging from 1903 to today’s latest showstoppers.”



The second annual Las Vegas Concours d’Elegance is set for late October at the Las Vegas Ballpark in Summerlin. (Photos courtesy Las Vegas Concours)





The goal of a Concours restoration is to make a car exactly as it left the factory—no better and no worse.

this improved system dealer-installed. At a Concours d'Elegance, the car owner would have to have such a change documented.

The documentation needed can vary from judge to judge and one show to another, but a dealer invoice from 1954 that covered that change would prove the case. In other instances, such evidence might not be available, but facts published in factory sales literature, a shop manual, a book or even a magazine article may come in handy.

Your shop's client may want to bring such items to the Concours d'Elegance, but they should *not* be displayed in the trunk of the car, like many owners do at regular car shows, since they do not meet the *original factory equipment* requirement that judges will adhere to.

At this point, if you're thinking that building a car for an owner to show on the Concours circuit is not worth the trouble, you're likely wrong on two counts. First, shops do not build cars for Concours judging—they *rebuild* them. The top awards go to cars that are restored to the condition they were in when newly purchased. They are not supposed to look better or go faster than they did when they were in the auto salon or showroom.

Second, shops known for turning out Concours winners will likely benefit from that reputation with lucrative new and repeat customer projects.



Dennis Bickford of Vintage Woodworks restoring a Chrysler Town and Country.

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This 1935 Packard Model 1208 owned by Dave and Marlese Lindsay has a Dietrich body.



The events are particularly popular in the United States today, and are often organized as competitive car shows that raise money for various charities.



A 1935 Auburn 851 Speedster entered by Allen and Nancy Strong at the Milwaukee Concours.

The advantages of being recognized as a craftsman who turns out Concours-winning cars include:

- Always having a long waiting list of reliable customers
- Working with select clients who appreciate the time and work high-end car projects require
- Achieving a great sense of satisfaction from the historical importance of the cars being worked on
- A sense of accomplishment from doing things other shops can't do
- Often being involved in the transportation and preparation of the car prior to a showing

A Concours d'Elegance restoration is a job that by its very nature stands apart from the commonplace. It goes beyond fixing dents, applying new paint, stitching up an authentic interior and rebuilding mechanical components.

Many of the Grand Classic cars of the 1920s and '30s were purchased in a chassis-and-cowl format for which custom bodies were then hand-fabricated. Coach builders including Derham, Fleetwood, Murphy, LeBaron, Waterhouse, Deitrich

and dozens more then crafted the coachwork for that chassis.

Huge multicylinder engines—including straight-eights, V-12s and even V-16s—were used to power these four-wheeled works of art. In fact, they were sometimes called *rolling sculpture*.

The shops that bring these cars back to their original glory today are treated to a very special experience in the world of restoring automobiles. The Classics seen at Concours d'Elegance events are sometimes described as *Olympian Motorcars*. They are big, beautiful and rare.

It takes a true artist to make them new again—plus a major investment of historical research, automotive talent and money.

Most shops can make any old car look good given enough time, but to turn out a Classic that loses no points when picky Concours judges examine it? That's a level that very few shops will achieve. **TS**



**JOHN GUNNELL** has been writing about classic cars since 1972. He is also the owner of Gunner's Great Garage in Manawa, Wisconsin. He owns 11 cars and seven motorcycles.

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# Autotrader Names Best New Cars for Dog Lovers

**C**hances are your shop has considered creating product packages for specific customer groups. But have you ever thought of targeting man's best friend?

Finding the perfect car for a family can be challenging—especially when some family members have four legs and fur. Because dog-loving drivers often bring their sidekicks along on adventures, they need to consider their pups when determining which new car to buy.

In celebration of National Dog Day in August, Autotrader released a list of the 2021 Best New Cars for Dog Lovers, identifying the 2021 model-year vehicles best-suited for dogs and their owners.

“It’s a real decision-making factor for many shoppers when they are considering which new car to buy,” Brian Moody, executive editor for Autotrader, says of dog owners. “Whether you tend to bring your pet along for everyday errand running or you regularly take your dog on long trips, it’s important to consider your canine companion and which related features are important to you while car shopping.”

Which features do dog owners appreciate the most in a new vehicle? Autotrader’s list includes:

- **Durable seats**—Vinyl, leather and faux leather are the preferred seating materials for vehicles hauling dogs because of the materials’ durability against claw scratches and easy clean-up.
- **Tinted rear windows**—Dogs can get hot in cars, even when the air conditioning is running. Tinted rear windows can go a long way toward keeping back seats and cargo areas cool. Some vehicles on the list also have available rear sunshades for added protection.
- **Low cargo floor**—Big dogs can bound into the bed of a full-size truck with no problem, but if drivers have a smaller or medium-sized dog, or one that’s older, a lower load floor makes it easier for pets to jump in without assistance.
- **Rear air vents**—There are no very small SUVs on the list, Moody notes, because they often don’t have air vents in the back, which are a must for keeping dogs safe and comfortable.

- **Cargo tie-downs**—Needed for automotive pet accessories like harnesses or kennels.

Based on the list and a variety of relevant features like interior durability and space, comfort, convenience and safety, the vehicles that made the dog lover’s list are:

- 2021 Chrysler Pacifica
- 2021 Ford Bronco
- 2021 Honda Passport
- 2021 Jeep Wrangler
- 2021 Kia Telluride
- 2021 Nissan Rogue
- 2021 Subaru Forester
- 2021 Tesla Model Y
- 2021 Toyota Sienna
- 2021 Volvo XC60 Recharge

For more information, visit [autotrader.com/best-cars/best-cars-for-dogs](https://www.autotrader.com/best-cars/best-cars-for-dogs).

*This article originally appeared on [theshopmag.com](https://www.theshopmag.com). Visit and sign up for our daily eNewsletter delivered each morning to your inbox. **TS***



More and more dog owners are taking pet-friendly features and accessories into account when considering which new car to buy. (Photo courtesy Autotrader.com)



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