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Drag racing, particularly at the grassroots level, had a great year in 2022. The challenge now is to evolve and change with the times. *See articles beginning on page 18.* (Photo courtesy Tony Thacker)

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Jef White
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Positive Projections for New Vehicle Sales

If your business depends even partially on vehicle sales trends and/or fleet work, you may be starting 2023 with at least a little uncertainty.

Cox Automotive, which encompasses automotive brands Autotrader, Kelley Blue Book and others, hopes to bring some clarity with its Top 10 expectations for the U.S. automotive market in the new year.

By nearly all measures, the past 12 months were difficult for both the new-car industry and consumers, marked by historically low new-vehicle inventories, high prices and stubborn inflation chipping away at monthly budgets. A relatively strong jobs market was a tailwind, but the Federal Reserve pushed rates higher, essentially riding the brakes as the auto industry struggled to gain momentum.

"This past year was challenging, not only to forecast but for the industry to manage," says Jonathan Smoke, Cox Automotive chief economist. "As we look forward into 2023, we see one set of challenges being replaced by another. We expect the year ahead to be one of transition, as both the consumer and the industry move past the remnants of a global pandemic and set a new course for mid-decade growth."

The Top 10 predicted trends from Cox are:

- #1 A slow-growing economy will place pressure on the automotive market
- #2 New-vehicle inventory levels will continue to increase
- #3 Total retail vehicle sales will fall in 2023—new-vehicle sales will grow but used sales will decline
- #4 Sales of electric vehicles in the U.S. will surpass 1 million units for the first time
- #5 Used-vehicle values will see above-normal depreciation for a second straight year
- #6 Vehicle affordability will be the greatest challenge facing vehicle buyers
- #7 All-cash deals will increase to levels not seen in decades
- #8 Dealership service operations volume and revenue will climb
- #9 Half of vehicle buyers will engage with digital retailing tools
- #10 Federal incentives will encourage more fleet buyers to consider electrified solutions

A job-wrecking recession is a worst-case scenario for the auto industry, but hope for an economic soft landing remains. Still, Cox reports that new-vehicle production challenges are beginning to ebb, and inventory levels are measurably improving.

The depreciation of used vehicles presents another aftermarket opportunity, as owners look to refresh instead of replace, and dealerships search for added value. Cox predicts "price trends should normalize in the second half of the year as constrained wholesale supply supports used values and used retail prices fall into a normal relationship with new prices."

Finally, as affordability issues cause more owners to maintain current vehicles, 2023 should see continued strong dynamics in the service lanes, with or without a recession.

"With retail sales expected to be flat or down, fixed operations as a profit center will be more important than ever in 2023," Cox foresees. ***TS***

THE SHOP

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Filing with CONFIDENCE



The case for hiring a tax professional.

By Mark E. Battersby

When it comes to seeking advice or preparing a specialty automotive aftermarket operation's tax returns, complex, everchanging tax rules make doing so without help extremely risky.

While off-the-shelf software or more expensive custom software are frequently used, professional help is almost always a necessity.

Most shops use a professional at some point—most often to prepare tax returns. In fact, according to the IRS, more than half of all returns received were filed by tax professionals.

For those without professional help at the moment—or those seeking to change tax professionals—finding a qualified tax pro should be more than just a search for the least expensive or most convenient option.

THE PEOPLE YOU NEED

The first question to ask is, "What type of tax professional is required?"

When it comes to help with tax preparation or tax questions, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) does offer free advice—but it is often difficult to obtain. Also, the IRS will not advocate aggressive tax solutions, nor can its answers be taken as gospel.

In fact, the IRS will not stand behind incorrect advice or even an erroneous interpretation of its own rules.

While anyone with an IRS Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN) can be considered a paid tax return preparer, remember that there are various types of professionals with differing levels of skills, education and expertise.

Bookkeepers are great for the day-to-day recordkeeping of a specialty automotive aftermarket business. Accountants, on the other hand, usually crunch the numbers tracked by the operation's bookkeeper, translating—and sometimes even evaluating—those figures in a format understandable and usable by the average performance, restyling or customization shop owner.



Different types of tax professionals provide different levels of service.

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Complex, everchanging tax rules mean most shops should consider hiring professional help.

When dealing with an accountant, don't underestimate the importance of a certified public accountant or CPA.

Passing the CPA examination is frequently a guarantee of a certain level of ability. Those three letters are awarded only to those who have passed a rigorous three-day, nationally standardized exam.

Most states require CPAs to have at least a college degree or its equivalent. Many, in fact, require post-graduate work.

However, while many CPAs do advise and prepare returns, keep in mind that the CPA designation does not require a special knowledge of tax laws, even though CPAs and attorneys are permitted to practice before the IRS and the tax courts.

Meanwhile, another group of professionals called "enrolled agents" (EAs) must demonstrate their knowledge of taxes in order to represent taxpayers in those venues.

EAs have successfully completed a three-day test that is all about taxes. The IRS requires a certain level of competence, adherence to rigid professional standards, and continuing professional education to maintain those skill levels.

And, it is the IRS—not a local association of professionals—that tests, monitors and polices EAs.

THE SEARCH

Generally, experts suggest that it is best to find a professional focusing on clients that mirror your situation:

- Smaller tax return preparers and national chains such as H&R Block tend to focus on individuals, professionals and smaller-sized businesses.
- Medium-sized CPA firms usually specialize in mid- to large-scale regional businesses and high-income individuals.
- National CPA firms are geared toward servicing very large companies and their top employees.

Typically, attorneys specializing in tax law are not ardent disciples of tax return preparation. Such legal professionals are most often confined to complex transaction issues and document preparation.

Also keep in mind that non-legal tax professionals are afforded some degree of client confidentiality. For issues requiring absolute confidentiality, consider the use of attorneys who enjoy legal extremes of data protection.


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The best way to find someone to prepare your operation's tax returns or to render needed tax advice is to get a referral from business associates, your banker or an attorney.



The best way to find someone to prepare your operation's tax returns or to render needed tax advice is to get a referral from business associates, your banker or an attorney. If more possibilities are needed, every state has professional associations that can help, including organizations such as:

1 American Academy of Attorney-CPAs
AAA-CPA is the only organization made up of individuals who are dual-qualified as attorneys and as CPAs. (attorney-cpa.com)

2 American Institute of Certified Public Accountants
AICPA is the world's largest member association representing the accounting profession. (aicpa.org)

3 National Association of Enrolled Agents
NAEA is a professional society representing enrolled agents—America's "tax experts." EAs earn their licenses from the U.S. Treasury Department by passing a three-part examination administered by the IRS and are required to complete annual continuing education requirements that exceed the IRS's required minimum and adhere to a stringent code of ethics. (taxexperts.naea.org)

4 National Association of Tax Professionals
NATP claims to be the largest nonprofit organization, with members in all 50 states, focusing specifically on federal tax preparation. It says its members adhere to a superior standard of professional conduct and bring excellence to the more than 12 million taxpayers it assists worldwide. (natptax.com)

5 National Conference of CPA Practitioners
NCCPAP is another professional organization that claims to represent more than 1 million businesses and individual clients. NCCPAP monitors and influences tax administration and tax policy by meeting with IRS representatives and state taxing authorities as well as national and state elected officials. (go.nccpap.org)

6 National Society of Accountants
NSA, along with its state affiliates, represents independent practitioners who provide accounting, tax, auditing, financial and estate planning and management services to 19 million individuals and businesses. NSA members are required to pursue continuing professional education to stay current on tax laws and client services. It also has a strict code of ethics. (web.nsacct.org)

7 National Society of Tax Professionals
NSTP says it assists members to attain the greatest expertise, proficiency and competency is all areas of tax compliance while preparing them to be qualified to effectively provide professional tax preparation services for their clients. (natptax.com)

Remember, the professional used for tax advice need not be the same one used for preparing your shop's tax returns.

CHECKING & COMPLAINING

It should go without saying that the tax preparer's qualifications, along with his or her history, should be checked.

Asking the right questions, often during the free initial conference offered by most professionals, can help assess not only the needs of your business, but also determine whether the professional will be a good fit.

While few organizations will provide reviews of their members, the IRS's Directory of Federal Tax Return Preparers with Credentials and Select Qualifications (irs.treasury.gov/rpo/rpo.jsf) can often help in the search for professional tax help. The information contained in this directory is all that is publicly available, and keep in mind that there are many valid preparers who have current preparer tax identification numbers from the IRS who are not listed.

Tax return preparer fraud is among the list of common tax scams. The IRS provides tips on avoiding unscrupulous tax return preparers and investigates paid tax return preparers who act improperly.

Any performance, restyling or customization professional who has been financially impacted by a tax return preparer's

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A free initial conference can determine if a professional is right for you.

misconduct or improper tax preparation practices can make a formal complaint. To report abusive tax return preparers or suspected tax fraud, use the IRS Form 14157, Return Preparer Complaint, and Form 14157-A, Tax Return Preparer Fraud or Misconduct Affidavit.

Although these forms don't let shops off the hook for paying taxes owed, they allow every individual, sole proprietor and single-member LLC to anonymously report tax preparer misconduct.



NARROWING YOUR SEARCH

Since business (and life) happens year-round, not just at tax time, access to your tax professional for needed guidance at any time is almost essential.

If problems arise with a tax return, the professional should be able to address them. If there is an IRS audit, the professional should be available and able to guide you through the process.

An important step to finding the right professional is an inventory of what your shop needs in the way of services and advice and, most importantly, how much you can afford to pay for them.

Determine beforehand just how much of the work you and your employees will do and how much of it will be done by the professional or professionals you hire.

Shopping for a professional is virtually a necessity in today's business economy. Fortunately, many professionals offer free first meetings to discuss:

- Expectations
- Services needed & provided
- The extent of involvement by the professional & the portion of the work the operation's employees expect to shoulder
- Time constraints
- Costs

It is not "tacky" to discuss fees beforehand, but cost should not be the sole criteria for selecting a professional.

Comparison shopping to find a tax professional who can provide the level of service you require at a price you can afford is a process that should begin immediately.

And remember, when you sign that tax return, you become responsible for everything on it—even if someone else prepared it. ***TS***

MARK E. BATTERSBY *writes on financial and tax-related topics. Learn more at thetaxscribe.com.*

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WHSE23TS

ACCELERATING PERFORMANCE

Seven steps for promoting employee engagement.

By Kate Zabriskie

> *They're here, but they're not here. My staff isn't committed, and it's obvious to me and our customers. We're in trouble.*

> *To say that initiative is lacking is an understatement. My staff doesn't think beyond the basics. If they hit a wall, they stop. The idea of looking for a window never crosses their minds. Frustrating!*

> *Maybe it's them. Maybe it's me. Our team just goes through the motions. I wish there was a magic formula to get people focused and motivated.*

While there isn't an instant solution for increasing enthusiasm, focus and initiative, there are steps a leader can take to orchestrate success.

STEP 1 COMMUNICATE THE DIRECTION

It's hard for people to reach a destination if they don't know what it is. Whether you call it mission, purpose or something else, employees need to have a solid understanding of the organization's "why," the team's "why" and their own "why."

Leaders who promote engagement regularly connect day-to-day tasks and expectations with the bigger picture.

Work on creating clear lines of sight. For instance, "Debbie, we're here to service members. Everything we do should help our members get the most from our conferences. As the registration clerk, it's important for you to accurately register members and send their confirmation documents within two days of receiving a request. Our goal is timeliness and accuracy."

STEP 2 DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITIES & AUTHORITY

Once people know the direction, good leaders give them responsibilities and the tools they need to execute the plan.

Will everything be done exactly as the leader would do it if he or she were to take on the task? Doubtful. However, great leaders know when to step in and when to stand back and let others own their work.

"John, your job is to manage customer returns. While I have guidelines for you to follow, you can decide and then let me know how you will organize your work."

STEP 3 RECOGNIZE GOOD WORK & THE IMPORTANCE OF OTHERS

No matter their role or level in an organization, people like to be appreciated and recognized. Whether someone is a vice president or a temporary worker, leaders who engage their teams communicate the idea that everyone has an important role.

Take the time to articulate how others contribute. "Eric, you are the face of the

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office. When people visit us, you are the person who sets the tone. Thank you for taking pride in the appearance of the reception area and screening visitors in a friendly way that doesn't feel like an interrogation. You're nailing it."

STEP 4 SUPPORT STUMBLES

Slips, trips and falls will happen when people solve problems, and leaders who engage their teams completely have the good sense to support the stumbles employees will inevitably encounter.

In other words, it's about having the maturity to get beyond blame and focus on what to do differently in the future.

Do you assume the best? Do you steer clear of throwing others under the bus? Do you treat errors as learning opportunities? If not, you've got some room to improve.

"Eric, the event did not go as you had hoped, and now is the time to learn from the experience. In hindsight, what could have been done differently?"

STEP 5 INSTILL A SENSE OF CALM & CERTAINTY

Without a clear course, employees spend a lot of time worrying and focusing on what-ifs that may never happen. But with a sense of certainty, people's shock absorbers function at maximum capacity.

A leader with a plan reduces fear, uncertainty and stress. The plan can be short term, and it can change, as long as it's there and communicated.

Do you do all you should do to keep people in the loop?

"Folks, we're in a period of transition. We have several companies interested in acquiring us. Nothing has been decided and for the next two months, we're going to operate as usual. When I get information to share, I will share what I know. Until then, if you have questions, ask. Our top focus today is hitting the numbers on our secondary production line."

STEP 6 PROMOTE A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

Fairness trumps favoritism every time, and people will stick with a leader through some horrible circumstances when that person is a straight shooter and doesn't favor some over others.

Stay mindful of what's fair and think about how your team will perceive your actions.

STEP 7 ADDRESS PROBLEMS

Engaged teams eschew mediocrity, and the people at the top have high standards for everyone.

When problems occur, engaged leaders confront them head-on. If you have conversations you've put off, now is the time to reset and communicate what's expected.

Leaders who engage don't do so by accident or without work. If you want to jumpstart or refocus your team, start with these seven steps.

With some deliberate effort on your part, you should start seeing results soon. ***TS***



KATE ZABRISKIE *is the president of Business Training Works Inc., a Maryland-based talent development firm. She and her team provide onsite, virtual and online soft-skills training courses and workshops to clients in the United States and internationally. For more information, visit businesstrainingworks.com.*

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PERFORMANCE

FEBRUARY 2023

A Hard Look at Drag Racing p.24 | Pomona Gallery p.32 | Performance Products p.38



Work with racers who can be strong ambassadors for your shop's services. (Photo by Wes Duenkel/courtesy Holley)

By John Carollo

STRAIGHT TO IT

Drag racing rides momentum into the new year.

Drag racing, by all accounts, had a great year in 2022. With all that's going on in the world today, that's quite remarkable.

Following our recent report on the circle track market (*THE SHOP*, December 2022), it appears motorsports are doing well overall, leading to a sense of optimism heading into the new year.

That doesn't mean some strong challenges aren't still looming, however. From economic worries to supply chain struggles, shops will need to stay abreast of changes to the drag racing market as a new season quickly approaches.

SUPPLY & DEMAND

It seems no business discussion these days is complete without a mention of supply chain struggles.

"One of the major factors currently affecting the drag racing market is the ability to acquire many aftermarket components and the lead times it takes to receive those high-end race parts—whether for an engine, chassis, fuel system, etc.," says Brian Cox, marketing manager at Vortech Superchargers. "Waiting to receive parts makes it that much more



Racers are seeking shops that offer the best bang for their buck. (Photo by Brian Hogan/ courtesy Holley)

difficult to get a race car up and ready for the next race."

Economic factors could also make a difference regarding car counts heading into 2023.

"Another outside factor these days is certainly gasoline prices, as most racers have a significant distance to travel to make it to the events that they were determined to make last year," Cox notes.

Robin Lawrence, director of motorsports for Holley, identifies the same main issues.

"The supply chain shortages have had a large impact on the market. Customers need products, and there is concern that what's needed won't be available—everything from engine parts to components that are not on the shelves due to microprocessor shortages," he says. "Not knowing when supplies will return to normal has had quite an adverse effect on the average racer's spending habits. Increased fuel costs aren't helping, either—it's not only more expensive just to fuel the race car, but to transport that car to and from events as well."

Of course, budget constraints in general are always on competitors' minds.

"The rising cost of racing is drastically affecting the market," says Phillip VanBuskirk, national sales manager at Aeromotive Inc. "Everything from diesel prices to engine maintenance has gone up substan-







Racers rely on the relationships they build with speed shops to provide the parts or labor they need to keep their program moving forward. (Photos courtesy Aeromotive Inc.)

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Phillip VanBuskirk
National Sales Manager

HOT PRODUCTS:
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HOT PRODUCT: Holley EFI
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Holley
Robin Lawrence
Director of Motorsports

HOT PRODUCTS: Big-Block Chevy Elite Sportsman PowerPak Pistons
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MAHLE Motorsport
Joe Maylish
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HOT PRODUCT:
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Marketing Manager

RPM ACT STALLS IN CONGRESS

Despite backing from SEMA and PRI, the RPM Act was unlikely to pass during the most recent Congressional session, the trade organizations announced.

According to a statement from SEMA regarding the status of the legislation, key negotiators in Congress could not reach an agreement on bill language that balanced the need for federal law to protect racers and motorsports parts businesses from EPA enforcement with reasonable measures to ensure that race parts are not used on vehicles driven on roads and public highways.



"In addition to more than 1.5 million letters advocating for the RPM Act from the grassroots motorsports community to Congress, SEMA and PRI worked with Richard Petty to meet personally with key lawmakers in Washington, D.C., and with NHRA Top Fuel driver Antron Brown to testify before the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee," the organizations stated.

Mike Spagnola, SEMA president and CEO, thanked sponsors and members for supporting the effort.

"The RPM Act was one of the most bipartisan bills in the 117th Congress, with over 165 lawmakers cosponsoring the legislation," he said. "SEMA and PRI will leverage the momentum we built during this congressional session, assess the current challenges the industry faces, and chart a new path forward for the industry's advocacy efforts at both the federal and state levels."

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The MAHLE Motorsport-sponsored "Scalded Dog" race car driven by Tim Hall (Abbeville, South Carolina) in the Southeast Gassers Association (SEGA) won top honors in C/GAS in 2022 against 40 competitors. (Photo courtesy MAHLE Motorsport)

tially. Drag racers love what they do, though, and will find ways to continue doing it."

Bob Scheid, vice president of FTI Performance, echoes those fuel cost concerns and also agrees that motivated racers will find ways to keep going to the track.

"The economy and gas prices, including diesel, will have an effect on the drag racing market, especially at the grassroots level," he predicts. "I do believe, however, that racing is a passion, and that passion will not be given up easily."

The good news for shops is that it's easier than ever for competitors to join drag racing's ranks, says Joe Maylish, program manager for MAHLE Motorsport.

"We live in a time where information is available to anyone interested in getting into the sport, and premium parts are available to ship to the customer's shop with a click of a button," he says.

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The first MAHLE Motorsport-sponsored Nissan to break into the 6s at the Import vs. Domestic World Cup finals (2019) driven by Gidi Chamdi at a record-breaking 6.56 seconds at 225 mph. (Photo courtesy MAHLE Motorsport)



Quality parts and industry knowledge are a winning combination. (Photo courtesy FTI Performance)



Most drag racing customers are willing to pay more for proven performance gains. (Photo courtesy MAHLE Motorsport)



Support racers at your local tracks. (Photo courtesy Vortech Superchargers)

deterred by these hurdles, however, as suppliers agree that serving a dedicated core of drag racing enthusiasts has its benefits.

"Racers are not afraid to spend money," Scheid says. "They want to win, so they look for the best parts that will give them that advantage to get to the finish line first. They also have their tow vehicles and daily drivers that they buy parts and accessories for as well. Racers bring more than just a race car to the table for service and supply parts."

Lawrence agrees that racers will choose performance over price in most cases.

"The Sportsman drag racing market is composed of mostly discretionary spending. Going racing is a 'want,' not a 'need,' and getting the best bang for each dollar spent is the goal. Word of mouth from a customer who feels like their money was well spent pays for itself. Success with one customer can bring in 10 more."

That word of mouth is a huge factor, Cox explains.

"In addition to getting repeat business since racers tend to go through parts faster than most customers, the shop can also leverage the racers themselves to promote its parts and services and ultimately get and generate more sales," he says. "If a popular local racer is doing well, most people in the area who are into cars will know, and shops can utilize that notoriety on social media and in local ads."

Drag racers are diehard, loyal customers, notes VanBuskirk.

"Once you have a good relationship with



Waiting to receive parts makes it difficult to get a car up and ready for the next race. (Photo courtesy Vortech Superchargers)

your customer, you will be their first call for what they need. Racers put a ton of time and money into their programs and rely on the relationships they build with their speed shops to provide the parts or labor they need to keep their program moving forward."

At the end of the day, racers want to go as fast as they can.

"Many understand the value of working with high-quality parts and are willing to spend more to gain an edge in horsepower," Maylish says.

A PERFORMANCE-BASED INDUSTRY

As eager as drag racers are to work with quality shops, there's still more to be done to maximize sales.

"The best advice is to have relationships with manufacturers and WDs where you can get stock quickly," suggests FTI's Scheid. "Having parts and then having knowledge about those parts makes for a winning combination."

Forging relationships with individual competitors can also be beneficial, notes Holley's Lawrence.

"Try to work with a racer who can be a good ambassador for you at events. Many racers utilize social media as a way to connect with their fans, and that social media platform is another way that potential customers can connect with your shop without extra expenditure on your behalf."

It also pays to have a presence in the pits on race days.

"Get out to the track," recommends Aeromotive's VanBuskirk. "Being seen by and talking to racers at your local tracks goes a long way. If you can help them out, they will remember and support your business. They will also spread the word to all their friends. Being at the track also allows you to use social media to post pictures or videos of customers' cars. These can be seen and shared and draw potential customers to your pages."

Cox from Vortech agrees.

"Be present at local races, not only for the regular customers to know you exist, but to also support the racers attending and have face to face contact."

Finally, Maylish from MAHLE Motorsport says exploring sponsorship opportunities can make your presence official.

"Get involved with your local drag racing program by sponsoring something at the track. We get calls from so many DIYers that need guidance, but they don't know where to go, or they are afraid to ask for help for fear of not being able to talk at the level of a seasoned engine builder," he says. "A banner or billboard stating the engine services provided and a phone number can go a long way to developing business." ***TS***







A HARD LOOK AT DRAG RACING

By Tony Thacker

How the sport is evolving & changing with the times.

"Is drag racing dying or is it dead?"

That's a real question, believe it or not, I often get asked and it's darn hard to answer. After attending the opening night of the weekly Thursday Night Thunder at Irwindale Drag Strip in Irwindale, California, last year, however, I'd have to say it's alive and well, at least at the local level.

It took us about 30 minutes to get parked after entering the gate and there were 250 racers who paid $40 each for five hours of frantic 1/8-mile fun. Spectators paid just $20 and kids 12 and under were free.

We were there to watch Kelly and Paul Anderson campaign the crowd-pleasing, wheel-standing 2000 Chevrolet Camaro "Stacy 2.0." Kelly wrecked the original "Stacy," but that's another story.

The pair, who have been married for 32 years and have raised four kids, are relatively new to drag racing, having started in 2019. Kelly, a certified health coach, began with her street car but, after scoring a perfect reaction time, hubby Paul soon splashed out on their first Camaro.

"I race every Thursday from January until November," says Kelly, "plus test days and special events and I typically make hundreds of passes that, I'm told, equate to about 1 million impressions.



"After I wrecked 'Stacy' we purchased another 2000 Camaro and our race engineer, Martin Charles of MC Automotive, gutted her and swapped everything from the engine to the rear end into 'Stacy 2.0,' which is the car I race today," she continues. "My best 1/8-mile time is 6.07 seconds at 111 mph. I could go faster if we kept the front wheels on the ground, but wheelies are beyond thrilling for the spectators and for me so, for now, they're part of the show."

SOMETHING MORE

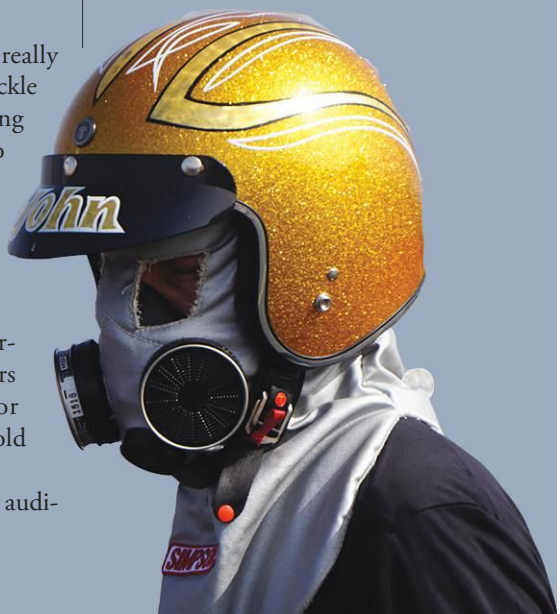
The show, or entertainment, is really what it's all about, and we are a fickle audience. We don't keep watching the same show over and over, no matter how big. We're always looking for something different, something new.

For example, last year's NASCAR Busch Light Clash at L.A.'s Memorial Coliseum apparently drew some 50,000 spectators and 4 million viewers. Right or wrong, good or bad, it was a bold move to attract a new audience.

Something else pulling in huge audiences is Discovery's "Street Outlaws," which began in 2013 and includes several spinoffs. Like it or not, it's entertainment for many and "Street Outlaws: Memphis" has, according to Parrot Analytics, something like 4.7 times the demand of the average TV series in the U.S.

While "SO" is not really street racing

Drag racing appears to be in the midst of major changes.





A HARD LOOK AT DRAG RACING



—they say it's a "controlled environment"—the connotation of racing on public roads has solicited criticism in some circles and threats from some of the major sanctioning bodies, but to no avail. It's too popular, and what drives its appeal is the drama, real or manufactured, along with the personalities and the diversity of race vehicles.

Mainstream drag racing used to be about innovation providing a venue for the weird and wonderful, but somewhere along the line it got legislated down to cookie-cutter cars that the public no longer relates to. Some could argue that the public doesn't matter, but it matters to the sponsors. It's no longer about butts in seats, but eyes on screens.

Drag racing commentator Cole Coonce recently had this to say:

"(Last) February, the 10,000-hp modern nitro dragsters were testing at Phoenix on the same weekend as Sick Week, which was five days of 350 of the fastest street cars shooting it out in Florida. Both events were livestreamed. On the day I tuned in to both on YouTube, 160,000 people had watched the Street Legal shoot 'em up and 800 people were watching the professional cars test and tune—800.

"These numbers are unscientific, but the reality is that 160,000 YouTube viewers watching street cars on skinny tires are about what watches a sports channel broadcast of nitro qualifying at a national event."

A quick search shows "Street Outlaws" appears to enjoy something like 2 million viewers. You do the math.

MAJOR CHANGES

Street racing remains a problem in many communities. On Dec. 25, 2020, photographer Daniel "Dano" Patten died when two cars street racing in Carson, California went out of control and veered into spectators.

One promoter looking to address the dangerous illegal street racing problem is Andy Marocco, who has been trying to organize legal drag races in Banning, California for more than 20 years. Finally, in 2020, (the weirdest of years), he pulled it off and the 1/8-mile Banning Street Drags were held at the Banning Municipal Airport—but, sadly, not for long.

"This new generation has grown up with reality TV shows about street racing. They watch this and think, 'Now, this is something I can relate to!' It's easy to be attracted to the bad boy image, social scene and the drama of competition that is part of outlaw street racing. For them, it's a lifestyle and a passion. Professional drag racing offers none of this to them."

Drag racing is in a state of flux, he believes, due to a generational transition taking place.

"The fans and racers of today are a new generation that has not been excited by or can't relate to professional drag racing," he states.



Kelly Anderson has fun and entertains fans with her wheel-standing "Stacy 2.0" Camaro at events like the weekly Thursday Night Thunder at Irwindale Drag Strip.

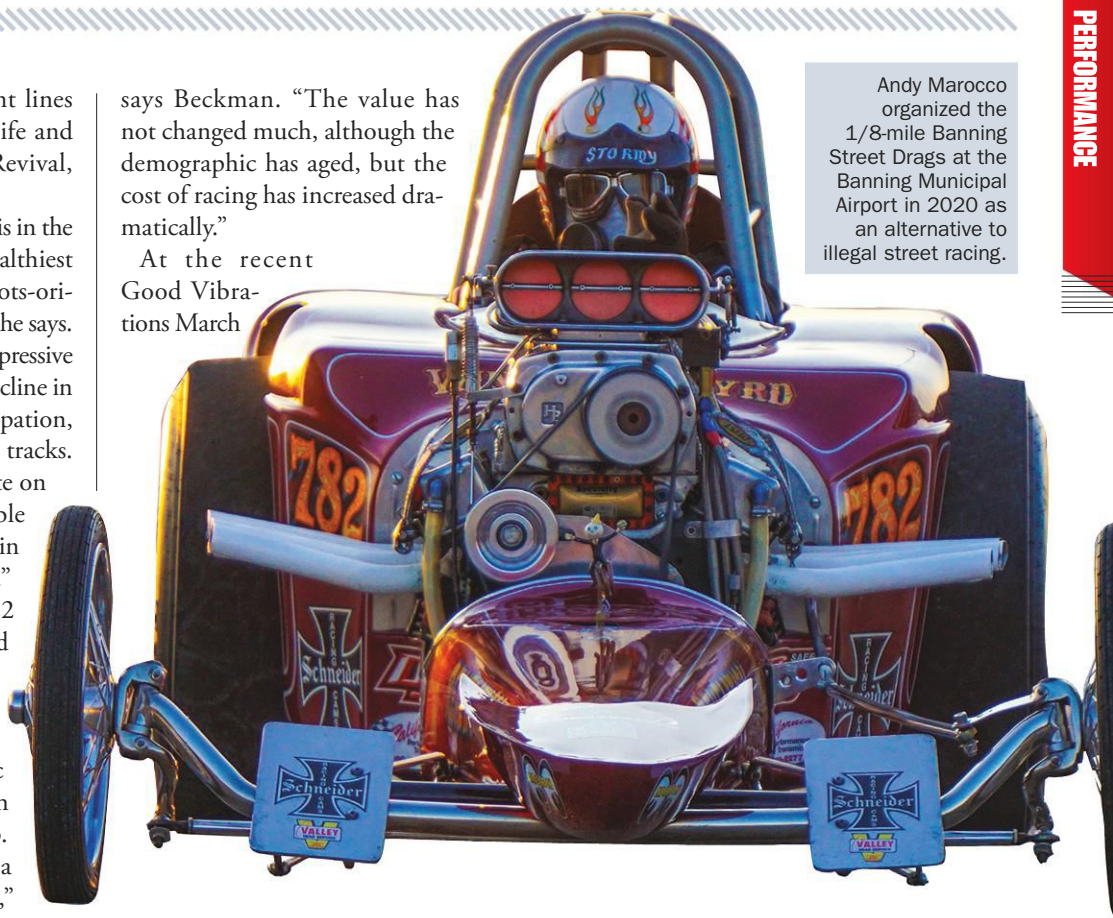
Steve Gibbs, a man on the front lines of drag racing most of his adult life and organizer of the popular Nitro Revival, agrees.

"It appears to me that drag racing is in the midst of major changes, as the healthiest elements seem to be more grassroots-oriented as opposed to the 'big show,'" he says. "Professional competition, while impressive performance-wise, has been on a decline in recent years in all aspects—participation, spectator attendance and qualified tracks. In my opinion, the cost to compete on a professional level is unsustainable and has resulted in greater interest in more realistic, local-type activities."

Jack Beckman, who raced for 22 years (14 years professionally) and was the 2012 NHRA Funny Car champion, stepped away at the end of 2020 and returned to his previous life as an elevator mechanic when sponsorship for his ride with Don Schumacher Racing dried up.

"It's increasingly hard for a sponsor to justify the investment," says Beckman. "The value has not changed much, although the demographic has aged, but the cost of racing has increased dramatically."

At the recent Good Vibrations March



Andy Marocco organized the 1/8-mile Banning Street Drags at the Banning Municipal Airport in 2020 as an alternative to illegal street racing.

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Meet, nitro was rumored to be $1,900 for a 42-gallon drum. According to Beckman, if a Funny Car gets through to the finals it can use as much as 130 gallons of nitro—that's around $6,000 just for fuel.

Now add in all the other related costs of getting a team to and from the races and you have a hefty bill—typically about $3 million to field a Fuel car for a year.

"John Force can justify that investment," says Beckman. "He's worth whatever a sponsor wants to pay. But it's very difficult for everybody else to provide the kind of ROI that a sponsor should and needs to see."

WORK TO BE DONE

Last year, Susan Wade interviewed veteran Top Fuel owner Mike Salinas for "Autoweek" with a tag line that said: "If I had the job of running this… I would do it a different way."

Salinas grew up the hard way, making his money in scrap. Among many telling quotes in the article regarding drag racing's biggest stage, Salinas says, "Just look around. There's a big disconnect. Look at the age group. There are no young kids here; there's very few. To sustain a culture, any culture, what does it take? That will tell you how many more years and this will all be gone."

Meanwhile, the opinion of Gibbs from Nitro Revival that the times are a-changin' was confirmed when I spoke to two promoters—Rocky Phillips, organizer of the Eagle Field Runway Drags, and Mike Thompson of Portland's Estranged Car Club.

Phillips, who has been organizing twice-yearly drags on a private crop duster strip in Firebaugh, California, says, "The past two years have been crazy, but we've enjoyed steady participation. In fact, I had to turn down some TV coverage because we just didn't need the exposure at the time. That said, there is room for growth."

Thompson is equally optimistic.

"Drag racing is alive and well up here



While top-level professional drag racing is facing strong challenges, competition and fun at the grassroots level remains strong.



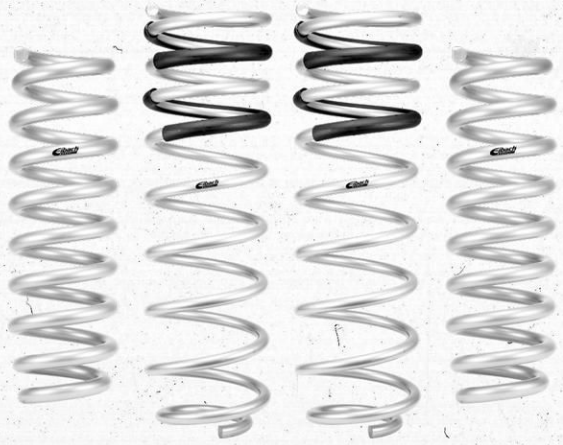
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A HARD LOOK AT DRAG RACING



Eagle Field Runway Drags are held twice-yearly on a private crop duster strip in Firebaugh, California and have enjoyed steady participation.



in the Pacific Northwest," he reports. "Sixty-five miles northeast of Portland in Toutle, Washington is Riverdale Raceway—an 1/8-mile outlaw track. You drive through the gate and it's like a time machine took you back to 1962. Our club has been racing there for years and I've always hankered to organize our own event, which I did as an invite-only event three years ago. The Estranged Drag/Show took place Aug. 19-21, 2022, and you could go back in time for three days of pre-1964-style nostalgia race cars and hot rods racing heads-up."

A SIMPLER TIME?

Maybe traveling back to simpler times is what people desire. Having got its organized start in Goleta, California around 1948-49, drag racing is now 70-plus years old and that is reflected in the demographics—you can't see the aluminum for the gray hair.

Not only are the fans getting older, but some venues are disappearing.

Time was you could race three or four times a week in Los Angeles. Steve Hope of Rat Trap Racing recalls, "We'd test on Wednesdays at Irwindale, Orange County (OCIR) or Lions, then move to Ontario to race on Friday, Irwindale on Saturday and OCIR on Sunday."

Sadly, and for various reasons, all of those So-Cal strips are long gone.

Commentator Bob Beck says, "L.A. recently lost Auto Club Dragway at Fon-

After 70-plus years, the fun and spectacle of drag racing still has strong appeal.





tana, which leaves only Irwindale (at a different location form the old Irwindale) and Pomona, which is used only twice a year."

The noise generated by Pomona, which is situated within a dense urban development, is intense and folks from miles around can hear what they call the "Pomona Dragon"—leaving some to predict, "It's only a matter of time."

All this and we haven't even broached the "carbon footprint" issue. Not only are we talking about the consumables generated by the actual racing, but also the gas, oil and what have you used by everyone getting to and from the events.

Of course, the pandemic has also had an effect in that overseas fans have not had an easy time trying to visit U.S. drag racing events. Testing and quarantine requirements have prevented fans from Australia, Europe, New Zealand and Scandinavia from visiting, though they are beginning to trickle back in as travel restrictions are slowly lifted.

In conclusion, drag strip journalist Coonce sums up the current drag racing situation succinctly:

"Entertainment has to be unpredictable and there has to be the potential for the viewer to see something they have never seen before. Modern drag racing is something we have seen ad nauseum. It is one 3-second riff driven into the ground—it's like a pop song without any chord changes."

I couldn't agree more, which is why I believe the future of drag racing—and for shops that serve these customers—will depend upon the fun and excitement found at the grassroots level in places like Kelly Anderson's pits at Irwindale's Thursday Night Thunder.

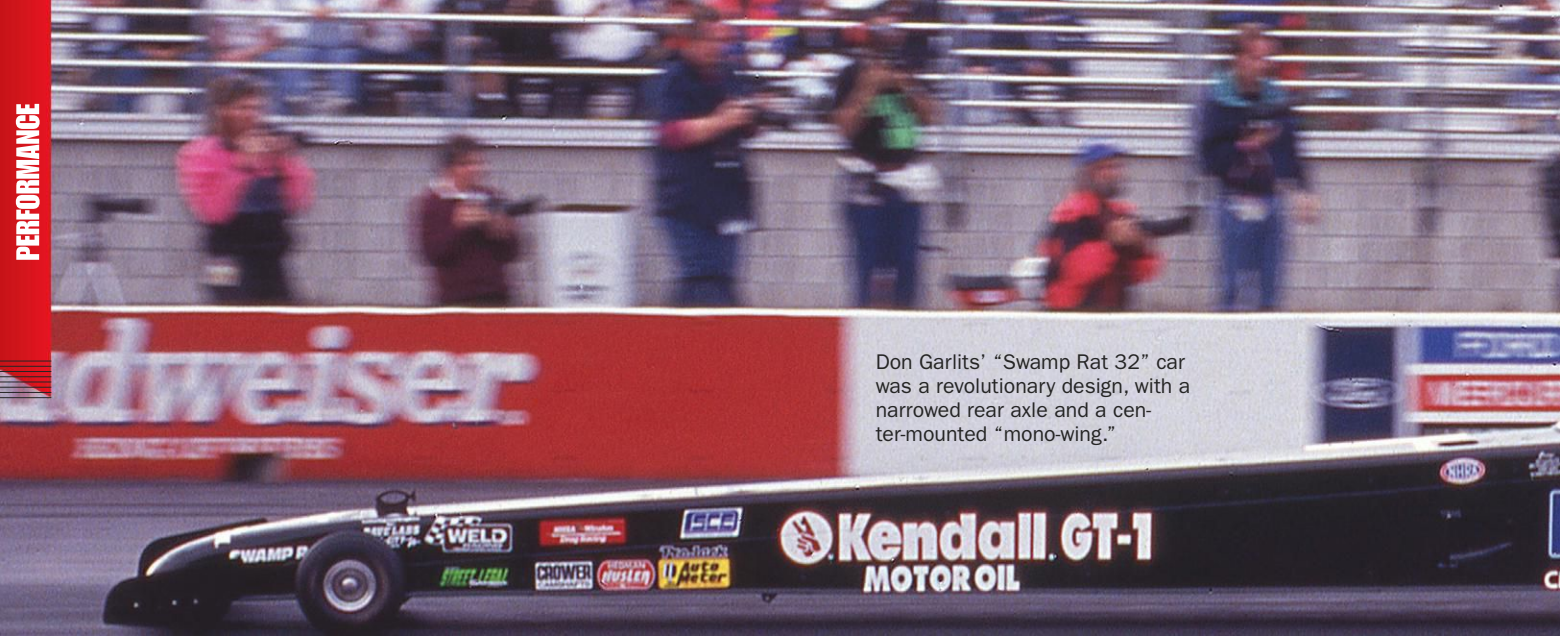
Her pit area is full of fans, family and friends. Her car reflects her personality with its purple lighting. She puts on a good show with strong burnouts and speed-sapping wheelies that she and the spectators love.

What's not to like—that's entertainment! ***TS***



Born in England, ***TONY THACKER*** *is an accredited automotive journalist, author and book publisher, and served as marketing director at the famed SO-CAL Speed Shop.*





Don Garlits' "Swamp Rat 32" car was a revolutionary design, with a narrowed rear axle and a center-mounted "mono-wing."

A TRIP BACK TO THE POMONA DRAGS

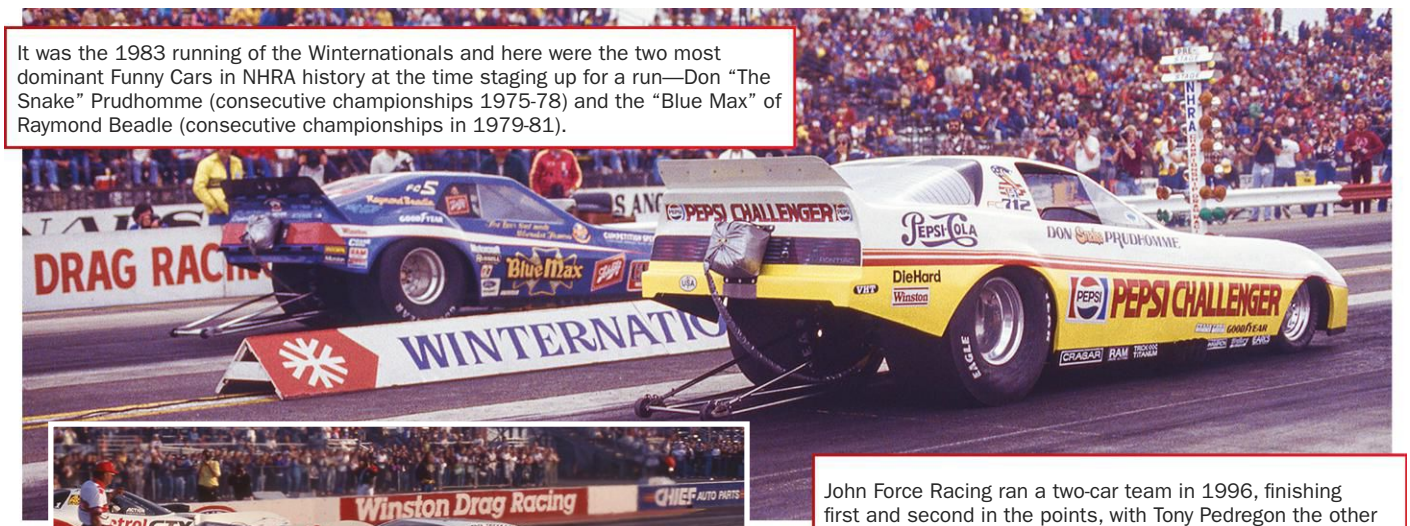
NHRA's visits in the 1980s & '90s were spectacles not to be missed. **Story & photos by James Maxwell**

As fast and impressive as the numbers are for today's NHRA drag racing events, for many, there's still a big appreciation for the sport's "glory days."

As a starting line photographer at NHRA races for a number of years, with a lot of time spent on the grounds of the L.A. County Fairgrounds in Pomona, California, the selected images, which range from the early 1980s all the way to 1999, show a sampling of what drag racing was all about during this exciting time.

While the NHRA modern era restricts Top Fuel and Funny Cars to 1,000-foot racing, back in the days of these photographs they ran the full quarter-mile track. Oftentimes that last 320 feet provided a lot of top-end excitement, especially during "pedal-fest" come-from-behind victories.

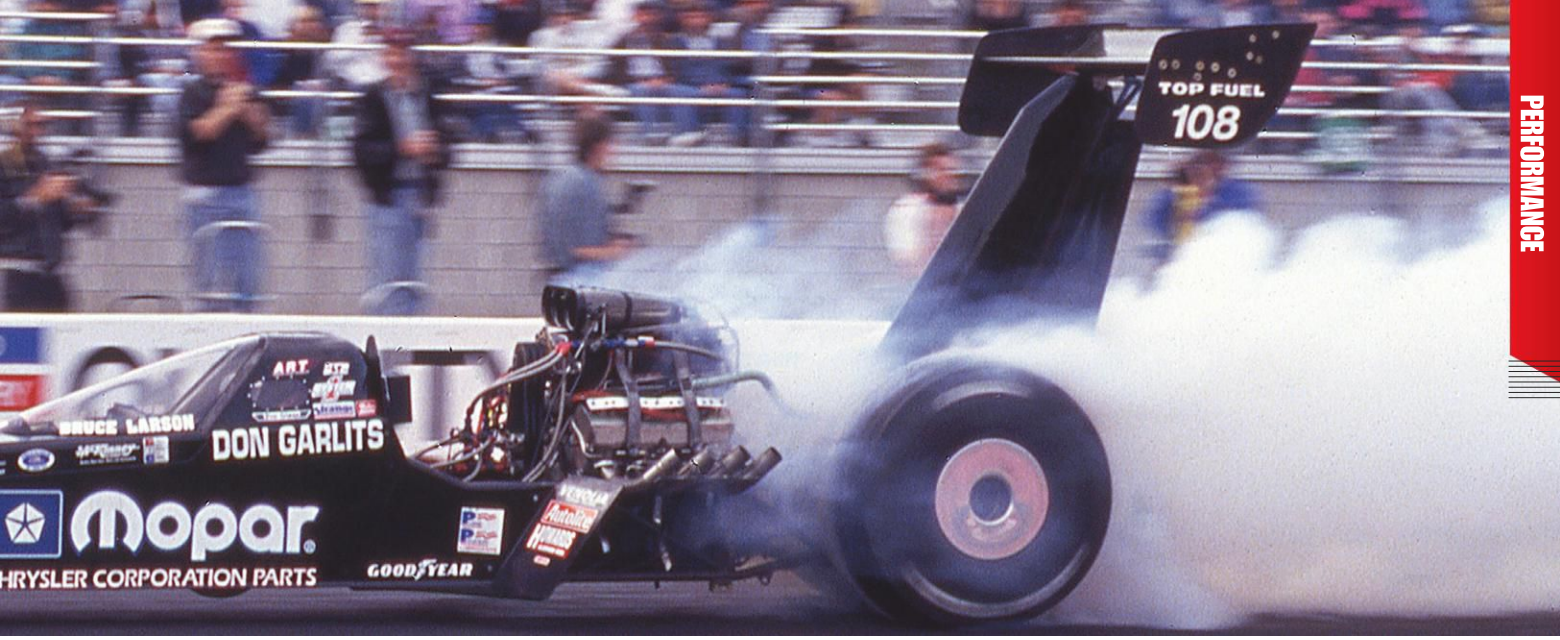
Another change is the burnout procedure. Today's Top Fuel and Funny Cars have throttle stops fitted to their engines for the burnout run, something to make



It was the 1983 running of the Winternationals and here were the two most dominant Funny Cars in NHRA history at the time staging up for a run—Don "The Snake" Prudhomme (consecutive championships 1975-78) and the "Blue Max" of Raymond Beadle (consecutive championships in 1979-81).



John Force Racing ran a two-car team in 1996, finishing first and second in the points, with Tony Pedregon the other driver. Force was having a difficult time getting Pontiac to come up with the funds to continue as a two-car team. At a chance meeting with Ford dealer Bob Tasca Sr., a deal was made with Dearborn for a Mustang body for Pedregon to run in the 1997 season. This shot at the first race of the season shows Pedregon's Mustang and Force's Firebird painted the same. Pontiac was not impressed and soon dropped its support, opening the door for a move to Ford.



the process as consistent as possible. With the throttle blades barely open, however, the tire smoke is minimal, and the engine rpms are low.

Because NHRA does such an extensive job of prepping the tracks with traction compound, there's really no longer a reason for these nitro cars to run hard during the burnout.

Without question, the action was much more exciting in years past, as the drivers were more involved. They blasted the tires with a lot of violence, there was more tire growth on the slicks as they spun, and the fans in the stands got to hear the engines really perform.

Plus, all this resulted in the track being covered with tire smoke!

Yes, the current cars are quicker and faster; however, in terms of pure visual excitement, there's something to be said about these earlier days. The bodies more realistically represented the cars that were in the dealership showrooms, there was a lot of effort from the fuel cars to lay down rubber on the track for needed traction, and the end result was a better show for the fans.

In Pro Stock, the entire field today consists of Camaros. The bodies are completely designed in the wind tunnel and it's difficult to claim that with all 16 cars having the exact same body shape that the class hasn't become boring to watch.

Of course driving one isn't boring, but what about all those people in the grandstands? They want to be entertained!

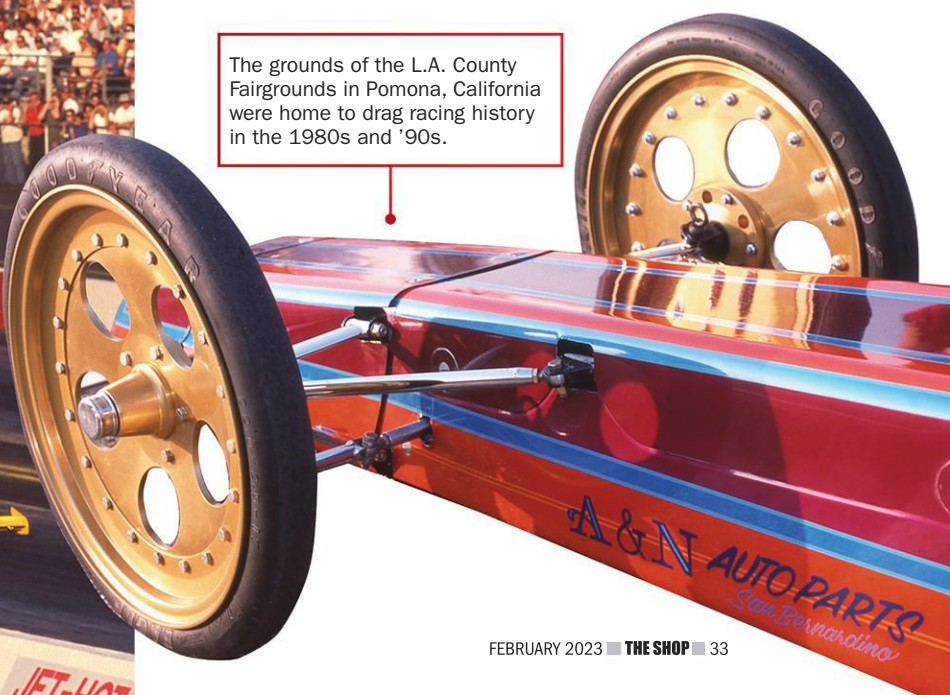
Here's a salute to the Pomona track in the old days and a tip of the cap to the drivers, both male and female, that made the on-track racing action so exciting to watch. ***TS***

JAMES MAXWELL *is an automotive journalist and historian based in Southern California. Contact him at imax3@mac.com.*



Pomona 1997 was a hot one for Eddie Hill from Wichita Falls, Texas.

The grounds of the L.A. County Fairgrounds in Pomona, California were home to drag racing history in the 1980s and '90s.

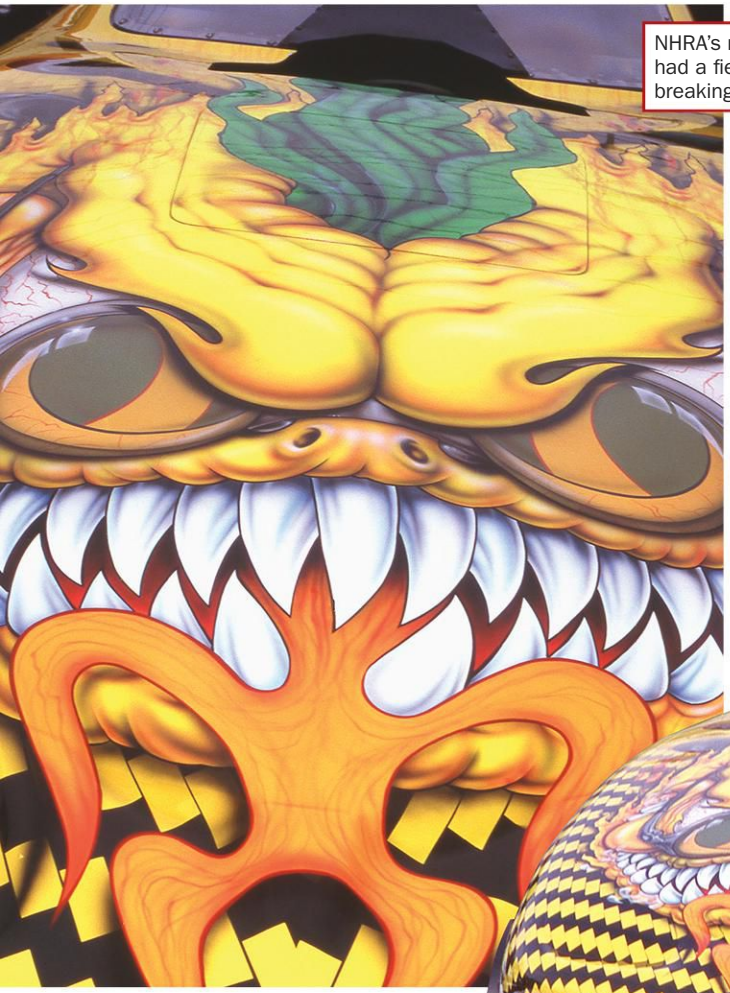


A TRIP BACK TO THE POMONA DRAGS



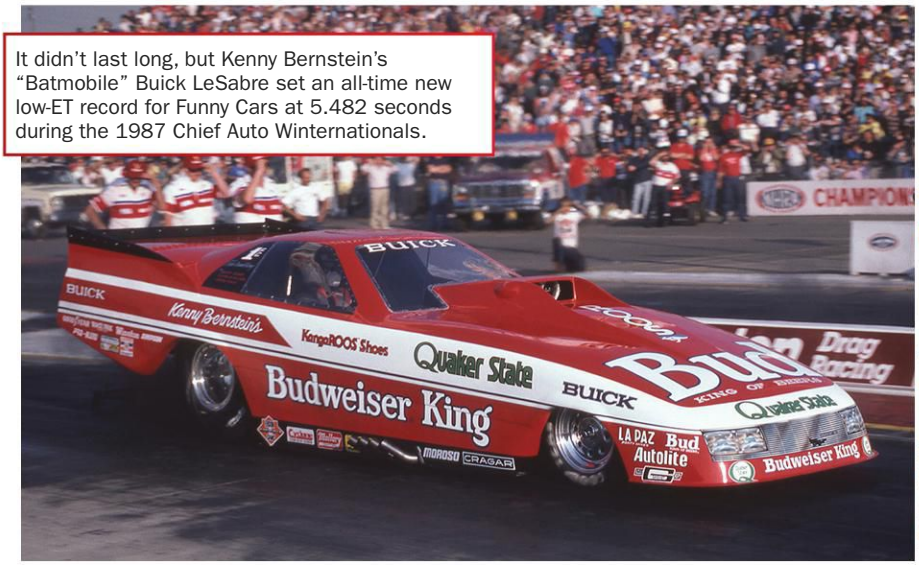
The WWF (World Wrestling Federation) was the title sponsor of the Jerry Toliver Pontiac Firebird Nitro Funny Car team.

NHRA's marketing department had a field day promoting the breaking of the 300 mph barrier.

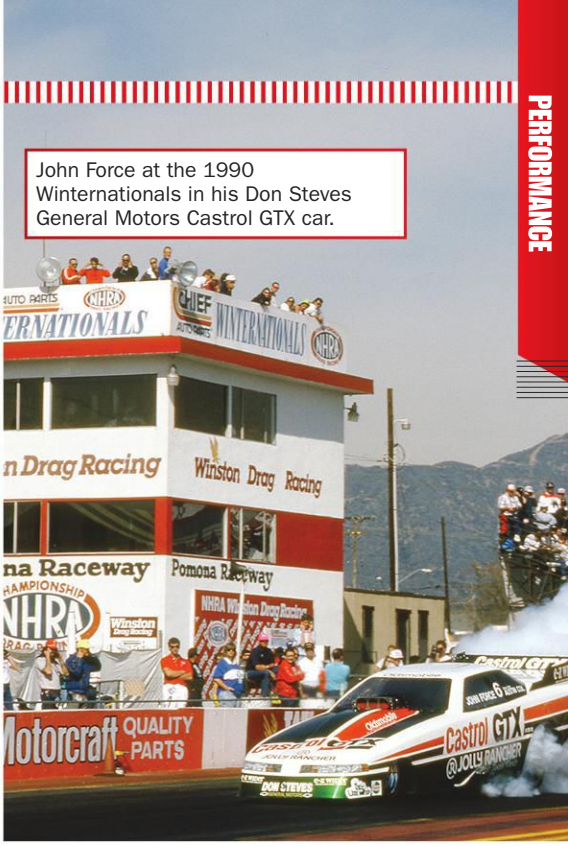


Well-known IHRA Pro Mod racer Scotty Cannon from Spartanburg, South Carolina, got an offer from Oakley sunglasses owner Jim Jannard in 1998 to run a Nitro Funny Car in NHRA competition starting in 1992. Cannon's mohawk hair and tiny circular steering wheel set him apart.





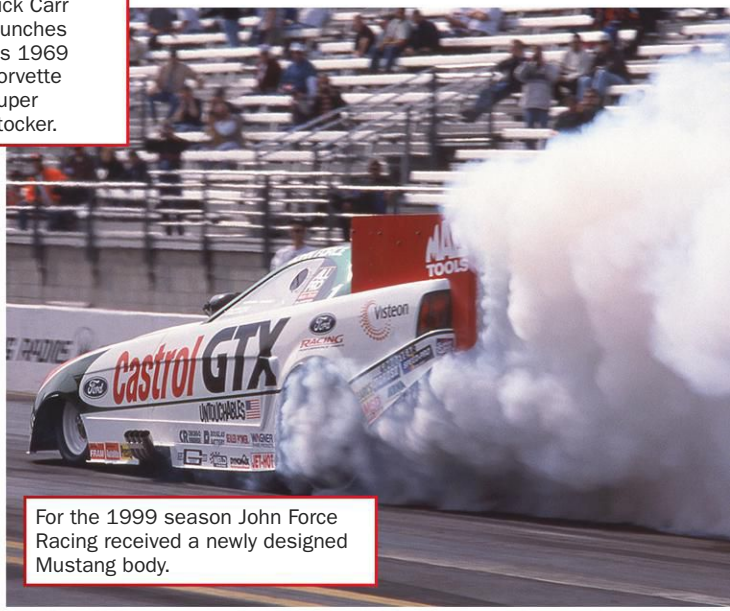
It didn't last long, but Kenny Bernstein's "Batmobile" Buick LeSabre set an all-time new low-ET record for Funny Cars at 5.482 seconds during the 1987 Chief Auto Winternationals.



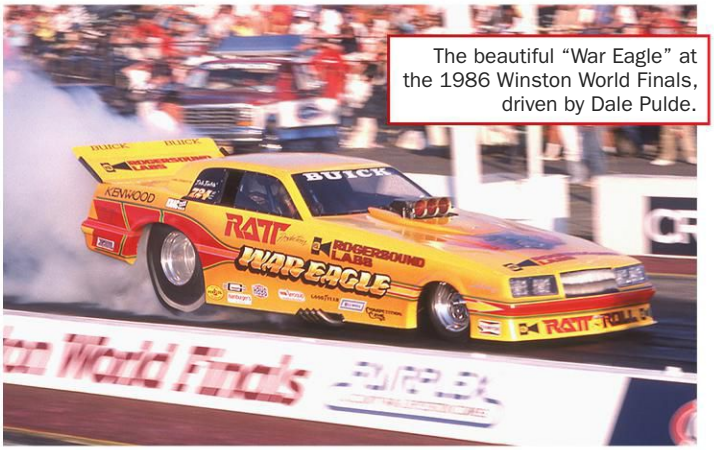
John Force at the 1990 Winternationals in his Don Steves General Motors Castrol GTX car.



Shown here in an early '90s running of the Winston Finals, Clovis, California's Dick Carr launches his 1969 Corvette Super Stocker.



For the 1999 season John Force Racing received a newly designed Mustang body.

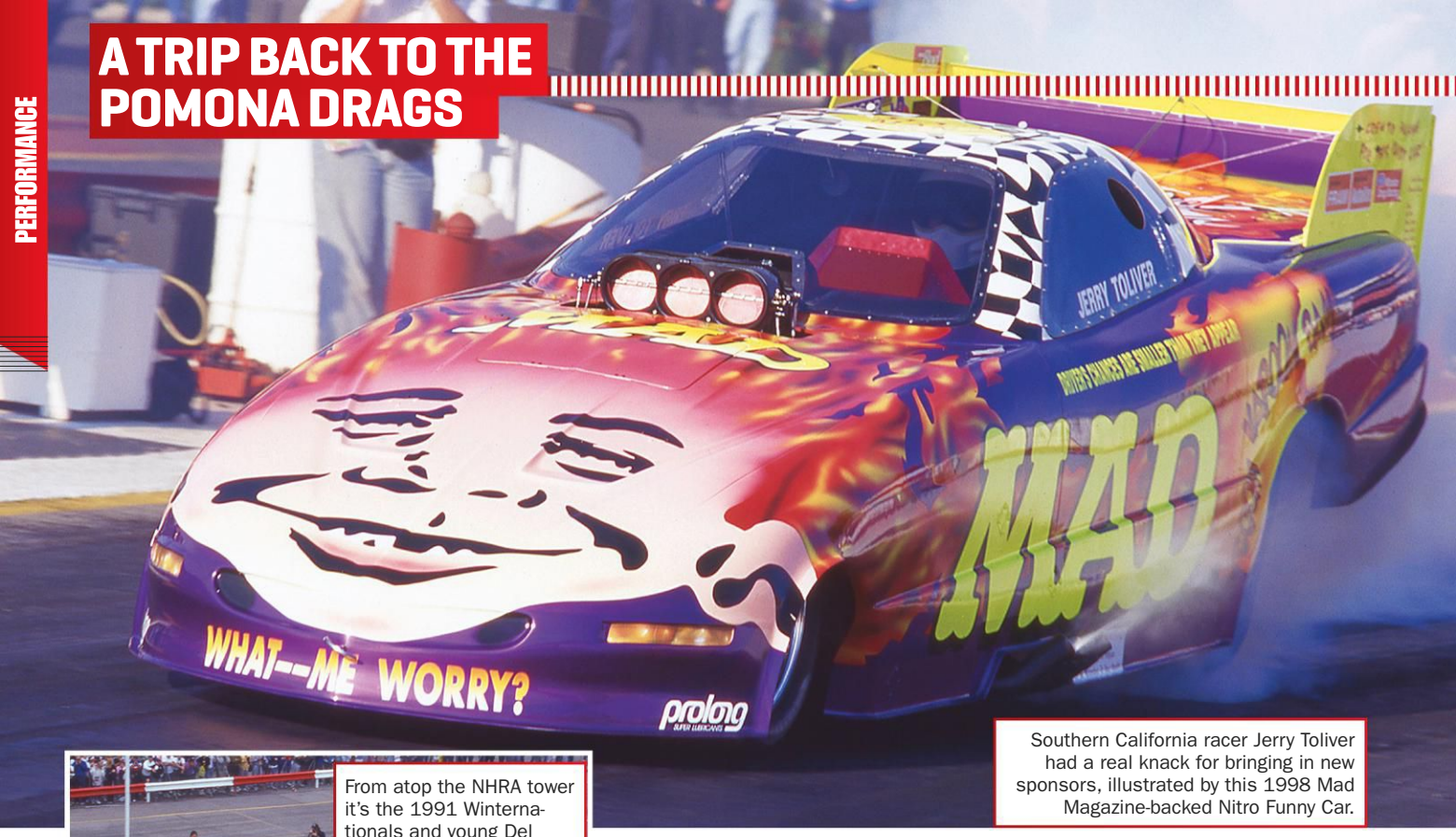


The beautiful "War Eagle" at the 1986 Winston World Finals, driven by Dale Pulde.

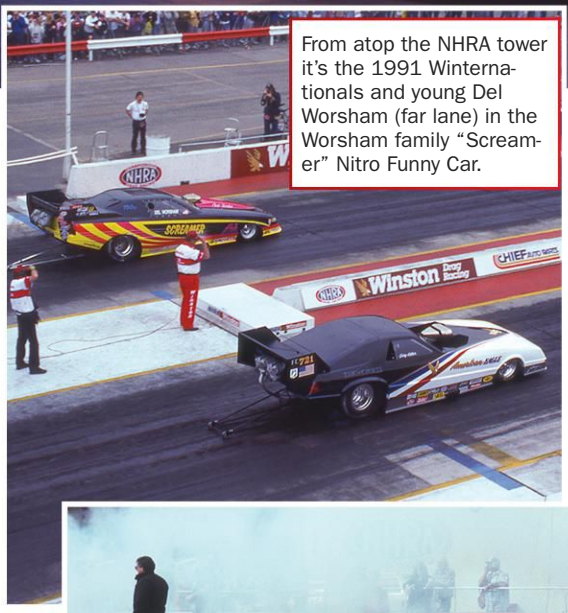


It was at the 1993 Winternationals when the "Pure Hell" AA/Fuel Altered of Rich Guasco made this exhibition pass.

A TRIP BACK TO THE POMONA DRAGS



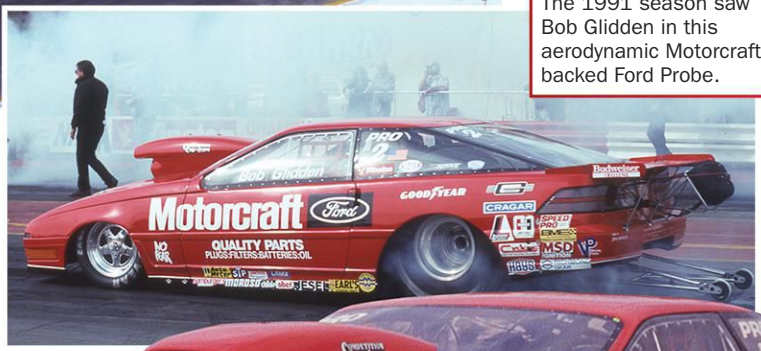
Southern California racer Jerry Toliver had a real knack for bringing in new sponsors, illustrated by this 1998 Mad Magazine-backed Nitro Funny Car.



From atop the NHRA tower it's the 1991 Winternationals and young Del Worsham (far lane) in the Worsham family "Screamer" Nitro Funny Car.



Diamond P Television commentator Steve Evans spent some time interviewing three-time NHRA Top Fuel World Champion Shirley Muldowney at the 1986 Winternationals.



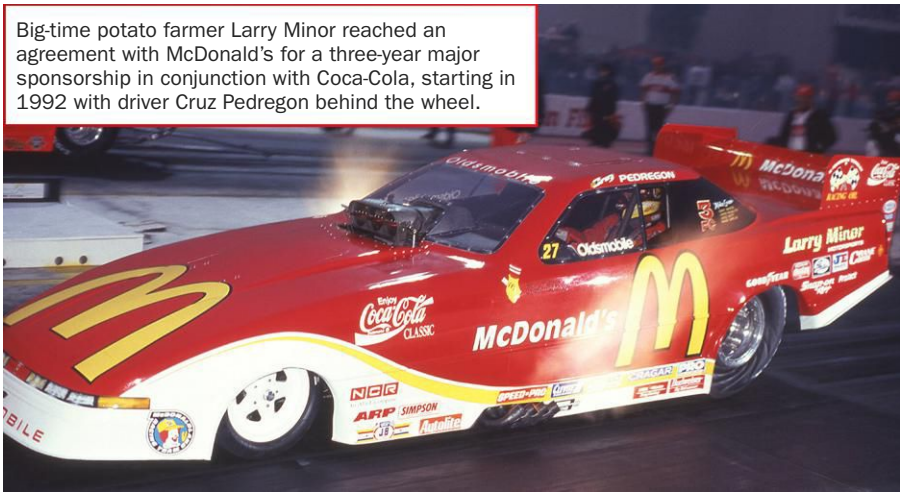
The 1991 season saw Bob Glidden in this aerodynamic Motorcraft-backed Ford Probe.



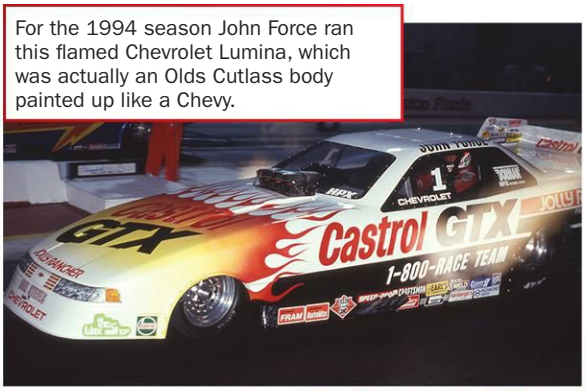
Glidden, the sport's winningest driver in any class in this era (10-time Pro Stock Winston Champ) also ran a Probe in 1992.



One thing the NHRA did a number of years ago was erect a street sign at the track to honor Ralph Parker, the police chief who did so much for the dragstrip in Pomona.



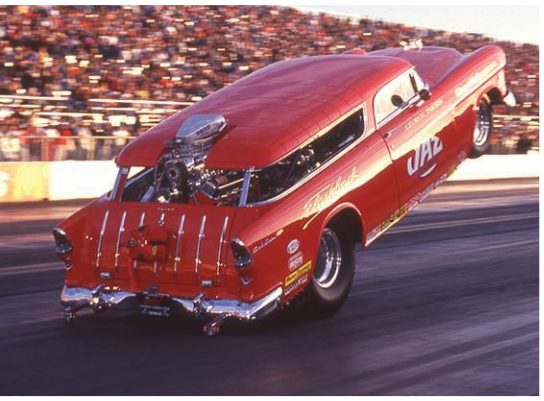
Big-time potato farmer Larry Minor reached an agreement with McDonald's for a three-year major sponsorship in conjunction with Coca-Cola, starting in 1992 with driver Cruz Pedregon behind the wheel.



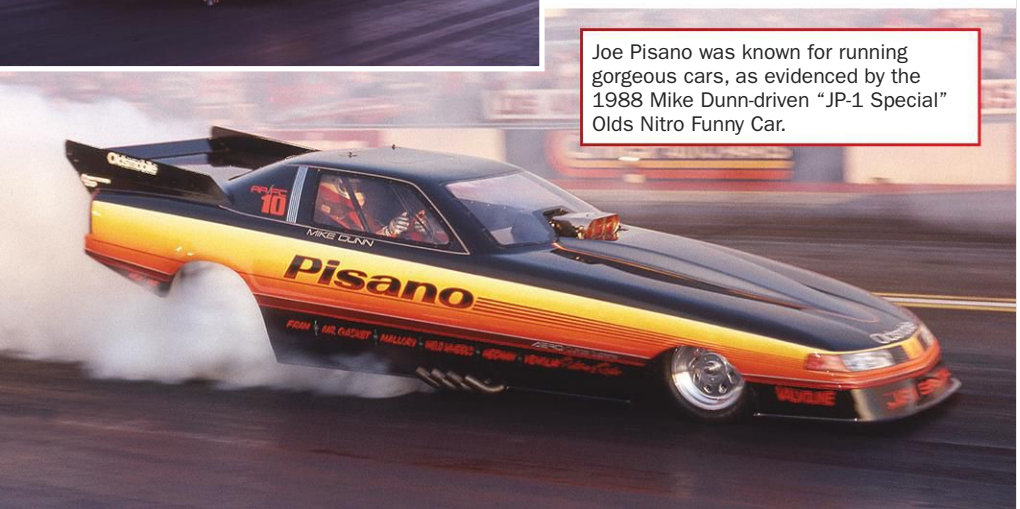
For the 1994 season John Force ran this flamed Chevrolet Lumina, which was actually an Olds Cutlass body painted up like a Chevy.

Granada Hills, California's Don "The Snake" Prudhomme ran this U.S. Tobacco-backed "Skoal Bandit" Firebird in 1988.





"Flashback" wheel-stand runs were popular during the 1990s.



Joe Pisano was known for running gorgeous cars, as evidenced by the 1988 Mike Dunn-driven "JP-1 Special" Olds Nitro Funny Car.

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Ford ZX3 Piston Set

MAHLE Motorsport, Fletcher, North Carolina, introduces a high-performance 2.0L PowerPak Piston Set approved for SCCA competition for racers competing with a Ford ZX3 engine. Designed for a 5.483-inch-long Ford or Eagle connecting rod and developed from high-strength 4032 aluminum alloy in a slipper skirt forging, the set provides reliability, increased durability and quieter operation for higher-horsepower applications. The pistons are only available in a 3.339-inch bore size, and regulations require OEM or **Hastings** rings only.



Carbon Wheel

Forgeline Motorsports, Dayton, Ohio, presents its Carbon+Forged FF-Carbon Wheel. Designed to blend classic styling and modern technology, the aggressive wheel combines a weight-optimized CNC-machined forged aluminum center with a proprietary carbon fiber barrel. The lightweight FF-Carbon is available in 18-, 19-, 20-, 21-, 22- and 23-inch fitments for modern exotic, sport and luxury vehicle applications. The forged aluminum center is offered in a variety of customizable finish options.

Wrangler Rubicon 392 Exhaust System



BORLA Performance Industries, Johnson City, Tennessee, presents its Cat-Back Exhaust System for 2021-22 Jeep Wrangler Rubicon 392 6.4L applications that improves horsepower and torque. The system delivers the aggressive ATAK BORLA sound without any drone or resonance inside the vehicle. It is made from T-304 stainless steel and features all-welded construction for durability and long life. A system with a black-coated rear section is also available.



Dodge Direct Connection Parts

SpeedKore, Grafton, Wisconsin, offers officially licensed **Dodge Direct Connection** parts for Dodge Challengers, including chassis and major body components. The select parts are crafted from American-made premium pre-preg carbon fiber and are autoclave-cured and finished in a UV-protected gloss or satin clear coat. The direct OEM replacements are available for 2015-newer Challenger applications.



Expanded Cleanable Oil Filter Line

System 1 Filtration Products, Tulare, California, presents an expanded line of Cleanable Oil Filters, now including an extra-tall model that measures 7-3/4 inches in length and 3-3/4 inches in diameter. Suited for robust automotive and light-duty truck use, the systems are equipped with a 35-micron stainless steel element that provides filtration of lubricants up to 20W-50 while maintaining unrestricted flow. Benefits include the ability to easily examine engine oil and identify potential problems without needing to constantly replace ordinary oil filters.

Fuel System Cleaner

Hot Shot's Secret, Mt. Gilead, Ohio, introduces a reformulation of its Gasoline Extreme complete fuel system cleaner. The new formula is offered in a new, easy-to-pour 12-ounce bottle design that is compatible with capless fuel tanks. Gasoline Extreme is now infused with Hot Shot's Secret's LX4, a premium lubricity additive that prevents wear and provides fuel system protection while also acting as an upper cylinder lubricant.





Carbon Fiber Intercoolers

Mishimoto, Wilmington, Delaware, introduces completely customizable Carbon Fiber Intercoolers with more than 280 configuration options. The universal intercoolers come in three core sizes with silver, black or gold finishes. End tanks are formed from solid 3K twill-woven pre-preg carbon fiber and are offered in both matte and gloss finish options. In addition, the company's V-band locking core clamps are available in eight colors. The intercoolers are packed with universal M8 mounting bosses on either side of the core and optimized 3-inch inlets.

Pliers Wrench

KNIPEX, Buffalo Grove, Illinois, presents its Pliers Wrench XS, a compact 4-inch tool with a jaw capacity of 3/4-inch. Designed with smooth jaws that will not mar surfaces, the pliers wrench grips, holds, presses and bends. Users can quickly and easily slide through 10 adjustment positions to find the right fit. A compact design and slim head allow easy access to confined areas, while texturized handles provide a firm grip.





Fine Oil Filtration

Pareto Point Industries, San Pedro, California, introduces its MicronMaster fine oil filtration system that captures and traps dangerous debris from 2-10 microns. At the cost of a high-quality, full-flow spin-on filter, MicronMaster offers the benefits of both full-flow and bypass filtration in a single unit while replacing the full-flow filter. Designed for virtually any internal combustion engine, highlights include dual flow, bypass and anti-drain valves, and low cost. ***TS***



FEBRUARY 2023

Restyling AFTERMARKET ACCESSORIES

Window Film p.48 / Products p.53 / Odd Overlanders p.54 / A Look Ahead p.60



make it Work

By Jef White

Get the job done by serving commercial & fleet customers.

Today's work trucks come in all shapes and sizes. (Photo courtesy Fab Fours)

While much is made of how the specialty automotive aftermarket brings joy and personalization to consumer vehicle owners, there's another part of the industry that just wants to work smarter, not harder.

Commercial customers appreciate accessories and packages that improve utility, safety and efficiency, and will form long-term relationships with shops that deliver on their promises.

Whether it's an independent contractor seeking an innovative cargo carrying solution or a local municipality looking to add ADAS features throughout its fleet, the work truck segment offers plenty of opportunities to blend creativity and profits.

Product suppliers outline current trends, hot new products and ways to connect with commercial clients.

MARKET DEMAND

If you're new to serving commercial vehicle customers, know that your products and services are highly desirable.

"The work truck market has been a great success story for many equipment suppliers," says Jillian Kish, marketing manager for A.R.E. "The continued strength of the segment over the last decade, and especially in the last few years with all of the world's issues and challenges, has been quite remarkable."

And demand only seems to be growing.

"Unlike past years, fleet buying cycles have become more frequent," notes Matt Blais, vice president of sales for LTA Manufacturing LLC. "Due to pent-up demand for pickup trucks, fleets are trending toward increases in their buying cycles to replace aging vehicles. Adding to or expanding into the growing work truck market can



The work truck market is still going strong. (Photo courtesy Fab Fours)



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HOT PRODUCT:
DCU Max Commercial Aluminum Truck Cap
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Handmade in Ohio; customized for professionals; hundreds of storage and security options and electronics; heavy-duty framing; commercial-grade-plus exterior aluminum skin; heavy-duty full double rear doors with stainless steel strap hinges.

A.R.E.
Jose Reyna
National Fleet Sales Manager

HOT PRODUCTS:
Black Steel & Premium Series Bumpers
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Popular with commercial accounts; Black Steel line constructed from 14-gauge steel; Premium Series constructed from 1/4- and 3/16-inch U.S. steel; both hold up to 16,500-pound winches and accommodate aftermarket lighting options.

Fab Fours Inc.
Autumn Hauck
Director of Sales

HOT PRODUCTS:
Steel Helper Springs
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Easy to install; tunable support ranging from 500 to 3,500 pounds level load capacity; maximum control, comfort and driver confidence; set-it-and-forget-it design; year, make and model-specific applications; level loads front to back and side to side.

Hellwig Products
Mike Hallmark
Marketing Manager, International Sales Manager

HOT PRODUCTS:
Impact Bumper & Grip Steps
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
For the Impact Bumper: spring-loaded, shock-absorbent brackets and heavy-duty steel for safety; for the Grip Step: expanded metal threads for maximum traction and safety.

Lippert/LUVERNE
Jeff Perez
Director of Business Development

HOT PRODUCT:
WorkForce Fiberglass Truck Cap
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Commercial grade; 600-pound roof weight capacity; custom-fit, injection-molded fiberglass side doors; molded water management drainage system; heavy-duty folding T-Locks; options including galvanized steel toolboxes, roof racks and interior lighting.

LTA Manufacturing LLC
Matt Blais
Vice President of Sales



Learn how your customers plan to use their trucks, truck caps, options and truck bed accessories in the real world. (Photo courtesy A.R.E.)



Local partnerships can increase commercial business. (Photo courtesy A.R.E.)

bring incremental sales and profits that you may not be enjoying now."

Disruptions dating back to the onset of the pandemic are still being felt, however, adds Autumn Hauck, director of sales for Fab Fours Inc.

"COVID has tremendously impacted the fleet market," she says. "The availability of trucks has limited the rotation of new vehicles. This has pushed companies to keep vehicles longer, resulting in less aftermarket upfitting."

As the market evolves, vehicles are becoming more capable, meaning the aftermarket must keep pace.

"With the changes in platforms and advances in truck and van bodies and cargo solutions, vehicles have the ability to carry more items," notes Mike Hallmark, marketing manager, international sales manager for Hellwig Products. "More items typically mean more weight; more weight means more stress on the suspension components, with a reduction in ride height and quality. With our steel helper springs, we have stayed up with the changes in platforms to ensure we support the most common work/fleet vehicles on the road today."

A HELPING HAND

Before they can serve their own clients, work truck drivers need a rig



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that suits their specific needs. Help your customers increase and streamline productivity with a comprehensive approach to commercial vehicle outfitting.

"Recently, there has been more of a focus on safety and limiting vehicle downtime," says Jeff Perez, director of business development for Lippert/LUVERNE. "In addition, fleets are having to increase the longevity of their vehicles due to the numerous supply constraints. Therefore, the addition of protective aftermarket accessories has become more prevalent."

If you're unsure what your customers really need, just ask.

"We always suggest that businesses and companies listen closely to their end users to learn how they use their trucks, truck caps, options and truck bed accessories in the real world," says Kish. "Our sales team will spend time with those end users for you as well, if needed."

Many of today's fleet-related accessories have grown beyond the traditional work truck market, further increasing sales potential.



Today's work vehicles can carry more items, which usually equates to more weight. (Photo courtesy Fab Fours)

"We have found that products that enhance the quality of life in the workplace often trickle into one's personal life as well," reveals Hallmark. "Our steel helper springs work on virtually any leaf-sprung vehicle that has a reduced ride height due to weight or worn-out springs. We appreciate the opportunity to enhance the drive quality of work and personal vehicles."

And manufacturers are poised to step even further outside the box.

"It gives us the opportunity to develop a more unconventional accessory outside of bumpers," Hauck says. "With the diversity of work truck platforms, we have full range on any accessory that can be fabricated from steel."

SUPERSIZED SALES

To begin increasing sales in the work truck

MOPAR HIGHLIGHTS 2023 RAM PROMASTER ACCESSORIES



Ram Commercial is highlighting available accessories and upfitting options for the new 2023 Ram ProMaster line.

Ram Commercial is highlighting available accessories and upfitting options for the new 2023 Ram ProMaster line.

Its focus is on factory-backed accessories for vocational, delivery, lifestyle and van-life users.

"The new 2023 Ram ProMaster is designed and built to meet the demands of a variety of customers and their upfit needs," says Mark Bosanac, North America senior vice president, Mopar service, parts and customer care. "To further enhance the customer experience and the demand for customization, Mopar offers more than 140 quality-tested, factory-backed parts and accessories for the new Ram ProMaster and more than 600 across the entire Ram truck lineup."

Featured customizations include a cargo-load floor featuring an anti-slip surface coupled with integrated rails, carriage bolts and D-ring hardware; a crew-van package with a rear bench seat and fixed polycarbonate windows that leaves the rear cargo area accessible; and upper side panels for multiple wheelbase models.

More traditional restyling accessories are also spotlighted, including paint protection film, cargo compartment and footwell floor mats, cargo lighting, passenger-side steps, D-pillar grab handles, receiver hitches, wheel lock kits and locking gas caps.

Ram Commercial will introduce a battery electric ProMaster in 2023 as well.



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make it Work



Get to know your clients to understand their individual work truck needs. (Photos courtesy Hellwig Products)



Recently, there has been more of a focus on safety and limiting vehicle downtime. (Photo courtesy Lippert/LUVERNE)

market, Perez from Lippert/LUVERNE suggests filling the funnel with as many strong leads as possible.

"Advertise to the fleet market," he suggests. "Promote safety and vehicle longevity through these types of aftermarket products."

Search for potential clients that can quickly become repeat customers, adds Blais.

"Increase your focus on the commercial/fleet industry in your area," he advises. "Create an outside sales plan to cultivate and earn business from the many fleet companies in your market. A good place to start is by building relationships with all the truck dealer fleet managers."

And if your shop has a retail area, he suggests creating a setup to catch the eyes of walk-in commercial clients.

"For truck caps, for instance, be sure you have a working display in your showroom or on a company vehicle at your location."

Hellwig's Hallmark recommends really getting to know your clients to understand their individual needs.

"To increase business in any market you need to figure out who your customer is (owner or worker) and then address the problems they are facing," he says. "Workers are typically looking for things that make their jobs easier, faster and more enjoyable. Owners are looking to increase efficiency and productivity and reduce hazards, which all add up to more profits. Addressing each individually and offering items or solutions that address these things will help increase business and customer traffic."

And if it's something never seen before, look for ways to be creative.

"Just because it doesn't exist, doesn't mean it can't," says Hauck from Fab Fours. "Work with your U.S. manufacturers to help accommodate those unique requests. We're always open to new opportunities and working with jobbers to create a product that is needed."

Finally, making connections with others operating in the market can bring extra knowledge and help build awareness of your products and services, explains A.R.E.'s Kish.

"Partnering with many companies and strong customers in the work truck space truly allows you to keep your finger on the pulse of the more real-world economic indicators." **TS**



Fleets are trending toward increases in their buying cycles to replace aging vehicles. (Photo courtesy LTA Manufacturing)

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WINDOW FILM

Separating fact from fiction for tint sales & installation. ///// **By Jef White**

It's not just consumers who have questions when it comes to choosing the right window film for their vehicles. Professionals may not always have all the answers, either.

To help, tint manufacturers and suppliers clear up some common misconceptions and separate fact from fiction in true true-or-false fashion.

TRUE OR FALSE: THE WINDOW FILM MARKET HAS SEEN MAJOR CHANGES OVER THE PAST DECADE.

TRUE

Mike Giles, a sales representative in the southeastern U.S. for 3M, says the market has changed in many ways in the last 10 years.

"Start first with the consumer. They are more educated. They are looking for informative and mobile-friendly websites. They are looking for comments and verifiable reviews. They also want their installations done right away, with the exception of returning customers, who will generally wait until the shop can do the work."

Include the products themselves in those changes, he continues.

"Nano technology window films now lead the way in our industry. This has led to a more expensive product for the shop. However, the consumers want these high-performing window films and are willing to pay more than ever for them. The benefit is a superior product for the consumer and higher profits for the shop."

Quality products are moving the industry forward, says Jim Koshak, regional technical specialist for Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions.

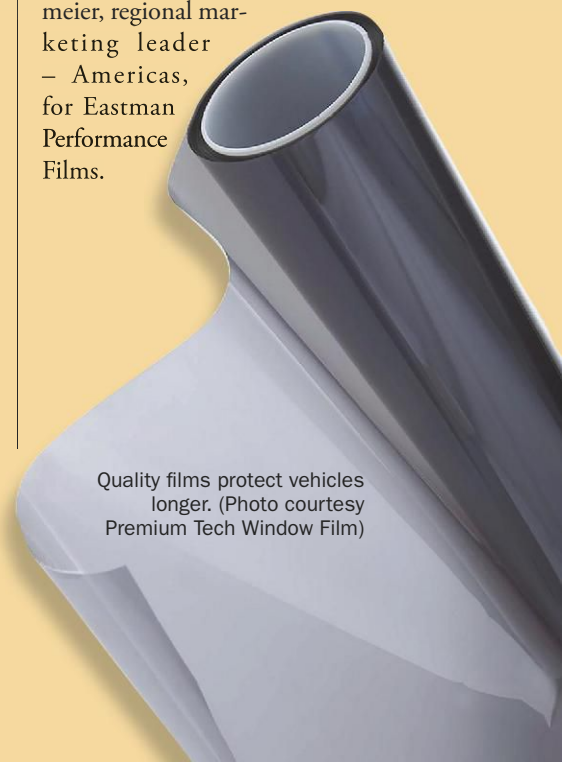
"The films are better-made, with improved solar properties and clarity," he reports. "Quality films are better constructed and last longer, maintaining their properties longer on vehicles."

Alex Sikorski, CEO of Premium Tech Window Film, agrees.

"The technology used in window film manufacturing continues to improve, bringing new products with improved benefits to the end user. The past 10 years have been marked using nanoceramic components and nano-carbon particles, creating products with higher infrared block that provide better comfort to users."

Drivers appreciate the combination of added comfort and improved aesthetics.

"We've seen the market evolve from consumers purchasing dyed films to higher-performing ceramic window tint to add the combination of comfort and style to their vehicles," says Dan Birkenmeier, regional marketing leader – Americas, for Eastman Performance Films.



Quality films protect vehicles longer. (Photo courtesy Premium Tech Window Film)



Look to build a local network of like-minded partners to help promote sales and visibility. (Photo courtesy 3M)





Quality tint products are moving the industry forward. (Photos courtesy Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions)



TRUE OR FALSE: THESE IMPROVEMENTS ALSO AFFECT HOW THE PRODUCTS ARE INSTALLED.

TRUE

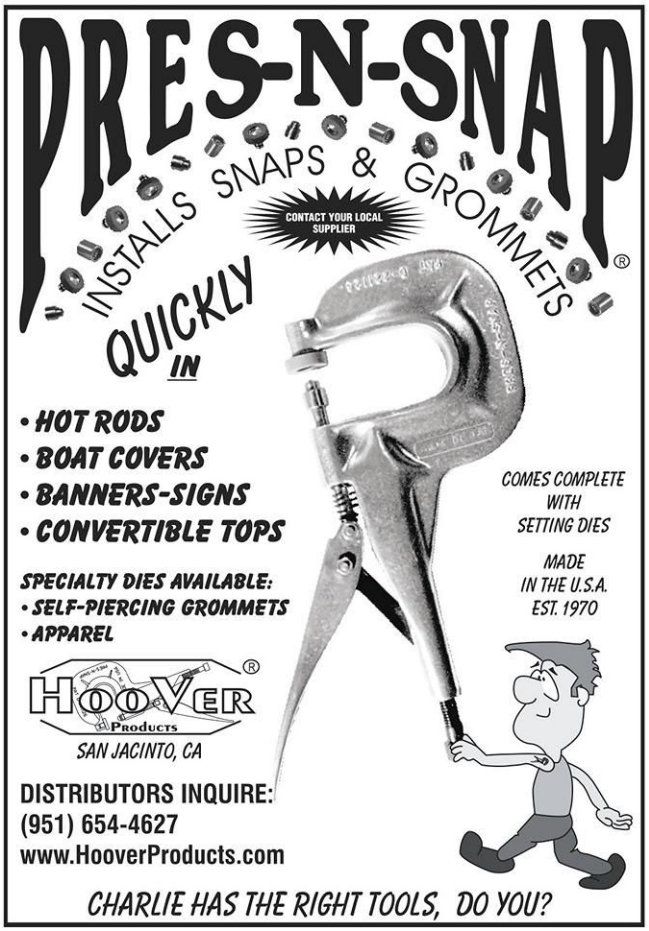
"Many shops expect that all films should or will install basically the same," Giles notes. "Window films with all of these newer technologies will install differently, at least in some ways. The installer notices it, for sure."

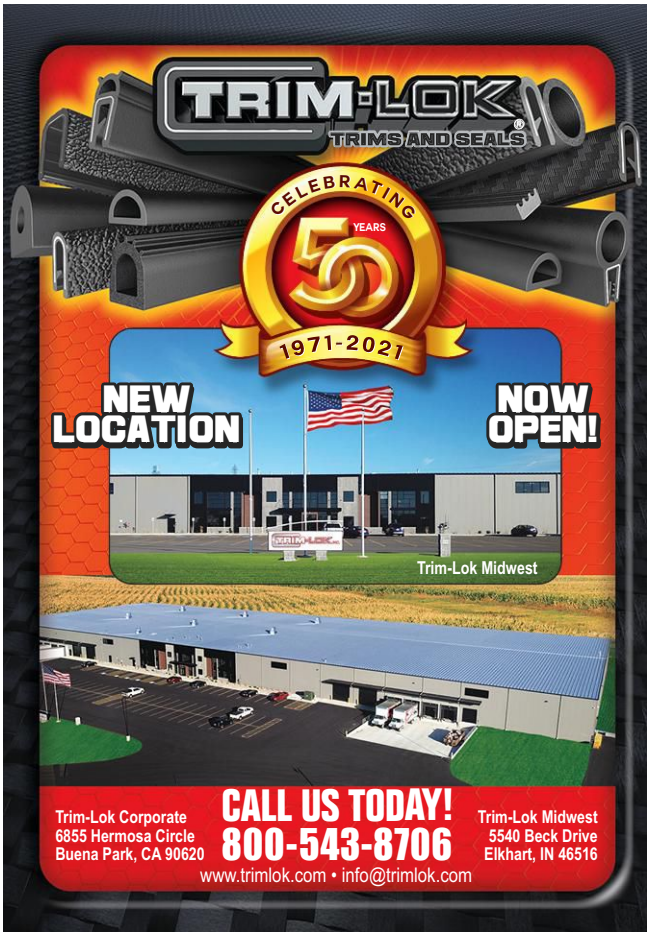
The misconception comes when managers worry that their top installers can't or won't adapt.

"When I was first teaching installers the 'dry shrink' method many years ago, it was very difficult to convince them to change from a 'wet shrink,'" Giles recalls. "I had to convince them to try it for just 30 days. It worked almost every time."

Furthermore, future breakthroughs may mean more changes to come, he adds.

"What will the next new technology be for window film? We are working on that. When it comes out, shops and their installers might have to learn something new again. Adjusting our installation methods to the technology of the future is going to be important for all to succeed."





WINDOW FILM

HOT WINDOW FILM PRODUCTS

HOT PRODUCT:
3M Automotive Window Film Ceramic IR Series
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Nanoceramic technology for infrared heat reduction; rejects up to 66% of total solar energy; provides up to 95% infrared rejection; rejects up to 99.9% of UV light; multiple tint levels that block up to 95% of visible light; neutral color with a cool blue shade.
3M
Mike Giles
Sales Representative, SE U.S.

HOT PRODUCT:
Avery Dennison NR Nano Ceramic IR
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Developed with advanced, durable inorganic ceramic nanoparticles; total solar energy rejection with long-lasting color stability; high optical clarity; deep graphite color tone; blocks more than 99% of harmful UV rays; up to 93% glare reduction.
Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions
Jim Koshak
Regional Technical Specialist

HOT PRODUCTS:
Ceramic Window Tint Products
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
High heat rejection; improve the comfort of passengers within the vehicle by rejecting infrared heat; help block harmful UV rays, which helps safeguard against skin damage and interior vehicle fading.
Eastman Performance Films
Dan Birkenmeier
Regional Marketing Leader–Americas

HOT PRODUCT:
Indy Ceramic Window Film
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
State-of-the-art, weatherable polyester combined with nanoceramics; superior clarity; blocks 99.9% of UVA and UVB; keeps vehicle interiors cooler when infused with IR blocking materials; blocks light without compromising safety or visibility.
Premium Tech Window Film
Alex Sikorski
CEO



Drivers look to high-performing window films to add comfort and style to their vehicles. (Photos courtesy Eastman Performance Films)

TRUE OR FALSE: PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IS VITAL FOR PROPER INSTALLATION.

TRUE

While the pros make it look easy, those new to tint films can dramatically flatten the learning curve with targeted instruction.

"For a new shop wanting to get into window film installation, it's important that installers receive proper installation training," says Koshak. "While some of the tools and techniques can be similar to that of, say, color-change film or even paint protection film, there are distinct differences. Many manufacturers such as Avery Dennison offer top-notch training classes from expert instructors in convenient locations all across the country."

TRUE OR FALSE: THE WINDOW FILM INDUSTRY IS AN OLD BOY NETWORK.

FALSE

"I think there is a more diverse group of people working in the industry, including a lot more women installers and women-owned shops, which is terrific," Koshak notes. "This dynamic is great because it can help extend the reach and education of window films as a way to customize a vehicle for style along with the practical and important benefits of added safety

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Educating customers is essential to avoid selling a commodity driven by price only. (Photo courtesy Premium Tech Window Film)

and comfort for drivers and passengers. It brings in a larger population of customers as well."

TRUE OR FALSE: CONSUMERS BUY WINDOW FILM ON PRICE ALONE.

FALSE

The industry has proven that educated buyers will pay more for quality films that offer added benefits.

"The biggest misconception is that customers will not pay for higher-performing products such as ceramic window tint," Birkenmeier observes.

Instead, explaining value and showcasing a variety of films can lead to upsell opportunities.

"Offer a 'good, better, best' product portfolio and do not assume which product your customer will buy," he continues. "Show each customer the full offering and utilize a heat demo unit to showcase the heat-rejecting qualities of higher-performing ceramic window tint products. It's a great way to provide the benefits your customers seek while helping to generate incremental revenue."

Never be afraid to demonstrate to consumers exactly what they are buying, says Sikorski from Premium Tech.

"Don't assume customers know the different properties of window films besides 'dark' and 'light,'" he explains. "Educating customers is essential to avoid selling a commodity driven by price only."

The options for shops include carrying products from more than one manufacturer, Sikorski adds.

"In some cases, if a tint shop offers different price tiers of the same brand of film, customers may have to settle for less performance to get the lowest price," he notes. "Offering another brand of ceramic film with the same quality and warranty gives shops an opportunity to sell a lower-cost installation and not lose business with customers constrained by tight budgets."

TRUE OR FALSE: THE EVOLUTION OF THE INDUSTRY MEANS LEAVING OLD APPROACHES BEHIND.

FALSE

This is particularly relevant when it comes to drumming up new business, says Giles from 3M.

"Assuming shops are doing all of the essential things such as website and social media activities, then perhaps it is time to get back to some of the basic things we did when first starting in the business," he says. "When my business slowed, I started to look at it as my customers did. Was it convenient for them that I opened at 9 a.m. and closed at 5 p.m.? Maybe not, so we began opening at 8 a.m. and closing at 6 p.m. We also picked up some customers before or after work."

He also suggests physical changes, if needed, to make the shop more noticeable and appealing.

"I wanted potential customers to see my shop at night as they drove by, so I installed a back lighted awning."

Finally, he revisited tried-and-true marketing methods.

"If there was nothing booked then I at least sent someone out to pass out flyers," Giles says. "We would get business every time we did that. If you cannot spend more on your SEO/social media activities, then look for things you can do at virtually no cost."

Koshak recommends connecting with consumers as well.

"Be present at Cars and Coffee events and other car shows, and bring along a nice ride that you've tinted," he says. "It's a great way to show off your work and expertise to a captive audience. And don't forget your business cards!"

TRUE OR FALSE: THE PRODUCT IS SO WELL-KNOWN THAT MARKETING ISN'T NECESSARY.

FALSE

Every business needs to market its products and services. For today's tint shop, that usually means starting with some type of online presence.

"Social media is a must these days," says Koshak. "Promote your business and the product lines you carry, and showcase your completed installations to build awareness and referrals."

He also recommends making connections with others that appreciate the benefits window film provides.

"Research companies that can use your services, like new and used car dealerships, body shops and limousine companies. Some of these may be small jobs at first, but the volume of work can add up."

TRUE OR FALSE: SUCCESSFUL SHOPS FORM STRONG PARTNERSHIPS.

TRUE

Making local connections is one way to broaden your reach with potential customers.

"Visit a glass shop," Giles suggests. "Visit a body shop. A mechanic's shop. Look for a connection with anyone that might refer business to you. Networking is one of the most valuable activities a small business owner can engage in to increase sales, and you might be surprised how many other businesses will want to refer their good customers to another fine business owner in order to keep them happy." ***TS***



Fender Flares

EGR USA, Ontario, California, offers its easy-to-install Fender Flares for a wide variety of modern pickup applications. Manufactured to OEM quality from ABS material and CNC robotically trimmed for a precise fit, BASELINE Fender Flares are available in two styles—Standard or Bolt-style. Both styles are designed with a textured black finish to closely match the truck's original equipment accent pieces.

4Runner Front Bumper

Raptor Series, Hayward, California, presents a Magnum RT Front Winch Bumper for 2014-22 Toyota 4Runner applications. The bumper offers a clean fit and is available with an optional RT bar.





Equinox Suspension Kit

Timbren Industries, Toronto, presents a Timbren SES upgrade for the rear suspension on 2018-22 Chevrolet Equinox models. Kit GMREQNX mounts to the control arm using existing holes. The no-maintenance upgrade is designed to prevent sag, reduce sway and enhance vehicle ride under load without compromising unloaded ride quality.



Tundra Suspension System

Air Lift Co., Lansing, Michigan, presents its LoadLifter 5000 series suspension kits for 2022-23 Toyota Tundra models, including new two-wheel drive as well as four-wheel drive fitments. Also available in a LoadLifter 5000 Ultimate offering featuring an internal jounce bumper, the fully adjustable air spring kits work with the existing suspension to properly level the vehicle—eliminating squat and correcting frequent issues while towing or hauling including poor headlight aim, unresponsive steering, body roll and bottoming out.



Classic Mercedes-Benz Radio

Retro Manufacturing, Henderson, Nevada, presents the RetroSound Europa authentic aftermarket radio for 1960-70s Mercedes-Benz vehicles. With an all-new design inspired by the sophisticated styling of classic Mercedes vehicles, the radio includes replica knobs, large buttons, elegant chrome trim and pinstriping that complements the vehicles' interior styling. A new DIN-Kit is included to provide an easy installation and OEM appearance. The Europa is compatible with all RetroSound radio motors. ***TS***

Bronco Front Bumper

Scorpion Extreme Products, Phoenix, one of the **DPI Off-Road Brands**, presents a Front Bumper for new-generation Ford Bronco models. Manufactured from high-quality cold rolled steel, the bumper includes high-precision laser cuts formed using CNC press brakes. Designed by off-road enthusiasts for on- and off-road use, the unit provides protection and function.



Looking around at an overlanding event, what you may not notice right away are the alternatives to late-model Toyotas, Jeeps, Fords or Rams, which are currently the most popular rigs.

Some uncommon builds, however, are equal to, if not more capable of, holding their own on the trail.

While there are shops that specialize in unorthodox types of overland vehicles, it's the interest they attract and the passion their owners have that should be noted and supported.

ALL IN THE ATTITUDE

Overlanders that run off the beaten path are not so unusual. Here are some examples:

Santa Fe Springs, California's Desolate Motorsports specializes in 1980-96 full-size Ford Broncos. Greg Gilbert started off building hot rods and off-road vehicles and grew into a fabrication shop.

Desolate is now a well-rounded business with off-road experience that builds anything from Baja race trucks to recreational off-roaders and cool daily drivers.

Another shop, LGE-CTS Motorsports, took on the challenge of overlanding a Volkswagen Atlas. This midsize family SUV is not likely your first choice when recommending an off-road vehicle platform, yet a 3.6L V-6 with 276 hp and 266 pound-feet of torque or a 2.0L 4-cylinder with 235 hp and 258 pound-feet of torque aren't bad places to start, especially if your customer already owns one or happens to see the LGE-CTS modified Atlas.

Meanwhile, Land Rover of Las Vegas turned a military gun tractor developed for the British Ministry of Defense into an overland vehicle. The "101 Forward Con-

MORE ON THESHOPMAG.COM
Mercedes-Benz Explores Electric Camper Vans:
bit.ly/3VWnVAP

Story & Photos By Jason R. Sakurai

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

Overlanders come in all shapes & sizes.



There's nothing quite like a 1955 DeSoto overlander built on a 1980s Ford F-250 chassis.

trol" name was derived from the vehicle's 101-inch wheelbase and the position of the driver, which is above and slightly in front of the front wheels.

Designed for aircraft transport, the 3.5L Rover V-8 is positioned beneath and to the rear of the cab to eliminate the hood and reduce unused space.

A 1980 Dodge Power Ram 3500 four-door 4x4 crew cab that Nitto Tires has used in its consumer and trade show displays is one that never fails to draw a crowd. This vintage truck is a good example of a build that can serve a variety of needs, whether off-road, overlanding or as a daily driver.

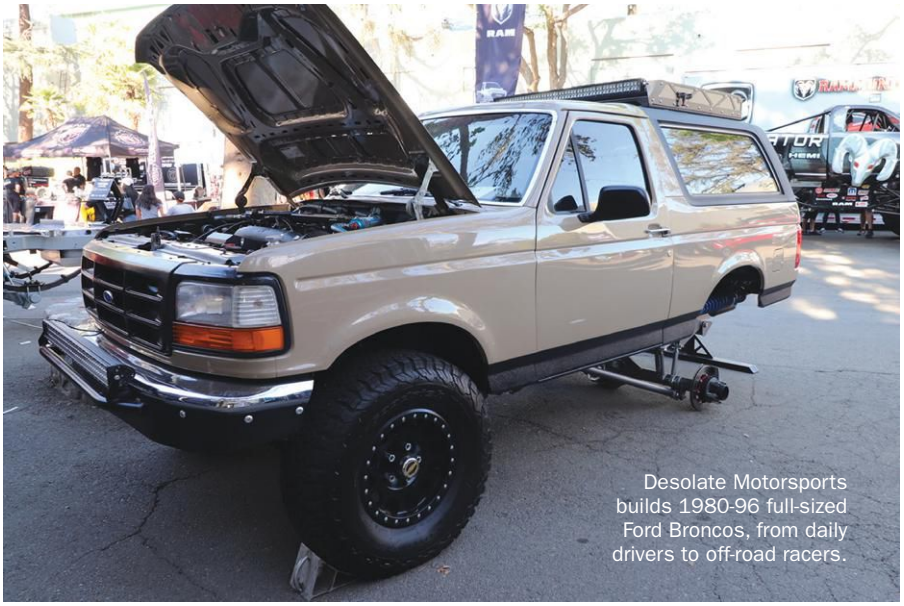
Subaru is another overlooked platform, although Portland, Oregon-based RalliTEK is looking to change that perception with its Outback, Crosstrek and Forester offerings.

If Subaru's success in the World Rally Championship isn't enough to solidify its credentials, seeing a modified Outback tackle trails that challenge other overlanders may alter your perception. Even more encouraging is the number of Subaru dealers that are supportive of modifying these vehicles—presenting an opportunity to work together as you do with other dealers in your area.

Vintage Toyotas may take more of an effort to source parts and accessories, especially if you're working with a JDM (Japanese Domestic Market) vehicle, but they can be well worth the effort. Landcruiser NW is a shop that specializes in classic Toyotas.

Also, while on the subject of vintage Toyotas, Menden, Germany's Maltec took Jorge Gonzalez's Toyota 78 Series Troop Carrier, which has roamed the world as the centerpiece of his liveworkwander.com website, and rebuilt, refurbished and mounted it to a restored 80 Series chassis. His 4.2L diesel-powered Troopy has been to the far corners of the earth, symbolic of just how far your customers may go.

Another oddity in overlanding is the Cayenne, a mid-size crossover SUV made by Porsche since 2002. The Cayenne is the first Porsche V-8 vehicle since the discontinuation of the 928, its first off-road vehicle since the 1950s, and the first with four



Desolate Motorsports builds 1980-96 full-sized Ford Broncos, from daily drivers to off-road racers.



A VW Atlas build by LGE-CTS Motorsports demonstrates the attraction of divergent platforms.



A RalliTEK-modified Subaru Outback demonstrates its capabilities on a grueling trail.



Land Rover of Las Vegas' "Forward Control 101" is a V-8-powered 4WD originally developed for the British Army.

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT...



Perhaps one of the original adventure vans, the VW Syncro Westfalia.



Landcruiser NW's two-door 70 Series Toyota is a vintage righthand drive Japanese market vehicle.



A Toyota Hiace former fire truck converted into an overland rig.

doors. Still, it's surprising to see them outside of their street-driven element.

"Go big or go home" may be Bailey Cooper's modus operandi, and he was lucky to find Willard, Utah's Plan B Supply. Plan B builds Humvee variants, Hummer parts and accessories, and armored vehicles.

Cooper's 5-ton M934 6x6 overlander may seem extreme, but that's how he likes it. Originally a military command center, it was acquired and repurposed by Plan B Supply, which turned it into an expedition transporter.

Conversely, there's an element within overlanding that thinks small, and imported Kei trucks and vans serve as a base for their builds. Examples include a Toyota Hiace former fire truck with its familiar paint scheme, and a 4WD Honda Acty SDX with a rooftop tent and custom bed rack.

(Note: Recent legislation in some states may prohibit the titling and licensing of these diminutive rigs, so check for any restrictions that may exist in your area.)

Finally, Ames, Iowa's Legend 4x4 is an International Harvester Scout authority that builds on stock frames to impart a vintage driving and riding feel. Its full restorations include modern updates such as a new LS3 engine and 4L60 automatic transmission, while still honoring the feel of the original.

VAN-TASTIC

The growth of adventure vans is credited largely to the emergence of Mercedes-Benz Sprinter, Ford Transit and Ram ProMaster platforms. Yet, the idea has been around for decades.

Unlike current 4x4 or AWD-equipped vans, some Ford Econoline, Chevy Express/GMC Savana and Ram models feature V-8-powered drivetrains with very robust suspension systems. Their capabilities make them popular in their own right and separate them from the more mild-mannered adventure vans currently in vogue.

Weldtec Designs in El Cajon, California builds 3- to 6-inch lift kits for full-size Chevy Express/GMC Savana vans, Ford E-Series models and Nissan NVs, in addition to Ford Transit and E-Series Class C motorhomes. Weldtec developed its own chromoly steel lift spindles that are TIG welded for maximum strength.

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DARE TO BE DIFFERENT...


This Toyota 78 Series Troop Carrier symbolizes just how far an overlander can go.



Richard and Dolores Ran's Porsche Cayenne is another overland oddity.


Bailey Cooper's 5-ton, six-wheeled ultimate bugout vehicle is a Plan B Supply build.


A 4WD Honda Acty SDX truck with a rooftop tent and custom bed rack.


Weldtec Designs' 5-inch lift kit for Chevy Express/GMC Savana vans provides off-highway clearance.


This Ford Econoline-based adventure van features a 4x4 drivetrain and a V-8 engine.

The systems use the factory mounting points to retain the stock steering geometry and are designed to reuse the stock upper and lower control arms. The spindles alone can level out the van, with blocks and U-bolts offered for the rear as well. Fox shocks are an available upgrade.

Meanwhile, Manchester, Pennsylvania's Quigley Motor Co. began selling trucks and vans, and then customizing them beginning in the mid-1960s. In 1974, it began building the Quigley 4x4.

A third-generation, family-owned manufacturing and design company, Quigley's innovative drivetrain systems have made it one of the world's largest manufacturers of full-sized four-wheel drive van conversions. The focus is on go-anywhere, large load capacity, full-size vans for fleets, small businesses, government or emergency agencies, transportation and tourism companies, and individuals.

EVERYONE WELCOME

Whether we're talking overland vehicles or adventure vans, the idea here is to remain open-minded.

There will always be that customer who refuses to go mainstream and instead wants to substitute a platform or vehicle that's outside the norm. This may require additional time and effort on your part to source obscure parts and accessories, or to fabricate something that doesn't exist.

One of the best parts about overlanding, however, is the creative aspect, and doing things differently is all part of the adventure. ***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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A LOOK AHEAD

How will you build your business in 2023? ///// **By Josh Poulson**

So, how was your 2022? I would venture to guess that, like many shops I've encountered, overall business was pretty good.

One thing I have always been fascinated by is how well we as restylers, along with our manufacturer partners, manage to adapt or pivot when needed.

Think back to March of 2020, when the world shut down. If you would have told me back then that there was going to be a shortage of automotive parts, that wait times were going to be unprecedented and that there would be a total lack of new car inventory for consumers to buy, I probably would have told you that our business would likely fold and we'd have to try something new.

Instead, we ended up having two record years, despite all the challenges. And that same happy story is being repeated by restylers all over the country.

So, yes, we are resilient and innovative when it comes to making our businesses not just survive, but thrive.

SURVIVE OR THRIVE?

So, what about 2023? More fears, I know.

Interest rates have been climbing to fight record inflation, which means vehicle payments are now more expensive, to go along with everyday items like food and gas. People just aren't spending the way they were when the government was giving out money.

Experts are all over the place when it comes to vehicle sales predictions for 2023, including electric vs. ICE debates and infrastructure questions.

So, what are we going to do? Survive? Or thrive?

I don't know for sure. But what I do

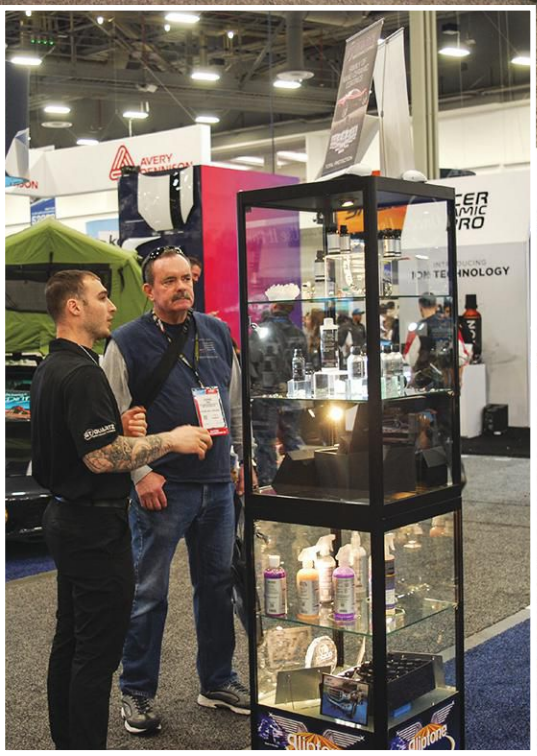




Lessons learned over the past couple of years will strengthen your shop and the industry as a whole.



An uncertain economic outlook means shops need to watch for opportunities and take advantage when they arrive.



know is that a mentor told me a long time ago that, no matter what, we aren't going back to the horse & buggy days, so there will always be vehicles around. With those vehicles come owners who have gotten used to having certain features and accessories, and again won't be looking to go backwards when they purchase a new or used car, truck, SUV or CUV.

(For instance, I myself am looking for a new vehicle but, to be honest, if it doesn't have a heated steering wheel then I'm not interested, ha-ha!)

Because so many people held off on a new vehicle purchase over the past couple of years, whether because of high prices or low inventories, there is a lot of pent-up demand. So the opportunities appear to be there.

LESSONS LEARNED

Many restyling shops learned a lot and changed a lot during the pandemic.

Owners I've talked to started putting more emphasis on retail business instead of solely focusing on dealership accounts. Others started pursuing fleet work. Many jumped into more products and services that they hadn't done much of in the past.

Regardless of what you did, it worked, and you thrived. The goal now is to keep up the pace.

The simple approach is to keep doing what we've been doing while also hoping to get business back to pre-COVID levels. Maybe that will get us through the next few months, if the slowdown many think is coming actually arrives.

Whatever happens, we all know that there is work out there, it just needs to be found. Don't get complacent hoping that work will just show up, however—some effort is always needed to grow and thrive, and this year won't be any different.

Make some short-term goals. Talk to your staff about where they think the market is headed and what is needed. Keep your ear to the ground so that when an opportunity comes you will be ready.

Ultimately those who thrive and make it through any downturn will always feel like their backs were against the wall to survive, so if that's how you feel right now then you're on the right track.

Fear is a motivator, but this industry is ready to face 2023 head-on! ***TS***



Named the 2022-23 SEMA Person of the Year, ***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.*

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Free Online Automotive Design Course Offered

Yellowbrick, a global leader in online education and career exploration, and the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles have teamed up to empower the next generation of automotive designers with a newly released free online course led by some of the top names in vehicle design.

"Auto Design & Sketching" highlights a path to a career in automotive design for anyone with a passion for cars and design, while mapping out a possible career in the future of transportation, program organizers note.

The self-paced online course features three modules: Design Principles & History, Famous Case Studies and Let's Draw, which focuses on sketching exercises.

The course is guided by a well-known group of automotive designers including Franz von Holzhausen (chief designer, Tesla Motors), Ralph Gilles (chief design officer, Stellantis), Christine Feuell (brand CEO, Chrysler), Francesc Arenas (design director, Hispano Suiza) and Roman Yneges (faculty, Art Center College of Design), among others.

"We designed this course to simplify and illuminate a path to a career in automotive design," says Justin Wolske, director, partnerships & strategic initiatives for Yellowbrick. "High-level training in this field isn't always easily accessible, but we've removed some of those barriers by offering the program at no cost and involving an esteemed lineup of contributors."

Working in partnership with the world's leading universities, brands and industry experts, "Yellowbrick creates learning experiences that help tomorrow's leaders discover and pursue career paths in growing global industries that align with their passions, including fashion, sports, beauty, music and media," says the company.

All three course modules will be available in early 2023. Participants only need to provide an email address and be at least 13 years old to participate.

For more information or to register, visit yellowbrick.co/autodesign.

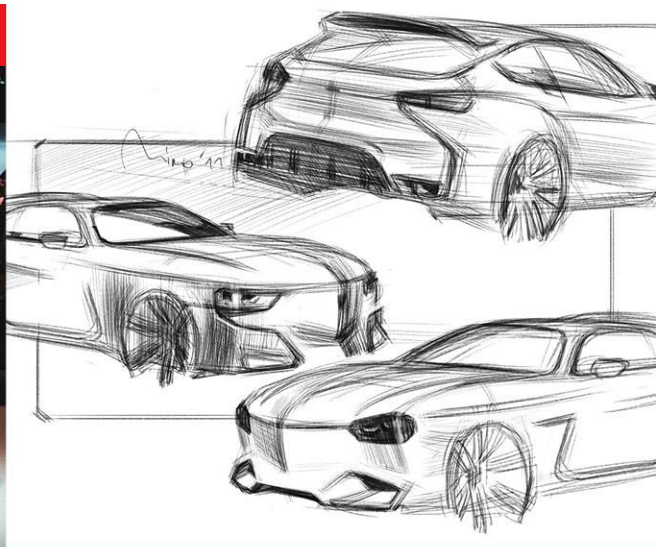
This article originally appeared at theshopmag.com. Visit today and sign up for the free daily eNewsletter. **TS**



The course is guided by a well-known group of automotive designers including Franz von Holzhausen.



Yellowbrick and the Petersen Automotive Museum have created a free online automotive design course led by top vehicle designers.



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