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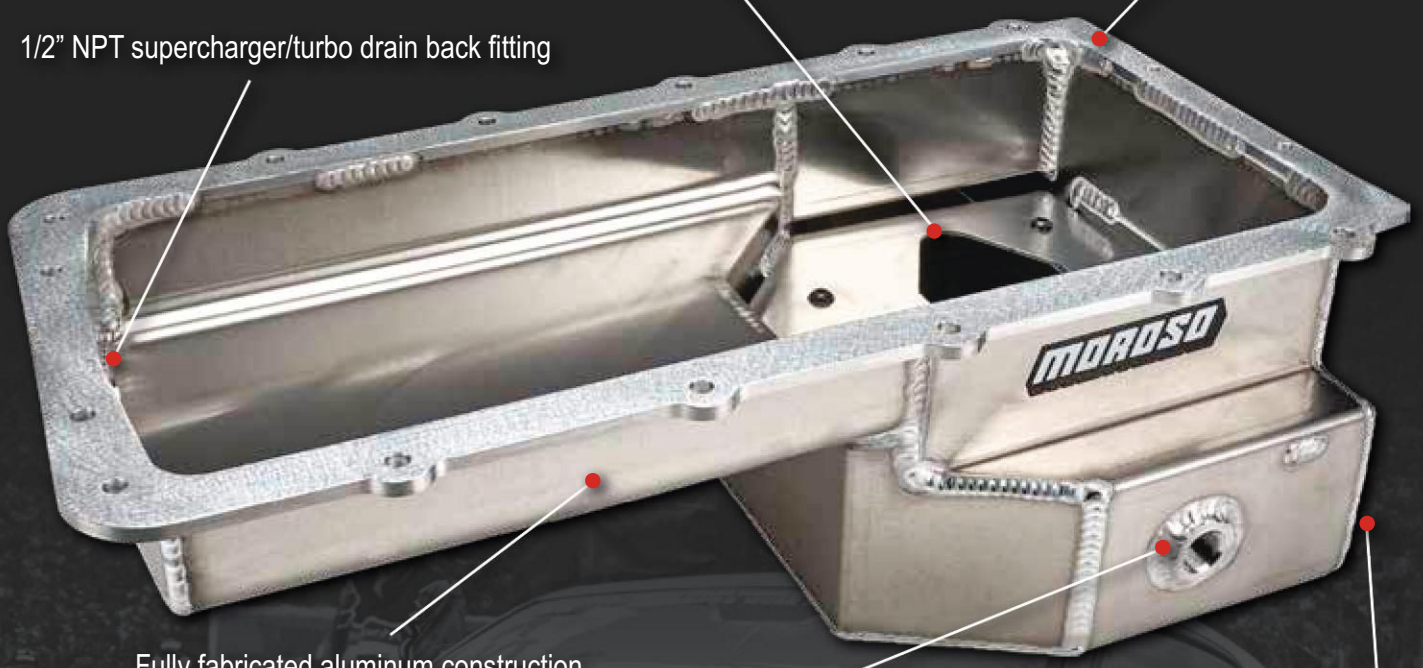


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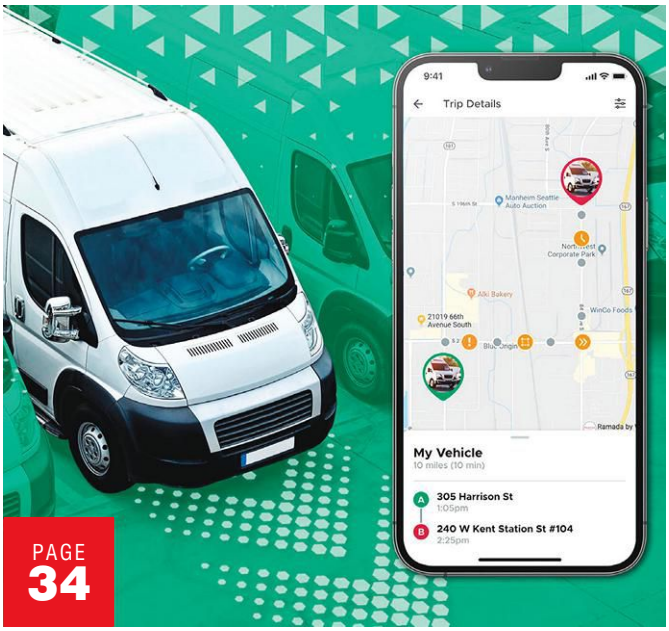


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More participants in more series, higher car counts at well-established races and renewed fan enthusiasm across the board are driving drag racing to new heights. *See article on pg. 16* (Photo courtesy FTI Performance; inset photo courtesy Avery Dennison)

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Jef White
Editor
theshopmag.com

Price-Conscious Owners Driving Car Buying Trends

Whether your shop works mainly with retail customers or wholesale clients, know that price sensitivity remains a major driver for new and used car buyers.

Affordability is king in CarGurus' 2024 Recap & 2025 Outlook, spotlighting the biggest new and used vehicle market influences over the past year and for the year to come.

"If 2024 had one defining theme, it would be affordability. As consumers became more price conscious in response to high interest rates and stubbornly high prices, demand for used vehicles—especially certified pre-owned vehicles—grew significantly," said Kevin Roberts, director of economic and market intelligence at CarGurus. "Affordability will continue to influence the market in the year ahead, especially as we consider the potential impacts on vehicle pricing in light of proposed tariffs and the possible end of the electric vehicle tax credit."

The pivot to affordability played a role in the surge of new vehicle inventory, which increased by nearly 31% over the end of 2023, according to the report. New vehicle prices hovered around $49,000 despite market days supply (MDS) rising for certain automakers. Compared to the national average of 82 MDS, some saw this metric exceed 100, including Stellantis (121 MDS), Ford (121 MDS) and Nissan (113 MDS).

Conversely, the used market remained in tight supply, as the average price declined by 3% to $27,900. Also, certified pre-owned (CPO) selection increased by nearly 10%, with demand surging by 17%.

Other key themes for 2024 included:

- The rise of hybrids: With the broader shift toward affordability, declining hybrid prices helped bring the segment center stage in 2024—taking on the demand that many expected for electric vehicles (EVs). The average price of a new hybrid dropped nearly 10% in 2024, reaching $46,600 (compared to the average new EV price of $62,000).
- A late model year listing shortage: The legacy of the semiconductor shortage is now affecting the used vehicle market, the report notes, with 2020 and 2021 models noticeably harder to find compared to years prior. While overall used car inventory stabilized in 2024 (down only 1%), 2021 model-year inventory dropped by nearly 22%, and 2020 models saw a 17% decline.
- Shoppers' love of larger body styles—especially pickups—remained strong in 2024: The Chevrolet Silverado 1500, Ford F-150 and GMC Sierra 1500 topped the list of most viewed 2024 models.

The report also highlights trends to watch in 2025, including the potential impact of tariffs, a potential loss of popular EV tax credits and a rise in demand for higher-priced models.

While shoppers are still expected to prioritize affordability in 2025, the potential for lower interest rates could expand buying power for drivers seeking lower monthly payments. This, in turn, may reignite demand for more premium options, along with aftermarket products that make each vehicle complete.

Review the CarGurus' 2024 Recap & 2025 Outlook at: dealers.cargurus.com/drc/cargurus-2024-recap-and-2025-outlook. ***TS***

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Toyota was among the OEMs taking full advantage of the ways aftermarket customization can help build factory loyalty. (Photo courtesy SEMA)

2024 SEMA SHOW REPORT



Shaping the future of the specialty automotive aftermarket.

A little construction dust from the renovation of the main entrance of the Las Vegas Convention Center couldn't slow the 2024 SEMA Show, which again solidified its status as the global epicenter of automotive innovation.

Held Nov. 5-8, the event brought together more than 2,400 exhibitors, including 580 first-time companies, and attracted more than 160,000 attendees from 140 countries celebrating the industry throughout SEMA Week.

This year's show encompassed 1.2 million net square feet of indoor areas and acres of outdoor exhibit space and activations showcasing groundbreaking products, cutting-edge technologies and forward-thinking custom builds.

The scope, energy and passion reaffirmed the SEMA Show as the premier automotive aftermarket event shaping the future of the industry, officials noted in a press release following the show.

"SEMA 2024 was a true celebration of where the automotive aftermarket industry is headed," said Mike Spagnola, SEMA president and CEO. "This year, we saw a remarkable convergence of innovation, collaboration and passion, with exhibitors, builders and enthusiasts all coming together to push the boundaries of what's possible. Innovation was the heart of the 2024 SEMA Show, driving the merger of creativity and technology across the show floor."

While still targeted at aftermarket professionals, the show has become part of the country's car culture, featuring high-profile celebrity builds, high-powered company activations and events for enthusiasts looking to catch an insider's glimpse.

SEMA Fest expanded the show's reach by offering the public a chance to engage with cutting-edge automotive designs, live music and motorsports. Held in the parking lot outside of the West Hall, it featured



Akira Nakai is among the new generation of YouTubers and influencers bringing the excitement and innovation of the SEMA Show to the masses. (Photo courtesy SEMA)

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2023 SEMA Person of the Year Ian Lehn (left) presents the award to 2024 winner Colby McLaughlin (center) alongside Industry Awards Banquet host Jarod DeAnda. (Photo courtesy SEMA)



ChrisFix accepts the award for SEMA Content Creator of the Year at the SEMA Industry Awards Banquet. (Photo courtesy SEMA)



Robert E. Petersen Lifetime Achievement Award Winner Don Prudhomme at the SEMA Industry Awards Banquet. (Photo courtesy SEMA)

performances from bands like Cage the Elephant and Sublime.

The post-show SEMA Cruise was another crowd-pleaser, with more than 1,200 vehicles parading down Convention Center Drive, giving attendees a final chance to see some of the most innovative and jaw-dropping builds up close as they exited the show floor.

SEMA also opened its doors, literally and digitally, through the Friday Enthusiast Experience, an opportunity for the public to experience the show on its final day, and SEMA Live, the show's first-ever livestream, which attracted hundreds of thousands of viewers from around the world, giving the SEMA Show a true global audience.

During the show, attendees engaged in more than 80 seminars, hands-on workshops and networking events. Meanwhile, SEMA's advocacy efforts were also front and center, underscoring the importance of collaboration across the industry. With initiatives like the SEMA Action Network (SAN) and the SEMA Political Action Committee (PAC), SEMA continues to advocate for policies that protect and promote the automotive aftermarket, ensuring the continued growth and success of the sector, officials note.

"We're excited by the groundbreaking innovations showcased at SEMA 2024," said Tom Gattuso, SEMA vice president of events. "The future of the automotive aftermarket has never been brighter, and SEMA is where it all begins."

PEOPLE OF THE YEAR

The Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) named the recipients of its 2024 Person of the Year, Content Creator of the Year and Robert E. Petersen Lifetime Achievement awards at the annual industry banquet Thursday night and offered these notes:

PERSON OF THE YEAR: COLBY MCLAUGHLIN

McLaughlin, president of Trim Illusion Inc., was awarded Person of the Year for his "exceptional contributions and leadership in the automotive aftermarket industry."

As a volunteer on the SEMA Professional Restylers Organization (PRO) Select Committee for many years, he is now chair of the council, guiding PRO in "creating valuable benefits that enhance the business practices and procedures of automotive restylers nationwide."

In addition to his work with PRO, McLaughlin actively supports automotive education programs, has mentored aspiring designers and engineers, and contributes to charitable initiatives that benefit automotive enthusiasts and their families.

CONTENT CREATOR OF THE YEAR: CHRISFIX

ChrisFix started his YouTube channel with the goal of "helping people learn how to fix their car so they could save money and

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A 1968 Dodge Charger built by Noah Alexander was the overall winner of this year's Battle of the Builders competition. (Photos courtesy SEMA)



Bruce Yarnell's '65 Aston Martin DB5 was this year's BOTB Sport Compact/Import Performance category winner. (Photo courtesy SEMA)



Rob Lindsay's '49 Willys Pickup was this year's BOTB Off-Road category winner. (Photo courtesy SEMA)



Connor McElvain's '69 Datsun 2000 Roadster was this year's BOTB Young Guns category winner. (Photo courtesy SEMA)

maybe even start a new hobby." Since then, he has amassed 10.4 million subscribers on YouTube and has taught millions of people all over the world how to repair and maintain their vehicles.

Each video is a step-by-step, how-to-style demonstration that he films, edits and publishes on his own. "His content is concise with all of the essential information so anyone can follow along, from beginners to experts."

ROBERT E. PETERSEN LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: DON PRUDHOMME

A drag racing legend, Prudhomme began his NHRA Top Fuel and Funny Car career in 1962 and later became just the third owner/driver in series history to secure more than 100 total wins.

BATTLE OF THE BUILDERS

One show staple that grabs the attention of attendees and the public alike is the annual Battle of the Builders competition.

This year's overall champion was Noah Alexander's 1968 Dodge Charger, the top entrant from the Hot Rod/Hot Rod Truck category. Other category winners included Bruce Yarnell's '65 Aston Martin DB5 (Sport Compact/Import Performance); Connor McElvain's '69 Datsun 2000 Roadster (Young Guns); and Rob Lindsay's '49 Willys Pickup (Off-Road).

"These builders represent an elite group of individuals who have demonstrated extreme talent, creativity and craftsmanship in modifying cars, trucks and SUVs," show officials stated in a press release announcing the winners.

The show week starts with 10 entrants in each of the four categories that are then pared down to the top three before the winners are announced.

This year, the Top 3's included:

HOT ROD/HOT ROD TRUCK

- Noah Alexander — 1968 Dodger Charger
- Chris Clark — 1932 Ford Roadster
- Tony Arme — 1959 Chrysler 300E

SPORT COMPACT/IMPORT PERFORMANCE

- Bruce Yarnell — 1965 Aston Martin DB5
- Brian C. Dilley — 1973 Ferrari Dino
- Kenny Pfitzer — 1956 Porsche Speedster

OFF-ROAD

- Rob Lindsay — 1949 Willys Pickup
- Jacob Moore — 1962 Dodge Power Wagon
- Chris Stafford — 1957 Chevy 3100



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QA1 was named SEMA Manufacturer of the Year. (Photo courtesy SEMA)



Keystone Automotive was named SEMA Channel Partner of the Year. (Photo courtesy SEMA)

YOUNG GUNS

- Connor McElvain — 1969 Datsun 2000 Roadster
- Tyler Adams — 1967 Chevy C10
- Austin Phipps — 1964 GMC C25

The overall winning build came to fruition following a chance meeting between Alexander and the car's owner, Ed Ganzinotti, in the checkout line at a Barrett-Jackson auction six years ago.

"The competition from this year's Battle of the Builders was intense, and to come away with a win is something our shop will never forget," said Alexander. "Some of the people we look up to the most in the industry have won this award, so to appear alongside them is really incredible."

After owning the car for 20 years, Ganzinotti, a Houston native, reached out to Alexander about sprucing up the Charger, and the build was on.

"We were going to fix some paint issues, do an interior refresh and rebuild the engine. We said, 'Ed, before we start, come to our shop, see what we're capable of, and become somewhat of a regular as we work on this build,'" said Alexander.

After visiting the shop, Ganzinotti commissioned the team to build him "the baddest Charger out there."

The '68 Dodge features original sheet metal that was refined with sharpened bodylines, a relocated wheelbase, shaved drip rails, flush-mounted glass, custom hood and trunk skins, and a bespoke belly pan. Built on an altered wheelbase Roadster Shop chassis, all suspension components were body-worked and painted.

The car is powered by the original 440-ci Dick Landy engine with eight-stack fuel injection and a deburred, smoothed block. Inside the vehicle, a custom dash features one-off milled bezels, unique seats and door panels and a package tray with Missouri black walnut accents.

PARTNERS OF THE YEAR

When it came to company honors, QA1 was named SEMA Manufacturer of the Year and Keystone Automotive was named SEMA Channel Partner of the Year.

"We are proud to honor QA1 and Keystone Automotive for their relentless dedication to advancing the industry," said Spagnola. "It takes hard work to drive meaningful change, and these companies have exemplified the teamwork, innovation and service needed to propel the industry forward."

A high-performance suspension and driveline components company, QA1 was recognized for its "commitment to providing customers with high-quality product data, a passion for pushing boundaries and setting new standards and investing in their employees through professional development opportunities."

Meanwhile, for warehouse distributor Keystone Automotive, "the Channel Partner of the Year Award recognizes Keystone's ongoing commitment to staying at the forefront of industry advancements, embracing new technologies and trends, and investing in cutting-edge logistics and inventory management systems that have revolutionized the way aftermarket parts are distributed, ensuring that customers receive timely and accurate deliveries."

TOP PRODUCTS

It's not really a trade show without new product introductions, and this year more than 1,600 parts and components were entered into the 18 different Showcase categories to be considered for a SEMA New Product Award.

Winners were selected based on a variety of factors that included superiority of inno-



What's a trade show without the latest and greatest new products? (Photo courtesy SEMA)

vation, technical achievement, quality and workmanship, consumer appeal and marketability, according to officials.

ADVANCED DRIVER ASSISTANCE SYSTEM (ADAS) PRODUCT

WINNER: Revv ADAS Plus (Revv ADAS)

- Runner-Up: Revv ADAS Mechanical (Revv ADAS)
- Runner-Up: Solar Wireless Driving Assistant (Vision Automobile Electronics Industrial)

COLLISION REPAIR & REFINISH PRODUCT

WINNER: I-CAR Academy (I-CAR)

- Runner-Up: SagolaSPRAY (Sagola by Elcometer)
- Runner-Up: RTS App (I-CAR)

ELECTRIC VEHICLE PRODUCT

WINNER: Formosa VCU (Formosa EV)

- Runner-Up: RGB LED Back Lit Trim (Papp Plastics & Distributing)
- Runner-Up: AEM EV Bridge Interface Module (Dakota Digital)

ENGINEERED NEW PRODUCT

WINNER: Velocity Commander Cruise Control (Dakota Digital)

- Runner-Up: E-LINK Electronic Sway Bar Links (Suspension Direct Inc.)
- Runner-Up: GM LT Engine Air to Water Intercooler Integrated Intake Manifold (ProCharger Superchargers)



More than 1,600 parts and components were entered into the 18 different Showcase categories to be considered for a SEMA New Product Award.

EXTERIOR ACCESSORY PRODUCT

WINNER: CURT Helux 5th Wheel Pin Box (Lippert/CURT/Luverne/Aries/Ranch Hand/UWS)

- Runner-Up: Boundry TrailBreaker Truck Bed Rack System (Boundry)
- Runner-Up: Arma-Lock (Arma-Lock)

INTERIOR ACCESSORY PRODUCT

WINNER: Dodge Durango Dual Stripes Shift Knob and Automatic Dial Selector Adapter Set (Speed Dawg Shift Knobs)

- Runner-Up: GRFX-3100 Universal Competition Gauge System (Dakota Digital)
- Runner-Up: WOLFBOX X5 3-Channel Dash Cam (TANLINK TECH)

MERCHANDISING DISPLAY

WINNER: Interactive Modular P.O.P. Showroom Display System (ORACLE Lighting)

- Runner-Up: Warn Truck Winch Display (Warn Industries)
- Runner-Up: Factor 55 Truck Hardware Display (Warn Industries)

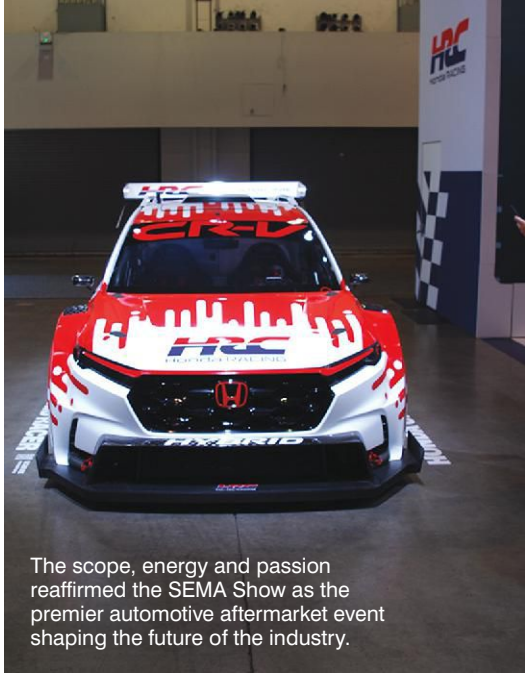
2024 SEMA REPORT SHOW



Classic Soft Trim Pittsburgh's accessory package for the 2024 Toyota RAV4 XLE Hybrid was the winner of the 2024 SEMA PRO Cup Challenge. (Photos courtesy SEMA)



Auto Trim Restyling from Ballwin, Missouri, won the PRO Cup Challenge People's Choice Award for its 2024 Toyota Land Cruiser LC250 package.



The scope, energy and passion reaffirmed the SEMA Show as the premier automotive aftermarket event shaping the future of the industry.

MOBILE ELECTRONICS PRODUCT

WINNER: USA-850 (Custom Autosound Manufacturing)

- Runner-Up: Tire & Vehicle Load Monitoring System (Cerebrum Intelligent Tire Technology)
- Runner-Up: Guardian 360 Digital Dash Cam (AutoMeter)

OFF-ROAD/4-WHEEL DRIVE PRODUCT

WINNER: ZEON XD 14-S (Warn Industries)

- Runner-Up: Paper Towel Holder(SeaSucker)
- Runner-Up: Toyota Tacoma 2005-24 Extreme Duty Tie Rod Assembly (Apex Chassis)

PACKAGING DESIGN

WINNER: Cobra TrailBlazer 500 GMRS Two-Way Radio (Cedar Electronics)

- Runner-Up: Professional Bi-Directional Diagnostic Scan Tool (GEARWRENCH)
- Runner-Up: UltraBright Switch - 9005/9006 (Type S)

PERFORMANCE-RACING PRODUCT

WINNER: JE Pistons - Patented Dual Gas Ports (Race Winning Brands)

- Runner-Up: Universal Pro-Fab Racing Steering Column (IDIDIT)
- Runner-Up: ORANGETOP H6 Lithium Auto Battery (OPTIMA Batteries)

PERFORMANCE-STREET PRODUCT

WINNER: Forge Motorsport E-DV (Milltek)

- Runner-Up: Dinan S58 PCU (Holley Performance Brands)
- Runner-Up: 2020-25 GM 3.0L Duramax LM2, LZ0 Crankcase Ventilation Oil/Water Separation Kit (Pacific Performance Engineering)

POWERSPORTS PRODUCT

WINNER: MLX-5000 Universal Motorcycle Gauge System (Dakota Digital)

- Runner-Up: Front NDPR Brake Kit for Polaris Pro R (Wilwood Disc Brakes)
- Runner-Up: Caliber Rover 360 dollies (Caliber Inc.)

STREET ROD/CUSTOM CAR PRODUCT

WINNER: Bolt-In Under-Dash Hydraulic Clutch & Pedal System C1 Corvette (Malwood USA/Under Dash Hydraulics)

- Runner-Up: Tap Shift Switch Module – Part # TSSB0317 (Holley Performance Brands)
- Runner-Up: Gen 5 Magnum Builder Series Plenum Assortment Kit (Vintage Air Inc.)

TIRE AND RELATED PRODUCT

WINNER: TrackAttack Pro (Hoosier Racing Tire)

- Runner-Up: Solus 4S HA32 (Kumho Tire USA)
- Runner-Up: JK Tyre #1 (JK Tyre)

TOOLS & EQUIPMENT PRODUCT

WINNER: GarageMax 3T Long Reach Electric Floor Jack (ROADTEK)

- Runner-Up: Slimline Billet Jack (Eddie Motorsports)
- Runner-Up: Hunter University (Hunter Engineering)

VAN/PICKUP/SPORT-UTILITY PRODUCT

WINNER: Gen 7 2017+ Ford Crew Cab, Short Bed Power Stroke Diesel XXL Fuel Tank (Titan Fuel Tanks)

- Runner-Up: Truck Bed Organization Kit (Tmat Products)
- Runner-Up: Manager Alpha (REDARC)

WHEEL AND RELATED PRODUCT

WINNER: 2024+ Mustang R1 Wheel Kit -Bright Machined Matte Black

DecoTech – 19x10.5-inch – Front & 19x11-inch - Rear (Ford Performance Parts & Accessories)
- Runner-Up: Ridler 681GGP (The Wheel Group)
- Runner-Up: MT Open 5 (Mickey Thompson Tires and Wheels)

PRO CUP CHALLENGE

Automotive restyling shop Classic Soft Trim Pittsburgh was the winner of the 2024 SEMA PRO Cup Challenge, a competition that raises awareness of the customization of new-model vehicles through dealership packages. The company won the award for its accessory package for the 2024 Toyota RAV4 XLE Hybrid. (See more on pg. 46.)

Held at the SEMA Show by the Professional Restylers Organization (PRO), a SEMA council, the competition challenges automotive restylers to create and install an accessory package for a new-model vehicle that appeals to a broad audience. The main driver of the program is to show fellow restylers, dealers and accessory manufacturers the value of designing and offering a marketable package rather than a "one-time" build.

The winning vehicle is voted on by a panel of judges based on four criteria: marketability, ease of reproduction, creativity and profitability.

"The aftermarket gives the ability for people to have options. It doesn't have to be extremely expensive, and it can be unique," said Colby McLaughlin, PRO chairman. "Classic Soft Trim created a unique package with the branding 'Northern Lights' that really carried throughout the whole build. The judges liked the overlanding aspect, but it also wasn't so hardcore for somebody who just wants a cool look on their vehicle."

The 2024 Toyota RAV4 XLE Hybrid includes:
- Alea Leather Interior-Northern Lights
- Alea Carbon Fiber Heating Pads
- Ironman 4x4 Uber Lite Rooftop Tent
- Ironman 4x4 2-inch ATS Suspension Lift Kit
- Ironman 4x4 Front Bumper Guard
- Ironman 4x4 Atlas Roof Rack Cross Bars
- Ironman 4x4 7-inch Scope Driving Lights
- Ironman 4x4 7-inch Scope Driving Light Covers (Amber)
- Mickey Thompson Baja Boss A/T Tires (4)
- Enkei Overlander Wheels (4)
- SeatbeltPlanet Reweb Seatbelts – Lime Green
- Trim Illusion Mirror & Door Handle Caps
- XK Glow LED Undercar Lights
- VOXX 10-inch Smart TV Seatback System
- LLumar Driver & Passenger Front Window Tint
- TSS Roof & Accents Wrap & Badges

"This award goes to my team, the vendors that helped us along the way and the dealership that gave us this car. It's been a blast," said Ray Bedner, Classic Soft Trim Pittsburgh owner.

Meanwhile, Auto Trim Restyling from Ballwin, Missouri, won the PRO Cup Challenge People's Choice Award, as voted on by SEMA showgoers. Auto Trim Restyling customized a 2024 Toyota Land Cruiser LC250 that showcased accessories from Avery Dennison, Method Race Wheels, Nitto, ORACLE Lighting, Rigid Industries, Westcott Designs and WheelPros.

Additional companies that competed in the PRO Cup Challenge were Auto Trim Design of Utah (2024 Hyundai Santa Fe), Automotive Concepts (2024 Chevrolet Silverado), Keystone Styling (2024 Ford F-150) and MARS of Billings (2024 Ford Bronco).

DATA EXCELLENCE

Prior to the show, SEMA announced the recipients of its 2024 SEMA Data Excellence Awards. The awards honor brands that have demonstrated exceptional commitment to data proficiency by delivering the most comprehensive product content for retailers and resellers in the SEMA Data network, the association noted.

"Achieving data excellence requires diligence and commitment," said Gigi Ho, SEMA vice president of technology, data and strategic initiatives. "We commend the manufacturers who have achieved this significant milestone that benefits the entire industry."

SEMA DATA PLATINUM BRANDS

- Advanced Clutch
- Blue Ox
- Borgeson
- BRExhaust
- Camburg
- CSF Cooling-Racing & High Performance Division
- Diode Dynamics
- Form Lighting
- IAG Performance
- ICI
- LEED Brakes
- MagnaFlow Exhaust Products

SEMA DATA GOLD BRANDS

- Bak Industries
- BD Diesel
- BedRug
- Belltech
- Bilstein
- BOLT Lock
- Boostline
- CamLocker
- Coast To Coast
- Derale
- ENEOS
- Extang
- FOX Offroad Shocks
- GATE KING
- GFB – Go Fast Bits
- HushMat
- Husky Towing
- KW
- MBRP Exhaust
- MTS Technik
- N-Fab
- Nolathane
- ORACLE Lighting
- Pacbrake
- Pareto Point Industries
- Pedal Commander
- Raxiom
- Retrax
- Roll N Lock
- Rugged Liner
- SpeedFX
- ST Suspensions
- TI Automotive
- Timbren SES
- Tonno Pro
- TrailFX
- Truck Covers USA
- Truxedo
- Undercover TS



Prior to the show, the Specialty Equipment Market Association announced the recipients of its 2024 SEMA Data Excellence Awards. (Photo courtesy SEMA)

PERFORMANCE

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Positive Reactions

Tips to get a jump on this year's drag racing market



Each year sees an influx of drivers, mechanics and fabricators, and the search for more reliable products. (Photo courtesy FTI Performance)

BY JOHN CAROLLO

A T-shirt hanging in a booth at last year's SEMA Show proclaimed "Drag Racing Isn't Dead" and the evidence seems to support it.

More participants in more series, higher car counts at well-established races and renewed fan enthusiasm across the board are driving the sport to new heights, even as events and series become more specialized. From big-money shootouts to "run-what-you-brung" novice nights, there's a chance to hustle down the track for drivers of all skill and budget levels.

Also, while moving toward the future, drag racing hasn't forgotten its past. As evidenced by Don "The Snake" Prudhomme receiving the Robert E. Petersen Lifetime Achievement Award at that same SEMA Show, interest in nostalgia racing and old-timer demo runs is high, helping older fans connect with the next generation.

Add it all up and it's a market that shop owners will want to investigate. Industry suppliers offer insights into what they might find and explain why the reactions will likely be positive.



A T-shirt hanging in a booth at last year's SEMA Show proclaims "Drag Racing Isn't Dead" and the evidence seems to support it.

MORE TO LOVE

If you haven't taken a close look at the drag racing market



Parts plus partnerships is a winning combination. (Photo courtesy FTI Performance)

over the past few years, you may not recognize what you see. There's a lot more going on today than many realize.

"Being aware of all the different types of racing that people are doing these days can be a challenge for shops," says Walt Sipp, director of service and motorsports for ProCharger Superchargers. "For instance, people are successfully running 3,000-plus hp on small radial or small slick tires—10 years ago, no one would have thought that possible. For shops that may not be up to date on modern race setups for the various classes/series, they may find their business impacted. Similarly, small tire shops sometimes overlook big tire or NHRA projects that they could likely accommodate with a little research."

Changes have alleviated many one-size-fits-all solutions of the past, says Jim Kahl, product manager for Maradyne High Performance Fans.

"Customers may assume that off-the-shelf parts or generalized setups will work for their specific application, without considering the nuances of their car's weight, aerodynamics, track conditions or engine setup," he explains. "This often leads to frustration when expected results aren't achieved."

As the sport continues to evolve and expand, Joe Pando, director of sales – motorsports for Holley Performance Brands, has seen an increase in racers who are willing to do what it takes to reach the speeds they seek.

DRAG RACING PRODUCTS

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** Champion M162K 16-Inch Engine Cooling Fan
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** High output—produces 2,170 cfm; lightweight at 5.3 pounds; low-profile 3.37-inch depth; draws 18 amps; workhorse fan that quickly and efficiently cools your engine when you need it.

DCM Manufacturing/
Maradyne High Performance Fans
Jim Kahl
Product Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** FTI Performance Two-Piece Powerglide Case
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Fits LS and LT engines; removable bellhousing; bushing-style case; SFT approved; can be utilized with aftermarket Ford and Chrysler bellhousings; economically priced; adaptable to race setups.

FTI Performance
Krista Baldwin
Director of Marketing

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** MSD Ultra 7AL Plus Ignition Control
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Offers the ability to switch the ignition output power level; particularly suited for Drag & Drive vehicles that don't require the high-output ignition draw while driving between tracks; will be available in the first quarter of 2025.

Holley Performance Brands
Joe Pando
Director of Sales – Motorsports

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** Lucas 20W-50 Semi-Synthetic Racing Oil
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Works with most race fuels and particularly well with alcohol; contains high zinc ppm numbers; additive package designed to help race motors last; fits into racers' budgets; holds up under extreme racing conditions.

Lucas Oil Products
Duane LaFleur
Business Development
High Performance

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** F4X-140-1 Supercharger with CrankDrive
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Offers performance and durability; has won multiple Pro Mod, radial tire and No Prep championships; capable of 4,500-plus hp; patented, robust gear case; superior linear power curve enables consistent A-to-B passes.

ProCharger Superchargers
Walt Sipp
Director of Service & Motorsports

NHRA READIES CELEBRATION OF 75 YEARS



Set to celebrate its landmark 75th season in 2026, NHRA officials have revealed a series of special plans to start the campaign for the historic year in the NHRA Mission Foods Drag Racing Series.

The buildup to the landmark 75th year will take place throughout the 2025 race season, with several initiatives including:

- 75th Anniversary Rings: Along with racers, NHRA also revealed special 75th anniversary replica rings that will be given to fans who renew their tickets for a 2026 race throughout the upcoming season.
- Commemorative Tickets: Each fan can purchase a special commemorative ticket for 2026 events to celebrate the landmark 75th season.
- Special 2026 Wally Trophy: The NHRA will introduce a new and unique Wally trophy that will be given to all race winners during the 2026 season.
- Wally Parks Documentary: A comprehensive and first-time full-length documentary on iconic NHRA founder Wally Parks will be released during the 2026 season.
- Top 75 Driver List: The Top 75 Drivers list will also be released in book form.
- 75th Anniversary Coffee Table Book: A high-quality hardcover coffee table book will detail the NHRA story.

"The 75th anniversary of NHRA drag racing marks a landmark moment in our sport's history and we're excited to kick off the campaign for that historic season in 2026 throughout our upcoming 2025 season," says Glen Cromwell, NHRA president. "From a special logo and 75th anniversary rings, we're thrilled to introduce several initiatives already for that celebratory season in 2026 and we will have many more to announce throughout 2025 in this exciting year-long buildup. NHRA has an incredible history—as well as a bright future—and we look forward to celebrating that with our fans, race teams, member tracks and partners."



Drag racers are willing to spend what it takes to be competitive. (Photo courtesy Holley Performance Brands)

"Don't think that racers are not willing to spend what it takes to be competitive. For shops, the sale, in many cases, can be broken down into building blocks, which makes it more budget-friendly," he notes.

Of course, more racers mean more parts, which requires shops to stay up to date not only on the newest introductions, but also the subtle differences between brands and particular offerings.

For instance, "a common misconception is that all torque converters are the same," says Krista Baldwin, director of marketing at FTI Performance. "FTI takes the time to understand the specifics of a customer's car like the engine build, rear gear and tire size. Depending on those answers, FTI can offer a custom torque converter that will work perfectly for the racer, rather than buying one off the shelf."

Duane LaFleur, business development high performance for Lucas Oil Products, has seen much the same with racing lubricants.

"There are many different options when it comes to racing oil. We need to make sure that when shops make suggestions, they take into account what that specific motor's requirements are when it comes to the proper racing oil," he says.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

If all this newness seems overwhelming, it's time to take a deep breath, relax and be thankful that is has helped recharge interest in the drag racing market.

"With street, No-Prep, big money grudge, Drag & Drive and No Time-style racing making such huge comebacks, this has brought a lot of new racers," says Sipp. "Equally important, it has brought back a lot of seasoned racers and older cars, suddenly making them competitive again. It has also reenergized audiences. This renewed interest has been great for the sport and has significantly increased the demand for drag racing aftermarket parts and the dealers who support high-performance builds."

Kahl finds it an exciting time to be part of the market, as old meets new.

"There is growing interest in diverse forms of drag racing, including vintage racing, as older vehicles attract a niche market of enthusiasts," he says. "The appeal of retro vehicles has been bolstered by their cultural and aesthetic value."

As always, the goal is to find customers looking to reach new levels.

"There have been tremendous gains in the EFI systems available, increasing the capabilities of the software while keeping it fairly user-friendly," says Pando. "This has allowed for huge increases in power and the ability to manipulate that power to keep the car hooked up."

Baldwin, a racer herself, has enjoyed watching the market evolve into a bigger community.

"Each year we see an influx of talent in drivers, mechanics and fabricators, and the

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Shane Lile's 1955 Chevy from Lile Nostalgia Gasser Racing is an example of how older race cars still have a role to play in the sport. Maradyne is sponsoring his crew for the 2025 season. (Photo courtesy Maradyne High Performance Fans)

need for more reliable products to get our customers down the track," she notes. "Listening to our customers on what they need is a key aspect of our customer service."

More participants increases the need to understand the parts you sell, says LaFleur.

"There have been many new brands of oil introduced into the racing market over the past few years. At Lucas Oil, we pride ourselves on the quality of our products. Lucas blends, bottles and packages all of our racing products in Corydon, Indiana, which gives us 100% quality control over what is produced."

BACK TO SCHOOL

Serving drag racers means having the parts they need, when they need them, LaFleur from Lucas Oil says.

"Maintain proper inventory levels," he advises. "We understand the struggles of having too much inventory in the system, but one thing we've learned over the years is if you don't have what the racer is looking for, they will go somewhere else and purchase the product."

From there it's time to build strong relationships.

"Know your customer. If you support Sportsman, No Prep, Drag & Drive or some other specific class of racing, gain as much knowledge as possible about the class, chassis setup, engine builds, and the innovative products that are tailored to that class," says Pando from Holley. "In most circumstances, data is king, so provide products that provide easy-to-understand data such as Holley EFI, MSD Power Grid and Racepak. Your knowledge will separate you from all your competitors and make you the racers' go-to for answers."



Activity in the ProCharger booth at the 2024 PRI Show proves interest remains high. (Photos courtesy ProCharger Superchargers)

Parts plus partnerships is a winning combination, says FTI's Baldwin.

"Once you know what your customers need, then know your product," she says. "FTI offers a variety of automatic transmissions and parts as well as torque converters. If a shop ever has any questions about a product, they can call or email us and we will make sure that the customer gets the best product possible for their build."

As mentioned, getting to know your racing community may mean studying up on the latest classes or series, says ProCharger's Sipp.

"Be open to the newer styles of drag racing and educate yourself on how various setups and winning combos are performing. Don't be afraid or too proud to ask questions wherever you can," Sipp recommends. "Manufacturers and customers are both solid sources of information. ProCharger, for example, has one of the best tech service departments in the industry and works closely with shops to help develop winning powertrains combos."

Boil it all down and you'll find that serious racers still need quality partners to reach their performance goals.



Serving drag racers means having the parts they need, when they need them. (Photo courtesy Lucas Oil Products)

"Shops must educate customers on the importance of tailored solutions, such as choosing the right fan for their specific application and selecting parts specifically suited for their car's intended class and performance goals," says Kahl from Maradyne. **TS**

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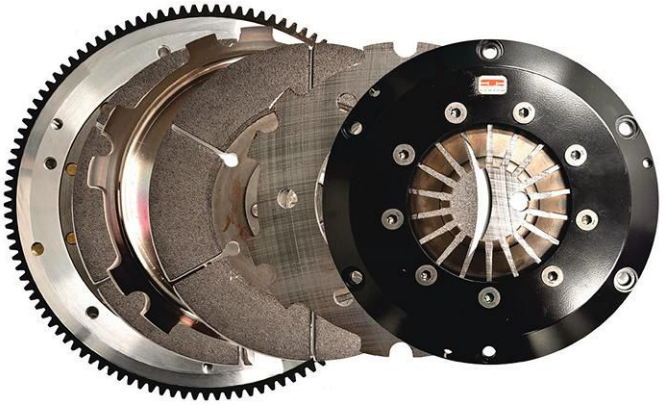
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How Luftgekühlt Lifts Up the Porsche Brand

An elevated car show experience for a brand with stories to tell.

BY TONY THACKER



Luftgekühlt, which translates from German to "air-cooled," is a Porsche-centric car show based in Los Angeles. (Photo by Larry Chen)



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.

A while back we wrote about the phenomenon of reimagined Porsches—a trend that continues to sweep the performance industry. The development of this performance niche continues to grow in no small measure due to events such as Luftgekühlt, which translates from German to "air-cooled."

Luftgekühlt was co-founded 10 years ago by ex-Porsche factory driver Patrick Long and Creative Director Jeff Zwart. Long participated in the first Red Bull Formula 1 Driver Search. In so doing, the Thousand Oaks, California, resident also caught the attention of Porsche, and for 20 years he enjoyed success with the company, from Daytona to Le Mans.

Zwart might not be a household name because he's usually behind a camera. Born in Long Beach, California, in 1955, he studied at ArtCenter College of Design and began his photography career shooting for Road & Track magazine. Eventually, he gravitated to shooting TV commercials and magazine ads, but Zwart is also an accomplished racer, having taken several Porsches to wins at the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb and elsewhere.

It might seem odd that these two racers would develop a static car show, but with a huge group of Porsche enthusiasts in Los Angeles and few local racetracks, they saw a desire from owners wanting to gather.

PORSCHES IN THE PARKING LOT

Long felt regular car shows failed to capture the attention of Porsche owners or the excitement of the marque. And standing around in a parking lot had limited appeal for families.

"Luft is about curation and storytelling," says Long. "Not only the stories of prominent cars and owners, but the story of normal people who've built a car with their parents in their garage, all the way up to some of the most celebrated and decorated



Luft 10 was held in October on the Universal Studios Backlot. (Photo courtesy lufthekuhlt.com)

championship race cars, and everything in between. We focus on different storylines and themes to highlight cars that haven't been seen repeatedly."

Long adds that the beauty of the Porsche brand is that there is so much to take in, so much history and so many amazing cars.

"So, we continue to make the show fun and interesting by focusing on the cars we want to learn about ourselves," he notes.

Held the first weekend in October, Luftgekühlt now forms the endgame of what has become a weeklong event with fans flying in from around the globe. In 2024, Luft marked its 10th anniversary, so there was a pre-party at Gunther Werks in Huntington Beach and a Rise & Shine pre-party at Race Service in Los Angeles.

Meanwhile, the Petersen Automotive Museum in LA celebrated 50 years of the 911 Turbo with a cocktail party, while Mobil 1 hosted an air-cooled caravan from Porsche Santa Clarita with an official after-Luft brunch. And, of course, there were other events going on at venues across the city for Porsche fans.

With 2024 marking the 50th anniversary of the legendary 911 Turbo, Luft 10 celebrated the milestone by showcasing a number of landmark vehicles, including a collection of original, modified and racing examples such as the 930-based Vasek Polak Racing Porsche 934, which won the 1976 Trans-Am Championship.

These made up part of the 400 vehicles on display among the movie sets within the Universal Studios Backlot—yes, really!—confirming this is an event with gravitas, attracting sponsors such as Porsche Classic, Meguiar's, Tag Heuer, Pirelli and more.

"The first time Luft went to Universal Studios it was described as the most ambitious car show in the world." says Greg Emmerson, former editor of European Car magazine and now involved in the show series. "The sequel just blew it out of the water with more movie sets, more cars and more people."

After such a high-profile event, one could easily ask, "How do they top that?" But Long

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Show organizers have worked to elevate the car show to give off more of an art show feel. (Photos by Nikos Karampotis)







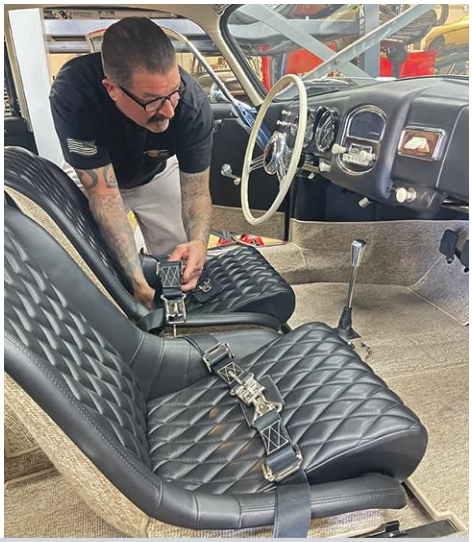
has already stated Luft (luftgekuhlt.com) has big plans.

CAR SHOW MEETS ART SHOW

David Steele, executive director of the American Hot Rod Foundation, longtime Porsche fan and recent 911 owner, says of Luft, "Ticket prices for the one-day event were $95, and if you wanted special parking at Universal that was another $35. That said, one of the things I like to see emerging in the hobby is events like Luft are being fine-tuned, becoming more specific as they chase an aesthetic that becomes more like an art installation. To the Porschephile, the cars are rolling works of art, and I love the direction events like Luft are taking."

Long confirms this opinion, noting the team views Luft as a production rather than a parking lot or racetrack full of vehicles.





Jimmy Shine shows how early Porsches offer a broad canvas for modification.



Luft is about curation and storytelling. (Photo by Larry Chen)

"That approach has kick-started a revolution in how we all look at car shows today, and I'm proud that people give us credit for having a big stake in that," he says.

Throughout its history, Luft has tried to reinvent itself each year, finding radical new locations to host the show. Interestingly, Luft 9 in 2023 was located at Mare Island, Vallejo, California, which was the oldest, (although now disused) naval base on the West Coast.

The sleek, air-cooled Porsches made an interesting juxtaposition with the imposing industrial shipyard backdrop with its brick warehouses and steel cranes. Over the course of the two-day event, more than 12,000 spectators turned out to see more than 1,000 cars.

All of this equals a lot of hot air, and the Luft organizers realized they had missed a large portion of their potential market by not connecting with the owners of newer liquid-cooled cars, SUVs and even EVs. To answer the call of all Porsche owners, they launched Air|Water during the Luft 9 weekend to celebrate 75 years of Porsche sports cars.

"The show was produced by the Luft team," Long explains, "but offered a different experience as part of a vision we have for an even larger gathering that will highlight all things Porsche, from the inception of the brand to current model lines."

The idea was and is to celebrate the Porsche brand in all its forms.

"There is a wider cast of enthusiasts out there, and there are things we can do differently to open our doors to them," Long says. "In my mind, the future of Air|Water is to be the largest single-brand car show in the world and, leaving modesty aside, I believe we will be there within three years."

In pursuit of that vision, last year kicked off with the first standalone Air|Water event in April. Held at the expansive Orange County Fairgrounds in Southern California, it was proof of concept.

With more cars on display and people coming through the turnstiles, the new Air|Water franchise seems here to stay as a complement to the annual air-cooled-centric Luftgekühlt show.

And, as a result of all this activity, the Luft brand has now become so well established that it has spawned a line of understated apparel, related artwork, accessories and even a $140 coffee table book, now in its second edition.

AFTERMARKET OPENINGS

What might all this mean for the performance aftermarket? Well, as niches go, the Porsche market offers a loyal following that, in many cases, can afford a Porsche as one of a fleet—large or small—that can be raced or modified with any number of accessories.

The days when Porsche owners kept their cars stock are long gone, and a Porsche is as ripe as a Deuce Ford or a '55 Chevy for personalization.

From aluminum fuel caps to carbon fiber body panels, aluminum pedal sets to custom instrument faces, there is a strong aftermarket out there.

We spoke to Greg Bartley, operations manager at Makellos Classics in San Diego. The Porsche restoration and modification specialist had three cars in the Meguiar's display last year at Luft 10.

"Makellos Classics had the opportunity to showcase three of our latest build projects with Meguiar's. It was a wonderful opportunity because Luftgekühlt is an amazing event, bringing builders and enthusiasts together to celebrate our beloved air-cooled Porsches. It presented us with a great opportunity to showcase our latest projects to a very knowledgeable audience," he reports.

We also spoke to Jimmy Shine from Shine Speed Shop in Orange, California, who was just finishing a stunning 1953 Pre-A 356 coupe and says, "Early Porsches are similar to early Fords in that they offer a broad canvas for modification—everything from decklid louvers and custom interiors to one-off wheels."

The AHRF's Steele sums up Porsche-mania by noting, "Porsche has always been a boutique company. In the 1970s, if you wanted to build a 911, you could buy a body shell (body in white) to build a race car. Porsche was a small, nimble company that could move quickly to develop a car. Yes, they're all Porsches but they can be individualized to suit a myriad of styles and needs—they're the German equivalent of the '32 Ford and, as a hot rodder, that's why I find them exciting." **TS**



New motor oil specification ILSAC GF-7 for gasoline-powered cars and trucks will be launched in March 2025. (Photo by Nathan Van Egmond on Unsplash)

Q A New Gasoline Motor Oil Standards

The American Petroleum Institute played a central role in developing the new ILSAC GF-7 category.

A new motor oil specification for gasoline-powered cars and trucks will be launched in March 2025. The ILSAC GF-7 specification represents a significant advancement in meeting modern engine performance demands and stringent EPA fuel economy and emissions standards, officials say.

The American Petroleum Institute (API) plays a central role in developing the new ILSAC GF-7 motor oil category by collaborating with vehicle manufacturers, oil marketers, additive companies and other industry stakeholders to establish rigorous standards that meet evolving engine performance demands and regulatory requirements. API will license oils that meet the new category specifications.

The upcoming engine oil specification represents a significant advancement in meeting modern engine performance demands and stringent EPA fuel economy and emissions standards. This Q&A from API explores the critical objectives of GF-7, the technical improvements it brings and what consumers and the automotive industry can expect as this new standard approaches its 2025 implementation date.

WHAT IS ILSAC GF-7 AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

ILSAC GF-7 is the next generation of gasoline engine oil standards developed by the American Petroleum Institute in collaboration with industry stakeholders. It is designed to meet stringent fuel economy and emissions reduction targets, particularly for model year 2026 vehicles.

This specification focuses on improving engine protection, efficiency and performance, responding to both technological advances in engines and stricter regulatory demands from the EPA, which aims for a 28% reduction in CO2 emissions by 2026.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE ILSAC GF-7 SPECIFICATION?

The primary goal of the GF-7 specification is to support improved engine performance while meeting the EPA's emission reduction goals. These objectives include:

- Fresh Oil Mini-Rotary Viscometer (MRV) viscosity is set at 40,000 cP to enhance oil flow under cold-start conditions.
- Improved deposit control with enhanced Sequence IIIH testing.
- Better fuel economy indices using Sequence VIE/VIF (Fuel Economy Indices) to achieve better fuel efficiency.
- Low-speed pre-ignition (LSPI) testing through the introduction of the Aged Oil Sequence IX, designed to prevent damaging LSPI events in modern engines throughout the entire drain interval.
- Chain wear reduction through Sequence X.
- A maximum sulfated ash limit of 0.9% to protect gasoline particulate filters (GPF) and reduce harmful emissions.
- A new oil gelation test and expanded seal compatibility testing to ensure better overall oil performance and protection.

WILL GF-7 HAVE A AND B CATEGORIES?

Yes. The A and B categories differentiate between performance levels or oil grades for specific engine needs.

Licensed oils that meet the ILSAC GF-7A standard may be used where oils meeting GF-6A or earlier gasoline engine oil standards have been recommended. Oils that meet ILSAC GF-7B standard may be used



The specification represents a significant advancement in meeting modern engine performance demands and stringent EPA fuel economy and emissions standards. (Photo by Tim Mossholder on Unsplash)

where oils that meet GF-6B standards for SAE 0W-16 oils have been recommended.

WHAT IS LSPI AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT IN THE GF-7 SPECIFICATION?

Low-speed pre-ignition (LSPI) is a critical issue in modern turbocharged, direct-injection engines, which are becoming increasingly common due to their improved fuel efficiency. LSPI is an abnormal combustion event that can cause severe engine damage, particularly in downsized, high-pressure turbocharged engines.

The introduction of the Aged Oil Sequence IX testing in GF-7 addresses this issue, ensuring the new oils provide better protection against LSPI. This is crucial for preventing engine knock, enhancing engine longevity and improving reliability, especially in newer vehicle models where LSPI is a significant concern.

WHEN WILL THE ILSAC GF-7 SPECIFICATION BE IMPLEMENTED?

The first license date for ILSAC GF-7 is scheduled for the end of the first quarter of 2025, specifically by March 31. This timing aligns with the release of model year 2026 vehicles, which will be required to meet more stringent fuel economy and emissions standards set by the EPA.

HOW IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF GF-7 PROGRESSING?

The American Chemistry Council (ACC) completed the Technology Demonstration Period (Tech Demo) last March, marking the start of the API's mandatory one-year waiting period. This period will help finalize the GF-7 specification and ensure its readiness for commercial use by the 2025 deadline.

This process includes extensive testing



Q A

The primary benefits of enhanced fuel economy, LSPI prevention and chain wear protection are significant for modern engines. (Photo by Gab on Unsplash)

Below: GF-7 oils are expected to be backward-compatible with most older vehicles that require ILSAC-certified oils. (Photo by Julian Hochgesang on Unsplash)



and collaboration across the industry to address emerging challenges and fine-tune the standard.

WHAT CHALLENGES IS THE INDUSTRY FACING WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GF-7?

ILSAC has identified several challenges requiring industry support:

- Replacement of aging test engines used in the Sequence V and VI tests, as these engines will be in short supply by 2028.
- Further review and evaluation of Sequence IX and X engines, particularly concerning LSPI testing and chain wear reduction.
- Development of ILSAC GF-8 tests concurrently with GF-7 to ensure the industry keeps pace with technological and regulatory advancements.

HOW WILL GF-7 IMPACT ENGINE LONGEVITY AND PROTECTION?

One of the key improvements in GF-7 is its focus on preventing LSPI and chain wear, two critical factors in extending engine life. The new tests, such as the Aged Oil Sequence IX for LSPI and further chain wear reduction in the Sequence, are designed to ensure that GF-7 oils provide superior protection, reduce premature engine wear and prevent costly repairs.

These improvements will be particularly beneficial in newer, more advanced engines where maintaining long-term reliability and performance is essential.

WILL ILSAC GF-7 OILS BE BACKWARD-COMPATIBLE WITH OLDER ENGINES?

Yes. GF-7 oils are expected to be backward-compatible with most



Photo courtesy API



For the automotive industry, GF-7 aligns engine oil standards with new regulatory requirements, supporting the development of more efficient and environmentally friendly vehicles.(Photo by C Joyful on Unsplash)

older vehicles that require ILSAC-certified oils. However, their primary benefits—enhanced fuel economy, LSPI prevention and chain wear protection—are significant for modern engines.

Vehicle owners and shop technicians should always refer to their manufacturer's recommendations when selecting engine oil.

HOW DO ULTRA-LOW-VISCOSITY GRADES FIT INTO THE GF-7 STANDARD?

API has recently adopted ultra-low viscosity grades, such as SAE 0W-8 and SAE 0W-12, into Service Category SP. These grades are becoming increasingly important as they offer lower friction and better fuel economy, which aligns with the goals of GF-7.

Some global automakers already recommend these viscosity grades and the GF-7 standard will make it easier for these automakers to recommend API-licensed oils, especially in North America.

HOW DOES GF-7 CONTRIBUTE TO GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS?

GF-7 is part of the automotive industry's broader effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve vehicle efficiency. By enhancing fuel economy and reducing harmful emissions like CO2 and sulfated ash, GF-7 supports global climate initiatives and regulatory standards to mitigate climate change.

This standard is aligned with the EPA's emissions reduction goals, but it will also impact other markets where environmental regulations are becoming more stringent.

HOW WILL GF-7 AFFECT CONSUMERS AND THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY?

Consumers will benefit from higher-quality engine oils with improved fuel efficiency, protection and reduced emissions. For the automotive industry, GF-7 aligns engine oil standards with new regulatory requirements, supporting the development of more efficient and environmentally friendly vehicles.

In addition, the backward compatibility of these oils with older engines ensures that a wide range of vehicles can benefit from the advancements made in GF-7.

WHAT FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS CAN WE EXPECT AFTER GF-7?

ILSAC plans to develop GF-8 to address future engine technologies and regulatory requirements. This parallel development approach ensures that new oil standards will continue evolving in sync with advancements in engine design and environmental goals, preventing gaps in the industry's ability to meet future demands.

More information on the API engine oil Engine Oil Licensing & Certification System (EOLCS) and GF-7 can be found by visiting api.org/products-and-services/engine-oil. **TS**

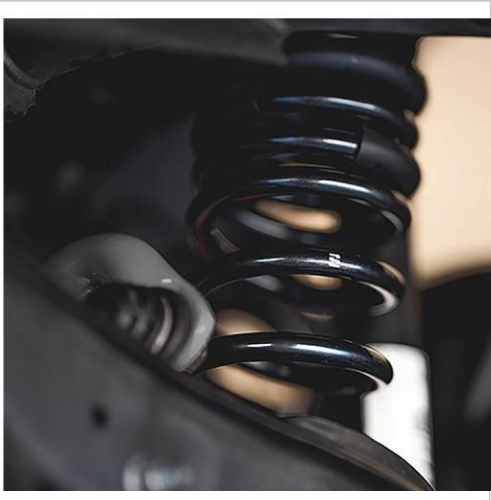
PERFORMANCE **PRODUCTS**

Stock Your Shelves With These Go-Fast Components



2024-25 Mustang Supercharger Kit

ProCharger, Lenexa, Kansas, presents its 2024-25 Mustang Supercharger Kit, shown to add up to 325 hp on 93-octane fuel. Quick and easy to install with common tools, the turnkey systems are available with tuning and retain the dual throttle bodies. Features include billet aluminum brackets, pulleys and head units, and the pleasing supercharger sound.



Factory Replacement Springs

Eibach, Corona, California, presents its Eibach Replacement Line (ERL) of factory replacement springs. Designed to replace broken, worn or damaged suspension springs, applications are available for hundreds of common passenger vehicle applications. The springs are built to OE guidelines with zinc phosphating as pre-treatment and to prevent corrosion infiltration, and undergo thorough static and dynamic durability testing.

Acura/Honda Clutch Kits



Advanced Clutch Technology (ACT), Lancaster, California, offers performance Street and Race Clutch Kits designed specifically for Acura TL Type S and Honda Accord J35 applications. The new kits deliver extended durability, improved torque capacity and enhanced drivability, and the heavy-duty pressure plate incorporates hardened diaphragm fingers for decreased wear. Street kits provide a 34% increase in torque capacity over stock and race kits deliver a 72% increase in torque capacity over stock.



Subaru WRX Cat-Back Exhaust

BORLA Performance Industries, Johnson City, Tennessee, presents its Cat-Back Exhaust System for 2022-24 Subaru WRX models that improves horsepower and torque. System 140931 features the aggressive ATAK sound without any drone or resonance inside the vehicle and an Extended Polyphonic Harmonizer muffler core design. The system is made from T-304 stainless steel with a brushed tip and features all-welded construction for durability and long life.

Full Synthetic Passenger Car Motor Oil



Hot Shot's Secret, Mt. Gilead, Ohio, presents Red Diamond Ultimate fully synthetic passenger car motor oil, now available in a convenient 5-quart easy-pour container. The new passenger car motor oil was introduced last year in 5-, 55- and 330-gallon sizes in three viscosity weights—0W-20, 5W-20 and 5W-30. The new 5-quart packaging is available for all three previously introduced viscosity weights and features an easy-grip handle for a mess-free pour. Red Diamond motor oil fully meets the API SP and General Motors dexos1 Gen 3 specification.

Chevy V-8 Engine Bearings



MAHLE Aftermarket, Farmington Hills, Michigan, presents its MAHLE CLEVITE F-Series Engine Bearings. Designed for reliability in performance engines with high load carrying and thrust load capacities, the bearings offer improved seizure resistance with no additional thickness. The CLEVITE F-series engine bearing is a TriMetal lead-tin-indium-alumina electroplated overlay applied over a cast bronze lead substrate capable of carrying loads up to 12,000 psi. The line is available for popular Chevrolet V-8 engines.



Mustang Cooling System

Vintage Air, San Antonio, presents its Gen 5 SureFit Kit for 1967-68 and 1969-70 Ford Mustang applications. Engineered to cool vehicles faster, the new kit utilizes the electronically controlled Gen 5 Magnum Max module that features an OEM-quality injection-molded case with separate high-capacity A/C and heater coils, blend air doors with rubber over-molded seals, block-type expansion valve and an increased-capacity blower motor. Patented cable converters convert the original control panel to electronic operation.

HD Truck Big Brake Kits

Wilwood, Camarillo, California, presents its TX6-DM Direct-Mount Caliper Big Brake Kits. Designed to fit a variety of Ford, Ram and GM HD trucks using 20-inch wheels or larger, the kits include Truck Xtreme six-piston calipers with 15-inch premium iron alloy rotors for more consistent braking and improved pedal feel. Drawing from motorsports and military expertise, the kits provide increased thermal capacity to inspire confidence in high-demand applications, including towing, hauling and commercial use.





4WD Wilderness Accessibility Technology

KXI Wildertec, West Kelowna, British Columbia, introduces Wilderness Accessibility Technology for use with four-wheel drive vehicles. Designed to increase capability while minimizing environmental impact, the system transforms a standard 4WD vehicle into an all-terrain workhorse. The setup is a new type of truck chassis system composed of engineered suspension technology and advanced computer-controlled hydro-pneumatic components. Custom drive modes allow the vehicle to maintain stability and control at any speed.



Performance Muffler

Pypes Exhaust, Hatfield, Pennsylvania, presents the Pypes MVR204S M-80 Muffler. The top-of-the-line performance upgrade is designed for serious enthusiasts with a straight-through design offering a 95% flow rate. The M80 can be used as a replacement for standard offset/offset 14-inch mufflers, offering broad compatibility. Inlet and outlet are both 2.5 inches, and the mufflers are built to last using a robust welded case construction.

GM Upper A-Arms



BMR Suspension, Lakeland, Florida, presents Upper A-Arms that improve handling and front-end stability, now available for 1970-81 GM F-body and 1975-79 GM X-body applications. Fabricated from heavy-duty 1.25-inch, 0.095-inch wall DOM tubing with laser-cut, CNC-formed plate steel braces for extra strength, the nonadjustable upper A-arms are fitted with heavy-duty ball joints and greaseable Delrin bushings to add a solid, more responsive feel over stock. The bushings are internally fluted, which allows grease to evenly coat the inner sleeve.



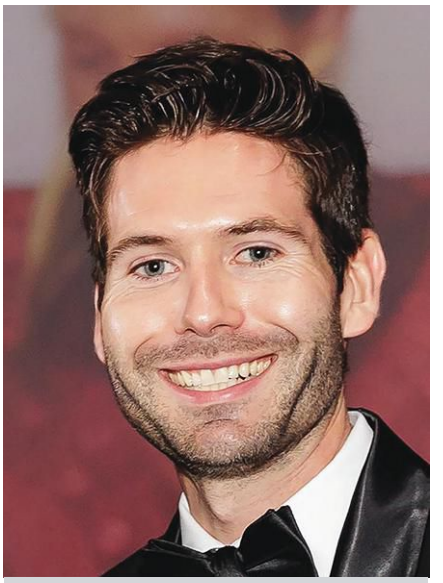
Mustang Automatic Overdrive Shift Linkage Kit

California Pony Cars, Ontario, California, offers a 1964-73 Ford Mustang Automatic Overdrive Shifter Linkage Kit. Used when installing a 1984-93 automatic overdrive transmission into an early-model 1964-73 Mustang, the kit retains the factory floor shifter lever. The "shaft lever arm" assembly supplied in the kit must be replaced in order to ensure correct spacing and ratio with the early model stock shifter. The system is made in the USA and retains the interior's classic look. ***TS***

Michael Bodell, COO of the Petersen Automotive Museum

Pennzoil's Long May We Drive partner marks 30 years of celebrating automotive heritage.

ARTICLE & PHOTOS PROVIDED BY PENNZOIL & THE PETERSEN AUTOMOTIVE MUSEUM



Michael Bodell, COO of the Petersen Automotive Museum.



The Petersen has a rich history of showcasing Ferrari heritage.

As part of its Long May We Drive campaign, automotive lubricants company Pennzoil has been conducting interviews with racers, influencers and other prominent figures in the automotive aftermarket.

Next on the list is Michael Bodell, COO of the Petersen Automotive Museum. For more than 30 years, the Petersen has been at the forefront of preserving automotive history, igniting passion in car enthusiasts of all ages through key exhibits and unique auto-related events.

Together, Pennzoil and the Petersen Automotive Museum look to celebrate the spirit of driving and ensure the legacy of automotive culture thrives for generations to come.

Q A THIS YEAR MARKS THE PETERSEN AUTOMOTIVE MUSEUM'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY, AND YOU RECENTLY HOSTED A SPECIAL GALA TO CELEBRATE. HOW HAS THE MUSEUM EVOLVED, AND WHAT DID ATTENDEES EXPERIENCE AT THE GALA?

BODELL: When the museum first opened, it focused primarily on American automotive history, serving as more of a local attraction. Since our renovation in 2015, we've expanded our focus globally, curating a collection that represents car culture worldwide.

Our exhibits now span many eras and themes, appealing to a much more diverse and international audience. We celebrated this evolution with our 30th-anniversary gala, our largest fundraising event of the year. We honored Bruce Meyer, our founding chairman and a key figure in the museum's growth.

The funds raised will support future exhibits and educational programs, helping us to continue expanding. This year's gala sold out within a week of being announced, showing just how much enthusiasm there is for the museum's future.

The support ensures we can continue preserving automotive history and inspiring future generations while showcasing the museum's role in shaping the global automotive narrative.

Q A THE PETERSEN AUTOMOTIVE MUSEUM HAS A RICH HISTORY OF SHOWCASING FERRARI HERITAGE. CAN YOU SPEAK TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FERRARI IN THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTION AND ANY FERRARI-RELATED ACTIVATIONS?

BODELL: One of the big exhibits we opened for our 30th anniversary is a celebration of significant Ferraris from each decade, housed in our Legends Gallery. One of the highlights is the first Ferrari ever built, the 1947 Ferrari 125 S, chassis number 01C. This car is displayed alongside other iconic Ferraris, such as the 1952 Ferrari 212 Barchetta from the Ford family collection, a Ferrari Testarossa from the '80s and the Ferrari Enzo.

Ferrari excites people of all ages, including collectors drawn to the brand's racing pedigree and new enthusiasts thrilled by its speed and design.

Ferrari's presence at the museum connects deeply with fans, thanks to its storied racing history and modern success, including the rise in popularity due to the "Formula 1: Drive to Survive" series. We're also seeing a younger demographic engaging with Ferrari, and this passion is reflected in the renewed interest in motorsports and the brand's exciting new innovations in hypercars and supercars.

The brand embodies the racing spirit that Ferrari founder Enzo Ferrari always championed. As we continue celebrating Ferrari's legacy, we're also looking ahead, ensuring that seasoned collectors and new fans stay engaged with this iconic brand.

Q A PENNZOIL HAS PLAYED A VITAL ROLE IN SUPPORTING EVENTS SUCH AS PETERSEN DIGITAL CAR WEEK, FERRARI CRUISE-INS AND THE ULTIMATE SUPERCAR SHOWDOWN SERIES ON YOUTUBE. HOW HAS THE COMPANY'S INVOLVEMENT CONTRIBUTED TO THE SUCCESS OF THESE INITIATIVES AND THE MUSEUM'S BROADER MISSION?

BODELL: The museum's mission is to preserve and present the history of the automobile, and our collaborations with Pennzoil have allowed us to deliver on that mission. Initiatives such as the Ultimate Supercar Showdown and Digital Car Week extend our audience beyond the museum walls, showing cars in motion and telling the stories behind them.

They also let us connect with new and established car enthusiasts, sharing their passion while keeping these vehicles alive for future generations.

Q A HOW DOES PENNZOIL'S "LONG MAY WE DRIVE" CAMPAIGN ALIGN WITH THE MUSEUM'S MISSION?

BODELL: The campaign resonates deeply with our mission. We see cars not only as objects but as expressions of freedom and personal stories. Our collaboration lets us emphasize the passion for driving, whether it's preserving classic cars or celebrating future classics. The campaign also allows us to share untold stories of vehicles from the 1980s, '90s and early 2000s—cars becoming the new wave of collector's items.

Q A CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE SPECIAL EXHIBITS CURRENTLY ON DISPLAY FOR THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION?

BODELL: We've brought out some of the "crown jewels" from our vault, giving visitors the rare opportunity to view pieces of our collection that are usually preserved behind closed doors.



The Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles features exhibits spanning many eras and themes, appealing to a diverse, international audience of car lovers.

For technology enthusiasts, we have an interactive Waymo exhibit that explores the history and development of autonomous vehicles. We're also showcasing hypercars—vehicles valued at more than $1 million, more than 1,000 hp and fewer than 1,000 made—plus an exhibit featuring concept cars from the 1990s and 2000s.

Finally, we have a special BMW and Clarios exhibit that focuses on alternative propulsion, highlighting the future of automotive technology. We're also looking forward to our ongoing collaboration with Pennzoil, which will enable us to continue telling stories through various exhibits and events in the future.

This article originally appeared online at theshopmag.com. Visit today and sign up for the free e-newsletter. ***TS***

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The right products allow commercial customers to utilize vehicles to their maximum potential. (Photo courtesy Worksport Ltd.)

We Can Work It Out

Shops get down to business upfitting professional vehicles & fleets.

BY JEF WHITE

While shop teams head to the garage each day to work on vehicles, independent professionals in the community are counting on their vehicles to allow them to do their work. Why not bring the two together by offering customization services for businesses and fleets?

Taking on professional upfitting jobs means offering innovative, reliable, repeatable solutions for company vehicles that are always on the go. Toolboxes, racks and





Having tools and materials organized helps jobs get done more efficiently. (Photos courtesy Dee Zee)



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■ **HOT PRODUCTS:**
Truck Toolboxes
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Many different varieties of applications, shapes, sizes and colors for different job uses; constructed using years of experience and quality control to stand up to the hard use they're designed for.

Dee Zee
Dallas Donovan
Account Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCT:**
Compustar PRO T13 Remote Start & Security System with DroneMobile LTE
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Offers 24/7 vehicle security monitoring with theft alerts sent to your remote fob and your smartphone via the DroneMobile app; in the event of a stolen asset, GPS tracking for swift vehicle recovery.

Firstech LLC
Justin Lee
Marketing Director

■ **HOT PRODUCT:**
Service Body Contractor Rack
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Versatile, durable solution for transporting tools and materials; adjustable to fit various service body bed and cab heights; supports up to 1,000 pounds; built-in rear grab handle; removable rear crossbar; anchor points integrated into each corner post.

TrailFX
Sara Ford
Marketing Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCT:**
AL4 Full Bed Access Tonneau Cover
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
High-quality, dent-resistant tonneau cover offering full bed access; dual side seals to maximize weather resistance.

Worksport Ltd.
Steve Raivio
Director of Sales

WORK TRUCK WEEK 2025 UNVEILS EDUCATION PROGRAM



Shops and technicians can explore current trends, delve into technical details and learn new strategies for success through the Work Truck Week 2025 education program.

Part of the Work Truck Week 2025 trade show put on by the Work Truck Association (NTEA), set for March 4-7 in Indianapolis, professional learning opportunities include new special sessions on talent development, commercial vehicle data, and selling and servicing the tech-driven truck, as well as a full slate of shorter breakout sessions.

"Education is one of the core pillars of Work Truck Week," says Jennifer Mitchell, NTEA senior director of content development. "We have sessions for fleet managers, vehicle upfitters, truck dealers and other industry professionals with a wide range of experience, from those just starting out to seasoned veterans."

The 2025 education program provides insights and strategies to help commercial vehicle industry professionals plan for the future and enhance operational growth, according to officials. Key topics include market data and industry trends, vehicle engineering and compliance, government regulations, workforce development, fleet management, and vehicle propulsion and sustainability solutions.

Vehicle manufacturers will also give their annual chassis updates.

Find more information online at worktruckweek.com/education.

Shops can explore current trends, delve into technical details and learn new strategies for success through the Work Truck Week 2025 education program. (Photos courtesy NTEA)



storage systems can be paired with steps, lights, electronics and a wide array of related components that improve safety and efficiency.

Industry insiders explain what it takes to connect with commercial vehicle customers, what they need from a partner and ways to overdeliver for a client base looking to get back to business in hurry.

MORE THAN A TRUCK OR VAN

When it comes to the vehicles professionals need to help them make a living, it's important to remember that each user has unique requirements.

"Work truck and van customers often need vehicles that are not just transport tools, but integral parts of their operations," says Sara Ford, marketing manager for TrailFX. "As such, utility and customization are key features they look for when choosing a vehicle or accessory like a contractor rack. They often look for accessories that adapt to different vehicle configurations, making it more flexible for businesses that use multiple trucks or frequently change vehicle types."

Continued on page 39

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Security systems can tie together a complete commercial upfitting package. (Photos courtesy Firstech)

MERCEDES-BENZ VANS USA NAMES FIRST ESPRINTER BRAND AMBASSADOR

Mercedes-Benz Vans USA has partnered with Goodr, an innovative organization dedicated to waste management and hunger solutions, and appointed the company's founder and CEO, Jasmine Crowe-Houston, as the first brand ambassador for the all-new eSprinter van.

Goodr was presented with the first refrigerated eSprinter cargo van by Mercedes-Benz in North America, with a custom upfit by Thermo King of Charleston refrigeration.

Founded in 2017, Goodr leverages innovative technology and a massive partner network to rescue surplus food and deliver quality meals to underserved communities. Last year, through its Surplus Food Recovery solution, Goodr diverted more than 1.3 million pounds of waste from landfills and prevented 714,759 pounds of carbon emissions, the companies noted in a press release.

"We are thrilled to collaborate with Mercedes-Benz Vans USA to showcase the eSprinter, propel electric mobility and continue to bring much-needed food supply to those in need," says Crowe-Houston. "Addressing food waste and hunger in our country is critical and we're taking a unique approach to expanding our impact by working with Mercedes-Benz. This vehicle aligns perfectly with our mission to serve communities efficiently and sustainably."

Aiming for an EV share of up to 20% by 2026 and more than 50% by 2030, Mercedes-Benz Vans is targeting a significant reduction in CO_2 emissions across the entire lifecycle in new vehicles.

"The eSprinter's versatility, combined with Goodr's sustainable delivery solutions, has proven to be an ideal partnership for advancing sustainable urban logistics," says Iain Forsyth, director of product management and marketing, Mercedes-Benz Vans USA. "Our collaboration with Goodr and Thermo King reinforces our commitment to sustainability and underscores our dedication to support small businesses with efficient, sustainable last-mile delivery solutions."





Mercedes-Benz Vans USA has partnered with Goodr and appointed the company's founder and CEO, Jasmine Crowe-Houston, as its first brand ambassador for the all-new eSprinter van. (Photos courtesy Mercedes-Benz Vans USA)



Offering a range of customization options will appeal to a broad spectrum of businesses. (Photo courtesy TrailFX)

Shops should adopt a mindset of service and versatility to create strong relationships.

"All work customers require their vehicles for work; however, they need versatility based on specific jobs," says Steve Raivio, director of sales for Worksport Ltd. "Servicing a work truck/van customer requires a lifestyle philosophy designed to fill specialized needs for each specific customer, ensuring that each driver can utilize their vehicle to its maximum potential."

One solution all professional customers seek is organization.

"Having tools and materials organized helps jobs get done more efficiently, increasing productivity," says Dallas Donovan, Dee Zee account manager. "We offer five-drawer toolboxes for smaller tools, nuts and bolts all the way to 96-inch topsider toolboxes for flatbeds."

Another is security.

"They all carry valuable possessions in their work truck/van," notes Justin Lee, marketing director for Firstech LLC.

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

Mobile professionals are like other groups of users in that they are always happy to share their opinions with peers. Shops can take advantage by doing solid work for a fair price to build their reputations.

"Once shops establish themselves as specialists in the work truck and van space, they



FORD UPDATES TRANSIT VAN MODELS

Ford's Transit and E-Transit gas and electric vans are getting new options for 2025 with factory-integrated vocational upfit packages and interior accessory kits.

Four available factory-installed trade packages with components by Ranger Design will be offered with shelves, drawers and work surfaces tailored to the specific needs of four leading industries, according to the company:

- Electrician trade package that includes drawers and bins to store parts and reels to hang bundles of wiring – MSRP starting at $4,370
- HVAC trade package featuring large shelves and storage bins, specialized refrigerant storage racks and restraints – MSRP starting at $4,440
- General Contractor package with a mix of multipurpose shelves, bins, drawers and hooks – MSRP starting at $2,900
- Foldable Shelving Package with deep, large-capacity folding shelves intended for delivery services – MSRP starting at $3,300

Additional new options for the vans include a wall liner kit (ceiling, wall, door) at regular or long lengths that also features lighting and wheel well covers to help aid in installation of upfit equipment, and a large grab handle kit (two D-pillars) to support easier accessibility.

Packages and options that have changed for the Transit cargo van include an optional mobile power cord that now includes a fast charger adapter, Smart Acceleration Truncation offered as a standalone option for fleet customers looking to limit acceleration based on an auto-calculation of payload, and 180-degree opening for 50/50 hinged rear doors standard on all low/medium-roof cargo vans and all passenger vans.



Ford's Transit and E-Transit gas and electric vans are getting new options for 2025 with factory-integrated vocational upfit packages and interior accessory kits. (Photo courtesy Ford)

can benefit from referrals within the industries they serve," notes Ford. "Contractors, small business owners or fleet managers are often well-connected with others in similar fields and word-of-mouth recommendations can drive new customers to the shop."

Donovan agrees.

"A good product being installed along with a smooth process can lead to more fleet business from positive word of mouth from the initial customers' experience," he says.

Protecting their investments is a smart next step.

"Security solutions like Compustar are a great way to raise the average selling price for work truck/van customers," says Lee. "These customers are usually adding valuable





Toolboxes, racks and storage systems can be paired with steps, lights, electronics and a wide array of related components that improve safety and efficiency.

customizations to their vehicles and a security system is the perfect add-on to protect those investments. Compustar offers a wide range of security solutions, ranging from straightforward digital alarms to comprehensive tracking and monitoring systems."

Performing as much of the work in-house as possible is a good way to ensure things are done right the first time.

"Doing the installation ensures the shop has full product knowledge as well as knowing the customer will be satisfied with properly installed products," says Raivio.

CAST A WIDE NET

Carrying adaptable parts lines is a good way for shops to get their foot in the door with various local contractors and fleet operators.

"Add products that offer more usage or functionality to the vehicle, such as the AL3 full bed access tonneau cover or Solis/COR systems that turn the truck into a mobile nanogrid," says Worksport's Raivio. "It is essential to offer lifestyle and versatility based on individual customer requirements."

For professional customers, durability is key.

"Focus on quality products that can stand up to the jobs at hand," suggests Donovan. "A good example of Dee Zee products is our truck toolboxes, fuel transfer tanks and rough side steps."

While specialized knowledge is important to professional customers, so too is product diversity.

"Offering a range of customization options will appeal to a broad spectrum of businesses," says Ford from TrailFX. "Providing flexible packages or bundling services—such as offering discounted installation with the purchase of certain products—can make these upgrades more appealing and encourage return business."

Finally, strong relationships give shops the confidence to serve a wide range of customers.

"As a security company, we believe that security starts with trust. Establish a trust and friendship with the business owner and/or the operator," says Lee from Firstech. "Ask questions about the business—not just what they are interested in purchasing from your shop. You may find there are ways that your businesses can help each other grow in the marketplace." ***TS***



Taking on professional upfitting jobs means offering innovative, reliable, repeatable solutions for company vehicles that are always on the go.

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Search Applications & Learn More by Scanning The QR Code
SuperSpringsInternational.com



Always seek out installation training to ensure jobs are performed flawlessly. (Photos courtesy 3M)

The Benefits of Automotive Films

Window tint & PPF have a lot to offer drivers & shops.

BY JEF WHITE

Automotive film is a fast-growing segment of the specialty aftermarket, mostly because quality products perform as advertised and consumers see them as an investment to protect prized vehicles from on-road and environmental hazards.

Whether it's window tint or paint protection film, it's likely your shop sees customers every day who would be interested in added protection and comfort.

While seamless applications require training and practice, spending the time and resources to do it right the first time is always worth it. If you're looking for an introduction into the world of automotive films, top suppliers offer insights about the market and all it has to offer.

UNDERSTANDING DEMAND

Quality automotive films fit all types of vehicles and appeal to all types of drivers. However, shops will want to dive deep into their main audience to determine the prime product offerings that will work for them.

"To ensure the long-term success of your business, conduct thorough research on your local market," advises Alex Sikorski, CEO of Premium Tech Coating Inc. "Analyze your competition, identify the types of films that are most popular in your area and choose products that align with your target demographics. Offering the right products to your customers is essential for achieving sustained growth and success."

Businesses that have not traditionally provided film services may find they have interested customers as part of their existing client base.

"For a shop specializing in automotive body repair, custom builds, wraps, etc., you already have your clientele and you've got

AUTO FILM PRODUCTS

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** 3M Protection Wrap Film Color Series
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Dry PPF installation with tried-and-true 3M Controltac and Comply technology; offered in 26 colors inspired by luxury OEMs and in gloss, matte and special effect varieties; color is impregnated throughout the entire depth of the film.

3M
Marc Bagley
Segment Marketing Manager
Personal Auto

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** Avery Dennison Encore Automotive Window Film Series
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Offers ease of use for improved installation speeds while also maintaining and exceeding quality standards; enhanced clarity and shrinkability, requiring less soap or slip solution for activation; infrared rejection for driving comfort and protection.

House of Tint, Winslow, Arizona
Harold Nimtz
Owner/Operator
On behalf of Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions

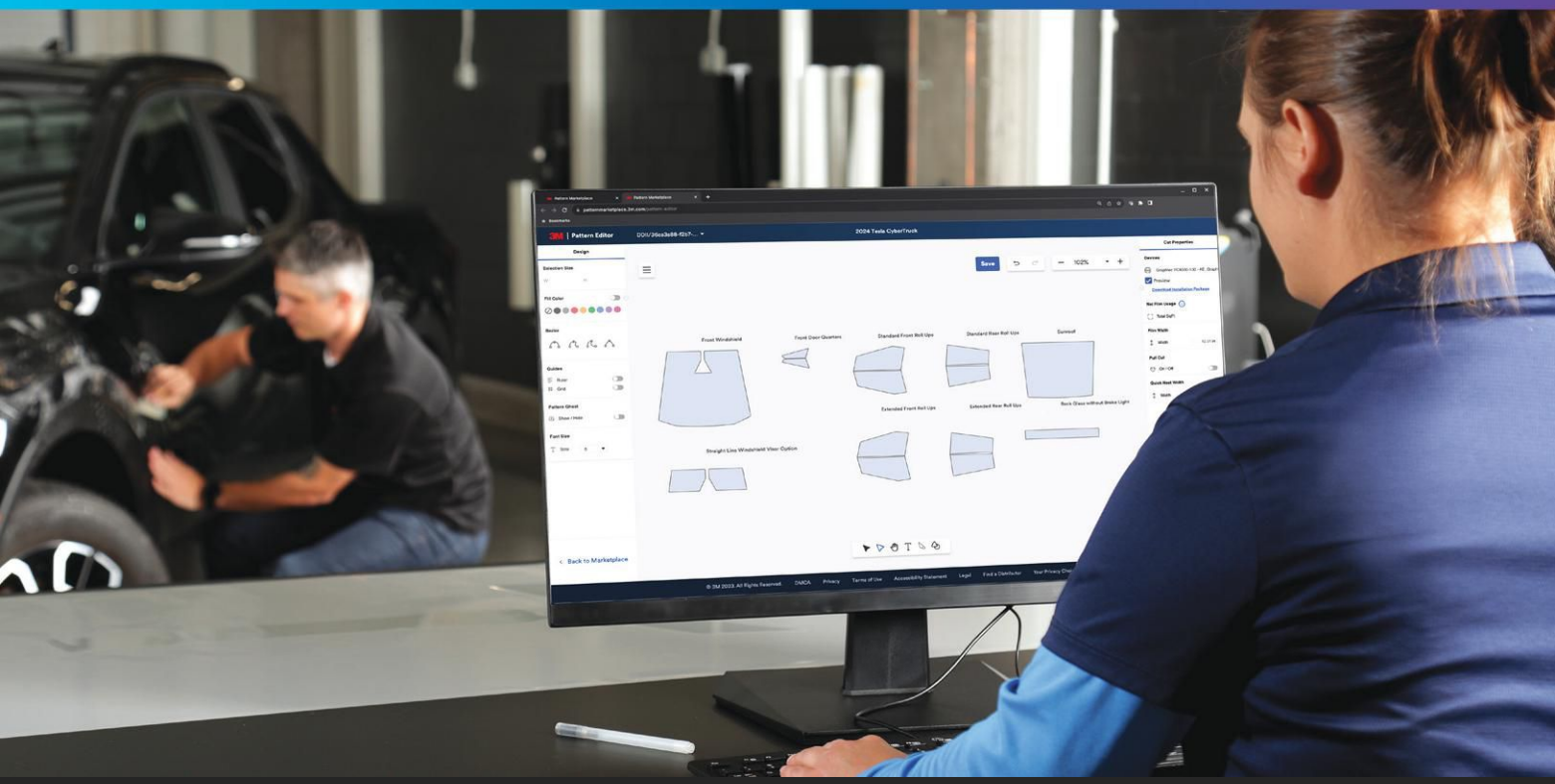
■ **HOT PRODUCT:** Grand Touring Nano Carbon Film
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Recently returned to the bestseller chart; nano carbon material combined with robust adhesive and distortion-free polyester for exceptional durability; offers infrared rejection above 90%; affordable alternative to ceramic films.

Premium Tech Coating Inc.
Alex Sikorski
CEO

3M | Pattern Marketplace

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Talking about automotive film options is a natural discussion that helps shops understand clients and their driving needs. (Photo courtesy Avery Dennison)



Quality films help professionals perform jobs right the first time without the fear of comebacks. (Photo courtesy Avery Dennison)

their vehicle—depending on the work you're doing, you could have their car for months on end," says Harold Nimtz, owner/operator of House of Tint and a professional trainer for Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions. "With so much time with the client and their vehicle, why wouldn't you discuss potential add-on solutions for protection—window tint film and also paint protection film? It's a natural discussion that helps you understand your clients and their lifestyle and driving needs."

This simple question can lead to lucrative partnerships, regardless of who does the application.

"Even if you don't want to handle the installation yourself in-house, you can subcontract that work," says Nimtz. "The subcontractor charges you 'X,' you charge the customer 'Y' and there you go. It can be a win-win for all parties involved."

If you do choose to perform installations, however, the first step is to learn how to do them properly and quickly, says Marc Bagley, segment marketing manager personal auto for 3M.

"Always seek out installation training," he says. "Attending a 3M training at a 3M Authorized Training Facility allows you to get tremendous hands-on experience with 3M films under the tutelage of industry-leading installation experts. Classes are capped with a student-to-teacher ratio, creating an intimate setting where you have ample time to ask all your questions and tackle your biggest installation challenges. There is a cost to attend these courses, but the value you extract is well worth it."

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

When it comes to educating customers on the performance characteristics of automotive films, it's important to stress that there's often more there than meets the eye.

"Every day, we observe customers visiting tint shops mistakenly believing that darker films provide better heat rejection. This is not the case," says Sikorski. "With the availability of carbon and ceramic films, tint shops can offer excellent heat rejection and comfort while maintaining high Visible Light Transmission (VLT). Most importantly, tinting should always comply with state and local regulations. #TintLegal."

Unsurprisingly, there are also often noticeable differences between brands, says Nimtz.

"The fact is, not all films are the same—you get what you pay for," he explains. "When entering this side of the business, you can buy a cheap product that gets the job done, but it comes with the risk of yearly callbacks and replacements, which will hurt your reputation. Step up and buy



To ensure the long-term success of your business, conduct thorough research in your local market. (Photo courtesy Premium Tech Coating Inc.)

a good, solid, quality film product. Do it right and give your customers a solution that will last."

Car owners appreciate top-end products they know they can trust, and are usually willing to pay more to ensure their investments are protected, Bagley reveals.

"This is largely driven by the fact that, behind their home, someone's car is typically the second or third most expensive thing they own. They want to know products going on it have been tested extensively, are made of high-quality materials in industry-leading manufacturing facilities and are backed by a company in it for the long haul," he notes. "Car owners also want to know the person putting it on has been trained to do so correctly and there's no better way of giving them that peace of mind than by using high-quality film installed by a trained and accredited installer."

And it's not just drivers who enjoy the benefits of quality film applications—installers will appreciate the differences as well, Bagley adds.

"Consistent feedback from our customers is that labor is what makes or breaks a project, and 3M is intently focused on improving its efficiency, output and, therefore, profitability," he says. "There will always be a less-expensive option somewhere out there, but we pride ourselves on innovation that makes our customers' day-in and day-out experience more pleasant, safe and profitable."



Automotive film is a fast-growing segment of the specialty aftermarket.

MADE IN THE SHADE

There's no shortage of information available to help drivers make the automotive film choices that work for them. Shops with the best knowledge and partnerships will be able to meet and exceed those expectations.

"The brand awareness 3M has with consumers helps sell jobs," says Bagley, who outlines the many ways shops can benefit from their supplier collaborations—"A six-figure investment in marketing directly to car owners and syndicating those leads to our dealers through our locator, the vastness of resources that are coming out now and in the next year to our dealers including new products in film and software, an abundance of digital marketing resources and credits to offset the cost of reaching new customers, high-end point-of-purchase shop displays to support your sale of 3M products and elevate the car owner's experience in your shop and, occasionally, the opportunity to be one of the first to provide feedback on new products in development that will shape tomorrow's market."

With so much to gain, every sale is a chance to build your auto film business.

"Turn your customers into your most effective advertisers. Satisfied customers naturally share their positive experiences with friends and family, driving new business to your shop," says Premium Tech's Sikorski. "By delivering exceptional service and exceeding their expectations, you foster loyalty and build lasting relationships that support your business's growth and success."

Nimtz from House of Tint has lived it firsthand.

"In my experience, the unexpected benefit is the amount of repeat and referral work you will get," he says. "My shop in Winslow, Arizona, is in a small town surrounded by Native American reservations. You do a good job for one person, and they go back and tell the entire reservation. The word of mouth that shares that you do good work, that you're not going to rip anyone off and that you take care of customers goes a long way. The amount of referral work you get will blow your mind." ***TS***



Create Packages Like a Pro

Let the annual PRO Cup Challenge serve as your dealership inspiration.

BY JOSH POULSON



Named the 2022-23 SEMA Person of the Year, Josh Poulson is the principal of Auto Additions in Columbus, Ohio, which was named Restyler of the Year, 2012-13. Auto Additions offers a complete line of product upgrades including 12V and appearance packages with a specific focus on the dealership segment. Josh is immediate past-chairman of the SEMA PRO council.

The 2024 SEMA PRO Cup Challenge was unlike any other, with several new participants submitting great builds based on attractive dealer packages.

Let's take a look at some of the details from last November's Challenge and give you some behind-the-scenes information that makes this friendly competition one of the SEMA Show's premier events.

THE GOAL

The goal of the PCC is to have restylers around the country compete by building a vehicle package with a $12,500 wholesale cost cap that requires no more than 40 hours of labor. Participants use products from manufacturers that are part of the SEMA PRO (Professional Restylers Organization) council, with the aim of creating an attractive, versatile daily driver.

Once the entries are submitted, PRO makes the build sheets available to show which products were used, allowing restylers around the country to duplicate the packages in their local markets.

So, if you're a restyler who comes to the SEMA Show and visits the PCC booth in the West Hall, realistically you can walk away with six brand-new package ideas to offer your local car dealers, with all the guesswork removed.

NEW WEBSITE

An exciting update from the most recent event was the creation of a dedicated PRO Cup Challenge website (semapcc.com) that highlights current builds and packages, as well as past winners. You'll also find manufacturer sign-up forms, builder sign-up forms and a lot more.

The goal is to quickly provide restylers and manufacturers background information and build sheets so these packages can be duplicated on different types of vehicles all over the country. We would also love it if you would post a picture of any builds you do in your market and then tag us on one of our social media outlets (Instagram: _semapro; Facebook: SEMApro).

Even if you don't do the exact package but were inspired by one of the builds, please post it and let us know. We'd love your feedback on the new website as well.



1 Construction professionals were the target of this contractor-based package on a 2024 Chevrolet Silverado from Dino Perfetti and Automotive Concepts in Minneapolis.

6 BUILDERS

For 2024, six builders were chosen to participate. Four of the six had never been in the competition before, so it was exciting to get fresh perspectives from new areas of the country.

1 AUTOMOTIVE CONCEPTS

First we have Automotive Concepts, which is a past winner and seasoned restyler from Minneapolis. Dino Perfetti and his team really went outside the box, showing how you can restyle in the fleet upfitting world.

Their 2024 Chevy Silverado W/T is one of the least expensive types of trucks you can find at a dealership—yet they took it and focused on making it look exactly like what any construction professional would want to drive. The wheels and tires were impressive as were the graphics, which gave a taste of how a company could use its truck for marketing and branding.

They then took a white commercial Smart Cap and added a slide-out cargo system and decked it out with a bunch of Milwaukee PACKOUTS, which are super-popular. Next came a workbench with laptop and workstation, and the rack system on top was icing on the cake—an inspiring example for those looking to jump into the fleet world.

2 AUTO TRIM DESIGN OF UTAH

The second builder is Curtis Nielson and his team from Auto Trim Design of Utah. They put together an eye-popping 2024 Hyundai Santa Fe that featured the theme "Into the Wild."

The SUV included a full color-change wrap, custom leather interior, lift, wheels and tires, and a roof rack with fly rod holder. The gloss green Avery Dennison wrap matched the Katzkin interior leather stitching and brought the vehicle together as a tremendous package.

A professional touch was protecting the gloss wrap with full front-end paint protection film.

3 MARS OF BILLINGS

The third builder is from Billings, Montana. The MARS Nation team, led by Devon Davidson and Spencer Scala, took a Ford Bronco Outer Banks and made it stand out as one of a kind.

Themed the "Predator," this Bronco nicely ties in a lot of the OE features while



2 Curtis Nielson and his team from Auto Trim of Utah outfitted a 2024 Hyundai Santa Fe with a package themed "Into the Wild."



3 The MARS Nation team, led by Devon Davidson and Spencer Scala, took a Ford Bronco Outer Banks and made it stand out.



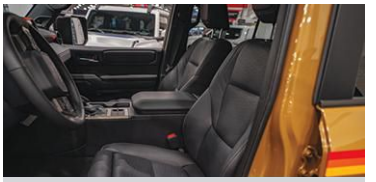


4 Kenny Pillings and his team from Keystone Styling built the eye-catching "Adrenaline" package for a 2024 Ford F-150.



5 Kevin McGowan and his team from Auto Trim Restyling in St. Louis entered a Toyota Land Cruiser package that won the Fan Favorite award at the 2024 PRO Cup Challenge.





A partnership with Westcott Designs for the lift kit, roof rack, MOLLE panels and rear ladder made the build pop, as did the retro graphics that were subtly tied into the center caps on the Method Race Wheels.



upgrading everything around them. It started with blue wheels and decals that matched the blue Ford dash and seats and included a full-wrap matte PPF to not only protect the SUV but also give the white Bronco a slick, matted look.

They finished it off with front-end lighting including the nameplate and headlights/fog lights.

4 KEYSTONE STYLING

The fourth builder hails from Pennsylvania and has been in the restyling business most of his life—Kenny Pillings and his team from Keystone Styling. They have basically been building SEMA PRO Cup-type vehicles for their dealers for years, but this was the first time being featured at the SEMA Show.

Called the "Adrenaline" package, the 2024 Ford F-150 featured a 3.5-inch ReadyLIFT with 20-inch Fuel Off-Road wheels and 35-inch Nitto tires. It boasted a blackout package with a touch of red in the emblems, caliper covers and seatbelts, highlighted by a Leather Craft interior featuring a special baseball stitch and embroidery.

We can see why these packages fly off the shelf for Pillings and his team, and they should be easy to duplicate for restylers around the country to increase their truck package sales.

5 AUTO TRIM RESTYLING ST. LOUIS

The fifth builder is a past PCC challenger that came looking for redemption. The well-known "ambassador of the aftermarket," Kevin McGowan and his team from Auto Trim Restyling in St. Louis entered a Toyota Land Cruiser package that won the Fan Favorite award.

A partnership with Westcott Designs for the lift kit, roof rack, MOLLE panels and rear ladder made the build really stand out, as did the retro graphics that were subtly tied into the center caps on the Method Race Wheels.

Rigid lights finished off the overlanding theme, making it a sure favorite of dealers everywhere.

6 CLASSIC SOFT TRIM

Pittsburgh is the home of the sixth and final builder. Ray Bednar and his team at Classic Soft Trim won it all with their Toyota RAV4 "Northern Lights Edition."



6 Ray Bednar and his team at Classic Soft Trim won the 2024 PRO Cup Challenge with their Toyota RAV4 "Northern Lights Edition" package.



Starting with badging on the doors, leather and even the license plates, the package calls to true adventurers.

Starting with badging on the doors, leather and even the license plates, the package calls to true adventurers.

The shop then partnered with Ironman to add the lift, bumper guard, roof rack, lights and tent.

Next came wheels and tires, along with important details such as a roof wrap, molding wrap, handle and mirror covers, window film and an Alea custom leather kit that matched the color accents. A deserving winner worthy of the $2,000 grand prize. **TS**

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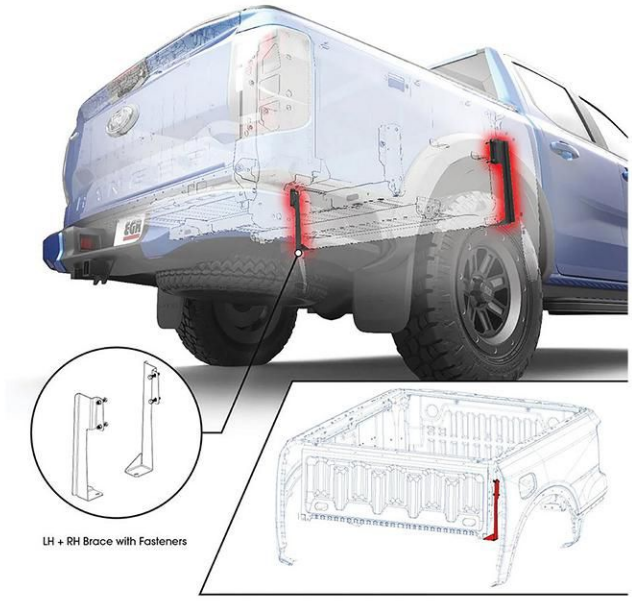
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Ranger Bed Reinforcement

EGR Automotive, Ontario, California, presents its new J Brace Support, designed to provide bed reinforcement for 2024-25 Ford Ranger and Ranger Raptor models. The reinforcement system helps prevent damage from retractable truck bed covers, campers and toppers, and allows owners the ability to install the EGR RollTrac retractable tonneau cover. The brace is constructed from high-strength steel and engineered to handle the additional stresses that come with off-road adventures and heavy-duty use while carrying aftermarket accessories on the truck bed.





Hitch Mount Light Kit

GEN-Y Hitch, Nappanee, Indiana, offers the **Diode Dynamics** Hitch Mount Light Kit that adds significantly more light output at the rear of tow vehicles. The easy three-in-one lighting upgrade installs quickly and provides brighter reverse lighting when backing up. All BOSS Hitches will require a package that includes an extension harness and MEGA-DUTY Hitches with stabilizer bars will require a package that includes an extension harness.



Extreme-Performance Winch Line

Warn Industries, Clackamas, Oregon, presents its newest winch lineup, ZEON XP. Engineered from the ground up for performance, reliability and ease of use, they deliver improved live feedback to allow users to confidently work the winches to their maximum potential. ZEON XP winches are available in 10,000-, 12,000- and 14,000-pound capacities for a variety of vehicle models and include corded or WARN HUB wireless control options.



JL Soft Top

Bestop, Louisville, Colorado, presents the Trektop Glide with Skyglide premier soft top for two-door Jeep JL applications. Offering full retractability and featuring exclusive SkyGlide Action technology, the top can be raised or lowered effortlessly by one person, making it ideal for both family outings and solo adventures. Designed to complement the unique dimensions and styling of two-door JL models and withstand diverse weather conditions, the tops are available in premium twill fabric or durable black diamond vinyl.

Amplifiers

AudioControl, Clearwater, Florida, a **Stinger** brand, presents new AudioControl EPIC Series Amplifiers designed for bass enthusiasts. The EPIC Series directly integrates with the brand's proprietary The Epicenter Bass Restoration Processor using The Epicenter Link Cable. Available in multiple configurations including the EPIC750, EPIC1000, EPIC1500, EPIC2000, EPICFOUR and EPICFIVE, the amplifiers are designed to deliver power in a sleek, compact design without breaking the bank. They come equipped with a bass knob for full control.





Suburban Fender Flare Kits

Air Design, Oceanside, California, presents its OE Style Fender Flare Kits for 2021-24 Chevrolet Suburban models. Designed to deliver a sophisticated, aerodynamic aesthetic, the flares can improve airflow around the engine bay while providing a noticeable, sharp driving feel at medium and high speeds. They offer durability and a straightforward, rust-free, no-drill installation.

Two-Way Radios



Cobra Electronics, Chicago, introduces its new TrailBlazer line of GMRS Two-Way Radios. Designed in the U.S., the line includes three models—the 250, 450 and 500—each tailored to the unique needs of adventurers, off-roaders, overlanders and outdoor enthusiasts. Featuring GMRS technology, the new radios offer improved range and signal quality, and flexibility over traditional FRS handsets, empowering users to stay connected in remote environments. Intuitive controls include oversized knobs and tactile buttons.



Ram Steering Stabilizer Kit

Synergy Mfg., San Luis Obispo, California, presents its 2003-13 Ram 2500/3500 Dual Steering Stabilizer Kit. Designed to work with most aftermarket steering stabilizers, the kit dampens the side-to-side movement of the tires while absorbing road vibration. The setup can be used with the Synergy-tuned **FOX** IFP and the bracket can also work with FOX TS and ATS stabilizers with use of the company's TS/ATS Clamp Adaptor. The Dual Stabilizer Kit is suitable for use on trucks with larger wheel and/or tire combinations.



Tesla Skid Plate

TEZspex by RYDEEN, Torrance, California, presents its Under Body Protection Skid Plates made from ArmorLite fiberglass material, designed to provide defense for Tesla Model 3 and Y vehicles. Designed as a direct replacement for the original skid plate that can be damaged by speed bumps, steep driveways or road debris, the TEZspex option offers improved protection for motors and axles. It is scratch-, wear- and corrosion-resistant.

Universal Exterior Camera



Rydeen Mobile Electronics, Torrance, California, presents its universal use CM-V90 AHD Digital Camera. Created to deliver clear imaging and advanced features, the camera offers both a standard view when used in conjunction with Rydeen's digital mirrors and a 90-degree downward view. The rear view of the vehicle is extremely comprehensive, offering expanded coverage on the sides, top, left and right, with the ability to show the bumper while driving. Lens construction includes six layers of glass and one infrared filter.



Slim-Fit Seats

TMI Products, Corona, California, presents its new Pro Series Trans-Am Sport Seats, made specifically for popular 1980s vehicles with narrower bodies that require a slimmer seat. Measuring 29 inches high with a 2-inch mounting track and 21 inches wide with a 21-inch base, the seats fit Gen-3 Camaros, Fox Body Mustangs and G-body applications. Crafted in-house with high-quality, custom-molded, high-density foam and all-metal frames, the seats are available in a selection of colors, including contrast stitching.



Rooftop Tent

iKamper, Kent, Washington, presents its BDV Duo Rooftop Tent. Designed for overlanding adventures, the tent offers a swift setup, low-profile design and wraparound T-track rails for accessories. The four-season, wedge-style popup tent serves as the foundation of the BDV Series, which includes accessories such as annexes, awnings, canopies and more that campers can use to curate the setup that works for them.



All-Terrain Tire

Turbo Tires, Baldwin Park, California, and its **Rolling Big Power** brand present the RBP Repulsor A/T Plateau All-Terrain Tire. Featuring a dynamic tread pattern designed to handle off-road surfaces, the tire has a comfortable ride and durable tread compound. With M+S and 3-Peak Mountain Snowflake Certification, the Repulsor A/T Plateau is available in 62 sizes from 15 to 20 inches to fit a variety of passenger and light truck vehicle models.

Adjustable-Height Running Boards



Romik, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, presents its "DRP" Running Boards with adjustable-height brackets. Choose the desired height, from the factory setting to as low as a 3-inch drop. Available in several styles to fit multiple vehicle models including Ford, Chevrolet, Ram, Toyota and Nissan, the running board systems include optional "DRP" bracket covers for a custom look.



New Overlaminate Finishes

Avery Dennison, Mentor, Ohio, presents its expanded Digital Overlaminate (DOL) product line with the addition of two new DOL Max series finishes: DOL 1370 Max, a 1.3-mil luster finish, and DOL1380 Max, a 1.3-mil matte finish. The pressure-sensitive films enhance the durability and longevity of printed vinyl, particularly in exterior applications such as fleet graphics, vehicle wraps, marine wraps and outdoor signage. Overlaminates protect the graphics from environmental conditions including harsh weather, UV exposure, chemicals and abrasion.



DC-DC Charger

REDARC, Lonsdale, South Australia, presents the BCDC Alpha. Available in 25A and 50A models, the BCDC Alpha offers advanced features like optimized solar charging and input current limiting, all in a design that ensures easy installation. The DC-DC charger system's Start Battery Recovery feature allows users to restore a flat start battery in as little as 15 minutes, while optimized solar charging diverts excess power to the start battery when needed, ensuring it always has sufficient power and remains fully charged. *TS*

Streamlined Fuel Filling



Husky Corp., Pacific, Missouri, presents the newly designed StreamShaper for ultra-high-flow fueling applications. The updated StreamShaper now enhances refueling experiences for vehicles requiring ultra-high flow rates of 25 gallons per minute or more, such as heavy-duty commercial trucks, industrial machinery, agriculture equipment and high-capacity fuel tanks. Designed to resolve issues from premature shutoffs, splash-backs or spills, the system utilizes laminar flow technology to create a smooth, compact fuel flow.

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Chilean Race Car Named Hot Wheels 2024 Global Legends Tour Winner



A race car nicknamed "La Liebre," built by Cars & Coffee Chile, was named the Hot Wheels 2024 Global Legends Tour Winner. (Photos courtesy Business Wire)

Mattel Inc. announced the 2024 winner of the Hot Wheels Legends Tour, dubbed "the world's largest traveling car show," during the virtual Global Grand Finale held Nov. 16.

After taking home the top spot during the 2024 Chilean tour stop, a homebuilt race car, nicknamed "La Liebre," secured the global victory and will be inducted into the Hot Wheels Garage of Legends.

The Hot Wheels design team will now transform the life-size car into a die-cast model for collectors and fans to enjoy in 1:64 scale.

Hosted by motorsports ambassador Jarod DeAnda, the 2024 Hot Wheels Legends Tour Global Grand Finale showcased 10 builds from around the world, the company reveals in a press release announcing the winner. Tasked with choosing the entry that best represents authenticity, creativity and garage spirit, the panel of judges joining the Hot Wheels Design Team featured:

- Jay Leno, TV host and car enthusiast
- Dalal Elsheikh, automotive experience designer
- Larry Chen, renowned automotive photographer
- Gabriel "Fluffy" Iglesias, actor and comedian
- Toni Breidinger, NASCAR driver
- Juca Viapri, Mexican automotive influencer and car customizer

"This year's Hot Wheels Legends Tour brought out so many incredible builds, making it difficult to select just one, however, the mission behind the 'La Liebre' built by Cars & Coffee Chile was emblematic of what the tour is all about," said Ted Wu, senior vice president and global head of design, vehicles and building sets at Mattel. "Not only is it an extremely impressive build, but it was created to help grow the car community in Chile and inspire others to participate. That's what makes this vehicle, and the team behind it, deserving of the win and entry into the Hot Wheels Garage of Legends."

In 2013, Giuseppe Casagrande and Maurizio Moschini co-founded Cars and Coffee Chile as a nonprofit organization to grow the car community and culture in Chile. The "La Liebre" project began as a method of promoting their organization and engaging local automotive enthusiasts.

After acquiring the Falcon, a custom-built Chevrolet 350 engine producing 600 hp was installed and mated to a Saenz 910 5-speed transmission with straight-cut gears. The original chassis was heavily modified by Baufer Garage and currently consists of a tubular frame and roll cage.

"La Liebre" weighs less than 2,000 pounds, thanks to the tube chassis and custom fiberglass body that was developed to maximize aerodynamics.

The Cars and Coffee Chile team behind "La Liebre" includes Giuseppe Casagrade, Maurizio Moschini, Pablo Olmos, Omar Aguilar, Nicolás Orellana and Jose Ignacio Barra.

Celebrating car builders and enthusiasts around the world in their drive to be legendary, the 2024 Hot Wheels Legends Tour traveled through 13 countries with 11 regional stops in the United States, the release notes. New Tour stops for 2024 included visits to Colombia and the United Arab Emirates.

The Hot Wheels team and local automotive personalities evaluated more than 5,000 vehicle entries with millions of event attendees around the world.

Since its launch in 2018 to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Hot Wheels, the Hot Wheels Legends Tour presented by Mobil 1 has grown from a U.S.-based series of local Walmart events to the world's largest traveling car show, bringing in builders and automotive fans through both virtual and live events.

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