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Auto Insurance Rate Hikes Expected to Slow



Jef White
Editor in Chief
theshopmag.com

For customers battling high auto insurance rates, relief may be in sight—or at least getting closer.

While premiums are rising for the seventh straight year, on average, drivers should expect to see smaller increases compared to last year's reported 16.5% rate increase.

Despite the slowdown in rate increases, however, the average cost of auto insurance for 2025 is still expected to reach a record high of $2,101 per year, according to The State of Auto Insurance in 2025 report published by ValuePenguin.com, a LendingTree company.

Many drivers won't be surprised after reporting that their auto insurance rates rose significantly more than rate hikes announced by auto insurers last year, says Divya Sangameshwar, an insurance expert at ValuePenguin.com.

"Insurers raised rates by an average of 16.5% in 2024, but an analysis by the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that Americans were paying 19% more for auto insurance on average versus the prior year. The discrepancy is likely due to driver-led factors like new car purchases, traffic tickets, changing credit scores or changes in coverage. Although rates aren't expected to increase as steeply in 2025, they are still trending upward and, as a result, auto insurance payments will still be a financial strain for some in the new year."

The hope will be that slower rate hikes this year will then extend into 2026 and beyond. Sangameshwar says the biggest factor will likely be the yet-unknown effects of new tariffs on imported goods and if they result in higher repair prices.

Meanwhile, here are the report's 2025 auto insurance rate predictions:

- Auto insurers will raise premiums by an average of 7.5% in 2025. Drivers in New Jersey, Washington and California are projected to see their auto insurance premiums rise by over 15% in 2025, the biggest jumps in the country.
- The average cost of full coverage car insurance in 2025 will exceed the $2,000 mark to touch $2,101 per year. Nevada ($3,216/year) and Florida ($3,264/year) will overtake Michigan ($3,156/year) to become the most expensive states for auto insurance in 2025.
- Drivers with traffic violations will see their premiums jump 53% on average in 2025, with drivers in North Carolina facing the stiffest financial penalties—an increase of 146% for traffic violations and dangerous driving.
- Insuring electric vehicles is predicted to be cheaper in 2025, but insurance for new EVs will still be 23% higher than new gasoline-powered cars. Of note, insurance premiums for electric vehicles made by legacy manufacturers like Ford and Volkswagen are 25% less expensive than insurance premiums for cars manufactured by EV-only companies in 2025, with Rivian's RV-1 and Tesla's Cybertruck emerging as the most expensive cars to insure.

Learn more about the State of Auto Insurance 2025 Report from ValuePenguin.com by visiting: https://www.valuepenguin.com/state-of-auto-insurance-2025. ***TS***

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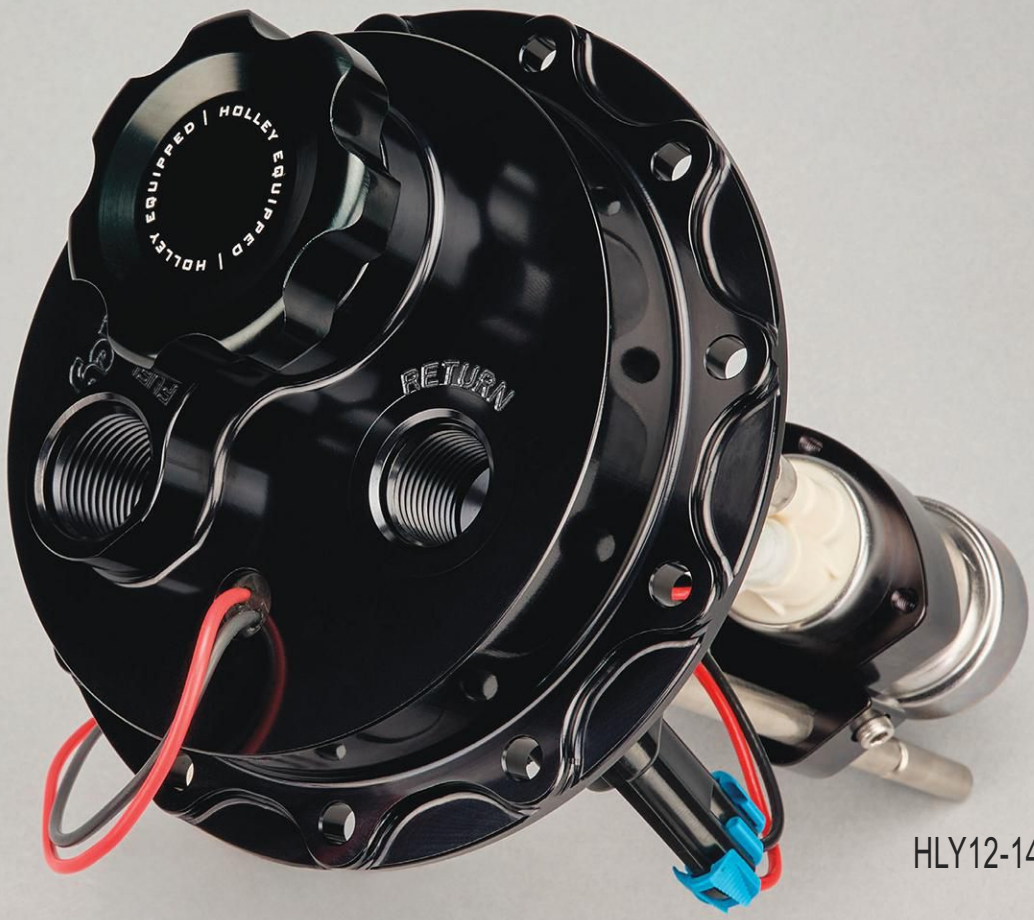
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Tax Savings at the State & Local Levels

An overview of what to watch for in order to stay compliant.

BY MARK E. BATTERSBY



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Mark E. Battersby writes on financial and tax-related topics. Learn more at thetaxscribe.com.

Many specialty automotive aftermarket professionals frequently complain about federal taxes. However, more often it is the state and local tax burden that is far greater.

What's worse, many of those state and local laws change from year to year.

State and local budgets, which often seemingly flirt with disaster even in good times, are, in many cases, in dire straits today, a situation with major implications for every automotive aftermarket shop.

Coping with and easing the state and local tax burden means planning, beginning with those state income taxes.

THE COMPLEXITIES OF TAXING INCOME

Today, state income taxes can cost a shop between 2.5% and 10%—or more—of its pretax income. That's a significant amount, regardless of the state of the economy.

Every performance, restyling and customization professional should also be aware of whether those deductions they're planning to claim on their federal tax returns will receive the same treatment at the state level. While many states follow federal tax rules, quite a few are decoupling.

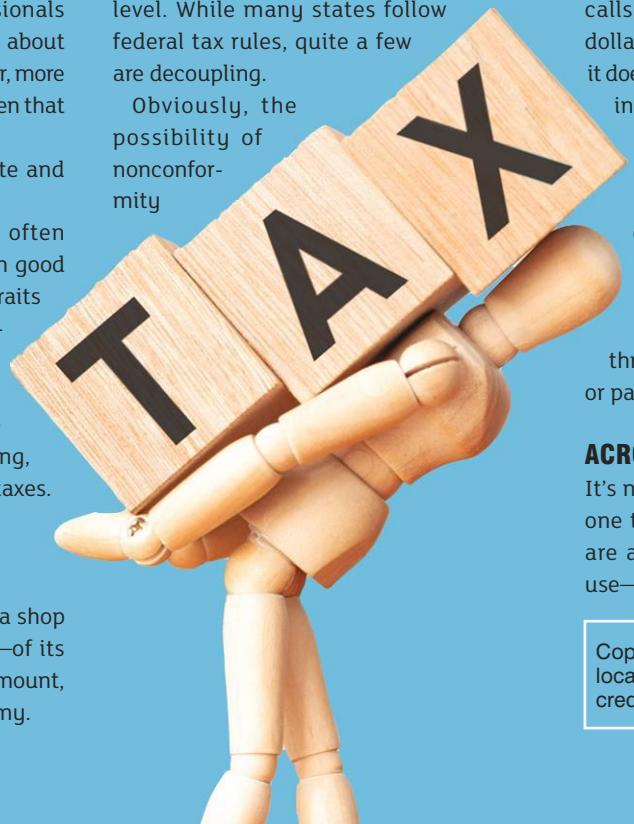
Obviously, the possibility of nonconformity should always be a consideration.

Some automotive aftermarket professionals face an interesting challenge—what happens if their shop does business in more than one state? The state that the business calls home generally wants to tax every dollar of income. Every other state where it does business wants to tax income earned in their state. Does that mean paying taxes on the same income twice?

Fortunately, good records and planning can ensure there are no overlooked or duplicate payments for taxable income earned in another jurisdiction. It can also mean no tax bill for a shop operating as a pass-through entity such as an S corporation or partnership.

ACROSS STATE LINES

It's not only income taxes that differ from one taxing jurisdiction to another. There are also those cumbersome sales—and use—taxes.



Coping with and easing the state and local tax burden means planning. Photo credit: Anderson Piza - stock.adobe.com

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Battles over the cross-border reach of state tax authorities are as old as the country itself. While some businesses may not be required to collect sales taxes on their sales of products or services, they usually must pay them on some of their purchases.

It's all too easy today to get caught ignoring the "use" tax due on purchases made in another taxing jurisdiction, via the internet or where sales taxes should have been collected but weren't.

Calculating the use tax can be especially complicated if equipment is used in multiple jurisdictions. This is also true if the shop initially ships an item to one location and stores it there temporarily, before shipping it to a new location. Remember, while some transactions might be exempt from the use tax, state rules vary.

A comprehensive use tax review can identify exposures, as well as opportunities for refund claims and exemptions. Businesses that do not have procedures in place to properly calculate and remit use tax are at risk of underreporting or fines, which vary from state to state.

LABOR LAWS & TAXES

Federal, state and even local laws dealing with employees often seem to be in a constant state of flux, with all usually impacting a performance, restyling or customization operation's tax bill. While these laws are designed to benefit employees, many shops are finding it increasingly difficult to remain profitable as a result of these changes.

Fortunately, a number of states have created programs specifically designed to compensate businesses for expenses related to minimum wage law changes, worker incentive programs such as paid family leave, and other laws dealing with employees. However, in most cases, these programs are only a temporary solution and rarely address the long-term impact of higher payroll costs and increased payroll tax bills.

PROPERTY TAXES

One tax that is often overlooked, and frequently overpaid, is the tax assessed on a shop's property and—in many places—its equipment and other business assets. Surprisingly, few automotive aftermarket professionals challenge their property tax bill.

While the property tax rate can't be questioned, the assessment of the shop or its property, the value placed on it by the local assessor, can be challenged. Whether that property tax billing period overlaps the other tax deadlines or not, investigating and possibly challenging the values placed on a shop's assets can result in savings that can be reaped year after year.

STATE TAX CREDITS & INCENTIVES

In addition to programs designed to ease the effects of minimum wage or other payroll costs, many state and local governments offer incentives such as tax breaks, grant programs or business-friendly policies. Is the shop taking advantage of all the tax credits and incentives it qualifies for?

Obviously, an automotive aftermarket professional must be aware of the tax credit or incentive program before negotiating the best possible credit or incentive package for his or her shop or business with the state or county economic development agency or any other agency.

POTENTIAL PITFALLS

The road to savings at the state and local levels contains a number of potential pitfalls such as:

- *Independent Contractors.* Those in the specialty automotive aftermarket industry have long appreciated the absence of payroll taxes and the withholding burden associated with employees but nonexistent with independent contractors. Many individual workers favor the flexibility, freedom and perceived tax benefits as independent contractors. Unfortunately, it is not only the IRS and the U.S. Department of Labor that are changing the definition of who is and who isn't an independent contractor. A growing number of states are adopting the controversial—and stricter—definition of independent contractors originating in California but driving up payroll costs elsewhere.
- *Conforming to Federal Tax Reform.* Although slated to soon expire, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) lowered the federal corporate tax rate and made significant changes to the cost recovery possibilities and deductions available to businesses. The states have largely settled on TCJA conformity, but each year a



Is your shop taking advantage of all the tax credits and incentives it qualifies for? Photo credit: William W. Potter - stock.adobe.com



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Federal, state and even local laws dealing with employees often seem to be in a constant state of flux. Photo credit: BritCats Studio - stock.adobe.com

number of taxing jurisdictions institute changes or adapt specific provisions that don't conform to the federal rules.

- *Pass-Through Entities & Taxes.* Pass-through entities are the hybrids of business taxation: business entities for which tax liability is generally attributable to the amount of individual income tax imposed on partners, members, owners or shareholders. However, states are increasingly applying corporate income tax concepts, such as business or nonbusiness income and apportionment, to pass-through entities operating in more than one state, and it's often unclear how these concepts are applied in each jurisdiction.

SEPARATELY ACCOUNTING FOR STATE TAXES

Many small businesses find it easier to use the cash method of accounting for tax purposes, while others use the accrual method.

The accrual method, however, is the preferred method for both tax purposes and financial reporting because it gives a clearer picture of the financial status of the business.

While most shops take a general approach to apportion their income, many states are allowing the use of "separate accounting." Separate accounting is pretty much what it sounds like: a second set of books.

With separate accounting, the shop or business computes its net income based on the income and expenses in each state in which it operates.

Unless the operation in the state is almost a separate entity, this generally is not easy. It can also be expensive.

Overhead, salaries of employees who work both in and out of the state, expenses, overhead, etc., must be allocated to those locations

However, despite the problems, the use of separate accounting can result in significant tax savings, especially if the operations within the state produce little or no income, and the state has a high tax rate.

Those automotive aftermarket businesses that don't operate in more than one state or tax jurisdiction can also benefit from separate accounting. While a business must compute its income using the same method used in keeping its books, it is not required to use the same method when preparing its financial statements.

FILING

When is a performance, restyling or customization business required to file a tax return in another state? Even that can be a complicated question—one that depends on the rules in that particular state.

Generally, if a shop simply sends goods into a state and does not have employees working in that state, the business probably will not have to file income tax returns there.

Of course, once an automotive aftermarket business has property located in a state or has employees in a state (or some other similar connection) the operation must generally file tax returns and pay taxes. Not filing could result in penalties, interest and a host of other tax problems.

KEEPING ABREAST

State and local taxes are varied and in constant flux. However, keeping abreast of the performance, restyling or customizing shop or business's state and local tax obligations can, while complex, be well worth the effort. Failing to keep abreast can significantly affect the operation's cash flow.

A thorough review can lead to new planning strategies that can result in a lower tax bill. It may uncover opportunities for automation, advantageous filing and apportioning methods, or valuable credits and incentives. As always, professional guidance is recommended. ***TS***

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New Vehicle Report p. 22 | Products p. 28 | Interiors p. 30



Customers benefit from guidance on how different racks and accessories can be customized to fit their specific needs. (Photo courtesy Leitner Designs)

PACK IT UP

BY JEF WHITE

OFF-ROAD RACKS GET DRIVERS TO THEIR DESTINATIONS WITH ALL THE ESSENTIALS.

When it's time for drivers to pack it up and hit the road—or trail—with all the necessities, it's time for a capable off-road rack.

Having exploded in popularity along with the entire overlanding market, off-road racks offer shops a chance to meet drivers' specific needs while showcasing the benefits of vehicle accessorization.

Often an entryway into related products, shops will want to carry quality, versatile racks that add utility and aesthetic appeal to a wide range of trucks, vans, SUVs and crossovers. A knowledgeable sales staff, enticing showroom display and complementary component inventory will help complete sales and build a loyal base of adventurous clients.

Suppliers provide insights into market trends, hot new products and sales tips for retailers interested in getting customers to their desired destinations well-stocked with all the essentials.

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With overlanding and off-roading popular nationwide, it's easy to typecast these racks as adventure accessories.

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OFF-ROAD RACKS

■ **HOT PRODUCT:**
Overland Rack for Jeep Gladiator
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Made in the USA by skilled welders; expandable design offers an extension over the cab; multiple tie-down and mounting points; 10 integrated 3x3 LED pod mounts; integrated roof access step; optional added cross-members for strength and support.

Fab Fours
Jason Bukolt
Director of Marketing

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:**
RAID Roof Rack & RAID Bed Rack
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Flagship products in our RAID aluminum accessories series; designed to meet the needs of everyday drivers and hardcore off-road enthusiasts; aerodynamic performance meets modern design; weatherproof durability; modular; quiet by design.

IRONMAN 4X4
Katherine Abraham
Sr. Marketing Manager, B2B

■ **HOT PRODUCT:**
IBEX
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Off-road rack designed for overlanding and off-road enthusiasts; rugged durability; lightweight construction; sleek, modular design that adapts to specific needs; supports rooftop tents, recovery gear and storage solutions in a wide variety of setups.

Küat Innovations
Craig Metcalf
Automotive Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCT:**
INEOS Grenadier 3/4 Platform Rack
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Adjustable sliding load bars for easy access, enhanced flexibility and superior weight distribution to securely transport camping equipment, bikes or other off-road essentials; T-slot allows for most third-party accessories to be attached, such as Thule or Yakima.

Leitner Designs
Bernhard Leitner
CEO





By asking the right questions, you can sell your customer the right overland rack setup. (Photos courtesy Fab Fours)



everyday users looking to expand their truck's utility—whether for work, family trips or outdoor recreation," says Nupesh Patel, new product manager for Overland Vehicle Systems (OVS).

Some shops may incorrectly believe all customers want the same type of rack system, or that functionality is more important than appearance, says Katherine Abraham, senior marketing manager, B2B, for IRONMAN 4X4. Instead, she explains how off-road rack customers often have diverse needs and priorities, which might include:

- Overlanding versus everyday use
- Vehicle compatibility
- Weight and load ratings
- Installation complexity
- Budget expectations

"By addressing these misconceptions and asking questions about the customer's intended use, vehicle setup and budget, shops can provide better recommendations and create a more satisfying experience," Abraham notes.

Start with a brief customer introduction to get an idea of what will work for them.

"When it comes to installation, knowing what the customer wants to do with the rack is key. Why? Because you're going to set up the rack system tailored to their activity or usage," explains Jason Bukolt, director of marketing for Fab Fours. "The setup is going to be different for someone who's interested in mountain biking for the week versus a weekend getaway couple with a dog."

Not all "universal" systems will fit and work in all conditions, says Tony Savasta, VP of marketing for Westin Automotive.

"Westin racks are specific for the vehicle, utilizing existing mounting points, with rails and mounting slots specifically designed for off-road use," he says. "Generic racks that



Off-road racks not only meet a specific customer need but also tap into a broader ecosystem of sales, repeat customers and community engagement. (Photo courtesy IRONMAN 4X4)

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PACK IT UP

OFF-ROAD RACKS (CONT.)

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** Discovery Rack
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
New product available in both full- and midsize applications; designed to redefine functionality and versatility; 1.75-inch heavy-duty square tube design; no-drill installation; full-length rails with integrated tie-downs; removable shelf; side plates.

Overland Vehicle Systems (OVS)
Nupesh Patel
New Product Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** TrailFX Roof Mount Basket for Jeep JL & JT
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Lightweight aluminum construction with a durable black powder-coated finish; front and rear fairings to reduce wind noise and secure cargo; 150-pound load capacity; easy installation with direct-fit brackets; optional TrailFX LED light bar..

TrailFX
Sara Ford
Marketing Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** Mesa Roof Rack & Overland Cargo Rack
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Both racks offer a multipurpose platform to transport gear and equipment; built from powder-coated extruded aluminum; combine strength with light weight and corrosion resistance; accommodate most rooftop tents; multi-position crossbar support rails.

Westin Automotive
Tony Savasta
VP Marketing

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** RuggedLine HD
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
New off-road roof rack system; designed and rigorously tested for high load ratings and off-road use; integrated wind fairings; combines with Yakima LockNLoad platforms for a tough-yet-versatile system.

Yakima
Todd Scott
Sr. Category Manager – Roof Racks, Truck Racks, Vehicle Fitment



Drivers will pay for quality and features. (Photo courtesy Küat Innovations)

are not designed for off-road use will easily break when loaded, which may also cause damage to the vehicle and cargo."

A wide variety of uses also means differences in system capabilities such as load ratings, says Todd Scott, senior category manager – roof racks, truck racks, vehicle fitment for Yakima.

"Not all roof rack systems are designed and tested the same way. Roof rack load ratings can be driven by the product's capabilities, vehicle manufacturer's stated roof load maximum, the vehicle's structural integrity in the interface area and often a combination of all the above."

Also, not every rack customer is looking for cargo management options as their top concern, says Sara Ford, marketing manager for TrailFX.

"Some customers think off-road racks are only for carrying cargo, but they may miss out on features like integrated lighting options, fairings to reduce wind noise or aesthetic upgrades, all of which can enhance both utility and the vehicle's overall appearance," she notes.

It's encouraging to know that drivers will pay for quality and features, says Craig Metcalf, automotive manager for Küat Innovations.

"Customers are willing to invest in premium rack systems if they understand the benefits of better performance, enhanced safety and the ability to expand or adapt the system as their needs change," he reveals.

Even for buyers who arrive with a particular setup or system in mind, a quick discussion will help determine the best rack for their unique application.

"Shops may assume that customers know exactly what they need, but in most cases, customers benefit from guidance on how different racks and accessories can be customized to fit their specific needs, whether that's for hauling gear, adding third-party accessories or enhancing vehicle aesthetics," says Bernhard Leitner, CEO, Leitner Designs.

DON'T STOP THERE

Off-road racks can serve as an entryway to



Quality systems are built with the vehicle in mind. (Photo courtesy Westin Automotive)



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PACK IT UP



Shops often experience increased customer engagement, as a rack's features naturally lead to additional sales opportunities. (Photo courtesy Overland Vehicle Systems)

total vehicle accessorization. Abraham identifies ways the products can lead to add-on sales and repeat business for shops, thanks to approaches such as accessory bundling and benefits for retailers and installers such as brand loyalty, higher margins and marketing potential.

"By offering off-road racks, shops not only meet a specific customer need but also tap into a broader ecosystem of sales, repeat customers and community engagement," she says.

Patel explains that sometimes it's like a light switch goes on for drivers once they recognize the possibilities.

"Shops often experience increased customer engagement as a rack's features naturally lead to additional sales opportunities," he says. "Customers who invest in the Discovery Rack frequently return for complementary items like rooftop tents, awnings and recovery gear, creating a long-term relationship with the retailer."

Scott, too, has seen retailers and installers benefit from "related accessory sales and word of mouth advertising among the off-road and adventure vehicle community."

Ford lists just a few potential complementary items:

"Offering off-road racks provides shops with opportunities to upsell related products such as lights, storage solutions, covers and accessories," she says.

Expect many off-road rack customers to come back for more, agrees Metcalf.

"The rack purchase is the starting point—customers return for complementary products (tents, lights, sporting equipment, a panel kit) to further modify how they interact with the rack," he says.

Quality systems are built with the vehicle in mind, notes Savasta, making installation and use seamless.

"Our slot receivers will work with other brands of accessories, so there is no limita-

2025 JEEP WRANGLER V-6 BRINGS BACK 8-SPEED AUTOMATIC

Jeep has announced the return of the optional TorqueFlite 8-speed automatic transmission for 2025 Jeep Wrangler four-door models equipped with 3.6L V-6 engines.

"In response to enthusiastic requests, we're reintroducing the 8-speed automatic transmission for V-6 Wrangler models, underscoring our commitment to freedom of choice, performance and versatility for every adventure," said Bob Broderdorf, senior vice president and head of Jeep brand North America. "We deeply value our community's passion and input."

New Wrangler four-door models come standard with the Pentastar 3.6L V-6 engine, delivering 285 hp and 260 pound-feet of torque, paired with a 6-speed manual transmission (excluding Sahara). The TorqueFlite 8-speed automatic transmission is available as a $4,500 option, according to the carmaker.

Engineered for smooth operation and maximum efficiency, the TorqueFlite pairs seamlessly with Wrangler's four available advanced 4x4 systems: Command-Trac, Rock-Trac (part-time and full-time) and Selec-Trac, the company states.

The 2025 Jeep Wrangler offers additional powertrains, including the 2.0L turbocharged I-4 engine (270 hp and 295 pound-feet of torque) paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission, plus the returning Wrangler 392, featuring a 6.4L V-8 engine producing 470 hp and 470 pound-feet of torque. Additionally, the 4xe plug-in hybrid powertrain combines a 2.0L turbocharged gas engine, two electric motors, an 8-speed automatic transmission and a high-voltage battery pack, delivering 49 MPGe and 21 miles of all-electric range.



Jeep announces the return of the TorqueFlite 8-speed automatic transmission for 2025 Wrangler four-door models equipped with 3.6L V-6 engines. (Photos courtesy Jeep)

tion to how the customer chooses to outfit his or her truck. We also pay close attention to details. For example, on our Bronco rack, the Freedom panels are accessible without removing the rack. Installation is bolt-on with all necessary hardware included," he says.

Special attributes such as U.S. manufacturing will also build shop loyalty, says Bukolt.

"By carrying a premium brand like Fab Fours, the shop's reputation as a go-to location for quality off-road gear improves. This can attract high-end customers willing to invest in their vehicles, leading to higher-ticket transactions," he says.





Highlight the different uses and customization options of off-road racks. (Photos courtesy TrailFX)

A chance to see the racks up-close is an advantage shops have over online sales, Leitner notes.

"An unexpected benefit is an increase in foot traffic from people who come in to ask about the racks, explore options and learn more about how they can customize their vehicles," he explains. "This not only leads to direct sales but also builds trust and strengthens customer loyalty. It opens up opportunities to engage with customers

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Ensure your staff is up to date on the products and trained to sell in a way that meets the customer's immediate needs and anticipates future upgrades. (Photo courtesy Yakima)

and fosters a community of enthusiasts who appreciate high-quality, durable off-road solutions."

COMPLETE THE PACKAGE

When you're selling and installing off-road racks, you're helping customers get out and explore.

"Leverage unique features in your marketing," says Patel, spotlighting the OVS Discovery Rack. "Highlight the no-drill installation, versatile accessory mounting options and its compatibility with rooftop tents and other gear. Set up a demo unit in-store, fully equipped with tents, awnings and accessories, to inspire customers and showcase the rack's capabilities. Additionally, provide your team with detailed training on installation and benefits so they can confidently recommend the product."

Abraham from IRONMAN 4X4 also supports the benefits of a well-designed display area.

"Shops can boost off-road rack sales by creating an immersive experience that emphasizes the versatility and lifestyle appeal of racks. Showcase their sleek design and modular functionality with in-store or online displays featuring vehicles fully equipped with roof and bed racks," she recommends. "Include popular accessories like rooftop tents, light bars or recovery boards to inspire customers and highlight the practical applications of the product."

Promotions such as package deals that bundle the rack with essential off-road accessories can drive customer engagement.

"Utilize digital marketing platforms like Instagram and Facebook to share compelling visuals and stories—show off vehicles outfitted with racks in real-world adventures or share customer testimonials to build trust and excitement," she says. "Lastly, educate your sales team to focus on the benefits that matter most to customers, such as durability, versatility and the ability to customize their setup."

And retailers don't have to go it alone, notes Savasta.

"Westin has in-store display programs so you can show your customers the features and benefits of our racks. We also have sales flyers available for free that cover the details, so your salespeople have all the information necessary to make a sale."

Showroom displays are effective, notes Ford from TrailFX, because they showcase product versatility.

"Highlight the different uses and customization options of off-road racks," she says. "For example, emphasize how they can hold gear for camping, hiking, bikes or kayaks. Show various configurations and installations through social media or in-store displays."

Accessorized shop vehicles are also extremely effective, says Metcalf from Küat.

"Customers love seeing products in action. Outfit a display vehicle with rack/accessories, showcasing the possibilities—then create content," he advises.

It's all about getting to know your client base and their levels of comfort when it comes to overlanding, says Bukolt from Fab Fours.

"By asking the right questions, you can sell your customer the right overland rack setup. There are a ton of products in the overland space, and your customer is relying on you to help them with what to bring with them and what stays at home," he says. "Always start with the basics and don't forget about weight."

To achieve such high-level service, Yakima's Scott believes in having employees well-versed in the capabilities and options of off-road racks.

"Ensure your staff is up to date on product knowledge and trained to sell in a way that meets the customer's immediate needs and anticipates their future needs," he suggests.

Becoming the local off-road rack expert means having a good grasp of the features, benefits and capabilities of various systems and how they can work together, says Leitner from Leitner Designs.

"Understanding the various preferences for how customers use racks is critical—whether it's for camping, hauling bikes or carrying other off-road gear," he says. "It's essential to be familiar with the third-party accessories that work well with your racks, as customers will often ask how these accessories mount to the rack. Product knowledge, even about accessories from other manufacturers, is crucial to closing the sale." ***TS***

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WHSE25TS

NEW VEHICLE REPORT

A sampling of the latest models, updates & special editions.



Carmakers are busy rolling out new models, special editions, notable updates and EV and hybrid offerings as 2025 vehicles begin appearing nationwide. Here's a sampling of what restylers may encounter on local dealer lots.

2026 HONDA PASSPORT

Completely reimagined around a "Born Wild" concept fusing form and function, the all-new 2026 Honda Passport and Passport TrailSport represent the ultimate Honda adventure SUVs with a rugged design, authentic off-road capability, next-level versatility and improved on-road performance.

Available in RTL, TrailSport and TrailSport Elite trim levels, standard features include an off-road-tuned suspension, expanded all-wheel drive system capabilities, robust steel skid plates, bright orange heavy-duty recovery hooks and specially engineered all-terrain tires.

Passport's new front end is strong and powerful with a bold grille, long hood and aggressive hood scoop. A new LED DRL signature includes distinctive amber lighting for TrailSport models.

The design is tough and aspirational with an increased dash-to-axle ratio, and "PASSPORT" stamped both in the front fascia and steel tailgate. Flared fenders, wider tracks and 18-inch wheels with 31-inch tires on all Passports accentuate its powerful stance.

A new, more powerful, 285-hp DOHC 3.5L V-6 engine pairs with the model's first 10-speed automatic transmission. This is also the first Passport to get the second generation of the Honda torque vectoring i-VTM4 all-wheel drive system, which features a stronger rear drive unit with 40% more torque capacity and 30% faster response, optimizing traction in all driving scenarios, the company states.

The interior delivers improved rear seat legroom, increased cargo space and more standard tech including a 10.2-inch digital driver instrumentation display and a 54% larger touchscreen (12.3 inches) plus Google built-in, and wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto compatibility standard.

New front body stabilizing seats help reduce fatigue on long adventure drives for best-in-class comfort.

Making the Passport adventure-ready are an aluminum front scuff plate and robust rock sliders with a stainless steel plate. An extensive new line of available cargo accessories with an overlanding focus includes a cargo roof platform, MOLLE storage systems and a cargo shelf that transforms into a picnic table to seat four. For durability, the lightweight composite cargo shelf/tabletop features a grippy rubberized surface finished with a unique Baja topographic map design.



The all-new 2026 Honda Passport and Passport TrailSport represent the ultimate Honda adventure SUVs. (Photos courtesy Honda)

2025 FORD MUSTANG GTD 'SPIRIT OF AMERICA'

The all-new 2025 Ford Mustang GTD, including the Mustang GTD "Spirit of America" package, sets a new performance bar with 815 hp, 664 pound-feet of torque and a top speed of 202 mph—the most of any street-legal Mustang ever.

Mustang GTD "Spirit of America" honors the American spirit of ingenuity and courage in the face of challenge. Ford Design created a Performance White body with twin racing stripes in Race Red and Lightning Blue, mimicking the iconic red, white and blue Mustang tri-bar that debuted in 1964.



The all-new 2025 Ford Mustang GTD "Spirit of America" package honors the American spirit and has the highest top speed of any street-legal Mustang ever. (Photos courtesy Ford)

Exposed carbon fiber is found on the front splitter, rear diffuser and spoiler. The spoiler includes Race Red end plates and a "MUSTANG" wordmark on the underside. Owners have a choice of Race Red or exposed carbon-fiber mirror caps, while Race Red calipers are standard—as is the Mustang GTD Performance Package.

Inside is a package-specific seat option to present a unique take on the focused, all-glass cockpit. The seats are leather-trimmed with Dinamica inserts. Black Onyx features prominently, with a Race Red gradient stripe down the middle and Re-Entry White trimmings on the exterior, while Victory Blue contrast stitching provides a subtle pop of color. Victory Blue also appears as a contrast element throughout the cabin.



The paddle shifters, shift ring and IP badge are available in 3D-printed titanium, as well.

2025 CHEVROLET CORVETTE ZR1



The 2025 Corvette ZR1, the quickest-accelerating Corvette ever. (Photo courtesy Chevrolet)

The 1,000-plus-hp 2025 Corvette ZR1 is the quickest 'Vette ever, achieving 0-60 mph in 2.3 seconds and clocking the quarter-mile in 9.6 seconds with the available ZTK Performance Package.

"The 2025 Corvette ZR1 yet again exceeded our expectations," said Josh Holder, chief engineer, Corvette. "Combined with a top speed record of 233 mph—which is unrivaled by any current production car priced under $1 million—the Corvette ZR1 delivers on its mission to provide customers unrelenting power."

The ZR1 with ZTK, which includes the high-downforce Carbon Fiber Aero Package, bursts from a standstill on ultra-grippy Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2R tires. Quick, repeatable launches are enabled by Corvette's standard Launch Control and Custom Launch Control features, allowing drivers more control to adjust for real-time conditions.

The ZR1 includes a 5.5L, twin-turbocharged LT7 DOHC flat-plane crank V-8 engine to reach 1,064 hp at 7,000 rpm and 828 pound-feet of torque at 6,000 rpm, per SAE guidelines. The top speed of 233 mph makes it the fastest car ever built by an American auto manufacturer, according to Chevy officials.

2025 RAM 2500 & 3500 HEAVY DUTY





Ram's 2500 and 3500 Heavy Duty trucks for 2025 combine comfort, innovation, technology and capability. (Photos courtesy Ram/Stellantis)

Ram's 2500 and 3500 Heavy Duty trucks for 2025 feature a new 6.7L Cummins High-Output Turbo Diesel engine while combining comfort, innovation, technology and capability.

"More than 70% of Ram heavy-duty customers opt for the diesel, and for 2025 we built on that demand and long-lasting durability with an improved Cummins engine coupled with a new 8-speed transmission," said Tim Kuniskis, CEO. "This is a very specific pickup segment that requires a powerful tool—every 2025 Ram 2500 we sell allows the potential of 1,075 pound-feet of torque in every gear, for a 70% increase in torque delivery from the previous generation 2500."

Also available with a standard 6.4L Hemi V-8 engine, the Ram Heavy Duty lineup includes Tradesman, Big Horn/Lone Star, Laramie, Rebel, Power Wagon, Limited Longhorn and Limited models.

Styling upgrades include unique updated grilles for the various trim levels, and premium LED headlamps, including available twin bi-functional projectors. The available RamBox offers lockable storage and includes a 115-volt outlet.

Inside is an improved 12- or new 14.5-inch touchscreen display and intuitive user experience through the Uconnect 5 system. Trailer-Tow Pages give customers the ability to view comprehensive trailer monitoring information, including Trailer Light Checkout, available trailer tire pressure monitoring, Trailer Brake Status and auxiliary camera shortcuts, all in one application accessible through the Uconnect touchscreen.

2025 TOYOTA 4RUNNER

As it enters its sixth generation, the Toyota 4Runner has never been more capable, advanced or refined. Amenities and the passenger experience were key focus areas during vehicle development, and 4Runner will now offer nine grades including the first-ever Trailhunter and Platinum offerings available on TRD Off-Road, TRD Off-Road Premium and Limited.

A 2.4L turbo four-cylinder i-FORCE engine is standard on the SR5, TRD Sport and TRD Sport Premium grades, and available on TRD Off-Road, TRD Off-Road Premium and Limited. It offers up to 278 hp and 317 pound-feet of torque. The second powertrain, the i-FORCE MAX hybrid, produces up to 326 hp and 465 pound-feet of torque.

The midsize SUV embraces its adventurous roots with the all-new Trailhunter grade. Trailhunter builds upon Toyota's off-road and overlanding credibility with purpose-built engineering and robust components including standard features such as Old Man Emu shocks, a low-profile high-mount air intake, 33-inch Toyo tires with 18-inch bronze-finished wheels, an onboard air compressor and distinctive exterior features like RIGID Industries color-selectable LED fog lamps, an ARB roof rack and the bronze-colored "TOYOTA" heritage-inspired grille with an integrated LED light bar.

The TRD Pro is also an i-FORCE MAX exclusive grade and packs in additional standard features like TRD-Tuned FOX QS3 adjustable shocks with rear remote reservoirs, a TRD performance air intake and 33-inch Toyo tires with 18-inch black alloy wheels.







As it enters its sixth generation, the Toyota 4Runner has never been more capable, advanced or refined. (Photos courtesy Toyota)

2025 SUBARU OUTBACK



The 2025 Subaru Outback continues its tradition of offering SUV capability with a car-like ride and handling. (Photo courtesy Subaru)

The 2025 Subaru Outback continues its tradition of offering SUV capability with a car-like ride and handling, backed by standard Subaru Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive.

The AWD system, Active Torque Vectoring, Vehicle Dynamics Control and X-MODE with Hill Descent Control complement the new model's standard 8.7 inches of ground clearance (9.5 inches for the Outback Wilderness), combining capability with a low step-in height and accessibility for everyday comfort.

The 2025 Subaru Outback will be available in Base, Premium, Onyx Edition, Limited, Touring, Onyx Edition XT, Wilderness, Limited XT and Touring XT trim levels. Non-XT trim levels are equipped with a 2.5L SUBARU BOXER engine that produces 182 hp and 176 pound-feet of torque.

Outback Wilderness and XT trim levels are equipped with a 2.4L turbocharged BOXER engine that makes 260 hp and 277 pound-feet of torque.

All Outback models feature a standard Lineartronic Continuously Variable Transmission with 8-speed manual shift mode and steering wheel paddle shift control switches.

Standard equipment for all models includes 17-inch alloy wheels and a SUBARU STARLINK dual 7.0-inch touchscreen system for infotainment, including USB-based Apple CarPlay and Android Auto compatibility, AM/FM/HD radio, Bluetooth hands-free phone and audio streaming connectivity, Rear-Vision Camera, USB-A charge point, and SiriusXM.

Higher levels include a variety of ADAS, comfort and accent upgrades.



2025 VOLKSWAGEN TIGUAN

The all-new 2025 Volkswagen Tiguan, the automaker's best-selling nameplate in the U.S., features bolder styling, more power and enhanced fuel efficiency, along with a refined, high-quality interior and advanced infotainment system to elevate the in-cabin experience.

The Tiguan has been fully redesigned on the MQB evo platform with all-new sheet metal, a shorter rear overhang and a slight wheelbase increase. The exterior design is bold and expressive, with a higher, more powerful nose than the second-generation Tiguan, as well as slimmer headlights and an available LED light bar and illuminated logo that creates a distinctive light signature.

The profile is also more athletic, thanks to a curved undercut above the front fenders that forms a powerful shoulder line. At the back, the roofline is extended by a spoiler that helps to optimize aerodynamics, along with side flow elements in the D-post and air curtains in the front bumper.

Under the hood, the 2.0L turbocharged EA888 four-cylinder engine now makes 201 hp, up from the previous 184 hp. Standard 17-inch aluminum-alloy wheels are replaced on volume trims with 19-inch wheels, while top trims are 20 inches.



The all-new 2025 Volkswagen Tiguan features bolder styling, more power and enhanced fuel efficiency. (Photo courtesy Volkswagen)

The color palette includes three new exterior options, including Avocado Green Pearl, Sandstone Uni and Monterey Blue Pearl, adding a vibrant touch to the vehicle's bold styling.

Moving into the cabin, the SUV showcases premium materials such as genuine American walnut wood décor, a wrapped and double-stitched center console, upgraded Savona leather interiors, and cloth seats with an embossed design to give the cabin an upscale feel. The gear selector has been moved onto the steering column, freeing up space for a larger center console that enhances storage space in the cabin. The Tiguan is offered exclusively in a two-row configuration for the North American region.

An array of ADAS, comfort and entertainment options are offered, along with available "Atmospheres" that combine synchronized ambient lighting and audio settings for a harmonious blend of sight and sound.

2025 MERCEDES-AMG GT 43





The 2025 Mercedes-AMG GT 43 is a sporty, elegant new entry into the AMG GT model portfolio. (Photos courtesy Mercedes-Benz)

The 2025 Mercedes-AMG GT 43 is a sporty, elegant new entry into the AMG GT model portfolio. The coupe offers an engaging dynamic driving experience, agile handling and extensive standard equipment.

The lightweight, handcrafted AMG 2.0L inline-4 turbo engine produces 416 hp and features an electric exhaust gas turbocharger—technology derived from Formula 1. It enables immediate throttle response across the entire rpm range and acceleration from 0-60 mph in 4.5 seconds.

Rear-wheel drive and standard AMG sport suspension support the dynamic driving experience, which is further heightened with the optional AMG RIDE CONTROL suspension with adaptive adjustable damping.

A long wheelbase, short overhangs, long hood and steeply raked rear windshield define the powerful appearance. Three optional exterior design packages—AMG Night Package, AMG Extended Night Package and AMG Exterior Chrome Package—sharpen the look of the coupe with high-gloss black, dark chrome or silver chrome accents.

Customers can personalize each model with a variety of exterior paint colors, including six MANUFAKTUR finishes, and optional AMG wheels in 19-, 20- and 21-inch sizes.

The interior features standard 2+2 seating in Nappa leather with AMG sports seats in the front and rear seats with folding backrests. Optional multi-contour front seats with massage function can be fitted to enhance comfort on long journeys. MANUFAKTUR Nappa leather upholsteries with diamond quilting are also available.

An AMG Performance steering wheel is offered standard in Nappa leather, as well as in optional Nappa leather/microfiber and microfiber/carbon fiber finishes.

Six interior trims, including new Open-Pore Grey Birch Wood and Open-Pore Brown Ash Wood, provide additional individualization options.

2025 JEEP WAGONEER

Built to appeal to the heart of the large SUV market, the 2025 Jeep Wagoneer combines heritage, refinement and technology with comfort and 4x4 capability. Powered by the standard Hurricane Twin Turbo I-6 engine with 420 hp and 468 pound-feet of torque, new touches this year include power-folding mirrors, 20-inch aluminum wheels, Active Lane Management and adaptive cruise control.

Wagoneer's interior offers a spacious third row standard with seating for up to eight. Leading-edge technologies include the advanced Uconnect 5 system, heads-up display, 360-degree surround view camera, up to 40 inches of total screen surface, available Amazon Fire TV built-in and segment-exclusive McIntosh audio system.

Highlights include a best-in-class towing capability of up to 10,000 pounds and, when equipped with the Advanced All-Terrain Group, the SUV features four steel skid plates that protect the front axle, transfer case, fuel tank and rear sway bar stabilizer bushing.





The 2025 Jeep Wagoneer combines heritage, refinement and technology with comfort and 4x4 capability.
(Photos courtesy Jeep/Stellantis)

Three available 4x4 systems include Quadra-Trac I, Quadra-Trac II and Quadra-Drive II. With the standard Selec-Terrain traction management system, which adjusts shift patterns, engine performance and torque distribution for maximum traction on tough roads, Quadra-Drive II features a rear electronic limited-slip differential (eLSD). Meanwhile, Quadra-Lift air suspension delivers a smooth ride and up to 10 inches of ground clearance.

2025 NISSAN FRONTIER

The 2025 Nissan Frontier doubles down on its relentless spirit with a rugged new design, enhanced utility for work or play and updated technology that simplifies every journey.

Headlines include greater availability of the 6-foot bed, an increased maximum tow rating and a larger available infotainment system.

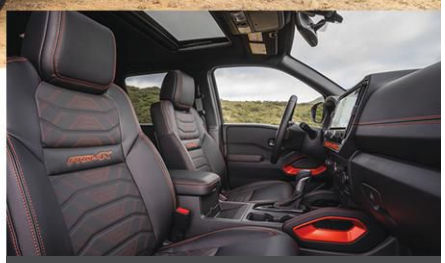
The midsize pickup's new look builds on its tough, squared-off appearance with a revised front fascia, grille and bumper design; a new tailgate finisher for PRO-X/PRO-4X; redesigned dashboard trim; a new 17-inch alloy wheel design and the introduction of a new Afterburn Orange paint.

A telescopic-adjusting steering wheel is newly standard on all grades, while a four-way power passenger seat becomes standard on the PRO-X/PRO-4X and SL grades. On SV grades and higher, the six-way power driver's seat now adds two-way power lumbar.

SV grades and higher add a 12.3-inch touchscreen infotainment system with Android Auto connectivity, in addition to wireless Apple CarPlay, enabling compatible smartphone mirroring without plugging in a USB cord.

All Frontier grades now come with a standard sliding rear window and a sunglasses holder in the overhead console. SV models include standard 17-inch alloy wheels. On SL grades, a wireless phone charger, Intelligent Around View Monitor and a four-way power passenger seat are all included.





The 2025 Nissan Frontier doubles down on its relentless spirit with a rugged new design, enhanced utility and updated technology. (Photos courtesy Nissan)

The 2025 Frontier expands availability of the crew cab long-wheelbase configuration from SV to SV, PRO-4X and SL grades. With a 6-foot bed, this caters to Frontier drivers looking to carry larger loads. The truck also boasts an increased maximum trailering capacity of up to 7,150 pounds.

The responsive, direct-injected 3.8L V-6 engine and 9-speed automatic transmission are rated for 310 hp and 281 pound-feet of torque. The engine features Idle Stop/Start, and Active Brake Limited Slip is standard on all grades, with PRO-4X upgrading to an electronic locking differential.

The PRO-X and PRO-4X cater to buyers heading beyond with all-terrain tires, Bilstein off-road suspension components, an even more rugged appearance with over-fenders and Lava Red tow hooks. ***TS***



Scout II Instrumentation

Dakota Digital, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, presents its Retrotech Series instrumentation for 1971-80 International Scout II models. The drop-in RTX series retains a stock look but with late-model features. Providing an original equipment appearance enhanced by LED backlighting in multiple color schemes, the system includes high-definition TFT message centers that can be fully configured to display information as needed. A central control box makes installation and setup easy.

Recovery Traction Boards



Superwinch, San Dimas, California, presents its Superwinch Recovery Traction Boards. Designed to provide reliable self-recovery for off-road enthusiasts, especially in situations where other vehicles or natural anchors are unavailable, the boards are constructed from automotive-grade polypropylene and UV stabilized. They support loads up to 4,400 pounds per axle (8,800-pound max vehicle weight) and feature aggressive, raised teeth and underbelly traction for enhanced grip. The boards are compatible with **TRED** traction board mounting systems.



Fender Flares

EGR USA, Ontario, California, presents its all-new EGR Summit Fender Flares. Available in matte black and featuring expanded applications for a variety of trucks, the flares combine modern styling with enhanced protection, making them ideal for drivers looking to elevate their vehicle's appearance and functionality. Featuring a robotically trimmed edge for a precision fit, they deliver up to 1 inch of additional tire coverage, protecting against road debris, mud and harsh weather conditions while also upgrading the truck's appearance.

Monoblock Amplifier



Stinger, Clearwater, Florida, introduces the MT-4000.1 Monoblock Amplifier. Rounding out the MT Series, the MT-4000.1 delivers more than 4,000 watts RMS at 1 ohm, providing booming bass. Engineered for SPL enthusiasts seeking bass and volume, the amplifier features Class D circuitry for maximum efficiency while delivering power to the subwoofer. Added highlights include advanced MOSFET technology, premium capacitors, robust transformers and high-performance inductors.



Sound-Damping Spray Coating

Design Engineering Inc. (DEI), Avon Lake, Ohio, presents its ATAC Spray-On Coating, available in a 12-ounce aerosol can. The easy-to-use, all-in-one solution provides heat reflection and sound-damping capabilities, now accessible without the need for a spray gun or air compressor. Specifically engineered for spot treatments, the coating reflects heat up to 375 degrees and reduces noise and vibration while insulating against engine and exhaust heat, creating a quieter and more comfortable interior environment.



Bronco Top Products

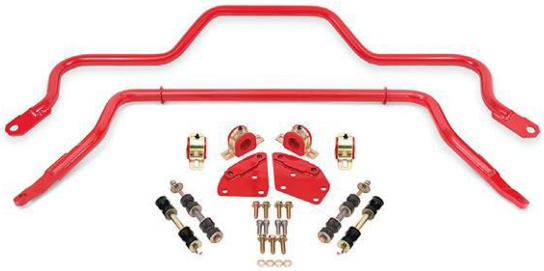
Bestop, Louisville, Colorado, presents its latest Top Products for new-gen Ford Broncos. The Skyrider for Hardtop (2021-24 four-door Broncos) retractable top upgrades the factory modular hardtop, featuring a dual-row opening that enhances the driving experience. Its smooth, cam-assisted mechanism makes operation easy. The TrekTop Soft Top (2021-24 Broncos) provides a fully enclosed, all-season soft top experience or can be reconfigured for various open-air options.



Jeep LED Light Bar

ORACLE Lighting, Metairie, Louisiana, presents its Integrated LED Light Bar, designed exclusively for Jeep Wrangler JL and Gladiator JT models. The high-mount LED light bar combines performance and a factory-style appearance. Its patented waterproof design integrates into the roofline, offering a sleek, aerodynamic profile that reduces wind noise and drag while delivering improved lighting power with 30x 8W LED emitters producing 18,000 lumens and projecting light up to 600 meters.

F-Body Sway Bar Kit



BMR Suspension, Lakeland, Florida, presents a front and rear Non-Adjustable Sway Bar Kit for third-generation 1982-92 GM F-Body Camaro and Firebird models. Designed from 35mm (front) and 25mm (rear) DOM steel tubing, the sway bars are cold formed to better resist torsional fatigue and retain memory. The kit offers a 129% (front) and 149% (rear) increase in sway bar rate over the stock bars, reducing body roll and improving handling for street performance, autocross and road racing applications.



Hard Low-Profile Bed Covers

Rough Country, Dyersburg, Tennessee, presents its Hard Low-Profile Bed Covers. Designed to offer sleek style, secure gear storage and protection with fast, easy access, the covers are available in a standard trifold design as well as a flip-up (full bed access) model. They include a premium matte black textured finish with full aluminum construction for a blend of functionality, durability and affordability.



Performance Tires

Kumho Tire U.S.A., Atlanta, offers a new lineup of Ultra-High Performance Tires. The Ecsta Sport All-Season PA71, Ecsta Sport PS72 and Ecsta Sport S PS72 are designed to bring next-generation compound and tread design technology for improved performance matched with all-new aesthetics to fit high-end, high-performance vehicles.

2024-Up Mustang Rear Deck Spoiler



Air Design USA, Oceanside, California, presents a Rear Deck Spoiler for 2024-newer Ford Mustang models. Offering authentic styling and instant aerodynamic flair, the spoilers are designed to accentuate the vehicle's profile in a sleek way that won't take away from its aggressive style. They also improve airflow to provide a noticeable sharp driving feel at medium to high speeds. The rust-free, no-drill installation features **3M Automotive** double-sided tape, and the removeable spoilers are factory painted in glossy black and ready to install.



All-Terrain Tire

Yokohama, Santa Ana, California, presents its all-new GEOLANDAR A/T4 G018 all-terrain on- and off-road tire. Engineered for trucks, SUVs and CUVs, the multipurpose A/T4 will be available in over 100 sizes ranging from 15- to 22-inch wheel diameters. The A/T4, which replaces the GEOLANDAR A/T G015, is severe snow service rated and features a dual-sidewall design that allows drivers to choose their appearance. An optimized ride comes from aggressive center blocks that provide off-road traction on any trail surface. ***TS***



View From the Inside

TMI Products honors its 2024 TRIM Award winners.

TMI Products announced winners of its annual TRIM Awards showcasing the style and creativity of top vehicle interior designs. (Photos courtesy TMI Products)

Custom automotive interior products company TMI Products honored winners of its 2024 TRIM Awards with trophies and Golden Tickets to attend this year's Barrett-Jackson Cup, along with gift certificates from FiTech and OPTIMA Batteries and a complete Mother's detail kit.

The Grand Champion also received a complete TMI interior for their next build.

Vehicles were selected from 10 categories related to excellence in interior design and craftsmanship, showcasing the skill and creativity required to create a classic custom interior.

The winners, announced at the 2024 SEMA Show and with comments from TMI officials, were:

BEST CAR

1966 CHEVROLET NOVA

Owner: Jeremiah Belk

(Open to any car that features TMI seats)

"The full custom interior was designed by Sean Smith and beautifully crafted by Sew Cal Rods in Ontario, California. Front seats are TMI with added bolstering. Dash built and fabricated by the car builder, Driven Speed Shop."







BEST TRUCK

1953 CHEVY 3100 PICKUP

Owner: Ellezy Bodhi

(Open to any truck that features TMI seats)

"The interior of this awesome custom truck was built by students at Kustom Built Cars Educational Workshop. Using a blacked-out theme with a pop of red double-diamond stitching on the interior, all interior accents were powder-coated to go with the outside design theme."







BEST SUV OR WAGON





1957 PONTIAC SAFARI TWO-DOOR WAGON

Owner: Tracy Weaver

(Open to any SUV or wagon, either two-door or four-door)

"The interior of this slick Pontiac was completely remade, including seats, and all the chrome parts were modeled in-house. The design of the interior was imagined to look like an upscale concept car for that era. An amazing 1,000 hours of fabrication went into handcrafting and completing the look. Even the machined parts were designed to look like they could have been built by the factory of that era, yet have been given a modern edge."

BEST CUSTOM CAR INTERIOR

1972 OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS SUPREME

Owner: Randy Wilcox

(Open to all cars at the show; can be any car with any custom interior)

"The more you look at this classic Olds, the more custom details you will see. The entire custom interior was designed and fabricated by Jimmy Konnermann and the Renegade Customs and Covers team. From custom color-matching the exterior paint to seamlessly integrating the double DIN and custom billet into the factory dash, great pains were taken to maintain the original spirit of the car."



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BEST FULL INTERIOR





1970 CHEVROLET CHEVELLE

Owner: Brian Myers

(Open to any vehicle running a full TMI interior using all the available components)

"This stunning Chevelle, built by Lakeside Speed and Shine, was the 2024 TMI Road Tour winner, giving it automatic entry into the TRIM Awards, where it clearly held its own by taking home yet another trophy."

MOST CREATIVE

1959 CHRYSLER 300E

Owner: Tony Arme

(Best usage of patterns, colors and overall execution)

"Highlights of this incredible interior include 3D-printed door panels, carbon floor material and a front-row bucket seat conversion that retained the factory swivel seat feature. The dash was extensively modified with leather, carbon and a Cerakote treatment. The matching trunk allowed for suspension viewing and CNC-stitched inserts were used throughout."







BEST OF SHOW

1972 CHEVROLET K5 BLAZER

(Of Ringbrothers and Sean Smith fame)

"This stunning full custom interior, courtesy of Gabe's Custom Interiors, was designed by famed interior designer Sean Smith himself and features a unique blend of old-world craftsmanship paired with a modern 3D-design process. Hundreds of man hours went into the dash alone and the seats were reworked from a late-model Camaro. In the rear, the spare HRE wheel is showcased in the cargo area, while the tailgate has a flip-down table for tailgating and get-togethers."







BEST COLOR-MATCHING



1970 CHEVROLET CAMARO

Owner: Tim Palazzolo

(Best usage of patterns, colors and stitching that matches vehicle exterior)

"While blue isn't always the color you go to when you think of a world-class interior, this Camaro used the color effectively to complement the exterior. The complete custom interior built by Cato's Custom Upholstery is a one-off design and uses Dakota Digital gauges and custom brightwork accents for a hint of contemporary flair."

BEST CUSTOM TRUCK INTERIOR

1986 CHEVROLET C10 PICKUP

Owner: Earl Brignac

(Open to all trucks at the show; can be any truck with any custom interior)

"Square bodies are coming in hot and this C10 was sporting a full custom interior by the crew at MTI Automotive Designs. The focal point of this interior was a completely reworked dash with modern screens that somehow didn't look out of place on this build. Custom door panels, seats and back wall were fully wrapped in leather and all of the trim was unique to this build."





FAN FAVORITE

2005 MERCEDES-BENZ SLR MCLAREN

Owner: David Price

(TMI social media; finalists chosen by TRIM Award judges and voted in by audience)

"It's no wonder why this eye-grabbing interior was voted in as the Fan Favorite. Making a supercar interior stand out is a tall order and this full Alcantara and carbon fiber interior features laser-etching, which lends itself to the Tartan style. The Alcantara has been laser etched to give a Tartan style finish as a nod to the SLR heritage."





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





Donut Lab is pursuing development of a multiuse platform for electric vehicles, offering manufacturers a library of intercompatible components. (Photo courtesy Donut Lab)

EV ROUNDUP

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

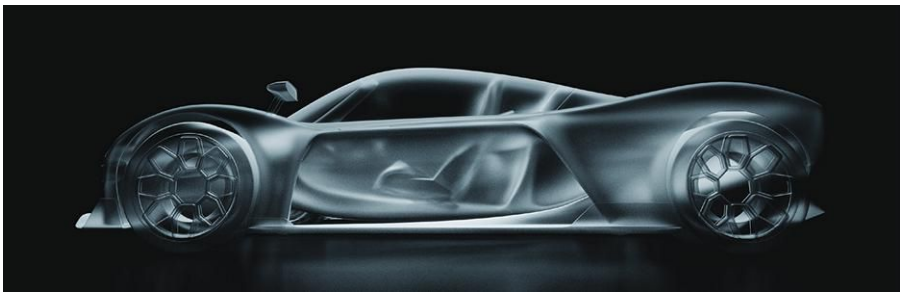
DONUT LABS DEVELOPING MULTIUSE EV PLATFORM

Donut Lab is developing a multiuse platform for electric vehicles, offering manufacturers a library of intercompatible components that can be used to produce a variety of EVs including supercars, buses, drones and SUVs.

The goal is to improve performance through weight savings and affordable manufacturing processes by bringing all the components needed for an electric vehicle onto the single Donut platform and making it available to all industry operators, the company states in a press release.

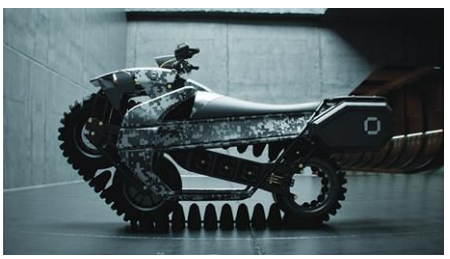
"We want to set a new standard for what electric transportation can achieve. The Donut platform creates entirely new opportunities for almost any industry," says Ville Piippo, product director of Donut Labs. "In the future, those utilizing the platform will be able to select the components they want from a catalog and connect them with standard connectors, after which everything is ready."

As a subsidiary of the motorcycle manufacturer Verge Motorcycles, one of the main components of the company's technology platform is the donut-shaped motor that can be installed directly in the wheel, eliminating the need for a drivetrain.









Other highlighted components on the Donut platform include battery modules, computer units and vehicle control software. All will be available in a range of sizes and performance classes, and the modular architecture ensures that the components can be used to build various vehicles or even robots, according to the company.

Oruga, a Latvian company that manufactures electric vehicles designed for off-road driving, has used the Donut Lab platform in the development of its most recent model—a one-roller vehicle resembling a futuristic combination of a snowmobile and a motorcycle.

Meanwhile, the Australian company Hyper Q Aerospace also utilizes the Donut platform in its electric aircraft.

MAHLE TO SELL US-BASED EV & HYBRID BUSINESS SUBSIDIARY MAHLE POWERTRAIN



MAHLE plans to sell its MAHLE Powertrain (MPT) USA engineering services business, MAHLE Powertrain LLC, to the Dumarey Group. (Photo courtesy MAHLE)

Automotive supplier MAHLE plans to sell its MAHLE Powertrain (MPT) USA engineering services business, MAHLE Powertrain LLC, to the Dumarey Group. Both parties signed a contract at the end of 2024.

The transaction includes the MPT facilities in Plymouth, Michigan, that currently houses around 70 employees, providing testing and engineering services to U.S. customers.

The official closing was expected in the first quarter of 2025.

The MAHLE Powertrain branches and their locations outside the U.S. were not part of the sale and will continue their business from five dedicated facilities in the United Kingdom, Germany and China, fully integrated in the MAHLE Group's R&D network, according to a press release announcing the sale plan.

MAHLE Powertrain is the engineering services subsidiary of the MAHLE Group, providing engineering and consultancy services for the design, testing, development, calibration and integration of electrified powertrain systems and hybridized internal combustion engines.

The decision to sell the U.S. branch was a result of an ongoing review of the long-term strategic positioning of MAHLE, according to the release. The engineering services market in the U.S. is highly competitive, with consolidation to be expected.

Due to the small size and small market share of MPT USA, MAHLE officials saw bigger opportunities for future growth outside the group, the release states.

"With the Dumarey Group we have found a buyer with a strong U.S. focus and corresponding dedicated growth strategy for this market that will be able to lead the business outside the MAHLE Group into a successful future," says Dr. Marco Warth, vice president of MAHLE Corporate Research and Advanced Engineering.

The Dumarey Group (formerly known as PUNCH Group) is a Belgium-based independent supplier for the development, integration and manufacturing of competitive powertrain solutions.

"Acquiring MAHLE Powertrain USA marks a significant milestone in our strategy and reaffirms our longstanding connection with the United States," says Pierpaolo Antonioli, chief technology officer of Dumarey Group. "This step strengthens our commitment to growth, innovation and delivering exceptional value to our customers, while honoring the deep heritage and shared cooperation with U.S. companies over the years."

EV ROUNDUP

EV MANUFACTURER MULLEN RAMPS UP US BATTERY PRODUCTION

Electric vehicle manufacturer Mullen Automotive Inc. plans for battery production operations to begin at its Fullerton, California, facility by mid-2025.

The Fullerton facility is dedicated to producing next-generation, American-made battery packs and modules—critical components to Mullen's zero-emissions commitment and a step toward reducing reliance on key battery components imported from foreign countries, officials state in a press release.

"A key mission for our company is to transition to American-made battery components," said David Michery, CEO and chairman of Mullen Automotive. "Our focus is on producing batteries and modules made right here in the USA."

To date, Mullen has installed three battery lines at the California facility—a high-volume standard battery chemistry line; a high-precision, low-volume standard chemistry R&D line; and a high-precision, low-volume solid-state polymer R&D line, the press release notes.

Plans call for an additional high-volume standard chemistry battery line and an additional high-volume, fully automated wire bonding line to be installed soon. Battery production is then anticipated to begin by mid-2025.



EV manufacturer Mullen Automotive Inc. plans for battery production operations to begin at its Fullerton, California, facility by mid-2025. (Photo courtesy Mullen Automotive)

BEV MARKET GROWTH HINGES ON WOMEN BUYERS


A new study shows dealerships hold the key to effectively engaging female BEV buyers. (Photo courtesy GlobeNewswire)

Growth in the battery electric vehicle (BEV) market hinges on attracting more women to the category, according to new data from EVForward by Escalent, a comprehensive study of the next generation of electric vehicle (EV) buyers.

BEV ownership, shopping and awareness are largely male-dominated, with men making up 71% of owners and 74% of shoppers and typically conducting more exploratory research throughout the purchasing process, the study finds.

Women generally start with lower familiarity of BEVs—only 30% are familiar compared with 55% of men—and report engaging in fewer research activities during their car-buying process, the report adds.

Research conducted by women carries greater weight in their final purchase decisions, the report notes, presenting an opportunity for automakers, and especially dealerships, to close the gender confidence gap by serving as a trusted source of clear, reliable information for women throughout the BEV buying process.

"A combination of factors is limiting BEV adoption for women," says Nikki Stern, senior insights manager with Escalent's Automotive & Mobility team. "Women are not only less familiar with BEVs and complete fewer research activities, but they are also less likely to know someone who owns a BEV. This limits their ability to hear about positive experiences, further slowing their consideration of BEV powertrains."

Men and women report researching BEVs differently. Men are significantly more inclined to explore their options via online research (71% compared with 64% of women), videos (34% versus 27%), online forums (22% versus 15%) and vehicle-building tools on manufacturer websites (22% versus 17%), according to the data.

The study states women rely more heavily on in-person experiences, with 65% conducting test drives compared with 60% of men. However, women report having worse dealership experiences than men and not getting all the information they need from the dealership while shopping for a BEV.

"Dealerships hold the key to effectively engaging female buyers and it's critical they acknowledge the existing gaps. Women generally have a broader set of EV barriers than men, so they need additional and more nuanced information to feel comfortable and confident in buying one," says K.C. Boyce, vice president with the Automotive & Mobility and Energy teams at Escalent. "Alongside the opportunity to enhance the dealership experience for female buyers—a recognized challenge—dealers must recognize that women generally approach EV purchases differently than men and tailor their strategies accordingly."

RANGE-EXTENDED RAMCHARGER LEADS RAM'S ELECTRIFICATION OFFERINGS

Stellantis moved up the launch date of its Ram 1500 Ramcharger range-extended pickup ahead of the Ram 1500 REV, the company's first battery-electric (BEV) light-duty truck. Ram brand originally planned to launch the Ram 1500 REV in the first half of 2025.

"The decision to launch Ramcharger first was driven by overwhelming consumer interest, maintaining a competitive advantage in the technology and slowing industry demand for half-ton BEV pickups," the company stated in a press release.

Ramcharger will be open for consumer orders in the first half of 2025, followed by the Ram 1500 REV launch in 2026, according to the company.

The Sterling Heights (Michigan) Assembly Plant will continue to be the primary home for Ram 1500 production—including electrified and internal combustion engine (ICE) versions—and play a key role in bringing industry-leading technology to market, officials added.



The Ram 1500 Ramcharger pickup will be open for consumer orders in the first half of 2025. (Photo courtesy Stellantis)

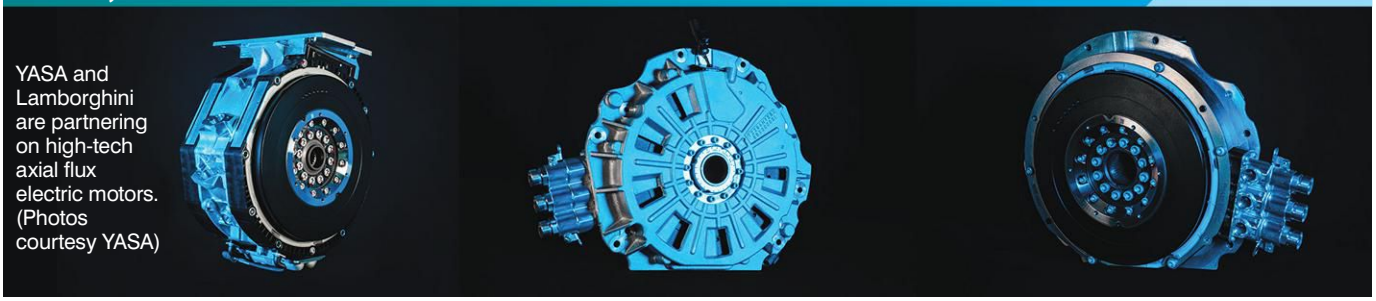
The all-new 2025 Ram 1500 Ramcharger has a targeted range of up to 690 miles with a 92 kilowatt-hour battery pack, paired with an onboard 130 kW generator, sending power to 250 kW front and 238 kW rear electric drive modules (EDMs).

Vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-home bidirectional charging affords the pickup the flexibility to charge another Stellantis battery-electric vehicle or provide power back to the grid, the company reveals.

Targeted performance figures include a 0-60-mph time of 4.4 seconds, 663 hp and more than 615 pound-feet of torque, up to a best-in-class 14,000 pounds towing with a class 5 hitch and a maximum payload capacity of 2,625 pounds.

A new feature is One Pedal Driving Mode that charges the regenerative braking system when easing off the accelerator.

YASA, LAMBORGHINI UNVEIL NEXT-GEN E-PROPULSION TECHNOLOGY


YASA and Lamborghini are partnering on high-tech axial flux electric motors. (Photos courtesy YASA)

YASA, a leader in axial flux electric motor technology, and Automobili Lamborghini, the iconic Italian luxury sports car manufacturer, have announced the latest milestone in their strategic technical partnership: the creation of high-tech axial flux electric motors.

The bespoke electric motors have been meticulously designed and honed for Lamborghini's state-of-the-art Temerario hybrid V-8 supercar and will be built at YASA's production facility near Oxford, England, officials note.

Last year, YASA and Lamborghini officially announced their electric drive partnership, which began with the development of an optimized high-performance e-propulsion system for the Revuelto V-12 hybrid hypercar.

Building on this foundation, the Temerario represents a leap forward, showcasing the latest technical, design and performance capabilities that YASA's technology can deliver, the companies stated in a press release.

"Our evolving partnership with Lamborghini is a testament to our shared vision for the future of high-performance electric propulsion," said Graeme Cook, YASA managing director. "The Temerario advances the path that the Revuelto established earlier last year, further exemplifying the pinnacle of our collaborative efforts and showcasing YASA's innovative technology."

Positioned on its front e-axle, the Temerario incorporates two YASA axial flux motors, delivering peak torque of 300Nm and peak power of 110kW. The outputs come via a small overall footprint of the front electric motors: each weighs approximately 38 pounds, with a diameter of 11.6 inches and thickness of 2.7 inches. The motors' maximum speed is 10,000 rpm.

"At Lamborghini, our pursuit of perfection drives us to integrate the latest advancements in electric propulsion," said Davide Bizzarri, head of vehicle motion at Automobili Lamborghini. "Partnering with YASA allows us to push the technical and engineering boundaries of what's possible, delivering unparalleled performance and driving experiences for our customers."

In addition to the two front electric motors, the Temerario benefits from a third YASA electric motor on the rear axle, ensuring optimized performance and driving dynamics. ***TS***

PERFORMANCE

Larry Chen p. 44 / Dr. Mopar p. 48 / Performance Products p. 52

Cut Through the NOISE

More profits selling performance exhausts? Sounds good!

BY JOHN CAROLLO

One constant in our performance world has been drivers changing out the exhaust system. Jesse Kramer, chief marketing officer for AWE, jokingly calls it a "gateway drug" of hot rodding, and it is often the first or second modification made by car owners—right up there with wheels and tires.

These days, the performance exhaust market includes plenty of high-tech aspects that allow drivers to enjoy all the benefits cat-back and related upgrades have to offer—including sound, performance and even efficiency. Advancements have also helped alleviate drone and other unwanted noise and harshness while capturing the rumble (or roar!) that enthusiasts seek.

It may seem like there's nothing new to say about today's performance exhaust systems and components, but new applications and refined selling tips combine with best practices to help shops maximize market potential. Suppliers are happy to share their tips (pun intended!).

THE SHAPE OF SOUND

Simply stated, different exhaust notes sound good to different people. For shops looking to debunk popular misconceptions, it makes sense to start with "louder is better."

"With exhaust, it's about managing



A precision-engineered tone and noticeable performance boost create an instant connection between drivers and vehicles featuring upgraded exhaust systems. (Photos courtesy AWE)





Today's designs make performance exhaust systems and components less labor-intensive. (Photos courtesy aFe POWER)

expectations within the utility of the vehicle," says Rich Waitas, senior manager/spokesman for MagnaFlow. "If it's your weekend warrior, you can push the limits and choose a more aggressive exhaust designed for the highest performance, lowest mass and fewest noise countermeasures. Or, it could be a dual-purpose vehicle that has to have manners for the daily commute but enough to make the sound character fit the build. Lastly, check your local laws, as sound abatement rules vary from city to city and there is nothing worse than adding a ticket to the cost of the investment."



Cut Through the
NOISE

PERFORMANCE EXHAUST PRODUCTS

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** Toyota Tacoma & Tundra Stainless Steel Cat-Back Systems
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Available in mandrel-bent 304 and 409 stainless steel cat-back versions with several tip options; all designed to install with little or no modifications, utilizing stock mounting points and quality hardware.

aFe POWER
Michael Santa Cruz
Director of Sales

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:**
Performance Exhaust Lines
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Patented drone-canceling 180 Technology, customized per platform; available for Jeep, truck, modern muscle, sport compact, JDM and Euro segments, all in T304L stainless steel; lifetime warranties and fitment and satisfaction guarantees; made in the USA.

AWE
Jesse Kramer
CMO

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** SwitchFire X-Pipe
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Eliminates the turbulent intersection of a standard X-Pipe while truly blending the combustion pulses from both sides of the engine.

Borla Performance Industries
Tim Sayers
Muffler Development Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** MagnaFlow Overland Series
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Provides true OEM-plus fit, functionality and durability for trucks and SUVs while complementing the owner's lifestyle; NDT (No Drone Technology) for a solid performance sound; dyno-proven power.

MagnaFlow
Rich Waitas
Senior Manager/Spokesman

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** Stainless Steel Systems
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
High-quality 304- or 409-grade mandrel-bent systems offered by Aero Exhaust, Flowmaster, MagnaFlow, Corsa, Borla and more; mild, moderate and aggressive sound options.

Team Allied Distribution
Alex Ortega
Director of Business Development



Prepare to answer questions about the systems to find the right exhaust for each application. (Photo courtesy Borla Performance Industries)

The truth that one exhaust system or style doesn't fit everyone's preference is what drives the market and makes professional knowledge important, says Michael Santa Cruz, director of sales at aFe POWER.

"It's extremely important that the reseller know and qualify their customer before offering a particular exhaust," he says. "What may be 'quiet' and smooth sounding to the reseller may be too loud or even too much cab drone for the customer."

Even if drivers come in looking for a specific system or setup, good shops know they have more to offer.

"Learning what level of knowledge customers have is important so you don't talk over their heads," cautions Tim Sayers, muffler development manager at Borla Performance Industries. "You may know what words like 'drone,' 'resonance' and



Performance exhausts are among the first upgrades enthusiasts make, regardless of vehicle type. (Photo courtesy AWE)





Quality systems deliver a visceral connection to a vehicle's performance. (Photos courtesy MagnaFlow)

'scavenging' mean, but your customer may not. On the other end of the spectrum, be careful not to 'dumb' things down too much when talking to a knowledgeable customer."

Next, the systems need to fit properly, says Kramer.

"Once a shop understands that an exhaust needs to excel in quality, sound and performance, the next step is to focus on brands that respect the realities of flat-rate labor," he says. "Exhaust systems that don't prioritize precise fitment can quickly lead to wasted time and lower hourly earnings. That's why going with a brand that has a Fitment Guarantee is critical."

The complexity of the perfect exhaust system makes for some trials and tribulations, meaning shops need some familiarity with what's available.

"A common challenge for many shop owners is the number of reputable brands on the market, each typically offering at least two to three sound options," says Alex Ortega, director of business development at Team Allied Distribution. "Stocking various flavors and multiple sound options for every customer/application can present some challenges. Primarily focused on the exhaust and emissions segment, Team Allied takes on the logistical burden, ensuring shop owners have access to the appropriate performance exhaust solutions without requiring extensive on-site inventory."



Cut Through the NOISE

HOT ROD POWER TOUR ANNOUNCES MIDWEST VENUE SUMMER STOPS

The 31st Annual HOT ROD Power Tour is gearing up to hit five Midwest venues this June, including stops at the Route 66 Raceway in Joliet, Illinois, and the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

America's largest traveling car show brings more than 6,000 cars and trucks of all years, makes and models on display for tens of thousands of automotive enthusiasts along the route and at stops each night.

"HOT ROD Power Tour is a staple summer automotive journey that is truly one of a kind," said Eric Schwab, chief commercial officer of MotorTrend Group. "We are proud of the event's legacy and how it has continued to grow over the years, and 2025 looks to be another historic run."

The five-city tour will feature more than 1,000 miles of driving, combined with high-octane events like drag racing, autocross and live entertainment.

HOT ROD Power Tour 2025 schedule:

- KICKOFF/Day 1: June 9 – Lucas Oil Indianapolis Raceway Park, Indianapolis, IN
- Day 2: June 10 – Route 66 Raceway, Joliet, IL
- Day 3: June 11 – Allen County War Memorial Coliseum, Fort Wayne, IN
- Day 4: June 12 – Monroe County Fairgrounds, Monroe, MI
- Day 5: June 13 – Summit Motorsports Park, Norwalk, OH

"Last year was very successful, as we experienced over 65% growth of new participants. We're excited about this year's tour route, giving participants a unique and fun experience while visiting historic Midwest cities and venues," said Mike Galimi, HOT ROD network director.

Launched in 1995 by HOT ROD magazine to connect with readers, HOT ROD Power Tour is widely considered the finest high-end hot rod–based automotive tour in the world. It has visited 37 U.S. states and covers an average of 1,000-plus miles each year.

Classic cars and hot rods travel city to city while car lovers and HOT ROD editors and photographers follow alongside the tour, all cruising through small-town America like one big family reunion road trip. Participants can join for one, two or all five days.

All vehicles and spectators must preregister before arriving at the first venue they attend. Spectators can come out and witness the HOT ROD Power Tour spectacle at no gate admission cost but must register for a free ticket. Spectator parking is located away from the show grounds and parking charges may apply in some locations.





The 2025 HOT ROD Power Tour will visit five Midwestern cities in five days in June. (Photo courtesy HOT ROD Power Tour)



Stock different systems and sound options to meet the needs of performance exhaust customers. (Photo courtesy Team Allied Distribution)

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

One of the reasons the performance exhaust market continues to thrive is because nearly every driver is a potential customer.

"Exhaust, when it's a bolt-on design, is one of those features that can apply to nearly any car owner who is performance-interested," says Waitas. "Or it can be the first mod in a long list of future mods for the lifelong performance enthusiast. Exhaust uniquely provides a visceral connection to the performance of the vehicle—it's the heartbeat and the voice."

And, if you think some exhausts are loud, wait until you hear the attention from a satisfied customer.

"You gain not just the business that the performance exhaust generates, but you also gain a customer who may be an influ-

encer to their friends who are performance customers and also customers who have stock vehicles," says Sayers.

These conversions are at the heart of the performance aftermarket because they make a real, noticeable impact on the vehicle, Kramer explains.

"When a customer chooses a premium exhaust from a brand like AWE, they experience something few other upgrades can match—immediate satisfaction the moment they fire up the engine. The deep, precision-engineered tone and noticeable performance boost create an instant and undeniable connection with the vehicle. And, while AWE may have designed the exhaust, it's the shop that made it happen—delivering not just a product, but an upgrade that transforms the driving experience from Day 1," he says. "By offering high-quality solutions from trusted brands, the shop earns the customer's respect and confidence, positioning itself as a reliable source for future modifications. With such a positive first impression, it's only natural for customers to come back for more—whether it's intakes, suspension or other performance parts. One well-executed upgrade sets the stage for a long-term relationship."

Meanwhile, for technicians, the good news isn't just that exhaust systems are easy sales—they are often fairly simple to install as well.

"You don't have to own a muffler shop or performance center to offer your customers a direct bolt-on kit," Ortega notes. "Tire shops, general repair shops or really any business with a lift can easily sell and install turnkey exhaust systems equipped with all the necessary components and hardware in the box. Don't let the business walk away."

As far as installations go, Santa Cruz says not to forget how the industry has advanced.

"Most headers and cat-back exhaust systems are designed to fit much better than they were 20 years ago, so they are less labor-intensive, which offers less downtime for a shop to offer installations," he reveals. "This also leads to related products such as intake systems, charge pipes and tuners, if the customer is looking for a bolt-on performance package."

KNOW THE PLAYERS

A strong market attracts plenty of participants, forcing shops to know and understand the brands they carry.

"A dependable supplier like Team Allied Distribution ensures consistent access to major brands and a broad inventory," Ortega says. "Our services include same-day and weekly delivery options, allowing shop owners to focus on exceptional service and meeting customer needs. This reliability enables businesses to maintain product availability and offer timely solutions, regardless of demand fluctuations."

Performance shops can become local exhaust experts by knowing the ins and outs of different setups.

"Products have features; people buy benefits," explains Sayers from Borla. "Be ready to answer things like, 'Where is the product manufactured?' 'What material is it made from?' 'What warranty does it have?' and 'Will it guarantee no drone or resonance inside the vehicle?'"

Another plus for exhaust shops is that the systems show well on social media.

"Create content," advises MagnaFlow's Waitas. "Get online with even the simplest pictures, but absolutely create videos of the sound and what (the vehicle) looks like before and after. With a simple smartphone and some video content, you can draw customers to your shop with minimal investment."

Santa Cruz from aFe POWER is also a fan of before-and-after videos and gaining attention by showing the systems in action.

"This allows customers to see your capabilities and offers customers the chance to listen to a similar vehicle with the offered exhaust before selling or installing headers or a cat-back setup," he says. "Also, offer options. Again, one size does not fit all, and exhaust is more about personalization."

In the end, hearing is oftentimes believing.

"Nothing sells an exhaust better than sound. Shops should maximize the use of product media by reaching out to manufacturers for high-quality videos, sell sheets and marketing content—the top-tier brands will be ready to provide the support you need," says Kramer. "Beyond that, there's a major opportunity for shops to pull in product data, making it easier to showcase a brand's full catalog online, even without running an e-commerce store. Brands like AWE, which are fully ACES and PIES compliant, offer dealers all the data necessary to seamlessly integrate product information into their catalogs, ensuring accuracy and ease of use." ***TS***



Larry Chen Q&A: Through the Lens of Automotive Passion

Pennzoil provides industry insights from one of its 'Long May We Drive' partners.

PHOTOS COURTESY PENNZOIL/LARRY CHEN

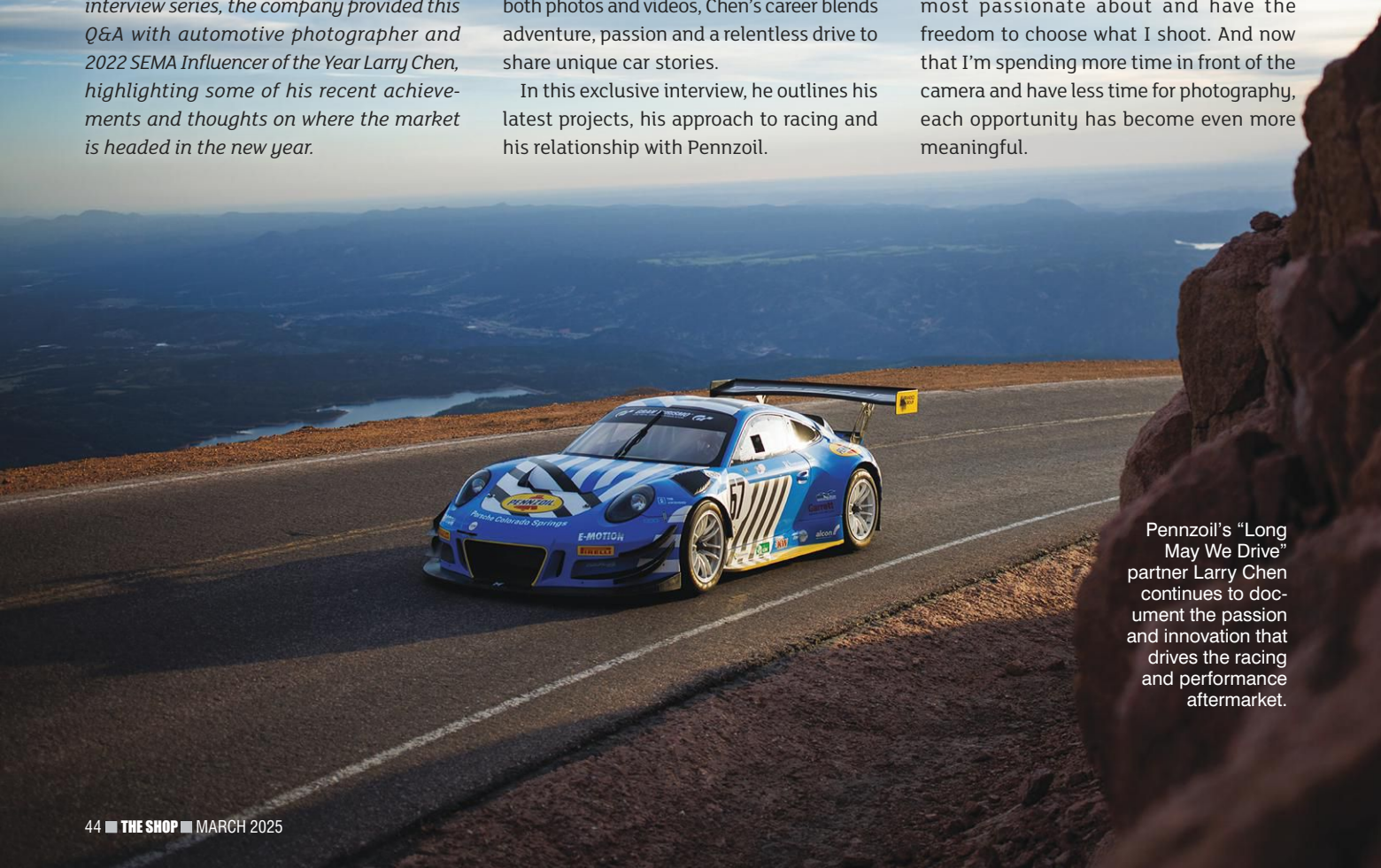
Editor's note: *Lubricants company Pennzoil works with automotive industry insiders, influencers and trendsetters as part of its "Long May We Drive" initiative to highlight the special nature of the racing and performance aftermarket. As part of its ongoing interview series, the company provided this Q&A with automotive photographer and 2022 SEMA Influencer of the Year Larry Chen, highlighting some of his recent achievements and thoughts on where the market is headed in the new year.*

As one of the most respected figures in automotive photography, Larry Chen has spent more than two decades capturing the spirit of car culture worldwide. Known for his vibrant storytelling through both photos and videos, Chen's career blends adventure, passion and a relentless drive to share unique car stories.

In this exclusive interview, he outlines his latest projects, his approach to racing and his relationship with Pennzoil.

Q Larry, how has your work in automotive photography evolved throughout the years?

LARRY CHEN: I feel incredibly fortunate to focus on the projects I'm most passionate about and have the freedom to choose what I shoot. And now that I'm spending more time in front of the camera and have less time for photography, each opportunity has become even more meaningful.



Pennzoil's "Long May We Drive" partner Larry Chen continues to document the passion and innovation that drives the racing and performance aftermarket.



Q Are there any recent car builds or events that stood out as particularly exciting or challenging?

LC: My most recent project was restoring my Nissan R34 Skyline GT-R in Japan. What began as a simple project to make it roadworthy as my daily driver quickly transformed into a full restoration. Now that it's complete, the car has been shipped to the U.S., and I am excited to pick it up in Long Beach soon.

Q Tell us about "Larry's Lemon"—the BMW M3 project you documented on social media.

LC: "Larry's Lemon" is a 1995 European model BMW M3 that I drove all across Europe, from London to Poland and beyond. The car had a blown engine initially, but some friends in the U.K. tracked down a used one, making the trip possible.

We gave it a quick tuneup, including an oil change with Pennzoil Platinum. Though the car's electronics and interior had quirks, it performed admirably, reaching 145 mph on the Autobahn!

Q We also learned that you recently earned your Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) license. Can you share what inspired you to pursue it?

LC: I've been photographing racing for more than 20 years, watching everyone else enjoy the thrill of the track. I wanted to experience it firsthand—not to compete seriously, but for the pure fulfillment of it. So, I took a refresher course at Radford Racing School to earn my SCCA license on merit, and it was an incredible experience.

Q What new trends in car culture are catching your attention, and how are you capturing them?

LC: One major trend is using new technologies like 3D printing and computer-aided design (CAD). Today's builders can create parts and modifications





Today's builders can create parts and modifications that were once impossible.

that were once impossible, and at last year's SEMA Show, most cars showcased some form of 3D printing or modern construction techniques. I love capturing these innovations—they highlight how car culture constantly evolves and pushes boundaries.

How has social media changed how you connect with your audience?

LC: Social media has been a game-changer, allowing me to connect directly with fans, enthusiasts and partners wherever I go. People are more open to sharing their collections and stories, and I can instantly reach car communities around the world. It's incredible to capture these moments and share them with fans worldwide.

Why does your relationship with Pennzoil resonate with you, and especially your involvement in the "Long May We Drive" campaign?

LC: It's genuinely a dream partnership. Pennzoil understands car enthusiasts—they're not just selling products;



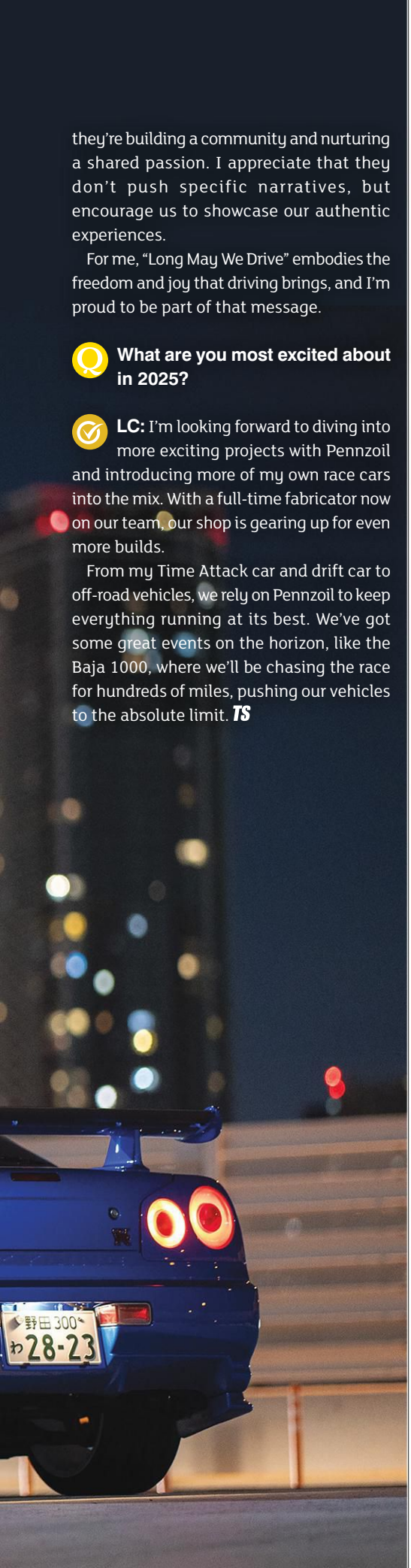
they're building a community and nurturing a shared passion. I appreciate that they don't push specific narratives, but encourage us to showcase our authentic experiences.

For me, "Long May We Drive" embodies the freedom and joy that driving brings, and I'm proud to be part of that message.

What are you most excited about in 2025?

LC: I'm looking forward to diving into more exciting projects with Pennzoil and introducing more of my own race cars into the mix. With a full-time fabricator now on our team, our shop is gearing up for even more builds.

From my Time Attack car and drift car to off-road vehicles, we rely on Pennzoil to keep everything running at its best. We've got some great events on the horizon, like the Baja 1000, where we'll be chasing the race for hundreds of miles, pushing our vehicles to the absolute limit. ***TS***



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The Doctor Is In

A small shop tackling big projects, Dr. Mopar's High Performance stays true to its roots.

BY MAURA KELLER

Located 2 miles from downtown Burlington, North Carolina, Dr. Mopar's High Performance LLC is a family-owned and operated business specializing in modern and classic AMC (American Motors), Dodge, Chrysler, Plymouth, Jeep and Ram/Mopar vehicles in both stock and performance formats—but particularly performance.

The company offers complete engine and TorqueFlite transmission rebuilds for stock and performance projects, and it also sells and installs racing parts as well as new tires, drag slicks and other vehicle accessories.

The origins of Dr. Mopar's High Performance began with grandpa "Pappy" John Ketteman in Benton, Illinois.

"Our family has over 50 years of working on AMC/Mopar products," says Chris "Doc" Ketteman, owner of Dr. Mopar's High Performance and Pappy's grandson. "Pappy was not only a diehard Mopar man, but he was also a great innovator and entrepreneur."

Besides operating the Gulf Oil service station with his wife and 12 kids and helping Southern Illinois' largest Dodge dealer, Stotlar Motors, Pappy also took time to pursue many business, sports and political ventures.

Dr. Mopar's High Performance LLC is a family-owned and operated business specializing in modern and classic AMC (American Motors), Dodge, Chrysler, Plymouth, Jeep and Ram/Mopar vehicles.

"Aside from his deep love of black Chryslers—of which he had many—he loved his family dearly and did what was necessary to take care of nine boys and three girls," Ketteman says. "It wasn't uncommon for Pappy's shop to have many well-known people stop in to pay a visit, including Anthony 'Andy' Granatelli, the CEO for STP; George Harrison of the Beatles; actor John Malkovich and many well-known athletes."

In October 1971, Pappy decided to sell the service station in order to pursue other business interests in Mt. Vernon, Illinois. Meanwhile, his children continued to invest their time, talents and treasure into the automotive industry.

Pappy's eldest son, Raymond, worked at the Dodge dealership as the head parts man and mechanic. Pappy's son, John, went to work for the Benton Ford Dealer as a mechanic/paint and body and owned nearly every performance car that was available at the time—one of his favorites being a 383-ci, 4-speed Plymouth Roadrunner.

Pappy passed away on April 9, 1993, and never saw his grandson carry on his legacy. But Doc knows he would be proud.

RAISED ON PERFORMANCE



As a child growing up in "The Dukes of Hazzard" era, cars were like music to Doc Ketteman.

"My fondest memory as a child was when our next-door neighbor pulled into his driveway with the 'General Lee,'" Ketteman recalls. "I remember him putting me through the window, as the doors were welded shut, and seeing the tan-colored interior, the roll bar cage and some writing on the dash. He



Chris "Doc" Ketteman founded Dr. Mopar's High Performance in 2000.

honked the Dixie horn for me and then proceeded to fire up the monster Mopar big-block. I'll never forget that rumble, and I was the happiest kid on the planet. From that moment on I had caught the bug—horsepower!"

Ketteman signed up for the U.S. Army Reserves while a junior in high school and did boot camp in between his junior and senior years. His job was 54B10 Nuclear/Biological/Chemical Warfare Specialist Ops.

Although Ketteman signed up for eight years, he stayed for 15, including inactive time. During his time in the service, he also worked with a mechanized smoke unit.

He ended up taking some courses in automotive technology while still in the military and in 2000 founded Dr. Mopar's High Performance.

"I may not have the resources the big shops do, but the quality of work is what speaks for my shop. I can guarantee that I put forth my best efforts to provide a quality product to the end user," Ketteman says. "My goal from the beginning was to focus on performance for classic models, but the business model changes as you find different opportunities. I set out to forge my own path and to carry on my family legacy."

Throughout the history of Dr. Mopar's High Performance, Ketteman has had the opportunity to work on several unique projects, including a 2014 Dodge Durango RT, known as "The Dame."

The build created a friendship with customer George Beato, earned magazine coverage and inspired the local Advance Auto Parts in Burlington, North Carolina, to host a car show for the first time, Ketteman reports.

Most of Dr. Mopar's High Performance customers are those who "eat, sleep and breathe" AMC and Mopar vehicles—both classic and modern.

"The majority of our customer base is looking for performance upgrades or engine rebuilds in both stock and performance formats," Ketteman says. "On occasion, we do have general maintenance work on stock vehicles."

To expand his company's reach, Ketteman has tried sponsoring school T-shirts for sports teams and placing ads on restaurant menus. He has also left business cards at local auto parts stores and put cards on community boards at grocery stores.



The Doctor Is In

"Frankly, since social media has become such a huge part of the community, that is where the majority of our customers come from," Ketteman says. As such, he promotes his company on Instagram (instagram.com/drmoparshp1) and other social media sites including Facebook, Pinterest and elsewhere.

"Every project, race, car show or event attended, or subject pertaining to our target audience gets posted," Ketteman says. "Sometimes I will try something different, just to see the results. I will also try to differ when possible from other pages. For example, there may be a recent post that has a lot of engagement, so you may share that on your page in order to try and grow new viewers or to maintain what you have. Other times you may look for something unique with low views and share to your page to spark interest. I try to share humor on occasion as well. But I always try to have the main focus be about our business."

One example in which Ketteman used "bad" feedback to promote his page included a post asking, "Which motor would you like to see Stellantis bring back in modern form?"

"Our example was the Chrysler 340 in a modern format with modern fuel injection, aluminum heads, etc.—but still be a pushrod V-8—or the Chrysler 383 in a similar format. Several people flipped out, saying we were trashing the great heritage of the 340 and 383, while others saw that it was only a hypothetical to get more engagement from our followers and express ideas."

He plans to post more videos of projects and related content in the coming year.

TEAM EFFORT

As a small shop with just one bay, Dr. Mopar takes all the help it can get when things get busy. Over the years, Ketteman has formed alliances with local businesses that have proved beneficial.

For instance, he has worked with several machine shops.

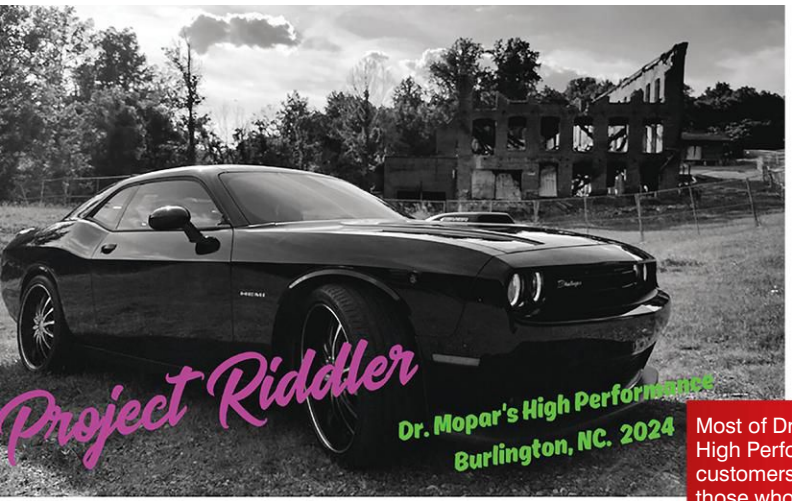
"Rick and Sherri Gerringer, owners of R&R Performance in Mebane, North Carolina, not only perform high-quality work at a favorable price, but we've also created a lasting friendship with them," Ketteman says. "They operate the Classic Gear Jammers, the largest stick-shift, bracket-style drag racing organization in the U.S."

Ketteman says the greatest part of his job is the time that he's able to spend with his father, who is often at the shop.

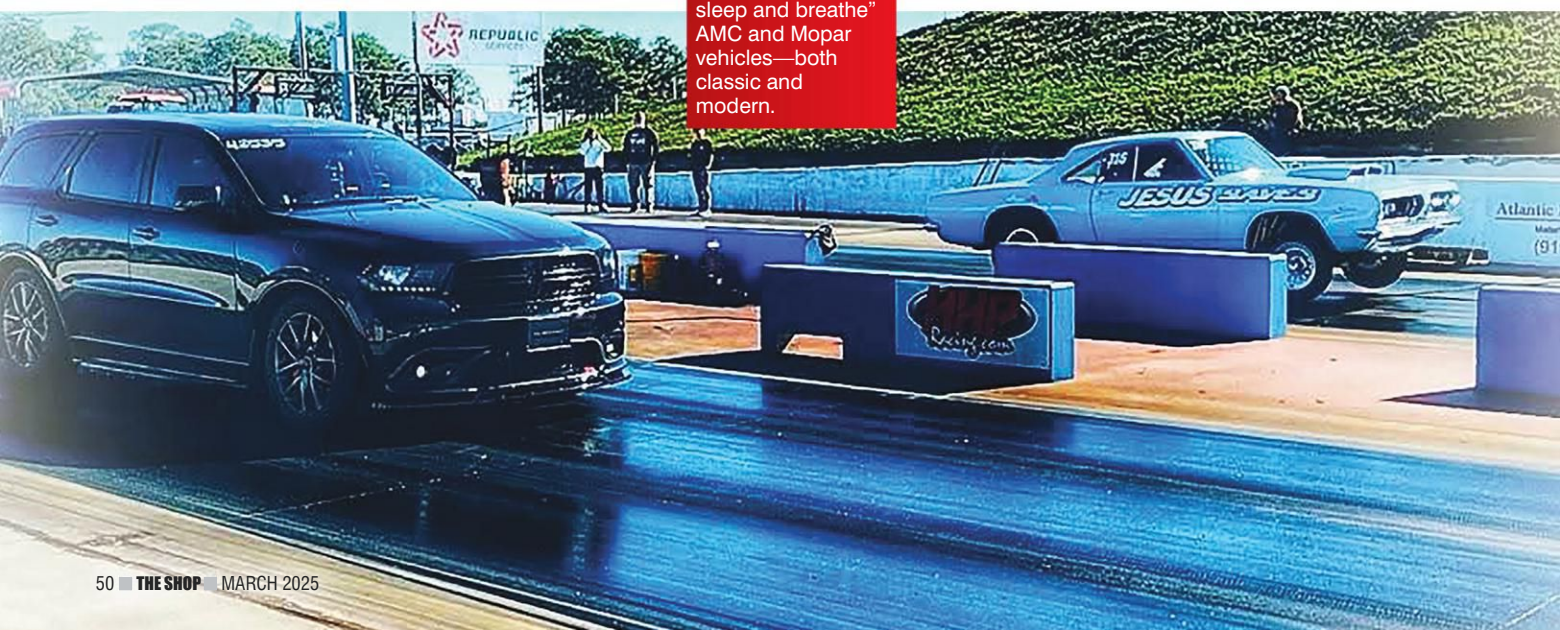
"We're never promised tomorrow and he is now 70. It's best to cherish the time spent; even something as simple as telling old stories while driving to pick up parts," he says.

Ketteman says the industry is filled with "great people."

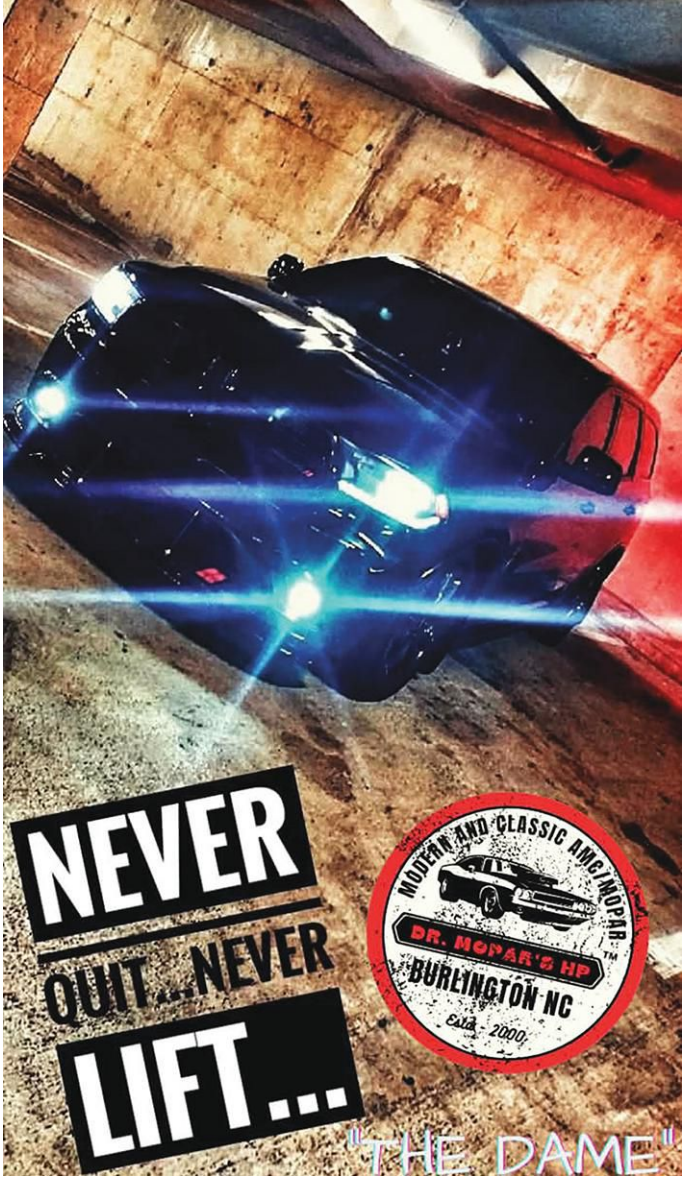
"In my office I have what I call my 'wall of fame.' Some items are collected memorabilia, and others are autographs from those I have met or corresponded with at one point

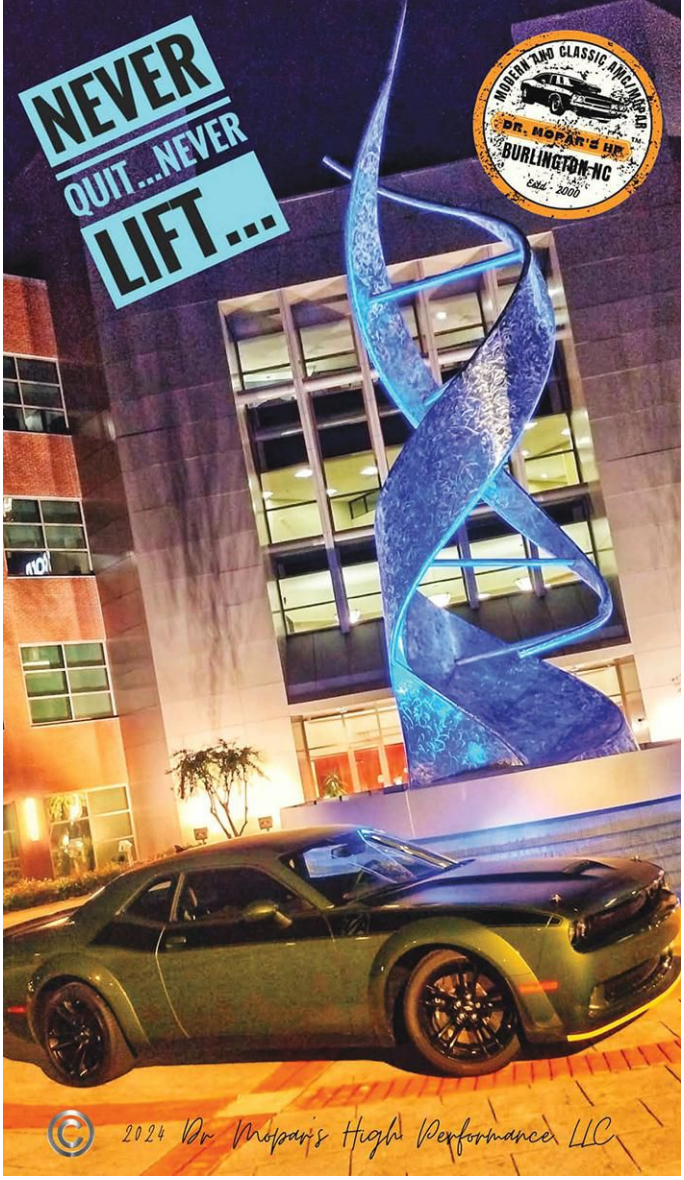






Most of Dr. Mopar's High Performance customers are those who "eat, sleep and breathe" AMC and Mopar vehicles—both classic and modern.







Ketteman set out to forge his own path while carrying on his family's legacy.

or another through the years. The other satisfying part is the moment after all the sweat and hard work is poured into a project and hearing that performance-modded vehicle roar to life."

Looking ahead, Ketteman sees the industry heading toward the emergence of more aftermarket shops specializing in a specific brand or model of vehicle or a specific engine type.

"I also see more places leaning toward subscription-based services or remote-type services—whether it's tech-based or the like," he predicts. "If I had the means to do so, I'd develop a platform that allows you to choose the vehicle you need a performance-based tune on, then gets you scheduled with a tuner for that vehicle. For example, you select your vehicle options to get your submission with the best-qualified tuner. If you have a supercharger, you get your request sent to tuners that have experience with that application versus sending you to someone who is only good at tuning basic bolt-ons."

In that scenario, each tuner would be sent several requests daily and then pick and choose the ones for their skill set. They'd schedule a time that's convenient for them and send a file with instructions.

"If a tune is needed for a race that day, they could schedule for that day for a live tuning expert to reach out and tune for them. I feel this could be very profitable and the tuners could keep their name anonymous and just be on a first-name basis," he continues.

After being in business for nearly a quarter of a century, Ketteman has experienced his fair share of challenges and opportunities. He's proud of his accomplishments over the years, whether it be the car shows and races he's hosted to benefit hospice care, or building his company and brand to where they are today.

"Most of all, I'm proud—and I like to think my grandfather 'Pappy' John Ketteman, and my grandmother, Mary Lynch Ketteman, would be proud as well—that their grandson has carried on their legacy in his business," Ketteman says.

"Also, my grandfather's passion for Dodge as well as family members' passion for classic cars, street racing and the family stories, as well as hard work through the good times and the bad, motivated me to turn it into something positive and honor my family." ***TS***

PERFORMANCE **PRODUCTS**

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Monte Carlo Interior



TMI Products, Corona, California, presents a complete Interior Product Line for 1986-87 Chevrolet Monte Carlo models. The lineup includes seats, headliners, visors, carpet kits, floor mats, door panels and interior quarter panels, steering wheels, dash pads and consoles. The components are available individually or as a complete interior and in a variety of matching patterns.

Ram 1500 4WD Kits



American Powertrain, Cookeville, Tennessee, presents a new ProFit HD 4WD kit for 1993-2001 Dodge Ram factory 5-speed trucks featuring a 600 pound-feet of torque capacity TR-4050 **TREMEC** transmission. The kit is a direct replacement transmission for the factory Dodge 5-speed NV3500. Equipped with an aggressive 6.16-inch "granny gear" first gear and economical 0.76-inch fifth gear, the setup allows for low-rpm cruising, higher torque capacity and a much-improved and fuel efficient highway driving experience.



Porsche Macan Exhaust

AWE, Horsham, Pennsylvania, offers its new, stainless steel Touring Edition Exhausts for 2019-21 and 2022-newer Porsche Macan 3.0T/2.9TT models. The U.S.-made, bolt-on, 50-state emissions-friendly exhausts include X-pipe configurations and are equipped with drone-canceling 180 Technology. They deliver maximum gains of 13 hp and 1 pound-foot of torque at the wheels. A fixed valve bracket accommodates the factory valve motor.

BMW Camber-Adjustable Top Mounts



AST Suspension, Horsham, Pennsylvania, presents Camber-Adjustable Top Mounts that are compatible with original equipment struts on select BMW F8X and G8X applications. Designed to provide additional camber adjustment without eliminating the vehicles' Adaptive M Suspension, the new top mounts provide minus-4.2 to 0 degrees of adjustment on G8X applications and minus-4.4 to 0 degrees on F8X applications, in addition to the factory adjustment range via the OE arms.



GM Small-Block-Compatible Crate Engines

BluePrint Engines, Kearney, Nebraska, offers its comprehensive range of 327-ci small-block Chevy-compatible Crate Engines. The new lineup offers options from deluxe-dressed block configurations to deluxe-dressed engines complete with polished pulley kits. Customers can also choose between naturally aspirated or electronic fuel injection versions to suit their performance needs. The engines deliver 350 hp and 350 pound-feet of torque and are 100% dyno-tested at the factory. They come styled with polished aluminum ribbed valve covers and air cleaner.



Toyota Brake Kits

Wilwood Disc Brakes, Camarillo, California, presents its Aero6-DM direct-mounted caliper brake kits, with applications for 2005-23 Toyota Tacoma and 2003-14 Toyota 4Runner applications with 17-inch or larger wheels. The kits upgrade the fixed-mount, cast-iron four-piston calipers and stock rotors to a direct-mount, net-forged six-piston calipers and premium iron alloy one-piece rotor setup to improve performance and pedal feel. ***TS***


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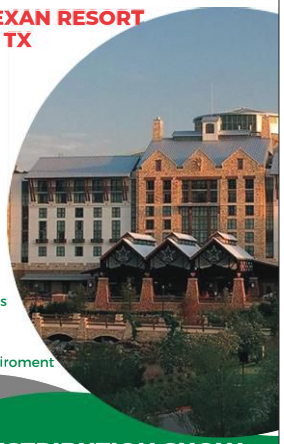

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LIQUI MOLY Effort Supports Extreme Travel in Mongolia

When it comes to auto touring, worldwide lubricants company LIQUI MOLY takes it to the extreme.

The Mongolia-based tour operator LIQUI MOLY Extreme has added a unique experience to its program—the off-road winter tour Ice Tracks to Taiga. Participants of the self-driving trip take off-road vehicles through the snowy Mongolian landscape and over frozen lakes.

LIQUI MOLY EXTREME was developed in partnership with the German lubricant brand LIQUI MOLY, the car rental company SIXT, the tour operator EscapeToMongolia and other partners. The tours are based on the philosophy of testing premium cars and equipment under extreme and demanding conditions and offering participants an unforgettable journey.

The Mongolian road trip starts and ends in the capital Ulaanbaatar and leads to Hustai National Park, where wild horses can be observed in their natural habitat. Drivers can relax in the hot springs of Arkhangai and experience the traditions and culture of local residents.

The itinerary includes a visit to the Tsaatan nomads in the Darkhad Valley and the Ice Festival at Lake Khuvsgul.

Along the way, adventurers enjoy diverse landscapes and different terrains—on roads as well as sandy and icy slopes. One highlight is a journey over the meter-thick ice of the frozen Lake Khuvsgul.

During the trip, participants are accompanied by experienced tour guides in support vehicles and a dedicated chef prepares the meals. Travelers spend the night in various types of accommodations, from luxury hotels to traditional yurts.

The four-wheel drive vehicles and fuel are provided, and each participant also receives a LIQUI MOLY product set. More information can be found at themongoliatour.com.

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Worldwide lubricants company LIQUI MOLY supports LIQUI MOLY Extreme adventure travels, offering self-driving trips through remote locations in Mongolia. (Photos courtesy LIQUI MOLY Extreme)

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