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The most memorable project vehicles, special editions and concepts are always more than the sum of their parts—telling a story or making a statement that was hiding in plain sight all along. *See article on page 40.* (Photos courtesy Archimedes Defense, top left; Bizzarrini, top right; and KRUG Expedition, bottom)



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Jef White
Editor
theshopmag.com

Right to Repair Maintains Momentum

A recent campaign by the Auto Care Association shows Americans continue to firmly support efforts to protect consumers' Right to Repair.

According to the association, industry advocates and concerned citizens have now sent more than 114,000 letters to Congress, demanding protection of their right to choose where and how they repair their vehicles, including through independent shops and DIY.

The message, it believes, is clear—consumers and independent businesses want laws that ensure equal access to repair information and parts.

"As we reach this incredible milestone, it's clear that the issue of Right to Repair resonates deeply with Americans across the country," says Bill Hanvey, president and CEO, Auto Care Association. "This is not just about fixing cars—it's about protecting consumer rights, preserving competition and ensuring that the auto care industry remains a vibrant, competitive marketplace."

The issue grows more prominent as new vehicles become more technologically advanced. The association states that 95% of new vehicles sold globally will have wirelessly transmitted connectivity by 2030. Currently, data is sent only to the vehicle manufacturer, which controls who has access and at what cost.

"These numbers highlight the urgent need for Congress to act," Hanvey says. "The current situation creates a lopsided market where large manufacturers hold all the power, and consumers and independent shops are left at a disadvantage. Ensuring Right to Repair is not just good for consumers—it's vital for the health of our economy."

Over the past year, the campaign has gained significant traction, with participation from all 50 states. Some of the strongest engagements have come from California, Washington, Texas, New York and Florida, where consumers have voiced their concerns over rising repair costs and limited choices.

A recent Auto Care Association survey found that 79% of vehicle owners believe they should have the right to choose where their vehicle is repaired, and 82% expressed concern over manufacturers restricting access to repair information.

Driving home the need for repair, 84% of shops rank the right to repair as their top issue, with 63% currently experiencing issues with accessing repair data.

Meanwhile, Congress continues to consider key legislation like the "REPAIR Act" (H.R. 906) that could shape the future of vehicle repair rights.

"The support we've seen from both industry professionals and everyday consumers is nothing short of inspiring," Hanvey notes. "It's proof that when we work together, we can make a real difference. But the fight is not over. We will continue to push forward until the Right to Repair is fully secured for all Americans."

Learn more at autocare.org/r2rtoolkit. ***TS***

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CREATING A WELL-ROUNDED MARKETING STRATEGY



A well-rounded marketing strategy will allow your shop to stand out in a crowded industry. All images credit: stock.adobe.com

■ Tips for helping your shop stand out in a crowded online marketplace.

By Barry Alt & Dean Heckman

Editor's note: This is the first in a two-part series highlighting The Four Pillars of Effective Business Marketing for Auto Restoration, Performance, Racing and Restyling Shops.

If you're the owner of an auto restoration, performance, racing or restyling shop, simply being great at what you do isn't enough anymore. To thrive in the online market these days, your shop must stand out in a crowded industry, attract new customers and keep them coming back for more.

That's where a well-rounded marketing strategy comes into play.

A well-designed strategy will help you build your reputation, grow your customer base and ultimately make your business successful.

But what, exactly, does a well-rounded strategy look like?

A solid strategy involves integrating the Four Pillars of Effective Business Marketing for auto restoration, performance, racing and restyling shops into your approach.

Those pillars are:

- Branding
- Photography
- Videography
- Digital Marketing & Messaging

This two-part article explores the four marketing pillars in detail to help you understand their benefits and how to integrate them into your marketing strategy.

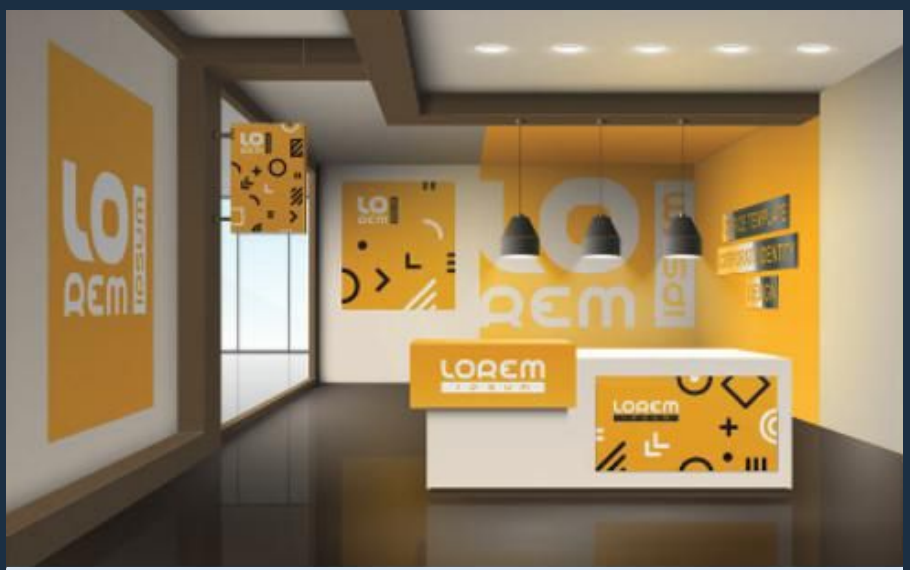
BRANDING

Branding is the foundation of your entire marketing strategy. It's what sets you apart in a crowded market where every auto restoration, performance, racing or restyling shop says they're the best.

Authentic branding goes much deeper than any logo or catchy slogan. It's not just about how badass your website is or how killer your brand colors look—it's all about creating a unique identity that connects with your audience.

In other words, it's about bringing your shop's personality to life online and highlighting the reasons behind everything you do for your audience to see.

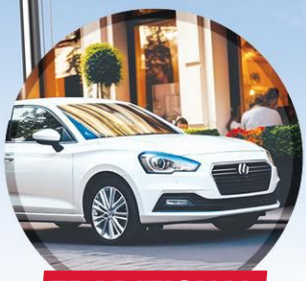
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A comprehensive strategy will help you build your reputation, grow your customer base and improve your chances for success.

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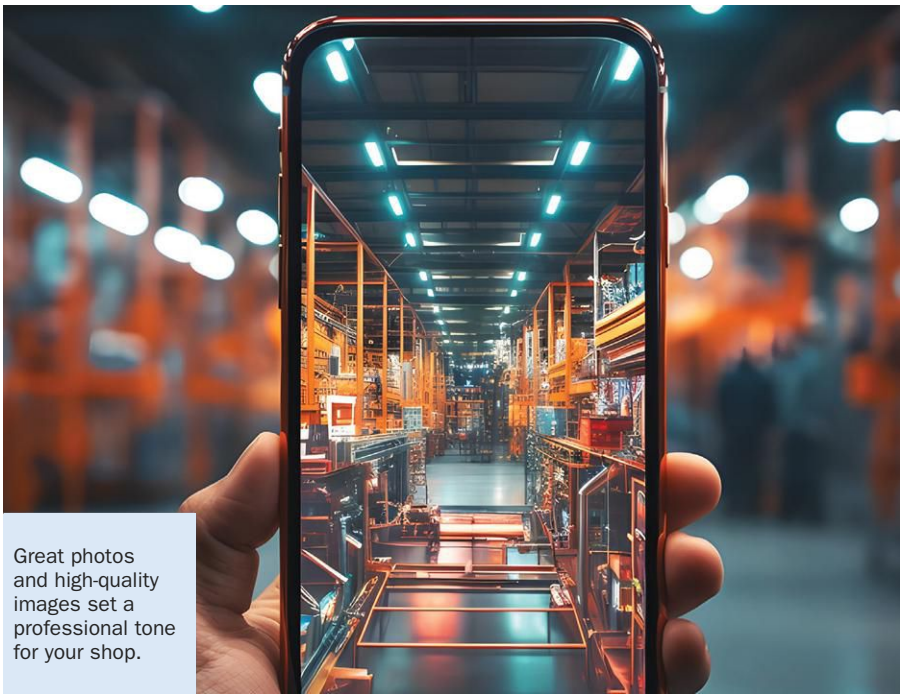
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Great photos and high-quality images set a professional tone for your shop.

online! Your brand's personality comes to life with every post you make on social media and with every interaction you have with your clients. Your website tells your brand's whole story, giving your audience a memorable first impression that will keep them thinking about your shop.

Together, your social media profiles and your website create a unique brand experience that builds trust with your audience and showcases your shop's awesomeness.

Key elements of branding for auto restoration, performance, racing and restyling shops include:

Brand identity

This is your business's overall persona. It's the big-picture view of how you want to position yourself in the market.

For example, if your shop focuses on high-performance tuning and upgrades, your brand identity might emphasize precision, power and expertise. If you're a restoration shop, do you restore any vehicle that comes your way, or does your shop specialize in restoring Mopars, vintage Porsches or Chevy C10 trucks?

Core values

These are the principles that guide how you run your business and interact with customers. Core values might include integrity, customer focus, quality and innovation.

Visuals

Visual elements like your logo, colors, typography and images make your brand recognizable. Keeping these consistent across all of your branding is key to looking professional and being memorable.

Messaging/copywriting

Strong branding hinges on clear, engaging messaging, and copywriting is a big part of this. Whether through your website, social media, email marketing or advertising, your copy must capture your brand's unique voice and personality.

To make your brand stand out and connect with your audience, keep these tips in mind:

- ***Be consistent:*** Make sure all your branding elements—visuals, messaging and tone—are consistent across every platform. This builds recognition and trust.
- ***Know your customers:*** Be aware of who they are, what they care about and how they interact with your brand. Tailor your branding to align with their expectations.
- ***Engage with your community:*** Branding isn't just about your online presence. Get involved in your local community by attending events and supporting local initiatives.
- ***Stay authentic:*** Make sure your brand reflects your actual core values and mission. Authenticity resonates with customers and helps build lasting connections.

PRO TIP: Readdress and periodically update your branding and messaging to match your audience's changing needs and tastes. Being flexible helps your brand stay relevant and connected to your customers over time.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Great photos and high-quality images are critical to your auto restoration, performance, racing or restyling shop's branding and marketing efforts.

They're key to creating a strong first impression, catching the eye of your prospects and setting a professional tone for your shop. When people see sharp, clear photos of your projects, they instantly know you're serious about the quality of your work.

Eye-catching images on social media combined with great branding and messaging get likes, shares and comments, helping you reach a wider audience.

On your website and in your other marketing efforts, it's the same story.

Great visuals keep people interested and engaged. You want them to stick around for a while, admiring the work you've put into your restorations, custom builds or performance upgrades.

The better the images, the better the

SEE MHD AT SEMA!

Barry Alt and the Motorhead Digital team will present a free educational seminar at the 2024 SEMA Show. Check out their "Social Media, Website and Digital Marketing: Expert Panel Discussion" from 1-2 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 6, in conference room W309, where panelists will delve into branding, photography, videography and digital marketing strategies designed to elevate your aftermarket business.

Learn more at semashow.com/education

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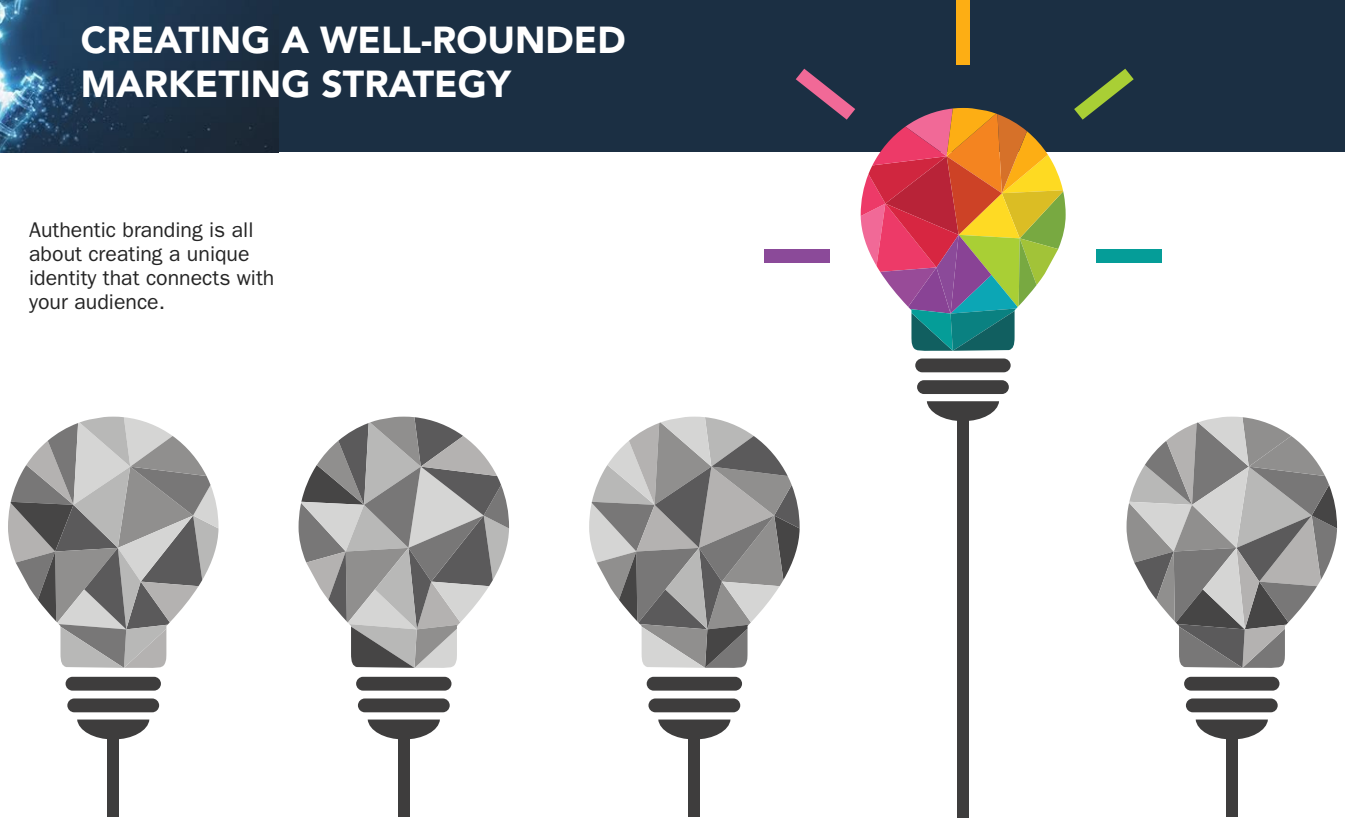
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Authentic branding is all about creating a unique identity that connects with your audience.

chances they'll choose your shop. As the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words, so make it a good one!

Types of high-quality brand photography for auto restoration, performance, racing and restyling shops include:

Product & build photography

Highlight your auto performance parts or services with detailed, high-resolution images. For example, closeups or before-and-after shots of a high-performance engine upgrade or restoration can showcase quality and craftsmanship.

Behind-the-scenes content

Share what happens behind closed doors. Photos of your staff at work or your shop's daily routines add a personal touch and show how much effort you put into your services.

Progress pictures

Everybody loves a good story, and what better way to tell a story than by showing off the progression of your latest or past projects with an image gallery full of build steps to completion? Not only do your clients get excited about seeing their cars on display, but your audience will be blown away by the transformations you make to vehicles every day.

Lifestyle photography

Show your team in action or happy customers enjoying your work. These images help potential customers picture themselves partnering with your shop.

Things to consider to take great photos:

- ***Lighting:*** Use natural or good studio light to make your photos bright and clear. Avoid dim light or harsh shadows. The more professional your photos look, the less your audience can look away.
- ***Composition:*** Frame your shots and use the rule of thirds to create balanced images.
- ***Background:*** Keep it simple. A clean background keeps the focus on your subject. For example, if you're taking a picture of a finished project, try taking it with an uncluttered background. Progress shots look great in the shop, but when she's all cleaned up, you want to make sure the only thing the audience sees is the beautiful work you've completed.
- ***Focus:*** Make sure your main subject is sharp. Blurry photos look unprofessional and won't keep anybody's attention for very long.

A note of warning: We would be doing a disservice here if we didn't warn you about using images you find with a Google search or grabbing pics from paid stock photo sites without paying for and licensing them. Never do this! You won't believe how many clients send us photos they've found on the internet.

Most images on the internet are copyrighted, so using them could result in a lawsuit or fines from stock photo companies.

There is no problem using a limited number of licensed photos or even royalty-free images on your site or social media, as there is a place for them. We always recommend using your own images.

PRO TIP: Keep the style and quality of your photos consistent across all your branding materials and—when appropriate—include your logo and brand colors on your images, especially for social media posts. This consistency helps create a polished and professional image for your shop's brand.

That's all for now. Check back next time to learn more about how videography and digital marketing and messaging can help your online efforts. ***TS***



*With over 27 years of experience, **BARRY ALT** leads Motorhead Digital, a digital marketing team focused on transforming the online presence of businesses in the automotive aftermarket. Their signature programs—Location, Site and Marketing Maximizer—are designed to enhance websites, social media and digital marketing strategies, attracting quality leads and maximizing revenue for auto restoration, performance and grassroots race shops. Call (585) 766-9785, visit motorheaddigital.com or email maximizesales@motorheaddigital.com.*

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NOWHERE TO HIDE

By Jef White

Aftermarket lights & light bars offer a clear path to profits.

The impact of LEDs and related light sources on the automotive aftermarket is easy to see.

Minus the former issues of heat, mounting difficulties and wiring challenges, these days you'll rarely find a customized car, truck, Jeep or even UTV not carrying some type of added illumination.

From light bars to pod lights and a variety of application-specific systems and setups, lighting solutions offer professional shops a clear path to profits.

From market observations to sales tips, suppliers are happy to explain why, when it comes to aftermarket lights and light bars, these days there's nowhere to hide.

CLEAR VIEWS

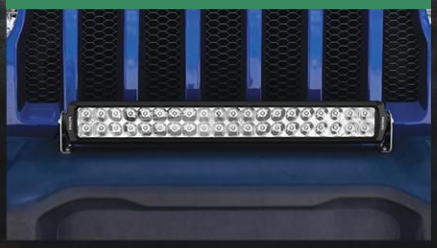
There's no doubting the popularity of aftermarket lights and light bars with today's off-road, street and track drivers. The reasons, as outlined by Justin MacLauchlan, director of marketing for EGR USA, include:

- Enhanced Visibility
- Improved Safety
- Customization Potential
- Durability for Off-Roading
- Increased Functionality

One benefit is that light upgrades contribute to both the vehicle's utility and appearance, says Paul Elwell, national sales manager for Putco Inc.

"Additional lighting brings forth many additional use cases for a vehicle and can also contribute to driver safety. Lighting accessories can completely transform the appearance of the vehicle," he says. "Improving the appearance of a vehicle's lamps are a major priority of the OEMs, and for platforms with more lackluster OEM lighting it's a major upgrade."

The latest off-road vehicle styles are driving the lighting aftermarket. (Photos courtesy Lumileds)



The "overland look" is one factor driving sales in the off-road market, notes Jason Dreger, product marketing manager for Lumileds.

"Light bars and pod lights have become increasingly popular because they let you venture out in complete darkness and still feel safe while doing it. But along with their practical benefits, they've become a styling upgrade as well. The look of LED lights across the grille or pod lights mounted on

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Baja Designs
Adam Watkins
Marketing Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** 52-Inch Light Bars
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Available in six different models; include rectangular and round built-in and modular tubular Delta Lights for a wide variety of Jeep, truck/SUV and Bronco applications; aircraft aluminum tubing; vehicle-specific brackets, wiring and harnesses. Also offers headlights – Jeep, classic and military.

Delta Tech Industries/Delta Lights
Bogdan Durian
President/CEO

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** EGR VSL LED Lights
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Exceptional brightness and durability; specifically designed for off-road and low-visibility conditions; provide clear visibility in dark or rugged environments; tough construction withstands harsh conditions such as rain, mud and dust.

EGR USA
Justin MacLauchlan
Director of Marketing

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** The Gravity Titan
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** A beast of a light bar that blends appearance, durability and performance; technologically advanced with a Titan Optic Core that uses patented Gravity Reflective Diode (GRD) technology with three-source optics; amber dust light.

KC HiLiTES
Taylor Ulrich
Brand Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCT:**
Philips Ultinon Drive 5000
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
10- and 30-inch LED single row light bars; fit Jeep vehicles, ATVs and UTVs; designed with high-power LED chips; built with a high-quality cast aluminum housing, anti-break/anti-scratch Lexan lenses and corrosion-resistant stainless steel brackets.

Lumileds
Jason Dreger
Product Marketing Manager

NOWHERE TO HIDE



A thought-out and intentional lighting package drastically improves the off-road driving experience at night. (Photo courtesy KC HiLiTES)



Make it easy for customers to say yes to a complete lighting package. (Photos courtesy KC HiLiTES)

the cowl signal that the driver is ready for adventure," he says. "Our Philips LED lighting products are built for enthusiasts that want to enjoy the nighttime driving experience and have the 'overland look.'"

When it comes to lighting choices, however, a key factor is to not overpower the complete look of the vehicle, notes Justin Hartenstein, director of product development for ORACLE Lighting.

"High-mount light bars generally run the length of the front windshield and project forward to provide additional lighting to users in off-road situations. Because the overall length of the windshield is relatively long (approximately 50-55 inches in most cases), there is a large amount of surface area to provide ample lighting for in any situation," he explains. "Consumers likely want to retain a more factory style or appearance, and our patented integrated design with its molded cowling integrates into the Jeep's factory roofline."

Functionality and versatility are attractive selling points. (Below photo courtesy ORACLE Lighting)

Of course, today's quality offerings not only look good but also perform well.

"The products are critical for drivers who actually work, race or night ride to give them the output that OEM lights are not capable of producing," says Steve Jergensen, director of business development for Race Sport Lighting by STINGER.

Drivers also appreciate the new thrills they can seek.



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LIGHTS & LIGHT BARS PRODUCTS (CONT.)

HOT PRODUCT:
Integrated Windshield Roof LED Light Bar System
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Available for Jeep Wrangler JL and Gladiator JT; CAD designed to blend with factory styling; molded cowl is quieter and more aerodynamic; polycarbonate housing matches the styling on hardtop Jeeps; can also be used on soft tops.
ORACLE Lighting
Justin Hartenstein
Director of Product Development

HOT PRODUCT:
YELLOWJACKET Warning Light Bar
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
All-new design; optical radiance generated by a proprietary Compound Projection Lens; high light output while remaining compliant with FMVSS/SAE regulations and guidelines; Two-Pocket sealing; aluminum base with fins; laboratory tested.
Putco Inc.
Paul Elwell
National Sales Manager

HOT PRODUCT:
Generation 2 Stealth Interior Light Bar
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Uniquely mounts inside the cabin; lightweight aluminum, crafty, low-profile design; 90-degree flood beam pattern; dual lighting mode toggles between hyper-white LED panels for long-range visibility or amber LEDs for enhanced clarity; no-drill install.
Quadratec
Matthew Konkle
Creative Content Managing Editor

HOT PRODUCTS:
LoPro Series Light Bars
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
On- and off-road dual-function capabilities; ultra-high-power off-road white and low-power amber marker/clearance lights; small, lightweight footprint allows for versatile custom installations in locations where most light bars won't fit.
Race Sport Lighting by STINGER
Steve Jergensen
Director of Business Development



The proper lights and/or bars will add to the vehicle's overall appearance. (Photo courtesy ORACLE Lighting)

"A thought-out and intentional lighting package drastically improves the off-road driving experience at night," says Adam Watkins, marketing manager for Baja Designs. "Whether in race car applications or on adventure rigs, we've designed lighting solutions for any use case to limit driver fatigue and see any obstacles in their path. With our lighting solutions drivers can drive safer, harder and longer."

Bogdan Durian, president/CEO of Delta Tech Industries, known as Delta Lights, has seen the popularity of aftermarket systems grow since his company first worked on a light bar design with GM officials for the original Hummer H2.

"Everybody loved it and we immediately had people from Jeep asking us for something similar," he recalls.



Lighting is one of the most progressive segments in the automotive aftermarket. (Photos courtesy Putco Inc.)

Fast-forward to today, when drivers of rugged overlanders and high-performance street and race machines are seeking product offerings that match their levels of style and function.

"Drivers want more than just stock performance—they want something that gets the job done while standing out above the rest," says Taylor Ulrich, brand manager for KC HiLiTES. "Aftermarket lights and light bars offer better visibility, enhanced safety and, let's face it, they make your ride look unique and badass. Lighting is one of the best ways that customers can make a personal statement through their rig."

The performance of quality lighting systems is a big part of their allure, says Matthew Konkle, creative content managing editor for Quadratec.

"The popularity of auxiliary lighting and light bars stems mainly from the enhanced visibility drivers receive from the high-powered LED panels, making off-roading safer during rough weather, at dusk and during nighttime trail exploration," he says. "Many of these lights have 10,000-12,000 lumens, which can be tailored into a spot or flood pattern depending on the driver's needs. Additionally, the aesthetics of these lighting products help make the vehicle appear much more aggressive, providing a look many drivers prefer."

BRIGHT IDEAS

Shining a light on popular misconceptions is an important part of steering customers toward the best solution. A top thing to remember is, when it comes to aftermarket lighting, brighter isn't always better.

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"This is why Baja Designs created the Effective Lighting Score, or ELS, to score an off-road light based on four important factors: beam pattern, bendability, distance and output," says Watkins. "While lumens, or output, is important, its where that output is in the driver's field of view that matters."

Konkle has seen examples of poorly planned, overpowered systems in action.

"Someone may want a 50-inch light bar mounted over the windshield frame, cube lights on each cowl and a 20-inch bar on the front bumper. And, sure, all those lumens mean additional brightness, but that may not be exactly what a customer needs and could do more harm than good because of excessive glare and brilliance," he explains.

Elwell reminds installers that wiring management and correct power choices are also important.

"With advancements in vehicle systems, wiring and logic system integration has become increasingly difficult. A successful shop needs a clear understanding of how the vehicle operates, how the product operates and any implication each unit may have with other functionalities," he notes. "Improperly installed lighting products can have a greater impact on the vehicle's functionality than ever before, and this trend will only continue as the OEMs advance their technology in these systems."

That doesn't mean the products are difficult to install, however, or necessarily require many vehicle modifications.

"With the right products like our plug-and-play systems and vehicle-specific mounting brackets it's actually pretty straightforward," says Ulrich. "The key is selecting quality products that are designed to integrate smoothly with the vehicle's existing systems."

Functionality and versatility are attractive selling points, notes Hartenstein.

"Remember, this is a product that is powered off 99% of the time, so providing consumers with features that can be used more frequently makes a lot of sense. For example, our Integrated LED light bar provides customers with both white LED DRL lights and amber LED marker lights incorporated into the design so that these smaller lighting arrays can be used on normal roads, saving the high-powered 20,000 lumens for off-road activities."

It's true that lights and light bars deliver tangible benefits when it comes to performance and safety.

"While lights and light bars do enhance the appearance of vehicles, their primary advantage is in functionality, offering improved visibility and safety, especially in off-road or low-light conditions," says MacLauchlan, noting that the company's VSL LED Side Lights for Jeep Wrangler, Gladiator and Ford Bronco provide broader visibility and an integrated turn signal for on- and off-road use.





Aftermarket lighting can be used to improve vehicle visibility. (Photos courtesy EGR USA)

And suppliers can help shops highlight the benefits for consumers.

"If you partner with the right brand, displays and programs, stores can turn into lighting center hubs in their local areas," says Jergensen.

The category's popularity has brought many manufacturers into the market, including some whose quality can be considered questionable. Top suppliers say shops will want to do their homework to ensure they are offering top-notch products from reputable brands that meet customer demands.

"Once these became more popular, companies flooded the market," says Durian. "Every day there was a new brand. For some people, all they know are the inexpensive bars. But with the Chinese tariffs, now we



The performance of quality lighting systems is a big part of their allure. (Photo courtesy Quadratec)



The popularity of aftermarket light bars and systems for a variety of vehicles continues to grow. (Photo courtesy Delta Tech Industries/Delta Lights)

have the price advantage, and the quality is indisputable."

Dreger notes that consumers get what they pay for when it comes to light quality and beam performance.

"With Philips lighting you're getting the benefit of our OE lighting engineering experience. For example, our light bars are engineered with no screws in the faceplate, so there's no spots for high pressure water to leak in," he explains.

DON'T STAND STILL

Lighting is one of the most progressive segments in the automotive aftermarket, with nonstop change occurring due to both product and vehicle innovation, says Elwell.

"It's important for the shop to keep up with these trends and constantly search for new solutions to offer, while also keeping up with the vehicles themselves for updated product compatibility and vehicle solutions. Shops that succeed carry reliable brands such as Putco that are constantly updating to the latest available technology while prioritizing knowledge and compatibility with the vehicle's electrical systems."

Showroom displays and other demonstrations can illustrate just how versatile and powerful the systems have become.

"Lighting needs to be on your signs, your business cards and your Services page of your website, and you absolutely must have a lighting display in your showroom that tells your customers 'Try me, I have the lighting you need," says Jergensen from Race Sport Lighting by STINGER.

Display areas also help customers understand and feel comfortable with the products.

"Showcase the differences. Set up a demo light wall in your shop so customers can see the light output and build quality first-hand," recommends KC's Ulrich. "It's one

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NOWHERE TO HIDE



Quality aftermarket lighting solutions allow customers to drive safer, harder and longer. (Photos courtesy Baja Designs)

thing to talk about lumens and beam patterns, but when they see them in action, that's what really seals the deal. Don't forget to offer installation services—make it easy for them to say yes to the whole package. Many customers are afraid of electrical and wiring, but it's very straightforward these days."

In-person connections also provide a chance to help customers know and understand the products, says MacLauchlan from EGR USA.

"Educating customers on the various practical benefits of aftermarket lights—such as improved safety, better nighttime visibility and durability in off-road conditions—can further motivate them to make a purchase," he reveals. "Highlighting real-world use cases and demonstrating the products' performance in the shop or through videos can help build customer trust and increase overall sales."

It's also a chance to relay the products' origin story, says Durian from Delta Lights.

"Don't be shy—tell them, 'These are made in the USA.' For many people, it's the most important attribute."

Of course, educating customers means doing your own homework first, says Konkle from Quadratec.

"The best tip is education. Not only will it inform your sales staff about lighting, but it will make the customer feel more comfortable," he says. "Shops should ensure all sales staff understand the differences between certain bars and other auxiliary lighting, such as cube lights. They should know how the products mount, whether they require extra brackets or wiring or if they include plug-and-play harnesses. Additionally, educate each customer about the legality of auxiliary lighting and light bars. Many of these lights are not permitted for on-road use, and some may even need covers following installation."

Hartenstein agrees.

"One thing to consider is compliance," he says. "Some states require LED lights to be covered when not in use. This is why ORACLE offers optional lens covers that can be installed for situations where state regulations have this additional requirement."

Stocking a strong inventory helps create happy clients who can get in, get out and be on their way, says Dreger from Lumileds.

"Offering a complete line of products is extremely important. Some individuals may want a solid one-piece-design light bar, where others may prefer individual pods or multiple small light bars," he says. "It's also important to have the right types of accessories for the LED light bars and pod lights. For example, we offer two types of LED wiring harnesses to accommodate different styles of installation. When it comes to selling auxiliary lighting, it's all about meeting the consumer's preferences."

Watkins from Baja Designs agrees, going back to the importance of finding the proper setup for each user.

"'Best' is subjective," he says. "Our S2 Sport is better in a fog light application, but an XL racer is a better distance light. Again, our ELS helps customers understand what each of our lights were designed to do and where they excel." **TS**



Shops can partner with suppliers to turn showrooms into lighting centers. (Photo courtesy Race Sport Lighting by STINGER)



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Chicago COOL

Tinting Chicago offers vehicle appearance & protection products to a wide customer base.

By Maura Keller // *Photos courtesy Tinting Chicago*

One of the most profound advertising mediums is the vehicle. Because of its mobility, a car, truck, Jeep or van provides an excellent means of getting a company's name, product or event all the attention it deserves.

In addition, window tinting, graphics and decals are popular ways of celebrating the design of vintage vehicles.

Enter Tinting Chicago.

With three locations dotting the landscape of the greater Chicago area, the company offers various window tinting and protection services for automotive, commercial and residential clients.

Tinting Chicago's offerings include color-change wraps, chrome deletion, fleet graphics and decal installation.

"Our team also specializes in surface protection for vehicles, including paint protection film application and ceramic coating," says Alex Belov, general manager at Tinting Chicago. "Paint protection film is a thick, clear film that protects surfaces against rock chips, minor scratches and various impacts, while ceramic coating provides shine, hydrophobic effects and UV protection."



Tinting Chicago has 10 to 12 installers working with the company daily, depending on project volumes.



Auto restyling chain Tinting Chicago has three locations in the greater Chicago area.

A HOBBY THAT GREW

Tinting Chicago has a long-standing history of enhancing vehicles throughout Chicagoland and beyond. And like most independent businesses, the company began as a small idea and gradually blossomed into a well-oiled machine.

Specifically, in 2014, one of the CEOs of the company, Mike Skoropad, started providing film services as a hobby in a small shop on Belmont and Harlem Avenues in Chicago, mainly focusing on car window tinting.

Over the years, the company expanded, opening additional locations and offering more services such as vinyl wraps and PPF. Currently, Tinting Chicago has three locations—the latest described as a 1,500-square-foot standalone Jiffy Lube-style building with three gates on each side.

The shops participate in various events, allowing for consistent growth and creating demand for a wider range of services. As general manager, Belov says he's proud of the positive people and environment the company has cultivated.

"When you walk into our shop in the morning, you can expect to have a good day surrounded by good people," Belov says. "Additionally, our commitment to quality is paramount. We adhere strictly to industry standards to ensure our customers receive the highest quality."

In addition, customer satisfaction is paramount at Tinting Chicago. The company received the XPEL Dealer of the Year award for 2023 in Illinois, further validating its



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Chicago COOL



Tinting Chicago also provides services such as color-change wraps, chrome deletion, fleet graphics and decal installation.

dedication and excellence in meeting each customer's vision for their vehicle.

"We have undertaken several unique and challenging projects that stand out. One notable project involved rebranding for FedEx, where we removed and reinstalled new decals on 53-foot trailers. Over two years, our team serviced Illinois and Indiana, completing over 10,000 trailers despite the weather restrictions," Belov says.

Tinting Chicago also had the privilege of tinting two DeLoreans, showcasing the company's expertise and versatility.

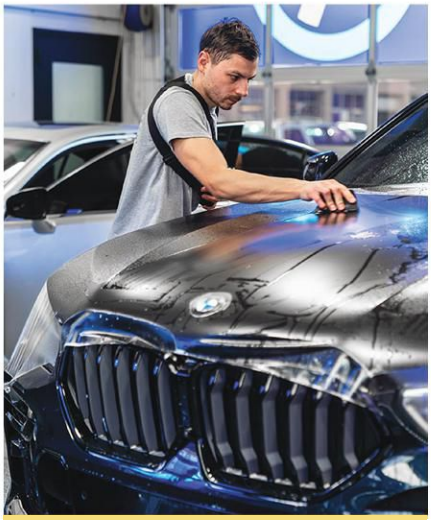
"Our main customers are typically new- or used-car buyers seeking to enhance the appearance or comfort of their vehicles. Whether through window tinting for heat control and aesthetics or color changes, we cater to their needs," Belov says.

Additionally, individuals looking to protect their investments often opt for services like paint protection film or ceramic coating. Commercial and residential customers also rely on Tinting Chicago (tintingchicago.com) for various window tinting solutions, offering benefits such as glare reduction, privacy, safety, security and decorative options.

BUSINESS BASICS

Currently, Tinting Chicago has 10 to 12 installers working with the company daily, depending on project volumes. Belov says finding and retaining good employees continually poses a challenge.

"However, when employees perceive growth opportunities and engage in various events and competitions, they tend to stay for years," Belov says. "Additionally, maintaining a positive environment at the workplace is crucial for employee retention."



Customers turn to the pros at Tinting Chicago for surface protection for vehicles, including paint protection film application and ceramic coating.

Tinting Chicago strives to deliver consistent, fair pricing. Prices typically increase

only with significant changes in material costs. Over the last five years, Tinting Chicago has adjusted prices two or three times, Belov notes, within a 5%-10% range.

"Prices remain consistent across our locations, positioning us as midrange in Chicago and more competitive in the suburbs," he says.

Establishing a solid reputation after 10 years in business means Tinting Chicago primarily relies on word-of-mouth advertising, complemented by exterior signage, banners and showcasing the company's best projects on social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok and Facebook.

"We have technicians that create and manage video content for our social media profiles," Belov says. "While it's challenging to predict success, we avoid purchasing followers or traffic so all views are valid. Engagement varies based on factors like hashtags and post timing, with some posts garnering thousands of views while others receive fewer."

Tinting Chicago also strives to keep products in stock so that when a customer arrives, they are confident they can drive away with the products they came looking for.

"It's the worst-case scenario if we were to tell the customer to come back next week because we need to order something," Belov says.

MOVING FORWARD

In addition to handling the company's consistent growth, Tinting Chicago strives to manage ongoing challenges as they arise.

"Post-COVID, many small shops opened their doors offering lower prices. However, customers must decide whether to risk going to a garage shop with no warranty guarantee or opt for slightly higher prices at an official dealer," Belov says. "Official dealerships provide warranty cards for certain services and are listed on installer maps, offering added assurance."

Additionally, staying updated with new software and features is top-of-mind for the Tinting Chicago team, including embracing AI for social media lead generation and voicemail setups.

"We also collaborate with various local businesses in different fields, including car washes, mechanic shops, glazing companies and dealerships," Belov says. "These alliances benefit both parties, especially when fulfilling customer needs or undertaking large commercial projects."

For Belov, the best aspects of the culture and business of Tinting Chicago include the dynamic environment, challenging projects and a variety of tasks that team members enjoy, as they are not confined to a single location or task, ensuring they remain engaged and motivated with their work.

"Looking ahead, while specific plans are confidential, we aim to expand and potentially become a national brand," Belov reveals. "Our optimistic outlook is fueled by our commitment to high standards and our vision for growth." ***TS***

MAURA KELLER *is a freelance writer based in Minnesota. She can be reached by email at maurakeller@yahoo.com.*



NEW MENU ITEMS



Product diversity can help you keep up with market trends and driver demand.

Make plans to diversify your product offerings, but do your homework first. ///// **By Josh Poulson**

Are you diverse in your product and service offerings? If you are, can you also say you are profitable in your diversity?

Herein lies a trap that some shop owners fall into—we all know how important it is to diversify, but when we explore new products and services, we need to make sure we understand the complete process so that we can ensure profitability.

For instance, maybe you take on a new product and you are used to marking things up 40%, but this product can have a lot of variables with installation. So, yes, the part could be marked up properly, but are you also ensuring that your labor portion is priced accurately as well?

It isn't always easy to price out every vehicle with the same product when you know that labor times can vary drastically while still trying to maintain a somewhat simplistic pricing approach. This business can be very challenging, but the key is to do your homework ahead of time before making a mistake.

I recently made a pricing mistake. I had come up with a price for a job, but when it came time to order and install the parts, I had to get some of them from a warehouse distributor instead of directly from the manufacturer for convenience and a quicker turnaround.

When the job was finished, I realized that some of the margin I was hoping for was gone.

If I would have taken more time to recognize that sometimes this might be the case, then I would have priced the job higher to cover the extra costs. We have all made these types of mistakes, but it still hurts when you "know better" but go ahead and do it anyway.

ADDING TO YOUR OFFERINGS

So, what do you look for in a new product to carry at your shop?

Is it the number of requests you've received? Is it how likely your customer base will be to accept and buy it? How easy it is to integrate it into your shop with sales and installation? Do you prefer to look at a new product or category that has great margins but is maybe a harder sell?

These and other reasons can be deciding factors as to whether or not to take on a new product line. Yet, we know how important it is to continue to diversify and make sure we are offering what people are looking for so that we remain relevant in the market.

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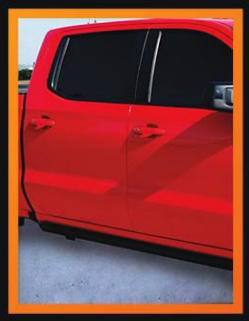
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NEW MENU ITEMS



Blackout overlays and similar accent products can change the appearance of a vehicle at an attractive price point.

It seems these days that car dealers are not selling as many vehicles as they have been over the last few years, and their gross profits are down per transaction. This, of course, can have a negative effect on your business if you are heavily dependent on car dealer wholesale accounts.

But it also creates upfitting opportunities.

So, what are some profitable products or services that your shop can easily integrate and that your customer base will accept and even ask for?

Let's talk about two of them I've had success with recently—one is more dealer based and the other is more retail based.

Ceramic coating

"Ceramic" has been an industry buzzword for a few years now and the general population is now aware of it as well. I've found ceramic coating an easier retail sale than through car dealer channels.

The reason is that car dealers are already trying to promote a handful of traditional F&I offerings, and most have evolved from selling basic wax-based paint protection products to some kind of in-house product that they claim has ceramic properties.

I don't know a lot of dealers that are truly using a good ceramic coating product but, quite frankly, they don't care about the quality as much as the profit margin and take rate. Especially with higher interest rates, there isn't as much "room" in a car deal for the dealership to add thousands of dollars' worth of upsells—thus they cherry-pick what makes them the most money and is easiest to sell.

Also, they tend to look at what products their ownership can reinsure so that they basically get paid a second time down the road when claims are low. All these factors make it harder to get dealers to sell a quality ceramic coating job that includes a paint correction where you buff the entire paint job before applying the ceramic.

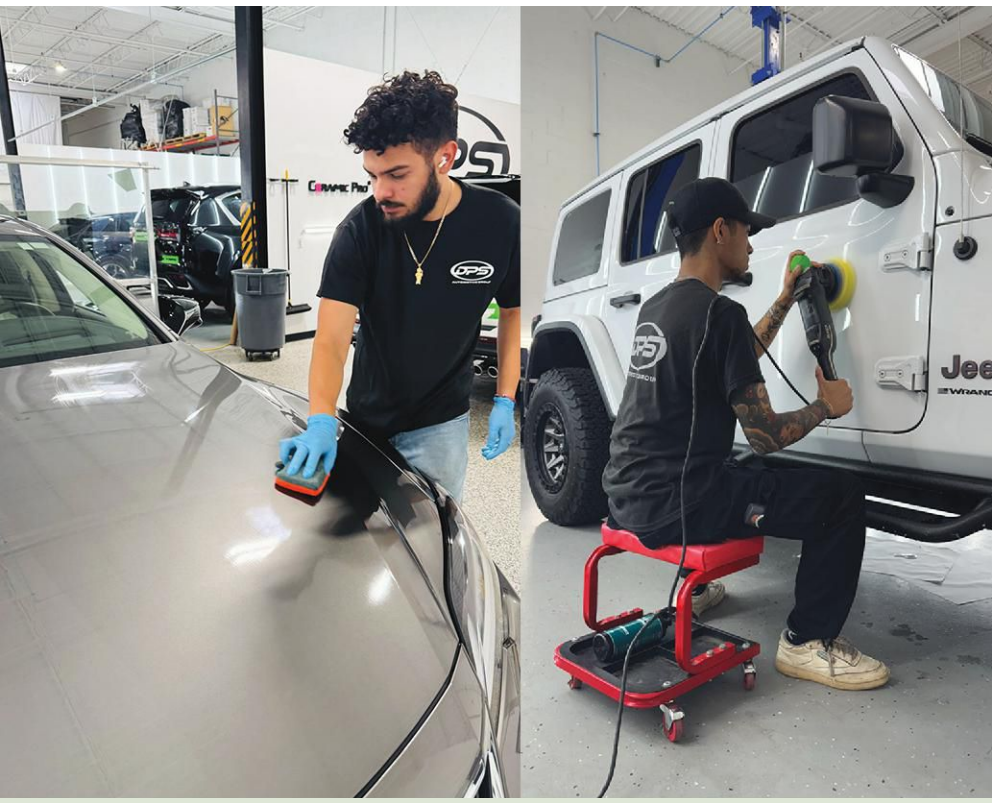
It is labor intensive, but the profit can be good because people will pay for quality. The real trick is being able to actually talk to the vehicle owner, which is why ceramic coating is a great retail offering.

Many people don't trust what the dealers are selling, but they do know there are some benefits to ceramic and want to protect their investment. So, it is easy enough to add this product/service to your lineup, especially if you are doing other care products like paint protection film or window tint for retail buyers.

What does it take to get started? First you need to find a ceramic coating product you feel comfortable with. Many of these companies can be found at the SEMA Show and all of them will tell you they are the best.

So, do your research and decide what is most important to you as a business. Is it time of install? Is it training and support? Is it warranty and customer benefits? Whatever it is, compare and then get started.

Also make sure you can do paint correction, which entails using a buffer, waxes and polishes to get the paint to near-perfect condition before the ceramic is applied.



Paint correction and ceramic coating offerings are enticing to retail customers looking to protect their vehicle investments.

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MENU ITEMS



Stock a shop vehicle with simple overlay products and start enjoying the benefits of mobile service offerings.

This is a learned skill but, in my opinion, it is easier to train and/or find someone who can do it well than with many other products in our industry. Sometimes the suppliers will help as well.

Blackout & chrome trim products

The second high profit margin product and service that many shops, including mine, have fallen in love with is the trend of adding overlay products that completely change the look of a vehicle. I'm talking about door handle covers, grille overlays, wheel skins, window trim covers and mirror covers.

Take for instance a 2024 Chevy Tahoe base model. By simply adding a gloss black grille overlay, mirror covers and door handle overlays (and in this case the rear hatch piece as well) you can change the whole look for a low cost. Imagine doing all this and only charging the car dealership around $750.

In this scenario, you would make 60%-70% gross profit and the labor time would be about 20 minutes from start to finish. This is a great product/service to take on the road in the form of a mobile route van where your employee simply drives to the dealership, makes a list of cars to do (new and used) and then, after approval, installs the packages right on the spot and sends an electronic invoice.

Sound too good to be true? Well, it isn't. In fact, some of these black and chrome product manufacturers will front you with inventory at no cost and even offer full training on sales and installation, so your investment is simply an employee and a vehicle to go mobile.

What I love about this product line besides the high margins is the advertising "billboard" shop vehicle that your employee drives around promoting your business. In my case it is a transit van all logoed up advertising the business.

The new-look packages can lead to other product offerings that are traditionally done by your shop and can go hand in hand. You can even create "good, better, best" offerings that may include black wheels, a black roof, leather, tint, lift packages—the options are limitless.

Find a manufacturer that offers a program to help you break into this highly profitable market niche and start diversifying today. ***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. He is immediate past-chairman of the SEMA PRO*

Consider all aspects of a new product, from popularity to availability to ease of install, when taking on new menu items.





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ATTRACTING HIGH-END CLIENTS

Connecting with high earners can help shops compete & grow. ///// **By Charles J. Bonfiglio**

The luxury aftermarket sector plays a pivotal role for automotive aftermarket companies aiming to expand. But connecting with customers in the high-end market involves more than just offering expensive or luxury parts and services.

Reaching this valuable customer base requires a strategic sales and marketing approach that meets the unique needs of a fast-growing segment.

It's important to recognize that high-income clients are more selective about how they spend their money. They tend to have different spending habits and expectations than other customers.

High-earners value unique experiences and personalized services, along with the discretion that most mass-market retailers can't offer.

Building long-lasting relationships requires a commitment to quality and value. You can also expect to invest time and effort to generate the big rewards that come with high-end and luxury sales and service.

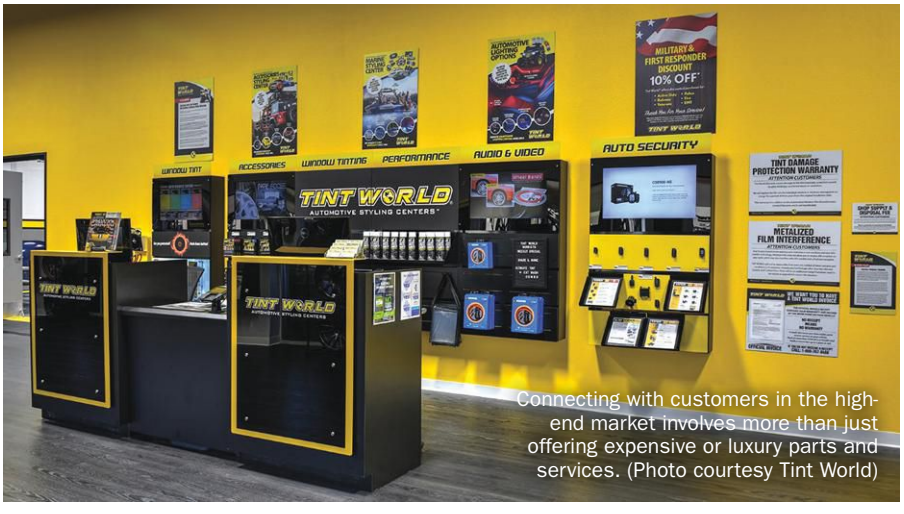
Here are some tips and best practices for building relationships with high-income customers.

1 KNOW YOUR CUSTOMER

High-income customers tend to be older and well-educated. They typically prefer to deal with trusted partners rather than salespeople.

As informed customers, they look to their partners for expert guidance. They prefer long-lasting value and unique experiences over the latest trends.

High-earning customers are likely to be early adopters of new technology. They may not make frequent purchases, but they will invest in high-quality, high-end items when they do buy.



Connecting with customers in the high-end market involves more than just offering expensive or luxury parts and services. (Photo courtesy Tint World)



Make sure your team is investing in these valuable customers and doing everything possible to elevate their experience.

2 MATCH YOUR BRAND

High-income customers typically value quality, exclusivity, innovation and personalization.

You can't simply expect high-earning customers to choose your company because you offer luxury products. They must believe that your business understands their needs and provides the tailored service, expertise and convenience they demand.

If you stock premium items, make sure you and your team are familiar with them. Train your team to customize service for VIPs. Manage your branding, communications and social media presence with an eye for detail to ensure you're projecting reliability, discretion and elite service in addition to quality and value.

3 FOCUS ON QUALITY

Wealthy consumers are less concerned with price points than value-minded customers. Highlight the quality of your products and service, with a focus on design, materials, innovation and upscale user experiences.

4 GO THE EXTRA MILE

High-income customers lead busy lifestyles. Train your team to make the purchase process as easy as possible for them.

Anticipate their needs and expectations by offering new product options or personalized service touches, such as consultations outside normal business hours or home delivery. Reach out directly with exclusive offers or new product lines but keep the focus on providing them with information.

Host exclusive events or offer premium-level services on a regular basis. Identify loyal high-earning customers in your system so all team members recognize them immediately.

In short, make sure your team is investing in these valuable customers and doing everything possible to elevate their experience.

5 BE AUTHENTIC

No matter how well-developed your strategy to reach high-income customers, it won't succeed if the audience isn't convinced. That depends on a level of authenticity that can't be faked.

If you and your team aren't acting in the true interest of your highest-earning customers, you'll never build the long-term relationships you need for luxury service to be profitable. Invest in the expertise and experience that will establish your credibility and authenticity, and customers will come back.

LUXURY IS ITS OWN REWARD

Incorporating premium products and service for high-income clientele into an existing business can offer enormous rewards. It's easier to accomplish if your business is already focused on quality products and services for all clients and delivering extraordinary customer experiences with a personalized touch.

Before developing a strategy for reaching the high-end market, make sure you're already providing expertise and personalized service to every customer. That will serve as the foundation for a successful connection to high-end automotive aftermarket clients. ***TS***



CHARLES BONFIGLIO *is president and CEO of Tint World, a provider of automotive, residential, commercial, and marine window tinting and security film services. With Automotive Styling Centers in the U.S. and abroad, each franchise location houses approximately 20 profit centers, ranging from in-store accessory installations to off-site sales and installation.*



Before developing a strategy for reaching the high-end market, make sure you're already providing expertise and personalized service to every customer.



Bronco Lights

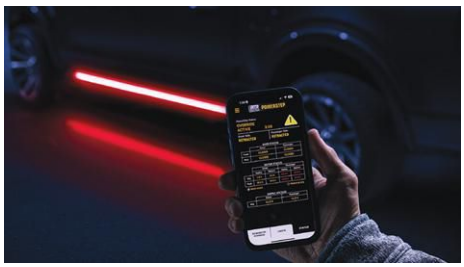
EGR USA, Ontario, California, presents its highly anticipated Ford Bronco VSL (Vehicle Side Lights) LED Lights. Designed to deliver superior illumination and a modern look, enhancing both the safety and style of the Ford Bronco, the lights feature a sleek design and high-performance output.



Bifold Rooftop Tent

Overland Vehicle Systems (OVS), Santa Fe Springs, California, presents the XD Sherpa Soft Shell Rooftop Tent. Designed for comfort and convenience, the bifold tent features a high-quality 320G rip-stop poly-cotton fabric, sturdy aluminum honeycomb base, easy-to-use coverless design, blackout interior and an integrated skylight. A high-density, 2-inch foam mattress with an anti-condensation mat is included, along with a cold weather insulation kit.

Electric Step With LED Lighting



RealTruck, Ann Arbor, Michigan, introduces the AMP PowerStep Vision for various applications, offering full-length LED lighting to deliver an eye-catching visual enhancement. AMP Vision combines the ease and convenience of a power retracting step with built-in full-length LED lighting. Utilizing plug-and-play technology, the systems provide a steady and stable stepping surface when activated, and when the steps retract they transform into color-customizable accent lighting providing effective ground illumination.



Aggressive Wheel Designs

Method Race Wheels, Long Beach, California, presents its new Raised Wheels product line. An innovative collection crafted for those seeking a bold, aggressive look combined with proven performance engineering, the wheels are available in sizes ranging from 20x9 to 22x12. The line includes popular 5-, 6- and 8-lug fitments, ensuring compatibility with a wide range of vehicles. The larger wheel sizes and striking designs provide an elevated appearance, enhanced stance and improved capabilities.



JLU 4xe Skid System

Artec Industries, North Salt Lake, Utah, presents a new line of Skid System products for Jeep JLU 4xe models. The JL4127, JL4126, JL4111, JL4187 and JL4198 systems help drivers tackle any terrain with confidence, delivering comprehensive undercarriage and exhaust protection. The protective plates are made in America with premium materials including 1/4-inch 6061 T6 aluminum and zinc-plated steel. Features include enhanced ground clearance and no-rust construction.

Chevy/GMC Lift

BDS Suspension, Goldwater, Michigan, a division of **Fox Factory**, offers a 1.5-inch Lift Kit featuring FOX Performance Elite 2.5 coil-over shocks for Chevrolet Trail Boss and GMC AT4 1500 applications. Part of the company's new XT Series, the kit is designed to improve stance, performance and capability, with clearance for up to 35-inch tires (Chevy) or 33-inch tires (GMC).



Amplifiers



AudioControl, Clearwater, Florida, a **Stinger** brand, presents its Altitude Series line of amplifiers that include a sleek aluminum chassis with a matte anodized finish for improved heat dissipation. Designed to deliver enhanced performance and exceptional sound quality, the amplifiers feature high/low input modes, GTO Signal Sense, Linkwitz-Riley crossovers, start-stop compliance, ParaBASS low-frequency contouring, a valet mode option, optional remote level control (ACR-1), EV compatibility up to 17V and spike mode on select models.



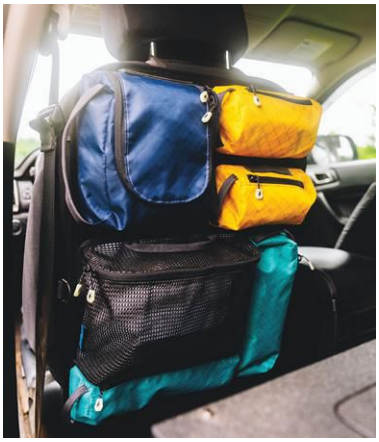
All-Terrain Tire

Rolling Big Power (RBP), Irwindale, California, a **Turbo Wholesale Tires** brand, presents its go-anywhere RBP Repulsor X/T RX extreme all-terrain tires for light truck, SUV and crossover models. Designed to deliver a comfortable ride while conquering any terrain, the tires produce minimal road noise and include wide tire grooves for improved traction. The tires are available in 33- to 35-inch applications and perform in rain, sleet, mud and snow.

UV-Stable Topcoat

KBS Coatings, Valparaiso, Indiana, presents its KBS Top Coater premium topcoat, formulated to provide a highly durable, UV-stable and permanent final finish that withstands dulling and fading caused by prolonged exposure to sunlight. The very-high-solids paint is designed to not run or sag while providing at least twice the coverage of conventional paints. The exterior-grade topcoat offers improved adhesion and can be applied directly to metal, primers and other paints and coatings.





Overlanding Gear Hauling Collection

Super Pacific, Portland, Oregon, introduces its HuckPack Collection of innovative carrying products. Available items include a seat organizer, duffel bag and packing cubes that seamlessly integrate, providing adaptability and organization for adventurers on the move. Designed to fit in a variety of vehicles and campers, and even usable as carry-on luggage, the items can be mixed and matched for individual storage needs. ***TS***

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EV ROUNDUP

Recent happenings in the ever-changing world of electric cars.

ELECTRIFIED 1990 TWO-DOOR RANGE ROVER

EV converter Inverted recently introduced its 1990 two-door Range Rover, boasting 450 hp and 442 pound-feet of torque by way of a special onboard electric motor and battery system in lieu of the original engine.

"Growing up on a farm, we have so many fond memories of our Land Rover. I grew up driving an old Series truck," says Harry Millington, Inverted founder. "But in my opinion, it was the classic Range Rover that really changed the game. To this day, no vehicle quite delivers the same level of sophistication and versatility. Built from 1970 through 1994, the first-generation Range Rovers are absolutely beautiful, but the realities of what one can actually do with a decades-old truck quickly become apparent while driving one. This is where Inverted comes in—we create a decidedly fun, modern driving experience combined with the classic, endlessly refined Range Rover aesthetic."

The build started with a full bare metal body and chassis restoration along with future-proofing to ensure its longevity. The interior includes multileather seats and a classic dashboard with modern upgrades. Other touches include an Alcantara headliner, central locking, Apple CarPlay/Android Auto compatibility, an onboard reverse camera, a high-quality audio system, heated front seats, USB charge points and electric air conditioning and heating.



EV converter Inverted recently introduced its 1990 two-door Range Rover, boasting 450 hp and 442 pound-feet of torque. (Photos courtesy Inverted)





VOLVO LAUNCHING LONGER-RANGE HD EV TRUCK





Next year, Volvo will launch a new long-range version of its FH Electric that will be able to reach up to 372 miles on one charge. (Photos courtesy Volvo)

Next year, Volvo will launch a new long-range version of its FH Electric that will be able to reach up to 372 miles (600km) on one charge. The range extension will allow transport companies to operate electric trucks on interregional and long-distance routes and to drive a full working day without having to recharge, officials note.

"Our new electric flagship will be a great complement to our wide range of electric trucks and enable zero-exhaust emission transport also for the longer distances. It will be a great solution for transport companies with a high annual mileage on their trucks and with a strong commitment to reducing CO2," says Roger Alm, president, Volvo Trucks.

The breakthrough comes thanks to Volvo's new driveline technology, the so-called e-axle, which creates space for significantly more battery capacity onboard, the company explains. More efficient batteries, a further improved battery management system and overall efficiency of the powertrain also contribute to the extended range.

Volvo Trucks offers eight battery-electric medium- and heavy-duty electric trucks. The wide product range makes it possible to electrify city and regional distribution, construction, waste management and, soon, long-distance transport, the company states.

Volvo has delivered more than 3,800 electric trucks to customers in 46 countries around the world.

"The transport sector represents 7% of global carbon emissions," Alm says. "Battery-electric trucks are important tools to reduce the climate footprint. Besides the important environmental gains that electric trucks bring, they offer truck drivers a much better working environment, with much lower levels of noise and vibrations."

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EV ROUNDUP

BORGWARNER SECURES 3 BEV ELECTRIC CROSS DIFFERENTIAL CONTRACTS

BorgWarner has secured contracts to supply its electric cross differential (eXD) to three major OEMs, including GAC Motor, an unnamed global East Asian OEM and an unnamed global OEM based in Europe.

The companies will incorporate BorgWarner's eXD technology on both rear- and front-wheel-drive battery electric vehicle (BEV) applications, ranging from sports cars to premium sedans to hatchbacks, according to the company.

Production for GAC Motor is currently underway, and production for the other two OEMs will begin in 2026.

BorgWarner's eXD is part of its electric torque management system (eTMS) portfolio, which offers a range of products that intelligently control wheel torque to increase stability, deliver dynamic performance and improve traction during launch and acceleration, according to the company.

High torque from the motor in electric vehicles (EVs) leads to limitations and challenges in vehicle performance since the application of torque to individual wheels remains unsupervised. Adding an eXD to the drive system enables intelligent modulation of the side-to-side torque, resulting in improved traction, cornering and lane change performance, all with improved efficiency, officials note.

"BorgWarner's eTMS portfolio leverages an array of BorgWarner's longstanding and proven competencies within the industry, spanning software, controls, systems integration and beyond," said Isabelle McKenzie, president and general manager, BorgWarner Drivetrain and Morse Systems. "The recent business awards for our eXD technology underscore the versatility and sophistication of the system and highlight our ability to meet the industry's need for solutions that increase safety and optimize energy consumption."



BorgWarner has secured contracts to supply its electric cross differential (eXD) to three major global OEMs. (Photo courtesy BorgWarner)

HYUNDAI DEBUTS ADVENTURE-READY IONIQ 5 XRT

Hyundai has released refreshed 2025 IONIQ 5 N SUVs, including a rugged new IONIQ 5 XRT variant ideal for venturing off the beaten path. The expanded lineup offers more driving range and innovative features, resulting in improved convenience, performance and safety, according to the carmaker.

The IONIQ 5 will be the first model range manufactured at the brand-new Hyundai Motor Group Metaplant America (HMGMA) facility in Georgia.

Restylers may want to keep an eye on the factory-built 2025 IONIQ 5 XRT, designed to bring additional off-road capability and a bolder, more rugged appearance to the Hyundai EV.

"IONIQ 5 has been a sales success for us since Day 1," says José Muñoz, president and global COO of Hyundai Motor Company and president and CEO of Hyundai Motor North America. "We're continuing to give customers more of what they want by expanding the IONIQ 5 lineup with a dedicated off-road-capable XRT model, NACS port, design upgrades and a long list of features developed with customers in mind. The high-performance IONIQ 5 N shows how exciting EVs can be and has been a halo for our entire brand."

IONIQ 5 is the first Hyundai model to come equipped with the Tesla North American Charging Standard (NACS) port, opening up more than 17,000 chargers on Tesla's Supercharger network without using an adapter—doubling the size of the DC fast charging network available to new IONIQ 5 customers.



Hyundai has released the refreshed 2025 IONIQ 5 N SUV, including a rugged new IONIQ 5 off-road-ready XRT variant. (Photos courtesy Hyundai)



KARMA REOPENS CALIFORNIA MANUFACTURING CENTER

Karma Automotive, California's first ultra-luxury automaker, recently welcomed local government and community leaders, educational partners and charitable organizations to its "KICC-Off Celebration" as its Karma Innovation & Customization Center (KICC) in Moreno Valley, California, returns to operation.

At KICC, Karma Automotive will manufacture its new portfolio of ultra-luxury electric and E-REV (Electric Range Extended) vehicles, including the flagship Kaveya super-coupe and Gyesera four-seater.

Production of the third-generation Karma Revero sport sedan, the world's first luxury plug-in hybrid, is already underway.

"KICC is the beating heart of Karma Automotive, and the cars we build here and the people who build them embody the entrepreneurial vision, technical innovation, dedication to craftsmanship and sheer capability, which is innate to California like no other place in the world," says Marques McCammon, president, Karma Automotive.



Marques McCammon, president of Karma Automotive, poses with the third-gen Karma Revero while celebrating the reopening of Karma's California manufacturing center. (Photo courtesy Karma Automotive)

Officials say KICC represents a total investment of more than $100 million and growing. Once fully operational, Karma Automotive expects KICC to employ over 250 people in the facility, which includes a body shop, general assembly area, paint lab, final process alignment section and dynamic test stations covering 556,000 square feet.

Production at KICC's Battery Assembly Facility has also begun.

BUILTMORE POWERS UP PRODUCTION OF ISUZU EV



Builtmore Contract Manufacturing has begun production of the Isuzu NRR-EV at its facility in Charlotte, Michigan. (Photo courtesy Builtmore Contract Manufacturing/The Shyft Group)

Builtmore Contract Manufacturing, a go-to-market brand of specialty vehicle manufacturing company The Shyft Group Inc., has begun production of the Isuzu NRR-EV at its facility in Charlotte, Michigan.

The project stems from a long-standing relationship between Builtmore and Isuzu North America Corporation, bringing an innovative electric vehicle option to the commercial market, according to company officials.

"The start of production for the Isuzu NRR-EV highlights the strong collaboration between Builtmore and Isuzu and our shared commitment to the future of commercial vehicles," says Jacob Farmer, Shyft Group president, Fleet Vehicles and Services and Specialty Vehicles. "We are proud to support Isuzu in bringing this innovative electric vehicle to market and advancing sustainable transportation."

The all-new Isuzu NRR-EV combines advanced electric powertrain technology with a versatile design to meet the evolving needs of commercial fleets. It features multiple battery configurations and regenerative braking for optimal performance, along with state-of-the-art driver assistance systems and fast-charging capabilities for enhanced safety and convenience, the company notes.

A durable, high tensile strength frame and improved aerodynamics ensure efficiency and longevity. ***TS***







FALL 2024 PROJECT VEHICLE SKETCHBOOK

Every build tells a story.

Blending old with the new. Flipping traditional structure on its head. Pushing past recognized boundaries. Isolating the essence.

The most memorable project vehicles, special editions and concepts are always more than the sum of their parts—telling a story or making a statement that was hiding in plain sight all along. The builds evoke emotions, from fascination to nostalgia, and inspire creativity, exemplifying why so many enthusiasts worldwide make driving their passion.

It may sound a little bit over-the-top. But, then again, most impactful projects are.

As a specialty company serving the needs of racers and enthusiasts, count Red Line Synthetic Oil among those companies that understand the importance of blending innovation and tradition.

"People say it's hard to have one foot in the past and one foot in the future. For us it is a necessity," says Mark Beatty, Red Line's brand director. "We will never forget where we came from and the products that carried us to this point. Our very first product was our 2-Stroke Race Oil and to this day it is a major part of our business. Since that point we have engineered gear oils, transmission fluids, engine oils, suspension fluids, coolants and more as our industry has grown and needs have changed."

Today's environment is one in which OE manufacturers, race teams, designers and builders continue to push the limits.

"Innovation has always played a major role in the automotive and powersports worlds," Beatty notes. "The advancements just in the last five years or so are unlike anything we have seen before. In our case, customers want thinner oils, increased longevity, better performance—the list goes on."

The following collection of project vehicles and specialty builds highlights the future direction of the specialty aftermarket. If you look closely, however, you'll see traces of the past as well.

"For years we have worked hand in hand with builders and race teams to design, test and develop new products. We never stop learning," says Beatty. "That is not only our tradition, but how we do things."

Check out the following collection of unique creations to see if any might move you—or your customers—in more ways than one.

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1966 PONTIAC CATALINA

Not every build has to be over-the-top, as shown by the mild custom **1966 Pontiac Catalina "Big Cat"** from **The Custom Shop** in Flanagan, Illinois. Riding on a **Roadster Shop** chassis and powered by a 421-ci LSX with **FiTech** Tri-Power EFI, it rolls on one-off Pontiac-styled rims and **Toyo Tires**.

The eye-catching exterior is courtesy **TCP Global** silver base paint with gold/blue pearl, while inside the driver finds **Apex Leather** in Blue Ink with a custom CNC stitch design and a **Sony** audio system. **Scosche Industries** wiring, **XKGlow** LED lighting, **Painless Performance** wiring and an **ODYSSEY Battery** keep it bumping.



Participants include **Auto City Classic**, **Carworx**, **Castle Works Motorsports**, **Cerakote**, **C-Tex**, **Dakota Digital**, **Design Engineering Inc. (DEI)**, **Eddie Motorsports**, **Fairchild Industries**, **Gold Eagle**, **Goodmark Industries**, **IDIDIT**, **K&N**, **Malco**, **Nu Relics**, **Pypes Exhaust** and **Vintage Air**.

1986 PORSCHE TARGA HYBRID



Galpin Motors debuted its **1986 Porsche bb-Auto Targa Hybrid** in the Porsche Classic Restoration Challenge at the **Werks Reunion Monterey** in August.

Meticulously restored by the expert team at Galpin Auto Sports and **Porsche Santa Clarita**, the neon-hued throwback pays homage to the iconic **bb-Auto "Rainbow" Turbo Targa**, originally crafted in collaboration with **Polaroid** for the **1976 Photokina** photography show.

Designed to blend heritage with cutting-edge technology, the Porsche features a precisely engineered **Ed Pink Racing** engine enhanced with **Vonnen** hybrid technology to deliver 550 hp. Modern highlights include an Active Suspension Management system, custom 18-inch **Titan 7** wheels, **Brembo** brakes, bespoke **RECARO** LX seats, an electric A/C system, 660W **Focal** sound system integrated with a **Porsche Classic Communication** radio and 9.2-inch infotainment screen.

2024 GMC 2500HD



The Custom Shop in Flanagan, Illinois, is building a **2024 GMC 2500HD**. The custom muscle truck will be lowered with a **Suspension Maxx** kit and outfitted with **AXE Wheels**, **Toyo Tires** and **Rough Country** fender flares to complete, the low, wide look.

A **LEER** topper, **Black Horse Off Road** boards, **TCP Global** paint, **MagnaFlow** exhaust, **ODYSSEY Battery** and a **Sony** audio system round out the tow muscle truck.

Participants include **AO Coolers**, **Apex Chassis**, **Bartec USA**, **BOLT Lock**, **Carworx**, **Cerakote**, **Cube Tracker**, **C-Tex**, **Design Engineering Inc. (DEI)**, **Gold Eagle**, **Green Filter**, **Ground-Shaker**, **Katzkin**, **Malco**, **Novawinch**, **R1 Concepts**, **Scosche Industries**, **Timbren Industries**, **WeatherTech**, **WOLFBOX** and **XKGlow**.

VENOM F5 STEALTH



Texas-based hypercar manufacturer **Hennessey Special Vehicles**, has revealed the **Stealth Series**—a new, ultra-limited trio of its 1,817-hp **Venom F5** hypercars. Only available on track-focused **Revolution** models, the Stealth Series balances exposed carbon fiber, in black and tinted forms, with hand-painted body panels.

The exposed carbon fiber runs from the nose-mounted H-badge down the entire spine of the hypercar. The exposed carbon initially broadens to meet the windscreen before flowing over the roof and narrowing organically—past the engine cover for the 6.6L twin-turbocharged Fury motor—right to the rear deck's trailing edge above the mid-mounted quad tailpipes.

Highlights include tinted carbon fiber inside and out, body color-matched brake calipers and personal racing numbers ghosted into the carbon fiber.

In March, a Revolution coupe confirmed the Venom F5's status as "America's Hypercar" by setting a new production car lap record of 2:10.90 at **Circuit of The Americas**.

ULTIMATE DRIFT

Avery Dennison sends information on a recent **Ultimate DRIFT** wrap project performed by **Ultimate Wraps** in Orlando. Owner **Lucas Grescov** branded the **Toyota GT86** using Avery Dennison Conform Chrome Wrapping Film in Chrome Red and Chrome Silver and Avery Dennison Supreme Wrapping Film in Gloss Black, Gloss White and Gloss Silver for the lightning-like accents.

"Ultimate Wraps specializes in high-performance—sports cars, race cars and super luxury yachts. So, when **Formula DRIFT** professional driver **Diego Higa** turned to Ultimate Wraps for help restyling his 1,000-hp 2JZ Toyota GT86, the shop was revved up and ready to go."

(Photos courtesy @ultimatewrapsfl)





DODGE SRT CHARGER & CHALLENGER



Texas-based high-performance vehicle creator **Hennessey** celebrates the nine-year run of the supercharged 6.2L Hellcat HEMI V-8 with limited edition **Last Stand** models of **2021-23 Dodge SRT Challenger** and **Charger** models.

The vehicles are available from the factory in a variety of trims—Hellcat, Jailbreak, Redeye and Super Stock—with outputs of up to 807 hp. Hennessey's performance touches can include a larger supercharger (non-Redeye models only), upgraded fuel injectors, a high-flow induction system, pulley upgrade, stainless steel long-tube headers, high-flow catalytic converters and a crankcase ventilation system.

New engine calibration raises the output to 1,000 hp and 948 pound-feet of torque, and the Hennessey H1000 Last Stand editions run on unleaded pump gasoline.

Differentiation comes from lightweight carbon-fiber appointments such as a new rear spoiler, front splitter, side skirts and rear diffuser. All models feature distinctive 20-inch alloy wheels that can be optioned with either a gloss black or graphite-colored finish, plus special heritage "Last Stand" graphics and a plaque denoting the serial number for each of the 50 limited edition Challenger and Charger models.

UP-ARMORED TESLA CYBERTRUCK





Archimedes Defense, a leader in high-power solutions for government and defense applications, has partnered with **Tesla** upgrader **Unplugged Performance** and its fleet division, **UP.FIT**.

Together, they introduce **STING** apocalypse-ready, go-anywhere packages of up-armored and genset-equipped Tesla Cybertrucks.

Building upon Unplugged's existing INVINCIBLE off-road components for the Cybertruck, the STING packages come in three variants to maximize off-grid recharging capability and protection for vehicle occupants. STING Baja includes the UP INVINCIBLE off-road package that incorporates **Starlink** connectivity and adds the ability to go off-grid via a compact, lightweight frunk-mounted **AMP Drive** G125TM aviation-derived 800V genset designed to run on jet fuel.

STING Protector includes the UP INVINCIBLE off-road package available with or without genset and adds further occupant protection via bolt-on, bolt-off external offset steel armor plating capable of withstanding 7.62mm assault rifle rounds.

STING APC takes STING armoring to the next level, with added IED/mine protection and upgraded bolt-on, bolt-off external offset steel and ceramic armor plating built to shield occupants from 14.5mm heavy machine gun rounds from key azimuths.

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1970 CHEVROLET SUBURBAN





ICON unveils a custom **1970 Chevrolet Suburban**, part of the company's Reformer series. Inspired in many ways by the work of European designer **Ludwig Mies van der Rohe**, renowned for his modernist architectural, interior and furniture designs, the build takes a classic "less is more" approach.

Highlighted by naked steel and modern glass, the ICON Suburban's exterior flows seamlessly into Mies-inspired interior appointments that pay homage to some of the designer's most heralded furniture creations.

Starting as a three-door model, the SUV matched the customer's performance and handling goals with a **Nelson Racing Engines** NRE twin-turbo Alien LS 427 good for 1,000 hp and 900 pound-feet of torque, 4L85-E automatic transmission with overdrive, rack and pinion steering, and a one-off **Art Morrison Enterprises** four-wheel independent chassis featuring a **Dana** 60 nodular rear end, plus high-capacity hydro-boosted **Brembo** brakes and **HRE Wheels**.

The ICON 1970 Suburban's grille is a custom one-piece machined from 6061 billet. Other custom bespoke parts abound such as the exterior door handles, which are one-of-one.

Finally, the exterior sports a shining two-tone, dark gray paint contrast with a hint of green and gloss black around the beltliner roof.

Modern-day conveniences and electrical were carefully introduced into the truck without distracting from its vintage spirit with a modern HVAC system, power windows, power door locks, and a **Mil-Spec One** powder-coated frame.

1970 DODGE CHARGER



SpeedKore, an American performance company known for its carbon fiber vehicles and pre-preg carbon fiber composite parts, unveiled **"Ghost,"** a fully custom-made reimagining of a **1970 Dodge Charger**.

Named for its ghostly white finish, the bespoke Charger features a full carbon fiber body, floor and wheel tubs mounted to a custom SpeedKore chassis for modern performance and dynamic handling.

Power comes from a reworked **Dodge** 6.2L Hellcat delivering more than 700 hp to the rear wheels via a **TREMEC** TR-6060 6-speed manual transmission that routes power through a **Driveshaft Shop** carbon-fiber driveshaft and **Strange Engineering** 9-inch rear end. The supercharged V-8 features a one-off cold-air intake and breathes through custom SpeedKore-fabricated four-in-to-one headers and exhaust system with **MagnaFlow** mufflers.

Participants include: **IDIDIT** (steering column); **Woodward** (steering rack); **Penske** (dual-adjustable coil-overs); **Detroit Speed** (double A-arm front suspension); **Brembo** (brakes); **HRE Wheels**; **Michelin** (Pilot Sport 4S tires); **EVOD**; **Cerakote**; **Dapper Lighting** (LED projector headlights); **JW Speaker**; **Classic Instruments** (gauges); and **KICKER** (audio).

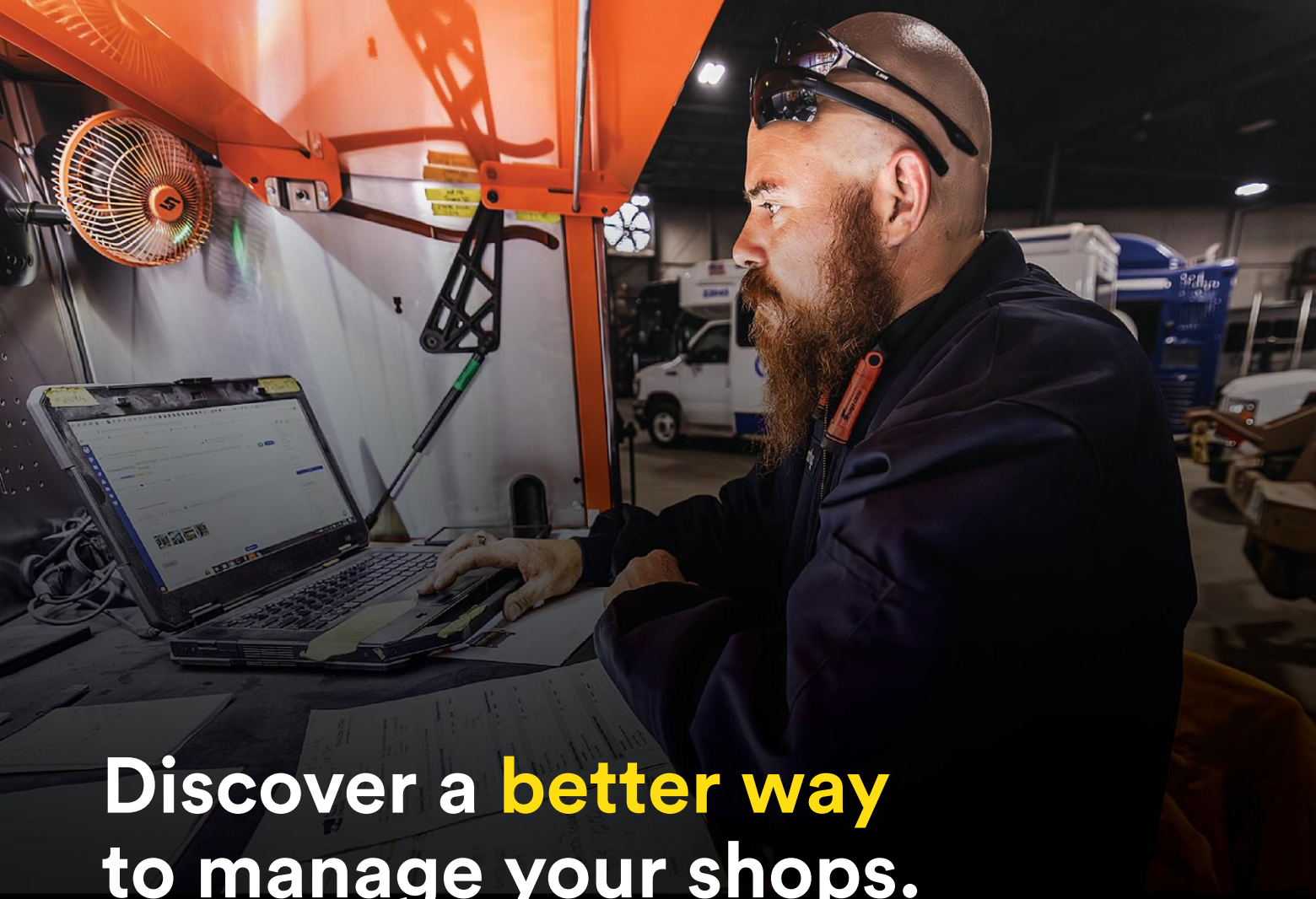
LIMEADE

Avery Dennison sends word on a recent **Limeade** wraps project performed by **Carbon Wraps** in Orlando. **Steve Carney**, owner and founder, wrapped the **Porsche 911 GT** in Avery Dennison Supreme Wrapping Film Gloss Lime Green.

"A graphic designer by training, Steve uses his artistic know-how and eye for design and detail for the professional installation of vehicle wraps on luxury sedans and exotic sports cars. One of Carbon Wraps' best practices is a point-by-point basis inspection for every panel of the vehicles they wrap. This step ensures the quality and accuracy of the wrap, especially on vehicles with challenging curves and recesses."

(Photo courtesy @carbonwraps)





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MATTE LUXE



(Photo courtesy @360wraps)

Avery Dennison sends information on a recent **Matte Luxe** wrap project performed by **360 Wraps** at **DFW Airport** in Texas. CEOs **Tyler** and **Felecia Dunn** and General Manager **Chad Francis** helped tackle the **2024 Range Rover SE** using Avery Dennison Supreme Defense Matte Paint Protection Film.

"Now serving three locations—Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston and Corona, California—360 Wraps has worked tirelessly to become a full-service vehicle wrap shop, with a team of graphic designers, graphic installers and on-site customer service teams. Paint protection film, often thought of for spot protection, is also an ideal design solution for full vehicle wraps. The matte PPF helps emphasize the mirror-like side accents, a distinctive design element on the luxury SUV, while protecting the full vehicle from road debris."

2023 DODGE CHALLENGER

Chris Ketteman of **Dr. Mopar's High Performance** in Burlington, North Carolina, highlights the shop's recent **2023 Last Call Dodge Challenger RT Scat Pack Widebody** build. With only 277 miles on the 6.4L Hemi, the customer wanted to have some fun at the track and on the street.

Updates include a Stage 2 **COMP Cams** HRT camshaft kit, port and polished heads, 85mm **BBK Performance** parts throttle body and mids with high-flow cats, **Barton Industries** shifter with stock handle, **Airaid** throttle body spacer, **MSD Performance** blaster coil packs, **Brisk USA** spark plugs, **JBA Performance** and **MBRP** exhaust components, factory cold air intake, **HP Tuners** MPVI3 and security bypass cable, and tuning by **Chris Boegler** of **American Muscle Performance**.



1985 TOYOTA LAND CRUISER FJ60



TLC4X4 recently rolled out a meticulously restored **1985 Toyota Land Cruiser FJ60**. The SUV features a Toyota 147 Silver colorway, skillfully finished with **Axalta** Cromax XP.

Keeping the FJ60 as close to period-correct as possible, TLC4X4 retained the vehicle's original bumpers, grille, emblems, vents and mirrors. The only major upgrade is modern LED lights for enhanced visibility.

Highlights include 33-inch **BFGoodrich** All-Terrain tires, an LS3 crate engine mated to an NV4500 5-speed manual transmission that easily connects to the original FJ60 transfer case, **DBA** rotors and pads front and rear, **Old Man Emu** springs, **FOX Racing** shocks, 3-inch stainless steel exhaust with **MagnaFlow** mufflers, **Dynamat** products, **Moore & Giles** leather incorporating **Chilewich** fabric, **JVC** head unit and **KICKER** KS Series speakers accompanied by a powerful subwoofer.

DEFENDER 110 MARK II



Blackbridge Motors presents its newest custom classic **Defender 110 Mark II**. While aesthetics, audio and interior design are focal points for the build, introducing daily drivability is also a hallmark.

The Mark II features a **GM Performance** 6.2L V-8 LT4 rated at 650-hp engine and matching 8-speed automatic transmission mated to a Land Rover LT230 Heavy-Duty Transfer Case at a 1:1 ratio with proprietary Blackbridge front and rear driveshafts.

Participants include **Wilwood** (hydroboost master braking system); **FOX** (shocks); **BFGoodrich** (K02 A/T tires); **Sony** (RSX-GS9 head unit); **Morel** (Reference speakers); **Diamond Audio** (subwoofer); **Garrett Leather** (Caressa doeskin finish); **Relicate** (SPEC Series Stone Grey plaid); and **Vision X** (LED headlights).

2024 ROUSH SUPER DUTY



Roush Performance has announced its **2024 Super Duty** production truck. Blending performance upgrades with iconic styling, improved capability and premium build quality, the pickup includes a dual-tipped performance exhaust, Roush/**FOX** 2.0 performance suspension, upgraded slotted rotors and an off-road wheel and tire package.

Customers can build their vehicle on **Ford F-250** or **F-350 Lariat** trims with a 6.7L turbo-diesel V-8 and choice of 10 signature exterior color options. Wide painted fender flares with integrated accent lighting accentuate its presence.

Roush styling components include a windshield banner, hood graphics, redesigned front grille badge, USA flag graphic, **Jack Roush**'s signature and more. An optional rocker accent graphic package is also available.

Improved ride quality and off-road capability come courtesy of the Roush/FOX 2.0 high-performance suspension system and 35-inch **General Tire** Grabber A/TX all-terrain tires wrapped around durable 20-inch satin black Roush wheels.

Additional stopping power comes courtesy of the Roush Performance front brake package, which includes upgraded slotted rotors.

The optional Roush Ready Package features a locking center console vault and off-road utility kit.

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CALIFORNIA COAST VAN LINE







Orange County-based **Vanspeed** introduces the company's newest adventure van line for exploring endless summers, the **California Coast**. Designed as a professional-grade excursion rig based on a 144-inch **Sprinter** van, the vehicles are created as a versatile travel solution for weekend getaways and longer coastal excursions.

Expertly outfitted with modern appointments, California Coast vans provide travelers with usable storage for outdoor action sports gear including surfboards, bikes, kayaks and more while comfortable accommodating two adults.

Highlights include a 25-gallon freshwater tank, two-burner induction cooktop; **Isotherm** refrigerator/freezer, outdoor quick-connect shower; HVAC system by **Maxxair**, **3M** Thinsulate insulation; and a 200W solar panel.

SUMMIT SPRINTER VANS

Vanspeed introduces its **Summit** line of bespoke vans, a new set of production vehicles engineered for adventure. Expertly adding rugged performance with bespoke interior appointments to a standard 144-inch four-wheel drive Sprinter platform, the vehicles include all necessary creature comforts for extended excursions.

The Summit offers a versatile living space with adaptable interiors that transition between sleeping, dining and entertaining. It features a one-burner **Dometic** cooktop, a refrigerator/freezer and a 40-gallon freshwater tank.

Premium maple natural wood paneling complemented by sleek black velvet accessories create a luxurious ambiance, while travelers will appreciate the exclusive gear garage.







ROUSH 2024 FORD F-150

Roush Performance recently announced a production vehicle based on the **2024 Ford F-150** pickup. The truck is designed to fuse performance upgrades with iconic styling, offering improved capability and premium build quality while maintaining OEM safety standards.

Standout upgrades include a redesigned Roush coil-over suspension, a new high-flow grille with Roush lettering, auxiliary lights and an off-road wheel and tire package. The model can be built on either the STX, XLT or Lariat trim levels, with exterior color options scaled by trim.

All builds start with a black appearance package as a foundation to complement the rugged off-road styling of the truck. Signature Roush styling components can be found throughout, highlighting and accentuating the F-150's bodylines.





Highlights include an integrated amber LED light bar in the front bumper and **Diode Dynamics** flood lights integrated in the rear; 33-inch **General Tire** A/TX All-Terrain tires wrapped around satin black 20-inch Roush Off-Road Wheels; Roush's signature Active Exhaust System paired with laser-etched stainless steel dual exhaust tips on the STX and XLT models; carbon-fiber accents throughout the cabin including on the steering wheel, dash and door panels; branded overhead switch panel that controls auxiliary lighting, the active exhaust and other prewired switches that can be tapped when installing additional accessories; and a Roush/**Alpine** audio system, which features upgraded speakers and subwoofers under the rear seats.

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FROM FLAMING RIVER INDUSTRIES

Introducing the new Flaming River Tilt Steering Column, designed for mid-80s muscle cars and trucks. This premium steering column features an integrated turn signal arm with wiper control and cruise control, offering modern convenience in a classic design. The innovative low beam/high beam microswitch enhances driving safety, while the tilt design and compact shroud provide a perfect driving experience. Finished in a sleek black powder coat finish, this column is both stylish and durable. Available in both floor shift and column shift options, it's the perfect upgrade for those looking to blend vintage appeal with modern functionality.

NOTE: *Your vehicle wiring harness must match the mentioned features*

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AT44 XT2 FORD F-550

Austria-based **KRUG Expedition** unveils its new **Bedrock XT2** vehicle platform. Built atop a custom **AT44 XT2 Ford F-550** designed in partnership with **Arctic Trucks**, the new KRUG Expedition Bedrock XT2 looks to establish a new high-water mark in terms of comfort and capability.

The go-anywhere adventure travel rig sports a 176-inch wheelbase and implements a triaxle 6x4 drivetrain. The addition of the third axle decreases ground pressure by upwards of 25%, while formidable 365/80R20 **Continental** multipurpose tires add traction in rugged terrain.

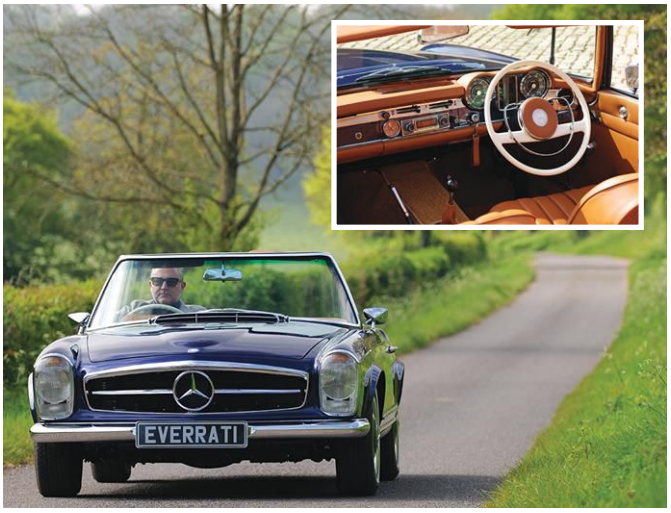
Arctic Trucks went to great lengths to re-engineer the F-550's body and frame to minimize suspension lift, which helps to retain near-stock suspension geometry and ultra-low center mass for stability. Meanwhile, the vehicle is equipped with a Truma Combi diesel-powered air heating system and the living module features a solar panel array and massive **Li-Ion** battery bank, utilizing advanced components by **Victron**.

Other highlights include a 32-inch Smart TV in the dinette area and a 24-inch Smart TV in the cabover section and a **Nomadic** X3 air conditioner. An outdoor kitchen can be integrated into the underfloor storage boxes.





MERCEDES-BENZ SL W113 'PAGODA'



Everrati Automotive Ltd. presents the luxury zero-emissions Mercedes-Benz SL W113 Pagoda model. Hand-built and meticulously restored to concours standards, there are two bespoke versions of the company's proprietary OEM-grade electric powertrain available—Standard and Touring.

Both versions feature the same 300-bhp electric motor plus a limited-slip differential and regenerative braking, allowing "one-pedal" driving when the opportunity arises. AC and DC fast charging is also included.

Inside, the redefined interior of the SL Pagoda can be specified with a super-soft luxury leather with a matte finish and hair cell grain from **Bridge of Weir**, combined with optional modern conveniences such as seamlessly integrated, Bluetooth-controlled high-end audio and heated seats.

1990 250GD WOLF

Among **Expedition Motor Company**'s latest creations is a resplendent **1990 Mercedes Benz 250GD Wolf**, boasting a captivating light blue exterior. This eye-catching color option is popular among luxury SUV enthusiasts, and EMC offered this colorway as a distinctive way for the client to personalize their G-Wagen.

This Wolf also comes with a an ABS hardtop and lavish mushroom weatherproof interior, while under the hood lies a rebuilt OM602 2.5L I-5 diesel engine, better known as Mercedes' million-mile engine. Complementing the power plant is a 5-speed automatic transmission for those who prefer two pedals.







1980 JEEP GOLDEN HAWK



Vigilante 4x4 founders **Daniel** and **Rachel van Doveren** and their company's restoration experts out of Texas (dubbed **JeepHeritage**) present a "sunbeam-chasing screamer" **1980 Jeep Golden Hawk** build.

Sporting a Bordeaux Metallic colorway exterior paint that was made available on 1980 **CJ5**, **CJ7** and **Cherokee** models, the Golden Hawk is highlighted by a tri-tone flying hawk graphic on the hood with matching striping across the Jeep body. Other classic touches included branding on the sides and tailgate, gold and black pinstriped wheels, a black tubular steel brush guard and bronzed glass on the rear quarter windows.

The detailed project started with a carefully rendered frame-off restoration. The body was stripped and metalized for rust protection. The Golden Hawk features classic, original body shaping techniques using hammers and heat.

JeepHeritage restored and powder-coated the Golden Hawk's chassis alongside completely rebuilding the axles, transfer case, transmission and AMC 360 engine, which now features multipoint fuel injection.

Highlights include an all-around disc brake upgrade, custom-built stainless steel exhaust system, **Levi's** Jeep interior using classic stock Levi's fabric and matching **Moore & Giles** leather, and all-new wiring, glass, seals, window actuators, gauge cluster, radio and clock.

BIZZARRINI 5300 GT CORSA REVIVAL EDITION



Two years after the announcement of the first prototype example of the **Bizzarrini 5300 GT Corsa Revival**, the build of the 24th and final car was completed in a unique specification.

Created in a green flecked hue known as Bizzarrini Verde Bosco Ventiquattro (VBV), it's an appropriate celebration of the end of production of this hand-built continuation, authentically based on the car that won its class at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1965.

Each car in the Revival series was crafted with a lightweight single-piece composite body over a steel frame. Inside, the two seats are protected by a more comprehensive six-point roll cage and safety fuel cell, meeting FIA Appendix K regulations.

With a front-mid-engine layout, independent rear suspension to Giotto's innovative Corsa specification and all-round disc brakes paired with a period-specific 5,300cc V-8 developing over 400 hp, it boasts a power-to-weight ratio comparable to a modern supercar.



1991 MERCEDES-BENZ 250GD WOLF







Expedition Motor Company (EMC) has established itself as a leader in restoring the vintage **Geländewagen (G-Wagen)**, transforming each vehicle to meet modern driving conditions while preserving their vintage charm.

Its newly available **1991 Mercedes-Benz 250GD Wolf** has been freshly restored with approximately 2,300 man-hours of dedicated restoration work and is ready to impress with unmistakable Meringue Yellow paint, enhanced charm and improved drivability.

The interior features Elephant gray-colored weatherproof upholstery and the SUV comes with two included tops—bikini and full soft top.

Highlights include **Apple** CarPlay, a back-up camera, heating capabilities and air conditioning, and an OM602 diesel engine mated to a rebuilt 722.6 automatic transmission.

ECD LAND ROVER DEFENDER

Adventure calls and **ECD Auto Design** answers with custom, one-of-one **ECD Land Rover Defender** builds, such as a collaboration with the rugged, versatile **Turtleback Trailer**. Teaming up to provide the ideal vehicle for weekend family getaways, the Defenders blend off-road capability with versatile and luxurious comfort.

Highlights of the Turtleback Trailer combo include rugged tires and independent suspension, spacious storage compartments, built-in kitchen complete with a **SnoMaster USA** fridge and freezer combo, 44-gallon hot water on demand, dual lithium batteries and solar power, and a comfortable tent and awning.







1970 PLYMOUTH ROADRUNNER

Chris Ketteman of **Dr. Mopar's High Performance** in Burlington, North Carolina, updates its engine build progress for a survivor **1970 Plymouth Roadrunner** with a 383-ci power plant and 727 Torqueflite transmission, with machine work by **R&R Performance** in Mebane, North Carolina.

Parts for the build include a **Lunati** Bracket Master II camshaft and timing set kit, **KB Performance Pistons** 162.030 piston set with **Hastings** rings, single-plane intake with 750cfm **Holley** double-pump carburetor, **Hooker** headers, and port and polished factory 906 casting heads. A high-stall converter and transmission will be built with a performance shift kit and other goodies for the street and strip.



"The owner of the Roadrunner had a family history of operating a Chrysler/Dodge/Plymouth dealership," Ketteman reports. "Our shop has a unique family history as well, so it really feels like this build was meant to bring us together. The car was owned by his late father, so it's a pleasure to work on the build with hopes to bring enjoyment to the son."

1988 TOYOTA LAND CRUISER FJ62



Toyota Land Cruiser restorer **TLC4x4** recently completed a **1988 FJ62** inspired by specific elements inherent in vintage **Porsche** design.

The custom FJ62 interior echoes the sharp, restrained allure of classic Porsche models. Seats are upholstered in **Relicate** leather with houndstooth inserts in homage to the iconic Pepita Houndstooth fabric of 1960s-era Porsches. TLC also engineered the door panels to recall the doors of the classic 911.

The exterior Agate Grey Axalta Cromax XP colorway is also Porsche-inspired. Further upgrades include the addition of TLC-designed front fender vents, rear 3/4 vents and robust TLC4x4 rock sliders for maximum all-terrain travel. All-new trim, rubber designs and door handles were integrated, along with upgraded LED lighting throughout the vehicle with supplementary back-up lighting and a hidden back-up camera.

Under the hood lies a robust 430-hp 6.2L LS3 engine paired with a 6L80 transmission.

Participants include: **Method Race Wheels**; **BFGoodrich** (all-terrain tires); **MagnaFlow** (mufflers); **Disc Brakes Australia (DBA)** (rotors); **Old Man Emu** (springs); **FOX** (racing shocks); and **Red-Head Steering Gears** (steering box).

1995 LAND ROVER DEFENDER





Land Rover restorer **Blackbridge Motors** presents a **1995 Land Rover Defender 110** in Beluga Black with a new **Roadster Shop** and Blackbridge custom chassis that improves the drivability, functionality and overall experience of the overlanding rig.

Featuring a removable roof, it is powered by a **GM Performance** 6.2L V-8 LT1 engine and includes a **Dana** 44-style front axle and **Dana** 60-style rear axle, both outfitted with heavy-duty gears for optimal performance.

Highlights include **FOX Racing** 2.0 Series coil-overs, four-wheel disc brakes with a **Wilwood** master cylinder and electronic parking brake, **Advance Adapters** ATLAS 2-speed transfer case, **Moore & Giles** leather in a Ecru tan colorway, **RECARO** Ergomed seats with custom upholstery, **Exmoor Trim** high-back seats for the back rows, **Chilewich** Tiger Eye rib weave, **Sony** 10.1-inch touchscreen stereo featuring **Apple** CarPlay, eight **Morel** mid-range speakers, a nine-channel Sony amplifier, **Diamond Audio** subwoofer, 18-inch **Method** wheels, **BFGoodrich** K02 A/T tires and Blackbridge and **Vision X** 7-inch round DOT-approved LED headlights, along with LED running lights, brake lights and turn signals for improved visibility and safety.



BATTISTA REVERSARIO

Automobili Pininfarina has delivered its most unique hypercar commission to date: the **Battista Reversario**. Inspired by the **Battista Anniversario** and the concept of balance, it is being called the pinnacle of the company's philosophy of "Dream Cars. Made Real."

Among the most striking features of the Battista Reversario is its color scheme, crafted to be the inverse of the unique Pininfarina heritage-inspired design theme that characterized the Anniversario. The lower body is finished in Bianco Sestriere gloss, with the upper body in Grigio Antonelliano gloss.

In a continuation of the theme from the previous model, the pinstripes are consistent with the upper stripe, in signature Iconica Blu. Bespoke inscriptions, including the vehicle's unique "Reversario" nameplate, are displayed both forward and in reflection on the carbon side wings and the underside of the active rear wing.



Inside, the Pilota seats are fitted with a white-on-white Alcantara quilting with a perforated background in Iconica Blu. While the cabin is primarily black including the bespoke chassis plate anodized in black, there are accents throughout with the cupholder retainer, the headliner center bezel and the seatbelts finished in Iconica Blu.



Reversario comes complete with an exclusive three-piece luggage set.

PORSCHE 911 (964)





Theon Design has revealed its latest bespoke **Porsche 911 (964)** commission, codenamed **GBR003**—the company's debut open-top Targa model.

As with every Theon Design commission, the all-carbon bodied, 6-speed manual, 4.0L naturally aspirated GBR003 is an entirely bespoke creation, enhanced from the ground up at its production facility, nestled in the heart of Oxfordshire's "motorsport valley." Finished in a one-off, paint-to-sample Pastel blue over licorice leather, it blends handcrafted luxury touches with cutting-edge technology and manufacturing processes.

Highlights include a five-stage **TracTive** Active Controlled Electronics (ACE) damping system, 18-inch **Fuchs** wheels wrapped in **Michelin** Pilot 4S rubber, and a Pioneer P99RS Bluetooth classic stereo unit paired with Focal amplifiers, subwoofers and six speakers.

ROLLS-ROYCE BLACK BADGE CULLINAN

1016 Industries launched an all-new carbon fiber program for the elite **Rolls-Royce Cullinan Black Badge** edition. This bespoke program uses Rolls-Royce OEM Spec Carbon Fiber, the same Black Badge material that Rolls-Royce employs in all of its high-performance vehicles.

The company offers exclusive enhancements like custom widebody flares and completely redesigned paneling to create innovative vehicle designs. The kit includes newly designed widebody flares, widebody rockers, a full rear diffuser, a trunk spoiler, grille and bumper. It is launching alongside an all-new 1016 Industries V3 Program, which features a redesigned vehicle front fascia, among other notable enhancements that include Forged and Twill Carbon options.



1967-68 CONVERTIBLE MUSTANG LINE



Velocity presents a new convertible option for its **Signature Series Mustang** lineup. The highly sought-after **1967-68 Ford Mustang Fastback** has been restored to seamlessly blend the iconic style of the classic with modern components found in late-model vehicles.

The new offering allows customers to customize their Mustangs with a motorized soft top and a color-matched interior.

Under the hood, the Velocity Signature Series Mustang is powered by a Gen III Coyote 5.0L engine delivering 460 hp. Power is transferred to the wheels via a 10R80 10-speed automatic transmission or a T-56 6-speed manual transmission for those who want additional control.

Highlights include a proprietary serpentine system, custom headers and stainless-steel exhaust with **Borla** mufflers, a brand-new **Roadster Shop** Mustang SPEC chassis, front and rear adjustable **FOX** coilovers, Ford 9-inch rear axle with a 3.73 gear ratio, 17-inch aluminum alloy wheels wrapped in 255/45 ZR17 **Continental** Extreme Contact Sport 02 tires, **Baer** four-piston calipers with 11-inch rotors and a **Bosch** electric iBooster, **BASF** Glasurit paint, vented hood with marker lights, **Truck-Lite** LED headlights and sequential LED taillights, all-new glass, weather seals and billet hood hinges by **Ringbrothers**, **Procar by SCAT** front bucket seats, **Dynamat** sound deadening, **Vintage Air** air conditioning system, **RetroSound** head unit, **Focal** speakers and subwoofer, classic wood steering wheel, **IDIDIT** tilt steering column, **Dakota Digital** gauges, and brushed metal and chrome interior components.

J40 LAND CRUISER EVS

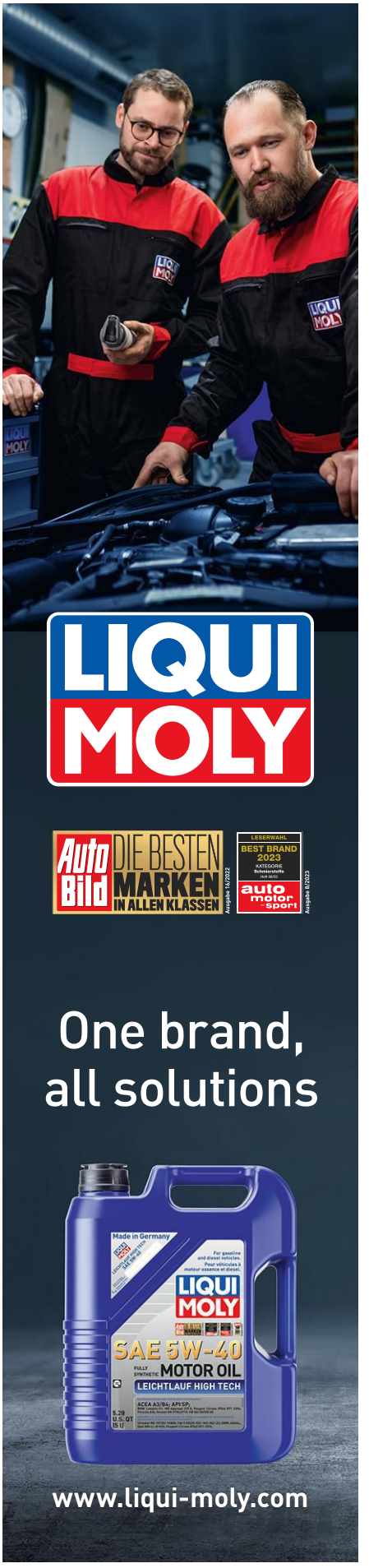


Building on its electrified classic **Range Rover** line, **Inverted** introduces custom **Toyota 40 series (J40) Land Cruisers**. Seamlessly integrating custom 53kWh battery packs, the EV engineering program is available via any of the vintage Land Cruiser variants, including the FJ40 short wheelbase, FJ43 middle wheelbase and FJ45 long wheelbase.

Inverted carefully integrates modernized features throughout the Land Cruiser and underneath to accommodate the new power, including upgraded **Old Man Emu** suspension and front and rear disc brakes to provide plenty of stopping power to match performance (choice of Toyota or **Wilwood** brakes). Lefthand and righthand variants are offered.

Highlights include interior cabins finished with **Bridge of Weir** Leather from the **Scottish Leather Group** from the seating to the door cards, **Apple** CarPlay, a powerful sound system, LED lights, rearview reverse camera and electric air conditioning.

Inverted also offers customers the flexibility to choose from various body styles, including hardtop, station wagon, pickup or soft top.



1985 PORSCHE 911 CARRERA RSR



For **Porsche** purists and collectors, the **RSR Project** presents a custom, hand-built **1985 911 Carrera RSR** in Gulf Blue and Vibrant Orange livery. Initially conceived in 1973 as the apex of Stuttgart's factory engineering prowess, the lightweight RSR cars epitomized the very best in performance with an emphasis in being the car to beat in global racing challenges on track and off.

The RSR Project focuses on delivering a true driver's car to collectors and enthusiasts. Featuring new, larger brakes to keep pace with the high-performance engine, the project integrates signature body paneling, a completely new, crisp and reimagined period-correct interior, and updated shocks and suspension.

Each RSR Project car starts by sourcing a 1984-89 vintage Porsche with a galvanized body and no accident history or rust. Client options include everything from adding a ducktail spoiler and other unique bodywork designs to the choice of a 3.2L, 3.4L or 3.5L engine.

A minimalist interior seamlessly flows alongside updated mechanics that are completed in a period-correct fashion. Participants include **BRAID** wheels and **Michelin** tires.

PORSCHE 992 GT3RS CARBON FIBER

1016 Industries and **9|Design** partnered on an advanced **Carbon Replacement Program** for the **Porsche 992 GT3RS**, offering enhanced aerodynamic performance and a uniquely sleek on-road presence. All kits integrate with the original specifications of each vehicle, ensuring they can be installed without any need for modifications.

The new GT3RS carbon fiber package was developed to elevate the contours of the acclaimed 992 by replacing all original exterior plastic with high-quality exposed twill carbon fiber available in a gloss or satin finish. The fully reversible installation method requires no cutting.

The kit includes essential front-end components such as front bumper inserts, a front lip with uprights, side skirts, hood and fender vents, hood louvers and mirror caps. The rear end features sleek roof rails, side intakes, a lower diffuser, a diffuser with uprights and wing tips.



1966 SERIES I JAGUAR E-TYPE

Upon debut, the **Series I Jaguar E-Type** quickly gained global recognition for its design and performance. The timeless allure of the Jaguar Series I quickly cemented the vehicle's status as one of the most celebrated sports cars to be born from the 1960s.

Now in 2024, **Moment Motor Company** is introducing the company's electrified version of the Series I E-Type with a completely EV-powered classic that can be driven like a modern sports car. The engineering process starts with a full-scale analysis of the 1966 Jaguar Series I E-Type to determine how to ideally integrate the new EV powertrain and properly distribute the batteries on board.

Special attention was spent to fit the powerhouse electric motor entirely within the transmission tunnel, delivering 375 pound-feet of torque and 300 hp directly to the legendary Jaguar rear end with a precision-balanced carbon fiber driveshaft. Inside, the cockpit retains the classic gauges and controls expertly remade to show power consumption, state of charge and temperature.



A small, subtle digital display tucked in the glovebox shows more detailed data when needed, while optional electric air conditioning keeps the cabin cool.



LUCID AIR SAPPHIRE







Pushing the envelope of the world's fastest armored vehicle is a custom 1,234-hp **Lucid Sapphire** from **U.S. Armor Group**. The bulletproof EV features a suite of lightweight armor and advanced ballistic windows, engineered for maximum protection while preserving the vehicle's key attributes—strength in design, quick acceleration and futuristic styling.

Equipped with three electric motors, the Sapphire delivers over 1,200 hp and more than 1,400 pound-feet of torque for 0-to-60-mph times under 2 seconds and quarter-mile runs under 9 seconds.

U.S. Armor Group worked to expertly balance the power-to-weight ratio, integrating armoring and ballistic windows as the primary security upgrade, while also allowing the custom armored EV to still have credible performance and range.

Inside, the vehicle features top-of-the-line premium materials, enhanced by cybersecurity protection and equipped with technology that continuously scans for nearby threats during transport, gathering intelligence from over a million sources, including local police and fire scanners.

Additionally, a one-touch outreach feature allows the driver to instantly connect with U.S. Armor Group for assistance via the integrated communication system.

ECD MUSTANG

Automotive restorer **ECD Auto Design** recently began production on its first custom Mustang. As the classic **Ford Mustang** celebrates its 60th anniversary, ECD is reimagining the vintage car experience for a modern audience.

Each Mustang will be a one-of-one build paying homage to the iconic designs of the past paired with updated features to improve performance, safety and comfort. That includes high-performance engine, driveline and suspension options, coupled with top-of-the-line braking capabilities to provide a smooth, fast ride. ECD offers a full menu of powertrain options from gasoline to EV.

Meanwhile, a variety of bespoke interiors will be available with a large menu of options, from seating to cluster types and customization down to the gauge tips. ***TS***







The carefully guarded "El Valle" lowrider build for the Phoenix Suns was amazingly completed in under two months.

MOBILE MASTERPIECES

Bugs Auto Art takes custom painting & the lowrider lifestyle to new levels.

By Mike Madriaga

Photos courtesy Efrain Gonzales & Cynthia Coury

When it comes to automotive artistry, few can rival the meticulous craftsmanship and creative prowess of Efrain "Bugs" Gonzales. Operating under the moniker Bugs Auto Art, the Mesa, Arizona, native has carved out a unique niche in the custom automotive world, transforming classic cars into mobile masterpieces that are as much works of art as they are vehicles.

As another trade show season approaches, Gonzales kindly took some time away from current builds to delve into his old-school lowrider journey, the intricacies of paint craft, and the challenges and triumphs of running a multifaceted operation while keeping his exclusive projects under wraps.

A SLAM-DUNK BUILD

One of his recent high-profile triumphs is a 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air, revamped in the NBA's Phoenix Suns' iconic purple and orange colors. The showpiece was commissioned by the Suns and driven by their 6-foot-6 point guard, Devin Booker, making waves across the sports, automotive and music communities alike.

In November 2023, the Phoenix Suns' official Instagram account posted a video of the lowrider-inspired Bel Air. In a gritty, hip-hop-esque scenario, Booker, a four-time NBA All-Star, approaches Gonzales in a garage.

"Bugs! Is it ready?" Booker asks with a mix of excitement and urgency.

"She's ready," Gonzales replies, a hint of pride in his voice. "Check it out."

"That's how you unveil it right there," Booker continues as the camera pans to reveal the car in all its glory.

A thumping Spanish rap track sets the tone as the two are filmed cruising down Phoenix streets in the now world-renowned 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air lowrider. The word on the streets, from Phoenix to Los Angeles, is that a project of this magnitude typically takes car builders two years to complete.

Yet, Gonzales and his team accomplished it in under two months.

"We spent many nights here at Earnhardt Chevrolet in Chandler," Gonzales reveals.

The massive project took a lot longer to secure. Gonzales notes that the Suns' staff monitored him for two years, as if scouting a first-round draft pick, before deciding he was the right person to customize their "lolo" or lowrider.



Gonzales assembled an all-star team from the metro Phoenix lowrider community to meet the two-month "lolo" build deadline.

And, for a good reason—since 1987, Gonzales has expertly applied techniques like flake pinstriping, pearl tape shades, water drops and silver leafing with candy clearcoats on the top cars in Arizona and California. His steady hand even pinstriped a Las Vegas-inspired lowrider owned by Joe Ray, former editor of Lowrider Magazine.

Almost every vehicle touched by Gonzales's paintbrush or sprayed by his airbrush has the "Bugs Did It" signature—now the Suns' official lowrider is a part of Bugs' legacy as well.

STARTING THE JOURNEY

The collaborative project went into effect when Gonzales first received a phone call from a team representative.

"He told me about painting a car for the Suns," Gonzales recalls. "I'm like, 'Is he serious, or is somebody messing around?'"

Gonzales and his close friends later met with the Suns' team in downtown Phoenix.

"I'm pinching myself, asking, 'Is this real?'"

His daughter, Cynthia Coury, adds, "The Suns presented their 'El Valle' uniform and asked him if he could incorporate the purple and orange colors from the uniform into a paint job and build them the best lowrider. They even gave him total creative freedom."

The "El Valle" uniform, including the shorts and jersey, spotlights the classic lowrider—a genre of vehicle customization created by Chicanos (Mexican Americans) in the 1940s and '50s. Lowriders, typically domestic cars lowered to the ground, originated in the Southwest United States, including Phoenix.

The NBA website states, "Today, the lowrider culture is part of Phoenix's identity. The city is home to dozens of lowrider car clubs and annual shows. The lowrider representation can be seen on the side panels of the jerseys and the shorts, featuring a custom pinstriping design commonly found within lowrider paint jobs. Most notably, the jersey also features a hand-drawn 'El Valle' inspired by the Chicano art movement, representing the dedicated Chicano and Hispanic fans."

In addition to being a vehicle, "lowrider" can refer to the person driving it, making Gonzales the perfect candidate. As a Chicano and member of Lifestyle, one of the most exclusive lowrider clubs in the United States, he has been customizing lowriders for over three decades.

As proof, Gonzales pulls out his phone and shows the step-by-step process he and his team used to meet the Suns' two-month deadline.

The Suns dropped off the Bel Air, originally painted red and white, at Bugs Auto Art's body shop on Aug. 10, 2023. Tucked away in a secret area of the 71-year-old Earnhardt Chevrolet dealership just east of Phoenix, the build was discreetly executed amidst the bustling activity of the dealership's other auto garages.

To the untrained eye, it was difficult to discern that a project of such magnitude was taking place. But that's just it—Gonzales only requires a few tools, many of which are crammed into his small red toolbox, adorned with a sticker that reads "Always Handpainted."

His main products include an RTI air compressor, FBS tape, One Shot and House of Kolor paint, flake and Striping and Lettering Enamel, USC sandpaper, and Iwata paint guns and airbrushes.

"They are high-quality products made by the best," he says.

To speed up the build process and meet the Suns' tight deadline, Gonzales enlisted the help of his family and friends. The crew used hand and electric sanders with USC products to strip the Bel Air's original paint. The RTI air compressor provided air for the crew's power tools.

"My son, Mikey, my brother, Chubs, my cousin, Fernando, and even my wife, Tiffany, helped me with the body; they prepped it," Gonzales explains. "That includes taking apart the car and sandblocking it. We were here day and night."

Gonzales requested his team not post photos or videos of the Bel Air online, especially the project's location and owner's name. Suns fans are diehard and loyal, and the vehicle's location had to be kept secret. After the vehicle was stripped and prepped, the crew used FBS masking tape to protect the trim, rubber pieces and accessories from overspray.

Gonzales employs a lot of FBS tape, particularly fine-line tape, which is essential for masking off areas to lay out and help create multiple paint designs and graphics. The more stripes, accents and layers, the more taping and painting are required.

The car was then pushed into a downdraft spray booth, where Gonzales used an Anest Iwata spray gun to apply House of Kolor's purple and orange paints and all of the needed flakes and pearls.

For freehand lettering and pinstriping, Gonzales turns to House of Kolor's Striping and Lettering Enamel or 1-Shot paint and a variety of brushes, each serving a unique purpose. Chiseled-edge brushes are used for lettering and filling in large areas with color; narrow, needle-like brushes, on the other hand, are ideal for scrolls and intricate details. Sword-shaped brushes are the go-to for long, flowing lines and most striping work.

ALL-STAR EFFORT

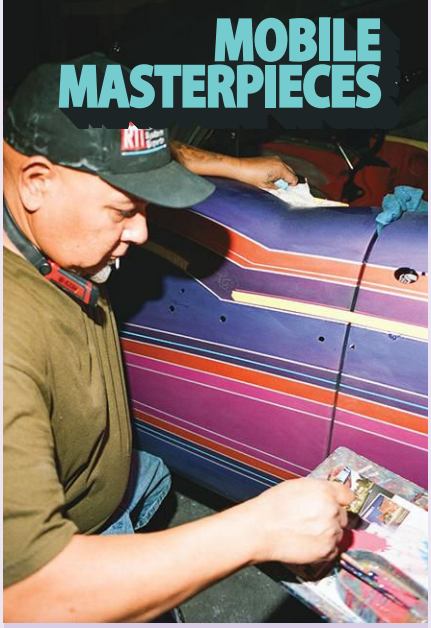
Gonzales assembled an all-star team from the metro Phoenix lowrider community to meet the two-month deadline.

Samson Fernandez from Come on Holmes Kustoms and his crew gutted the vehicle and created its hydraulic system.

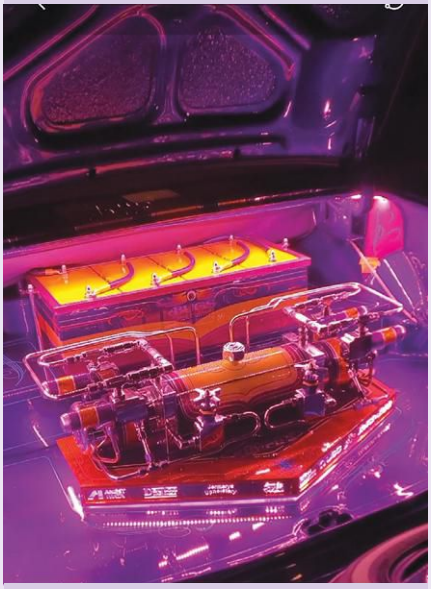
"I've been doing hydraulics since 1996," Fernandez says. "It was all hands-on learning, with a little help from my dad, a mechanic specializing in fabrication and metal work."

Fernandez tore out the rear end, fabricated it into a four-link suspension, welded in a trunk and added a support bridge. He also shortened some parts so the car would sit low when the skirts were put on.

MOBILE MASTERPIECES



When it comes to automotive artistry, few can rival the meticulous craftsmanship and creative prowess of Efrain "Bugs" Gonzales.



Gonzales sticks to his decidedly old-school approach to custom painting, pinstriping, lettering and leafing

"I don't want to do regular stuff," Fernandez says. "I like to be creative."

A switch box by the driver's bench seat controls the pumps, actuators and hydraulic cylinders atop the shocks and wheels. Multiple batteries power the system.

The trunk of the Suns' promo vehicle is a gem in itself, home to the chrome-plated and custom-painted hydraulic configuration. The trunk is "tubbed," a technique popularized by car stereo installers in the early 2000s, where fiberglass panels are created, painted and installed to make the trunk appear smooth and seamless.

"And everything I do in the trunk, I'll have Bugs paint as well," Fernandez continues. "So, with the paint, the chrome and everything in there, including the hydraulic tubing, they accent each other."

The hydraulics are powerful enough to lift the car off the ground when Booker and his Suns teammates need to clear speed bumps or dips. As witnessed in a viral video clip aired by ESPN, when Booker pulls into the Suns' garage, he drops the Bel Air back down to an almost impossibly low stance.

Meanwhile, the upholstery—designed, stitched and installed by Jeremy's Upholstery—includes a purple-colored boot to cover the convertible top. The car is finished off with classic 13x7-inch Dayton 72-spoke wheels wrapped in low-profile tires.

Since a lowrider is incomplete without chrome, Pelon's Chrome and Polishing chromed the hydraulic lines, some hardware and the lowrider plaque mounted atop the rear seats that reads "El Valle." Then, team Bugs polished out the other OEM chrome parts.

Gonzales only wishes they had an extra week to work on the engine.

"We didn't do any engine work on it," he says. "All we did was the hydraulics, interior and paint job. It's a nice street cruiser but not a full-blown show car."

Reflecting on the project, Gonzales is proud of what they accomplished in less than 60 days and that they did it as a family.

"It was something fun and challenging. It felt so good to create a beautiful piece of art, knowing that it was going to represent a professional sports team in Arizona and the Mexican lowrider culture," he says.

BUGS' BEGINNINGS

"As a kid, my family would travel up to Northern California to pick crops," Gonzales vividly remembers. "Helping my uncles and mom pick strawberries and tomatoes taught me humility."

In the 1970s and '80s, riding in the back of pickup trucks was a rite of passage for many kids, as was raising an arm to mimic tooting a horn at semi-truck drivers in hopes they'd blare their air horns. Young Gonzales did both on the I-10 on their way to California.

"As kids, we'd pull our arms down," he recalls, "and that's when I noticed the lettering on the trucks and how beautiful they looked at night with all the lights. The pinstriping captivated me, and the more I saw, the more I got drawn into the art."

That early fascination has come full circle. Today, thanks to his youth spent in the back of his uncles' and grandfather's pickups, Gonzales regularly pinstripes and applies lettering and silver leaf to big rigs and semis.



The Phoenix Suns' Instagram account captured the style and vibes of "El Valle" and the Bel Air build. (Photos courtesy Phoenix Suns IG)



As a Chicano and member of Lifestyle, one of the most exclusive lowrider clubs in the United States, Gonzales has been customizing lowriders for over three decades.

However, another rite of passage that transitioned then-teen Gonzales to "Bugs" wasn't so innocent. One day, Gonzales was busted in high school for something he prefers not to discuss.

"I prayed, 'God, help me get out of this mess, and if you do, I'll change my life,'" he recalls.

His prayers were answered, setting the trajectory for his days as a lifelong lowrider. Gonzales dove headfirst into the car cruising scene on Central Avenue in Phoenix around 1980-81. It was the city's answer to the cruising rituals of Van Nuys Boulevard in Los Angeles and the King and Story intersections of San Jose.

The desert night air was thick with the gleam of polished chrome and the hypnotic shimmer of custom candy and iridescent pearl paint jobs, casting surreal reflections that could mesmerize anyone watching. As one might imagine, seeing such sights without cell phones was an intense, in-the-moment experience.

"That's all I thought about," Gonzales reminisces. "Lowriders, murals, pinstriping, custom painting—and the girls."

MAKING A NAME

Gonzales was so enamored with the lowrider lifestyle that he wanted to be more than just a spectator. So, he began painting and pinstriping cars.

"When I started, (fellow painter) OG Mando inspired me," he says. "I always said if I was going to paint in Arizona, I needed to be good enough to hang with Mando."

And sure enough, Gonzales's projects began to sit alongside Mando's at car shows.

"His compliments about my paint meant a lot to me," Gonzales says. "Respect is essential in this field."

Another artist, Mister Cartoon, a now world-renowned tattoo artist, convinced Gonzales to move to "LA for a while to learn lettering and graphics at Los Angeles Trade-Technical College. And while there, I met more great artists, including OG Abel."

Then there's Danny D. "We saw each other's work around 1992 and we became good friends," Gonzales recalls.

They'd hit the road together, attending lowrider and classic car shows. Back then, there was no internet advertising; most marketing was done via word of mouth.

"We traveled to different states to stripe, sharing personal stories and art."

Gonzales connected with Joe Ray, who would become Lowrider Magazine's editor-in-chief. "We'd talk about color schemes and cars, and he'd share stories about the '70s. It felt like sitting around a campfire, listening to stories from the older guys from Lifestyle Car Club—which I would end up joining also in the 1990s."

Gonzales learned from and hung out with the best.

"Legends like Bill Carter, Mario Gomez and Danny D all took their secrets with them," he says. "I have a tattoo in memory of Danny D on my right forearm—rest in peace."

A LIFETIME OF EXPERIENCE

Nowadays, even with the completion of the Suns project and others in the works—projects he keeps under wraps to prevent planned paint schemes from leaking on social media—Gonzales remains committed to the old-school ways.

"New painters today watch YouTube and think they know everything," he says. "They share all the secrets, but some things should be kept to yourself, especially if it's good. I see people on YouTube revealing paint secrets and it bothers me because they do it for the likes. I do this for a living."

Because of the influx of newbie YouTube painters who haven't necessarily paid their dues with the OGs, as Gonzales and many of his comrades from the baby boomer and Gen-X eras did in their respective customizing lanes, there's been a lull in the market's customization prices.

"One of the biggest challenges I face is the presence of lowballers in the industry," Gonzales says. "Painters who take work for barely anything drive the market down and make it hard for the rest of us."

Now in his early 60s, despite the lowballers, technology and social media, Gonzales sticks to the old-school ways, working primarily by himself when he preps, pinstripes and paints his projects. That's unless the car is a high-profile project with a serious deadline, in which case he'll assemble another car-customizing dream team, like the one that built the Phoenix Suns' Chevy Bel Air.

His daughter, Cynthia Coury, concludes: "The world knows my dad as 'Bugs,' but my brothers and I know him as 'Daddy.' In our backyards, in his shops, in my nana's carport, there has always been a car or vehicle under a cover. The light in the garage has never been turned off. My dad has always been the first to wake up and the last one to sleep. For our whole lives, we have watched stars be born." ***TS***



MIKE MADRIAGA *is an award-winning multimedia journalist who has created content for a variety of media outlets. From 2000-06, he owned and managed Team Prototype, a world-renowned auto fabrication shop in San Diego that built dozens of car show winners, magazine cover vehicles and SEMA projects.*

PERFORMANCE

Nitro Rules p. 70 / Performance Products p. 74

A SPECIAL BLEND



The main goal of Pro-Touring is to modernize the complete driving experience. (Photo courtesy Detroit Speed & Engineering)

Mixing new technology with classic appeal is what restomods are all about. **By John Carollo**

The overall popularity of what is known as the Pro-Touring/restomod class of performance vehicles just keeps growing and growing. Sure, the retooling of any classic muscle car is always eye-catching, but add in the latest hard parts and modern twists and you soon have the attention of shops and drivers alike.

Vintage automobiles that can stop on a dime and won't overheat in traffic have a special appeal. Add in handling and performance upgrades, and maybe a subtle touch of class in the interior or a wheel and tire combo that blends the old with the new, and you've created something special and unique.

For shops looking to serve Pro-Touring customers, suppliers offer their latest observations on market trends, sales tips and hot products. Use them to find the perfect mix for your customer base.

STILL GROWING

Classic builds with a modern touch continue to appeal to a wide variety of drivers.

"The expansion of the market is arguably the biggest impact of the Pro-Touring/restomod movement," says Rich Barsamian, VP of sales and marketing for Advanced Clutch Technology. "This movement has broadened the customer base by making classic cars appeal to a wider audience. Enthusiasts who previously might not have considered owning or restoring a classic vehicle are now interested, because modern technology can make these cars more practical, reliable and enjoyable to drive. By



Every successful project is another step toward increasing your shop's reputation for restomod builds. (Photos courtesy Ridetech)

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Advanced Clutch Technology – ACT
Rich Barsamian
VP Sales & Marketing

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Borla Performance Industries Inc.
Tim Sayers
Muffler Development Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** Quick-Ratio Steering Boxes
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Applications available for GM cars and trucks; 12.7 steering ratio combined with DSE proprietary valving greatly improves steering feedback; the modern-feel steering box complements aftermarket or factory suspension; attractive price point.

Detroit Speed and Engineering
Nathan Peterman
Senior Design Engineer

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** 1979-93 Fox Body Mustang Suspension Components
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Front Short Long Arm (SLA) system replaces the front OE MacPherson strut assembly with a double-wishbone design; bolt-in IRS conversion system enhances autocross and road course capabilities and improves street manners.

Ridetech
Blane Burnett
Marketing Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** Billet Flexline Clamps
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Kits include everything needed to plumb the rear end and work on 3-inch-diameter axle tubes in most Ford 9-inch and GM 10/12-bolt rear ends including 12-inch flexline, a pair of billet clamps, chassis fittings and clips, steel braided lines and caliper fittings.

Wilwood Disc Brakes
Michael Hamrick
Events & Promotions Manager



Classic cars are getting a new life on the street or at the track thanks to the restomod/Pro-Touring movement. (Photos courtesy Detroit Speed & Engineering)





attracting new demographics and creating a crossover appeal between classic car lovers and those seeking modern performance, the restomod movement has fueled growth across multiple sectors of the aftermarket industry—driving demand for a wider variety of products and services and pushing the entire industry forward."

Some believe it's a natural extension of traditional hot-rodding.

"It opens up the category to additional enthusiasts and once again demonstrates that the performance market evolves over time," says Tim Sayers, muffler development manager for Bora Performance Industries.

Today's drivers are used to everyday vehicle technology that has progressed leaps and bounds over the past 30-50 years, says Michael Hamrick, events and promotions manager at Wilwood Disc Brakes. So, when they turn to a classic vehicle project, they often expect to blend the best of both worlds.



Many of today's Pro-Touring builds feature improved performance and handling without compromising ride quality. (Photo courtesy Ridetech)

"Many customers have been driving modern vehicles that have great performance including their stopping ability. When a customer decides to build a restomod out of their 1969 Camaro, they are looking for as much or more performance than their modern daily driver," he explains. "That is sometimes hard to do on these older cars. With the aftermarket community building better suspension, steering, wheels and tires, that leaves the last part for us at Wilwood Disc Brakes to match the performance these other manufacturers have delivered."

Normal automotive evolution also plays into Pro-Touring.

"The reliability and comfort of classic cars has greatly improved with modern tech," notes Nathan Peterman, senior design engineer at Detroit Speed and Engineering. "Along with that, younger generations are getting into classics and many great companies have emerged

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WHSE24TS

A SPECIAL BLEND

ECD, ROUSH COLLABORATE ON CLASSIC MUSTANGS

Auto restoration and modification company ECD Automotive Design and high-performance engine company Roush are partnering on ECD's new custom classic Mustang builds.

ECD Auto Design will offer Roush engines as an option for its custom classic 1967-68 Ford Mustang models. Builds will include the ROUSH 347 SR as the base engine, with options to upgrade or switch to other high-performance Roush engines, including the ROUSH 347 IR, ROUSH 427 SR and ROUSH 427 IR.

"Collaborating with Roush allows us to take our custom classic Mustangs to a new level of performance and reliability," says Elliot Humble, co-founder and chief technology officer of ECD Auto Design. "Their engines are a perfect match for our commitment to quality and innovation, and we're thrilled to offer our clients the best of both worlds."

Each engine is machined, balanced, assembled and dyno-tested to ensure top-tier performance and reliability, according to the companies.

"The team at Roush is excited to provide the engines for ECD's highly customized classic Mustangs," says Jason Furr, Roush VP of business development. "ECD's attention to detail and craftsmanship coupled with Roush's engineering expertise and passion for performance combine to create an incredible product."



The ROUSH 347 SR will be the base engine offering for classic custom Mustangs built by ECD Auto Design.





Restomods can be viewed as a natural extension of traditional hot-rodding. (Photos courtesy Borla Performance Industries)

to supply the consumer demand in the market."

Blane Burnett, marketing manager at Ridetech, says you can't overstate the effects Pro-Touring has had on the market.

"It allows us to enjoy a vehicle more fully, like our first car or truck or the classic we may have inherited. It is amusing that we look at those classics with rose-colored glasses sometimes, thinking we want them to function just like they did when they were new," he says. "Do we really want that now that 10, 20 or even 50 years have elapsed?"

New efforts keep things fun, he adds.

"The constant pursuit of making something better keeps the hot-rodding spirit alive in our industry and is a large part of why it continues to be so enjoyable."

A SPECIAL NICHE

As a shop owner, it's important to recognize that not every customer fully grasps all the options and possibilities available in a restomod build.

"Many think that Pro-Touring cars are just for racing, but the overall goal is to modernize the complete driving experience," Peterman explains. "Updating drivelines, suspension and electronics makes it easier for customers to take their classics on long trips with the comfort of a modern vehicle."

That means asking a lot of questions on



Modern technology can make classic cars more practical, reliable and enjoyable to drive. (Photo courtesy Advanced Clutch Technology – ACT)

the front end of any job, Hamrick explains, in order to get on the same page with the driver.

"What does the customer expect from the parts and service he is getting from the shop doing the work? Is he building a 1972 Nova and wants it to perform like his C7 Corvette? The customer's expectations are usually much higher than the overall build and builder can provide," he notes. "Asking the correct questions and giving the customer the best overall outcome on the parts and level of build they are paying for must be talked about in the very first conversation. Once this is done, the shop/builder then needs to discuss what parts are the best at the price the customer wants to pay and explain what's needed to ensure the



A SPECIAL BLEND

When today's drivers turn to a classic vehicle project, they often expect to blend the best of both worlds. (Photo courtesy Wilwood Disc Brakes)





Take time to consider how different products interact so drivers receive a complete package solution. (Photos courtesy Wilwood Disc Brakes)

performance and fit will all go as planned."

Everybody has an opinion on what to keep and what to change, says Sayers.

"What was popular in the past isn't always currently popular. Some things are timeless and rarely change, while others do change."

Television shows and social media can sometimes oversimplify Pro-Touring builds.

"The most common misconception is the consumer underestimating the complexity of restomod projects," Barsamian says. "Many customers assume that upgrading a classic car with modern technology and performance parts is a straightforward process. Yet, these projects often involve extensive custom fabrication, wiring and fitting, which can make them far more complex than anticipated. This misconception can lead to misunderstandings about the scope of the work involved, making it the most frequent issue shops encounter when working with Pro-Touring customers."

Burnett points to suspension selection as a prime example.

"We find that a lot of enthusiasts don't truly understand that you can improve the performance and handling of a car without compromising the ride quality. Depending on the application, sometimes all three categories can improve simultaneously," he says. "It's vital for dealers to not be afraid to offer solutions that are capable of giving their customers another level of enjoyment when it comes to suspension solutions. If possible, schedule a time for the customer to be able to ride in a shop vehicle equipped with the product in question before they make up their mind on a path forward."

MOVING FORWARD

There's no beating knowledge and experience when it comes to competing for the top restomod jobs.

"To increase Pro-Touring and restomod business, shops should focus on building a strong portfolio of completed projects and showcasing them through high-quality photos, videos and case studies," says ACT's Barsamian. "Leveraging social media, attending car events and engaging with the community can help attract more customers and establish your reputation in the industry."

There's hope for professionals just entering the market as well, however—particularly for those who understand how different product sets can complement each build.

DSE's Peterman advises, "Become knowledgeable with modern aftermarket components and, more importantly, how they interact with one another. Setup and

tuning of modern suspensions, electronics and driveline is key to making a good build great."

In fact, if you find certain products that work well together, consider creating combination offerings.

"Shops that are working with their customers and putting together a 'package' seem to be doing well with us at Wilwood Disc Brakes," says Hamrick. "Shops that take the time to meet the customer's expectations and ensure that the suspension works with the wheels and tires and the wheels work with the amount of brake the customer expects while keeping the budget in check are important. This makes for a happy customer that will come back and tell his friends how great of a job the shop/builder did and hopefully help the shop gain business."

Once you've found success, Sayers from Borla recommends telling everyone you can about it.

"Make sure that your current and prospective customers know that you are in the Pro-Touring business," he says. "Posts on social media and in newsletters and articles in local newspapers are good ways to get the word out."

Quality work will help pros build a reputation and, more importantly, develop a knack for creating unique, consistent, eye-catching builds.

"One of the things that a shop may overlook from time to time is what *isn't* being communicated in the conversations they are having with their customers," says Ridetech's Burnett. "While the vehicle they are bringing in for work may look a certain way and the parts the customer is asking about may lead to a certain conclusion of how it will be used, it's always important to ask: 'How are you going to use the vehicle?' Starting there will greatly improve the ability of the shop to 100% deliver on customer expectations while also serving to improve repeat business over the long term."

Rome wasn't built in a day, he adds, and your business won't be, either.

"Keeping in mind that these folks are entrusting their childhood dream or lifelong passion to you and your staff will help continue building bricks of success for your shop in particular and separate you from the rest of the shops in your immediate area." ***TS***





Fuel for Thought...

Reflecting on the end of federal nitromethane regulations.

By Tony Thacker



Federal regulations regarding nitro possession prompted by the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing recently expired.

My buddy Geoff Stilwell has a blown, nitro-burning 496 Brad Anderson-powered land speed racer that holds the class record at 258.679 mph. It uses around 40 gallons of 70% nitro for a 3-mile run.

Nitro varies in price from $25-$50 a gallon—it's a matter of supply and demand.

While looking for fuel for Bonneville Speed Week 2024, we were mindful of the Department of Homeland Security regulations regarding buying, moving and storing nitromethane—only to discover that the regulations are, surprisingly, no more. We were shocked and pleased at the same time.

A QUICK HISTORY

Nitromethane, CH_3NO_2, is produced industrially by combining propane and nitric acid in the gas phase and is used in many industrial applications, from cleaning solvents to pesticides to racing fuels. Invented in 1872 by the German Kolbe company, its use as a racing fuel can be traced back to the mid-1930s and the Nazi-funded Auto Union (Audi) racing and land speed vehicles.

Nitromethane surfaced as a racing fuel in the U.S. after World War II, initially developed by the Dooling brothers for model airplanes and tether cars. Its first use in full-size drag racers occurred circa 1949 in the small town of Goleta, about 11 miles west of Santa Barbara, California.

According to Wally Parks in his book, "Drag Racing Yesterday and Today," around 1948 members of the Motor Monarchs club from Ventura and engine-builder Bob Joehnck of Santa Barbara approached the local airport manager about using the property for legal drag races. He agreed, if they could get some insurance, which they did, and the Santa Barbara Acceleration Association started holding organized drag races every other Sunday in late 1948 or early '49.

Contemporary photographs show a two-lane road with central markings probably about 25 feet wide. Cars ran east to west and again, according to Parks, "three-tenths of the distance was used for accelerating and the final two-tenths to get stopped."

Track length was limited by a locked gate at the top end and timing was done with stopwatches. The finish line was a narrow bridge, and you could spot the winner by seeing which one bumped over this bridge first.

One weekend, two guys came up from Los Angeles to "drag it out"—track regular Tom Cobbs in a 1929 A Roadster with a GMC-blown '34 Ford V-8 and outsider and Vic Edelbrock's man, Fran Hernandez, in his stock-bodied '32 coupe powered by a 296-ci Mercury with triple Stromberg carbs.

The money was on Cobbs' blown roadster, but the strange-smelling coupe crossed the culvert a length ahead of him. Hernandez apparently quickly gathered his kit and was out of there, revealing to no one the secret of nitro.

Edelbrock and his team that included



Nitromethane is a popular fuel for land speed and drag racers.

Hernandez, Bobby Meeks and Don Towle experimented with nitro on Vic's new Clayton dynamometer and ran it in their midgets at Ascot. As drag racing exploded in popularity, nitro became a popular power-adder.

Speeds began to rapidly increase and Emery Cook, for one, was pushing the envelope. On Feb. 3, 1957, off the trailer at Lions Cook he set a new track record at a staggering 9.28/156.25 mph. On the final of six runs, he upped his speed to 166.97 mph.

The unexpected reaction was to slow the cars down. Robert C. Post, in his book "High Performance," states, "The very next day, C.J. Hart, manager of the Santa Ana dragstrip, announced an immediate ban of any fuel but pump gasoline. Two weeks later, management at five other California strips mandated 'pump gas only.'"

The infamous "fuel ban," that was by no means universal and initiated plenty of experimentation with superchargers and multiple engines, lasted until 1963-64.

A DARK TURN

The use of nitro in auto racing was confined to drag racing and nobody, especially the public, gave it a second thought until April 19, 1995. On that day, domestic terrorist Timothy McVeigh parked a rented Ryder truck in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City.

At 9:02 a.m., McVeigh ignited a powerful bomb made from a deadly cocktail of agricultural fertilizer, diesel fuel and other chemicals. The explosion was devastating—168 people, including 19 children, were killed and several hundred more were injured.

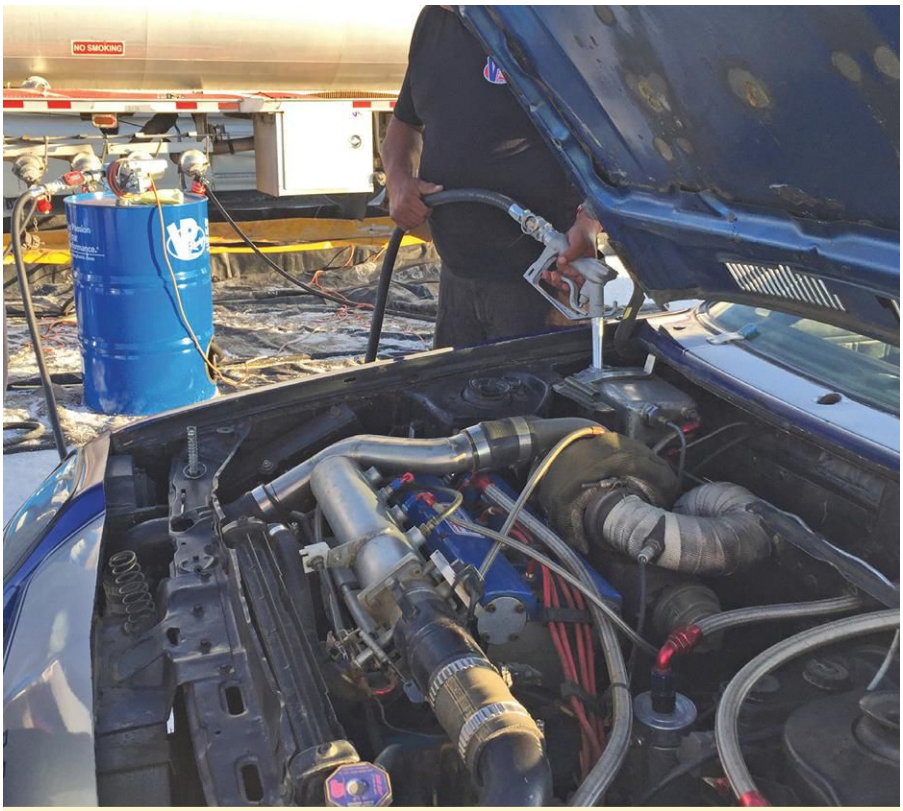
More than 300 adjacent buildings were damaged or destroyed as well. At the time, it was the worst act of domestic terrorism in U.S. history.

You have to dig pretty deep in the reports to discover that a component of McVeigh's cocktail was nitromethane purchased at a dragstrip. If you go to the pbs.org Front-

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Fuel for Thought



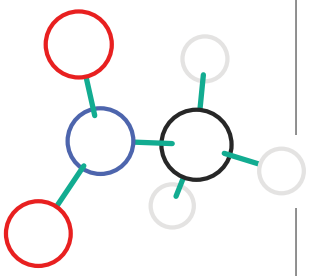
Nitro is so powerful that it spurred "fuel bans" at certain racetracks and events in the late 1950s and early '60s.

line link, the entry dated "10.20.94" says: "McVeigh had called model shops in search of nitromethane fuel, commonly used in auto racing. He found a source on the Funny Car Racing Circuit by hanging around pit areas. He was offered 55-gallon drums of nitromethane for $1,000 a drum from a source in Manhattan, KS. The main office of VP Racing was in Manhattan, KS. McVeigh and (Terry) Nichols bought the nitromethane from a VP Racing delivery truck located in Dallas, TX."

The PBS timeline goes on to say: "It took them awhile to find the race track. They finally found it in Winston Coveston[?]. Tim let Terry out of the truck before they got to the track. Tim bought three drums of nitromethane from a man for $900 a drum, and paid cash."

The Winston Coveston reference was erroneous, as according to the Fort Worth Star, May 8, 1997, Tim Chambers, a traveling salesman for VP Racing Fuels based in San Antonio, said he sold 29-year-old McVeigh three 54-gallon drums of nitro for approximately $3,000 cash on Oct. 21, 1994, at the Texas Motorplex in Ennis, Texas.

LASTING IMPACT



The drag racing world was impacted when nitromethane came under the scrutiny of the Department of Homeland Security, which eventually issued regulations and guidelines for its possession under the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).

The regulations were introduced to "reduce the risk of more than 300 chemicals of interest from being weaponized." Fair enough.

Very basically, you could hold 400 pounds (approximately 42 gallons) of nitro, but any more and you needed to report to CISA and meet the regulations.

"When the regulations were introduced," remembers Jim Tanner of SO-CAL Nitrous and Race Fuels, "I made the conscious decision to opt out and no longer carry nitro. It just didn't seem worth the effort."

Drag racers use less per run than Stilwell's land speed machine. Krista Baldwin, for example, on a Facebook post says she uses 15 gallons per run in her Top Fuel Dragster. Of course, that's an 89%-11% methanol/nitro mix, whereas Stilwell's is a 70/30 mix.

Whatever percentage it's mixed at, 42 gallons of nitro doesn't go far, and you'd obviously need much more for an event, which would immediately put you over the CISA minimum.

(Interestingly, Stilwell operated a terrorist insurance business, Beech Underwriting Agency, in the UK and in the aftermath





Different racers require different mixes.

of the Oklahoma bombing was working with Lloyds of London, resulting in the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act that created the federal program that provided insurance against certified acts of terrorism.)

Fast-forward to Bonneville Speed Week 2024 and the search for nitro. If Stilwell made just one run per day, he would need approximately 180 gallons of nitro—a little more than four 42-gallon drums—which was way over the CISA minimum.

In the past, racers could preorder nitro from VP and pick it up from its fuel truck on the salt. This year, however, VP decided not to take its truck on the salt and fuel had to be pre-ordered and picked up in Wendover, Utah. What would racers like Stilwell do with all that nitro, especially if, like recent years, there was little racing due to poor conditions?

While discussing the situation with drag racer Randy Bradford, he told us that the whole program had been abandoned. Sure enough, when you go to https://www.cisa.gov/resources-tools/programs/chemical-facility-anti-terrorism-standards-cfats/chemical-security-assessment-tool-csat, it says:

"As of July 28, 2023, Congress has allowed the statutory authority for the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standard (CFATS) program (6 CFR Part 27) to expire. Therefore, CISA cannot enforce compliance with the CFATS regulations at this time. This means that CISA will not require facilities to report their chemicals of interest or submit any information in CSAT, perform inspections or provide CFATS compliance assistance, amongst other activities. CISA can no longer require facilities to implement their CFATS Site Security Plan or CFATS Alternative Security Program. CISA encourages facilities to maintain security measures."

And there you have it, the whole CISA program in the U.S. is moribund.

I did learn in September, however, that similar regulations are still in place in the U.K.

So, as always, stay tuned. ***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.*





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C8 Corvette Superchargers

ProCharger Superchargers, Lenexa, Kansas, introduces Supercharger Kits for 2024 C8 Chevrolet Corvettes. Designed to elevate the driving experience, the systems deliver an additional 230-plus hp on pump gas and can accommodate serious power upgrades. The complete turnkey kits offer easy installation and require no engine/transmission removal and no permanent vehicle modifications.



Tri-Five Chevy A/C System

Vintage Air, San Antonio, Texas, presents its new Gen 5 SureFit Air Conditioning Kits for 1955-56 and 1957 Chevrolet vehicles. The complete bolt-in kits feature an electronically controlled heat, cool and defrost system with an OEM-quality injection-molded case with separate heating and cooling coils, a block-type expansion valve and a high-capacity blower for rapid interior cooldown. A control kit to seamlessly convert original control panels to electronic operation is included, accompanied by all necessary components for installation.

Camaro 10.5-Inch Clutch



Advanced Clutch Technology (ACT), Lancaster, California, presents a full range of 10.5-inch Mod-Twin-Style Clutch Kits for 2012-15 Camaro ZL-1 and 2009-15 Cadillac CTS-V (LSA) applications. The ultra-durable, customer-serviceable, long-lasting clutches offer extremely high torque capacity without the trade-offs often associated with a twin-disc clutch. Features include a mod-twin design, a mono-drive hub and forged aluminum cover. The systems can handle up to 1,496 pound-feet of torque at the engine and work with power-adders.



Honda/Acura Fuel Pump Hanger

DeatschWerks, Oklahoma City, presents its X2 Fuel Pump Hanger for Honda Civic and Acura Integra models. Designed to pair maximum fueling with an easy installation process, the hanger can accommodate two DW300 or DW420 fuel pumps, or a single DW440 or DW810 brushless fuel pump. An independently mounted top hat ensures easy installation in the factory fuel tank. Features include a billet top hat with an -8AN ORB feed and -6AN ORB return ports, M5 stainless bulkhead wiring studs, and matte black anodized and laser-etched graphics.



Ford Bronco Raptor Cat-Back Exhaust

BORLA Performance Industries, Johnson City, Tennessee, presents its Cat-Back Exhaust System for 2022-24 Ford Bronco Raptor models that improves horsepower and torque. System 140934CB features active exhaust valves and delivers the aggressive ATAK sound without any drone or resonance inside the vehicle. The system is made from T-304 stainless steel with black coated tailpipes and tips. It features all-welded construction for durability and long life.

Catalytic Converters



Street Series, Benicia, California, offers R-CAT Series 1 Catalytic Converters that meet or exceed rigorous standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Crafted in the USA, the converters feature an innovative design that optimizes exhaust gas treatment, effectively reducing harmful pollutants while enhancing engine efficiency. They include a 4-inch round body specifically developed for passenger automobiles and light-duty truck applications that houses a 400-cell ceramic substrate with rear O2 sensor port.



Chevy C1500 Rack & Pinion Cradle Kit

Flaming River Industries, Berea, Ohio, presents its Chevy C1500 Truck Cradle Kit. Designed to deliver improved steering precision, durability and style, the kit includes the rack and pinion cradle, slip shaft and hose kit. The systems are made in the USA.



Cylinder Heads

Air Flow Research (AFR), Valencia, California, presents its LS3 Enforcer Cylinder Heads that draw inspiration from the company's LS3 Mongoose CNC 12-degree heads. The all-new LS3 Enforcer is offered unassembled or fully assembled and components include **PAC Racing** springs, titanium retainers, Viton valve seals, hardened spring cups, ductile iron seats and AFR stainless steel 8mm valves. It has a 238cc intake port, a 92cc exhaust port and a 72cc combustion chamber, designed to meet the demands of today's high horsepower LS engines.

Hemi Valve Spring Retainers

Elgin Industries, Elgin, Illinois, and its Elgin PRO-STOCK brand offers high-strength, chromoly steel Valve Spring Retainers engineered to accommodate the higher spring pressures encountered in performance-enhanced Chrysler 5.7L Hemi engines. Designed for use with beehive and conical springs, the retainers ensure positive location under peak spring pressures and valvetrain rpm. Each spring is manufactured from premium-grade, lead-free SAE 4140 chromoly material for strength and longevity and includes a performance black oxide coating.



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Jeep Internal Bypass Shocks

Fox Factory, El Cajon, California, presents FOX Factory Race Series 2.5 Internal Bypass Shocks for Jeep JK/JKU models. Designed to deliver velocity and position-sensitive damping technology, Dual Speed Compression (DSC) adjustment and high speed-ready performance in a bolt-on kit, the shocks feature 2.5-inch impact-extruded and CNC-machined 6061-T6 Type III anodized aluminum bodies, finned reservoirs and 7/8-inch shafts with redundant seals. Front and rear applications are available.



Ford Deep Sump Transmission Pan

BD Diesel, Abbotsford, British Columbia, presents a Deep Sump Transmission Pan Kit for 2017-24 Ford 10R60/10R80 applications. The new pan kit adds 2.1 quarts of fluid and a temperature sender plug and features an OE gasket, cooling fins and heat shield studs. Magnetic drain plug is included.

Synthetic Hybrid Motor Oil

AMSOIL, Superior, Wisconsin, presents its 100% Synthetic Hybrid Motor Oil, now available in a 0W-8 viscosity, joining existing 0W-16 and 0W-20 viscosities. The new 0W-8 viscosity is engineered for applications calling for the JASO GLV-1 specification such as newer Toyota Corolla models equipped with the 2.0L (M20A-FKS) engine. Designed as a premium upgrade over vehicle manufacturer oils, the blend features an advanced synthetic formulation purpose-built to combat issues common to HEV and PHEV vehicles including infrequent engine use.





Dry Sump Oil Systems

Aviaid Oil Systems, Chatsworth, California, offers Dry Sump Oil Systems for most engine applications from four to 12 cylinders. Two basic pump designs (Series 1 and Series 2) are available and can be customized with one to seven or more sections. A variety of section widths up to 2 inches wide are also offered to match the pump's pressure and scavenging sections to optimize performance. Up to four (billet, fabricated, cast aluminum and fabricated steel) oil pans can be selected per application, along with other components.



Chevy Ignition Wires

Flex-a-Lite, Burlington, Washington, and **SQR Performance** present all-new SQR Performance 8mm Ignition Wires for performance and mild racing applications. Designed to offer added heat protection and less resistance at an attractive price point, the 8mm ignition wires are available in direct-fit sets for small- and big-block Chevrolet engines and four custom universal sets. All universal wire sets include a high-quality two-piece crimp tool and unique terminals that alleviate stripping insulation away from the core. ***TS***

Radio With Unique Displays

Custom Autosound Mfg. Inc, Fullerton, California, presents the USA-850 DigaDial Radio, featuring virtual analog screen technology. Users can choose from four unique displays including classic analog settings and a digital display with station and song info. Drivers can customize display color and audio settings, stream music via Bluetooth and choose MP3/WMA/FLAC playback from USB. Features include a built-in 300-watt peak amplifier, adjustable EQ, dual subwoofer outputs and easy installation into more than 450 classic vehicle models.



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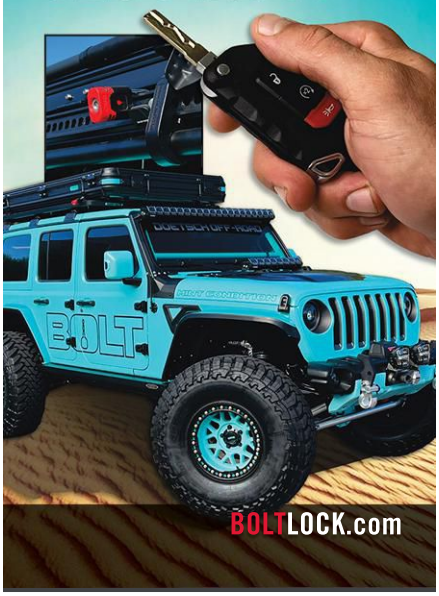
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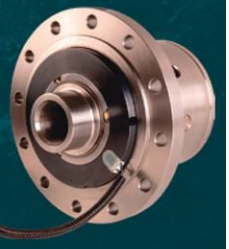
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Custom Creations Added to National Historic Vehicle Register

Custom cars are getting the recognition many believe they deserve as 2024 entrants into the National Historic Vehicle Register.

The Hagerty Drivers Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving automotive culture and history, hosted its annual Cars at the Capital exhibition in September on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Displayed in an eye-catching, brilliantly lit glass enclosure were the 35th and 36th vehicles to be added to the register—creations many dreamed about owning and driving when they were young.

The 35th vehicle is the "Beatnik Bandit," released in 1961 by Ed "Big Daddy" Roth. The vehicle was built on an early-'50s shortened Oldsmobile chassis with an entirely custom one-off body. Roth's fiberglass bubble-top car creations and irreverent art defined the 1960s custom car craze.

The "Beatnik Bandit" is among his most-remembered cars, as it became a best-selling model kit for the Revell company and later a micro-sized Hot Wheels car. The current owner is the National Automobile Museum in Reno, Nevada.

Meanwhile, the 36th vehicle is a Dodge A100 that was heavily customized by Mike and Larry Alexander for the 1967 Detroit Autorama custom car show. In 1964, Harry Bentley Bradley was commissioned to design the pickup for the Alexander brothers.

Named the "Deora" by a participant in a competition hosted by model kit company AMT, the DIY-scale version helped propel the one-off truck to legendary status.

Bradley led the design of Mattel's first 16 Hot Wheels in 1968 that included scale versions of both the "Beatnik Bandit" and "Deora"—cementing the two customs' places in history and inspiring generations of car enthusiasts. The current "Deora" owner is the Tom Abrams Collection in Detroit.

"These two custom cars captured the national imagination when they were first introduced, epitomizing a period of customization from the great independent car designers and craftsmen," says McKeel Hagerty, CEO of Hagerty. "The cars memorialized by Mattel's Hot Wheels models set the toy market on fire in 1968 and continue to capture the hearts of enthusiasts and help expand car culture."

Both vehicles have been added to the National Historic Vehicle Register in recognition of their significance in American automotive history and culture.

The exhibit and documentation of the vehicles are part of the Hagerty Drivers Foundation's partnership with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) that is permanently archived in the Library of Congress.

"Each generation has a touchpoint to car culture—toys and scale-model cars have been a major gateway for so many into the world of automobiles. Celebrating two of the most iconic cars to be miniaturized and make their way to the toy boxes of children around the world is an exciting opportunity," says Casey Maxon, senior manager of heritage, Hagerty Drivers Foundation.

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Big Daddy's Roth's "Beatnik Bandit" creation and the Dodge "Deora" A100 pickup—both of which earned fame as early Hot Wheels models—are the 35th and 36th vehicles added to the National Historic Vehicle Register. (Photos courtesy Hagerty Drivers Foundation)

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