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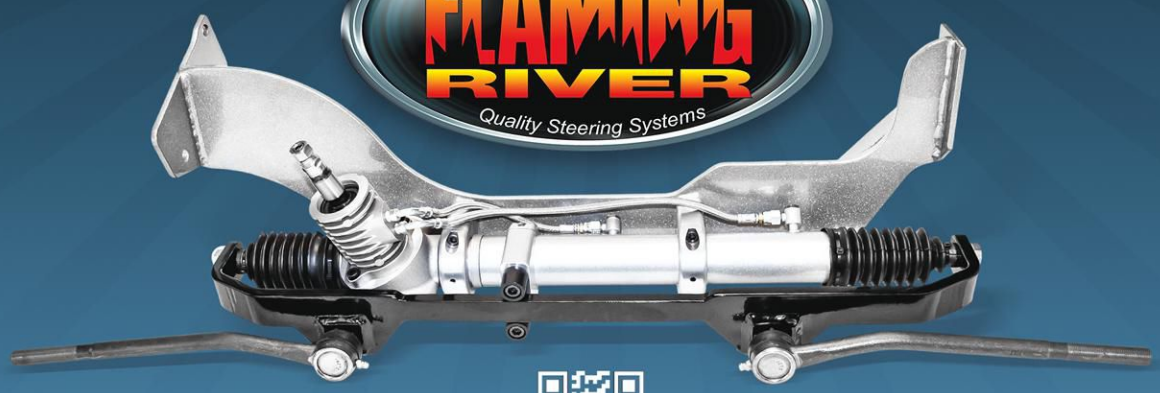


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Jef White
Editor in Chief
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Taking a Stand on AI

It seems you can't go too long these days without encountering the topic of artificial intelligence (AI). From online searches to therapy and companionship, more and more people are using the technology in new and unexpected ways.

As an aftermarket shop, AI may not help you bolt on a set of running boards or wire a new set of LEDs, but it does offer possible solutions for websites, email systems and other customer touchpoints.

In the blog post "131 AI Statistics and Trends for 2025" published by National University, more than 50% of companies say they plan to incorporate artificial intelligence this year, nearly two-thirds think the technology can improve customer relationships and 53% expect AI to streamline job processes within their organization.

And as far as vehicles themselves, AI is making inroads within the new "mobility" movement, particularly when it comes to Advanced Driver-Assistance Systems (ADAS) and autonomous driving. In "The 2025 AI Index Report," Stanford HAI (Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence) notes that transportation is one of the areas where AI is rapidly moving from the lab into daily life.

"On the roads, self-driving cars are no longer experimental: Waymo, one of the largest U.S. operators, provides over 150,000 autonomous rides each week, while Baidu's affordable Apollo Go robotaxi fleet now serves numerous cities across China," the report states.

In my world of journalism, AI has established an even greater foothold. Maybe you've heard of high school and college students asking ChatGPT to write their term papers or reports? The same temptation is there for professional reporters to turn to chatbots for supporting information or even complete articles to meet deadlines.

News outlets are paying close attention, with the understanding that AI writing support is here to stay. Many editors like the idea of the increased accuracy of fact-checking that AI is working toward, but are uncomfortable with, if not totally opposed to, completely AI-generated articles that may contain factual or subjective errors and/or pull from uncredited sources.

As such, I was happy to see that in Marc Zao-Sanders' article "How People Are Really Using Gen AI in 2025," published by the Harvard Business Review, data shows downward trends for the Content Creation and Editing category when ranked in the Top 10 Gen AI Use Cases. AI uses for "Generating Ideas" and "Editing Text" both moved down the list from last year.

As a trade publication supporting the specialty automotive aftermarket and offering genuine insights and observations from actual industry professionals, I'm proud to state THE SHOP's commitment to delivering real content produced by real writers. I can't promise that you'll never read anything AI-generated in our print or online products—suppliers may use the technology to create ads, product descriptions or company press releases, for example—but, if we know information presented in a news report or feature article was artificially generated, it will be clearly marked.

Here's our published AI policy from our parent company Cahaba Media Group (CMG). If you ever have any questions on the matter—or just want to talk to a live person—please reach out.

CMG'S EDITORIAL POLICY ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Our approach to using artificial intelligence (AI) is simple: it is a great tool for improving and optimizing content, but never a replacement for insightful, quality content written and edited by a human.

Our editors will never use AI tools to create or write exclusive content published under a CMG brand. We will also continue to communicate this expectation with our contributors and writers, and we will do everything within our power to thoroughly vet the content we publish to verify a human was responsible for the creation and editing of that content.

In any instance where AI is used to create content or artwork for our products, Cahaba Media Group will include an editor's note or other attribution clearly identifying the use of AI for creation or production. Any use of AI by our editorial and design teams will be guided by an intent to better serve our audience. **TS**

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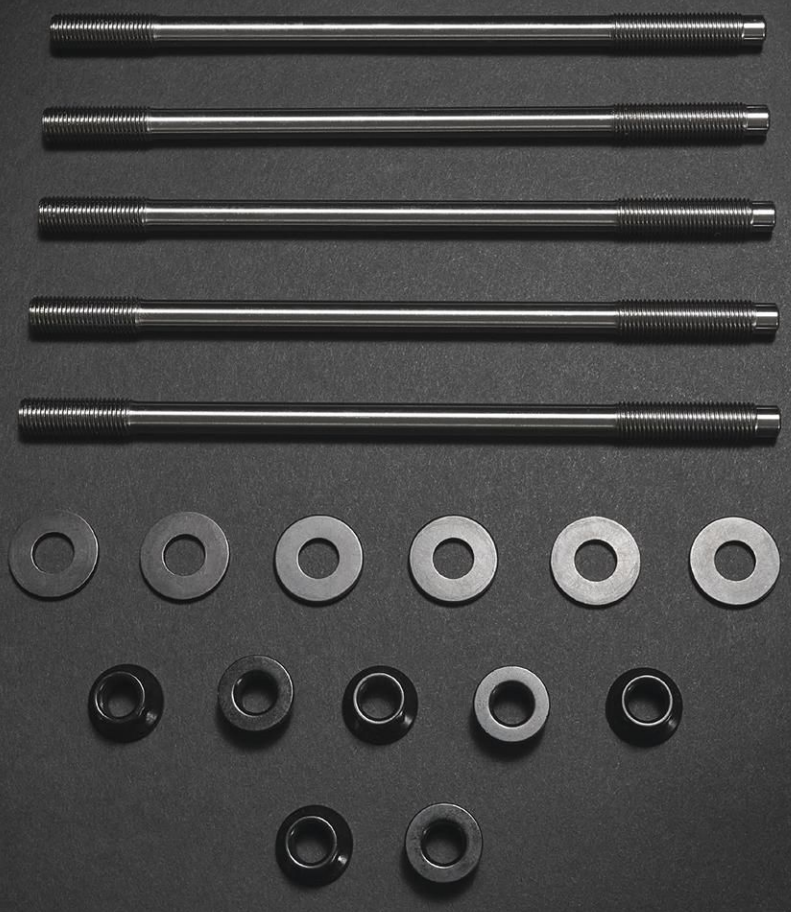
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DIGGING DEEPER
With a Vivid Vision Statement



Engage employees & stakeholders by describing an aspirational-yet-attainable future.

BY DREW YANCEY

(Image credit: maxutov - stock.adobe.com)



Drew Yancey, Ph.D., is founder & CEO at Teleios Strategy, a strategic planning, leadership development, executive coaching and succession planning advisory firm. He is also the co-author of "Leading Performance… Because It Can't Be Managed: How to Lead the Modern Workforce" and a frequent keynote speaker. Reach him at teleiostrategy.com.

All too often, traditional company vision statements fall short due to vagueness, misalignment with values or lack of communication. Unsurprisingly, the effectiveness of traditional vision statements is undermined by several common pitfalls:

- *Lack of Specificity:* Generic visions fail to provide actionable clarity, leaving employees disconnected from the broader organizational goals.
- *Misalignment With Core Values and Culture:* Visions that do not reflect the company's values risk eroding authenticity and trust.
- *Communication Gaps:* Poor dissemination of vision leads to disengagement, with Gallup reporting only 22% of employees strongly agreeing that their company has clear direction.
- *Exclusion of Stakeholders:* A lack of inclusive vision development results in poor resonance and ownership among key players.
- *Static Nature:* Failure to adapt the vision to external market dynamics and internal growth erodes its relevance.

THE VIVID VISION AS A SOLUTION

Unlike static mission statements, a Vivid Vision approach transcends limitations. It's one that's dynamic, specific and deeply integrated with the organization's purpose, values and strategy.

Rife with inspiration and specificity, a Vivid Vision is a detailed and compelling description of what a business aims to achieve in three to five years, answering the question: "What does amazing look like?"

This methodology addresses shortcomings of traditional vision statements in a number of ways. It includes offering detailed imagery of the future business, aligning with core values and strategic priorities, encouraging stakeholder involvement to build commitment and remaining adaptable to evolving circumstances.

VIVID VISION IN THE P2E PROCESS

A Purpose-to-Execution (P2E) process focuses on translating a company's purpose into actionable strategies and measurable outcomes. A Vivid Vision bridges the gap between high-level purpose and day-to-day execution by providing a clear framework for decision-making and resource allocation—things like:

- *Anchoring Purpose and Values:* The Vivid Vision grounds the organization's strategy in its fundamental "why." Purpose-driven companies grow three-times faster than their competitors, but this growth is only sustainable when aligned with core values. The Vivid Vision ensures that all strategic initiatives reinforce the company's foundational principles.
- *Fostering Alignment Across Teams:* With detailed goals and vivid imagery, the vision aligns employees at all levels, ensuring that efforts are cohesive rather than fragmented. This alignment is especially critical for businesses that are large enough to face bureaucratic inefficiencies but small enough to lack the resources of large enterprises.
- *Enabling Decision-Making With Clarity:* Decision filters derived from the Vivid Vision simplify choices by asking, "Does this align with our desired future?" This

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A Vivid Vision statement is dynamic, specific and deeply integrated with the organization's purpose, values and strategy. (Image credit: Ishra - stock.adobe.com)

clarity prevents resource dilution and enables a focused approach to execution.

- *Driving Strategic Focus:* A Vivid Vision narrows the organization's priorities, helping leaders adopt a "great = few" mindset, rather than spreading resources too thin. Research indicates that companies with fewer than three strategic priorities achieve significantly more than those pursuing broader agendas.
- *Inspiring Innovation and Engagement:* By painting a compelling picture of the future, the Vivid Vision inspires employees, fosters a culture of innovation, and attracts top talent and investors.

KEY COMPONENTS

To integrate a Vivid Vision effectively into the P2E process, it must include the following elements:

- *Detailed Description of the Future:* Cover important aspects like culture, customer experience and market positioning in specific terms. For example, a restyling shop might envision becoming "the leading accessory solutions provider for end consumers and dealerships, renowned for innovation and customer-centricity."
- *Alignment With Core Values:* Ensure that the vision reinforces the company's core values and aligns with its overarching purpose. This alignment fosters authenticity and consistency.
- I*nspirational and Motivational Narrative:* Engage employees and stakeholders by describing an aspirational-yet-attainable future.
- *Strategic Priorities and Measurable Milestones:* Include benchmarks to track progress, breaking the long-term vision into manageable short-term objectives.
- *Adaptability to External Changes:* Build flexibility into the vision to accommodate evolving market conditions, technological advancements or competitive shifts.
- *Inclusiveness:* Incorporate perspectives from key stakeholders, including employees, customers and investors, to enhance ownership and buy-in.
- *Clear Communication:* Translate the Vivid Vision into actionable messaging that can be easily shared across all levels of the organization.

5 STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

1. *Define Purpose and Values First:* Begin by identifying the core "why" of your organization. Use tools like the Purpose Prism to align stakeholder needs with your value proposition.
2. *Craft the Vivid Vision:* Collaborate with stakeholders to write a detailed narrative describing your desired future. Ensure it addresses all aspects of the business, from culture to market impact.
3. *Align Strategy and Execution:* Break the vision into strategic priorities and execution plans. Ensure every department understands its role in achieving the vision.
4. *Communicate Relentlessly:* Use storytelling, visual presentations and regular updates to keep the vision top of mind across the organization.
5. *Monitor and Adjust:* Regularly review progress against milestones and adapt the vision as necessary to remain relevant and impactful.

THE VIVID VISION AS STRATEGIC CATALYST

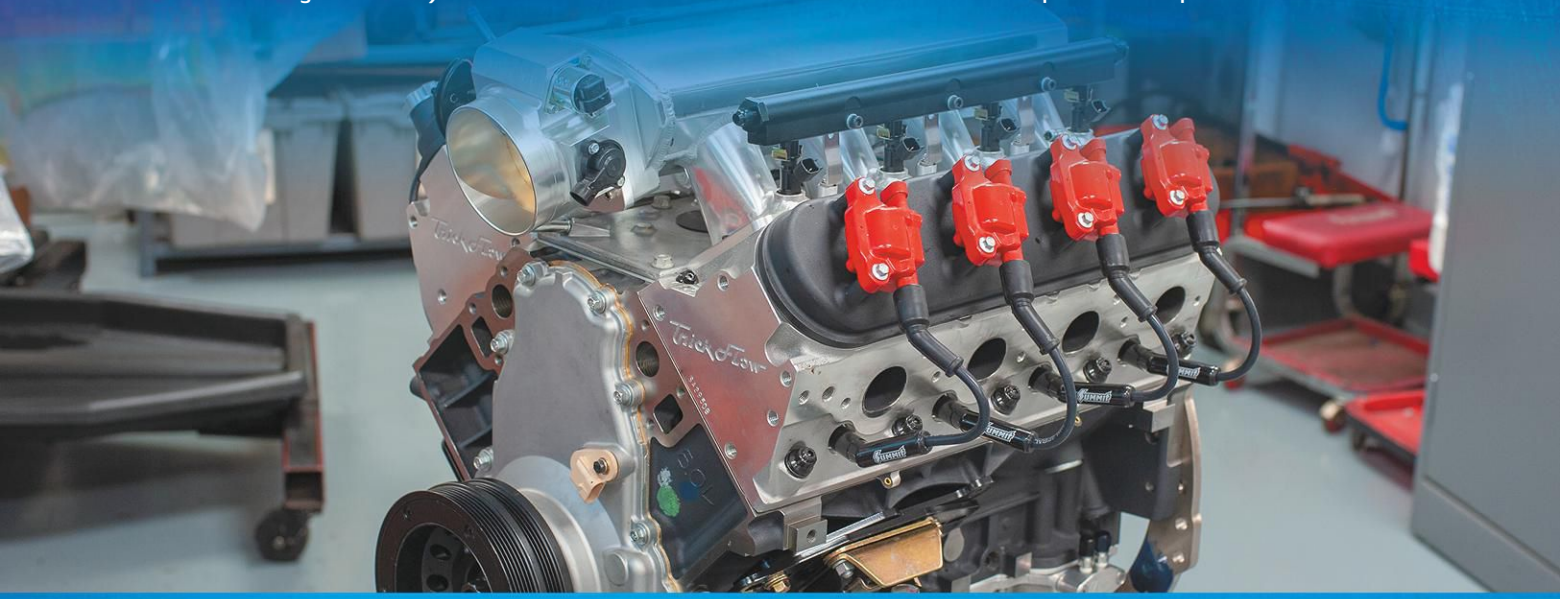
Relative to business growth, the Vivid Vision offers a vital compass, guiding organizations toward sustainable success. By integrating the Vivid Vision into the P2E process, companies can achieve clarity, alignment and focus, turning challenges into opportunities for innovation and growth.

The question for leaders is not whether to create a Vivid Vision, but how vividly can you imagine—and communicate—what amazing looks like? ***TS***

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WHSE25TS

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Off-Road Bumpers p. 18 | Kevin McGowan p. 26 | LINE-X of Palm Beach p. 30



Utility-conscious truck owners want to utilize every inch of their vehicle. (Photo courtesy Sawtooth)

FULLY COVERED

There's a versatile tonneau for every task a truck tackles.

BY JEF WHITE

From soft roll-up offerings to hard-shell lockable units, the tonneau cover market has a lot to offer owners looking to protect and transport tools or gear in their truck bed.

It's hard to imagine pickups becoming even more popular than they already are, but with drivers taking them everywhere from the jobsite to the campsite, versatile accessories like tonneaus are becoming even more attractive to customers living life on the go.



Confidently discuss the features and benefits of the tonneau covers you carry. (Photo courtesy Quadratec)

While mostly straightforward in appearance, the various features and benefits available on today's tonneaus means a professional touch is needed to find the right fit for each use case. Suppliers are ready to help with observations on market trends, hot new products and sales steps for shops looking to keep customers fully covered.

PICKUPS KEEP ROLLING

Experts say the tonneau cover market continues to grow in part because the light truck market won't slow down.

"New pickup truck sales continue to outpace passenger car sales, which keeps driving demand for truck accessories, and tonneau covers (or truck bed covers) are one of the first enhancements a pickup truck owner will typically make," says Tony Savasta, vice president of marketing for Westin Automotive. "Customers also want a product that will blend with the overall trim and style of their truck."

Pickups have also become more versatile over the last few years.

"We're seeing people use them in a lot more ways recreationally," says Nils Forssman, president of Truck Covers USA. "With more and more people using trucks for adventure travel, camping and more, we're proud to have a versatile product range that supports all of this. Wherever people go, whether for work or for play, they're carrying cargo that is important to them."

Add in commercial uses and it's easy to see why the tonneau cover market is thriving.

"As consumers invest more in their vehicles, they're seeking ways to enhance utility, security and value," says Adam Donahue, senior vice president of sales – truck bed covers for RealTruck. "This has created increased demand for versatile solutions that provide both premium bed protection



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Guardian Tonneau Cover
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Dual-panel design and exterior extrusion channel to mount accessories such as crossbars, platform racks and tents with an 800-pound weight capacity; patent-pending Tonneau Hinge Slide top-mounts gear while retaining rear panel access.

Dee Zee
Scott Moyer
Director of Marketing

■ **HOT PRODUCT:**
Electric RollTrac Tonneau Cover
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Advanced retractable bed cover combining rugged durability with smart tech; integrates with the truck's factory key fob for seamless locking and push-button control; smart ECU enables smooth, antipinch operation; built from heavy-duty aluminum.

EGR USA
Justin MacLauchlan
Director of Marketing

■ **HOT PRODUCT:**
Tactik EZ Hard Panel Tri-Fold Tonneau
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Clean, low-profile look with vinyl outer layer; three folding hard panels; unique clamping system; aluminum crossbars; theft protection rail; latch design that quickly allows full bed use when folded open, or locks automatically when the last fold closes.

Quadratec
Matthew Konkle
Creative Content Managing Editor

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** BAKFlip MX4TS
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Integrated T-slots combine bed protection with the added versatility to mount a rack system for ladders, kayaks, bikes and other long gear; designed for customers who want security and utility.

RealTruck
Adam Donahue
Senior Vice President of Sales – Truck Bed Covers

■ **HOT PRODUCT:**
Hard Roll-Up Bed Cover
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Flush, low-profile design with a sleek matte black finish that enhances the truck's appearance with a stealthy, streamlined look; durable matte black powder-coated aluminum slats that offer long-term protection and a premium look, feel and finish.

Rough Country
Tim Watts
VP Sales

■ **HOT PRODUCT:**
Chevy Colorado Cover
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Expandable tonneau design stretches up and over large cargo that extends above the bed rails; rolls up and secures easily; built from a proprietary stretch-and-hold textile; steel-reinforced J-hook fastening system; family-run U.S. company.

Sawtooth
D.J. Potter
CEO

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** TrailFX Hard Retractable Tonneau Cover
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Durable, sleek design; cargo-friendly features; made from OEM-grade powder-coated aluminum; supports up to 450 pounds of evenly distributed weight; compact canister design maximizes bed space; built-in T-slots accept crossrails.

TrailFX
Sara Ford
Marketing Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** Utility Bed Cover
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Released at the NTEA 2025 Work Truck Week in Indiana; premium-grade aluminum cover; locks in two positions to secure cargo in the utility bed while offering access flexibility; keeps cargo safe and secure.

Truck Covers USA
Nils Forssman
President

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** Westin Hard Tri-Fold Truck Bed Cover
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**
Durable aluminum panels; constructed with high-strength aluminum that protects against dents, impacts and weather; secure latch system; easy tri-fold access; weather-resistant seals and moisture drain rail; reversible no-drill installation.

Westin Automotive
Tony Savasta
VP Marketing



Shops can capitalize on installation services. (Photos courtesy Dee Zee)



and the flexibility to carry oversized gear."

Utility-conscious truck owners want to utilize every inch of their vehicle, says D.J. Potter, CEO of Sawtooth.

"The market is demanding more modularity and utility from bed covers than ever before," he observes. "Customers want functionality that keeps up with their lifestyle—not one that forces them to work around it."

Adventure activities such as camping and overlanding are driving factors in many tonneau purchases, says Matthew Konkle, creative content managing editor for Quadratec.

"During COVID there was an unprecedented spike in those segments, and it just keeps growing larger each year—fueling demand for truck products like bed protecting tonneau covers," he notes.

The products are particularly suited to outdoor lifestyles.

"Truck owners are looking for solutions that let them seamlessly transition between work and play—protecting tools during the week and carrying gear like bikes, kayaks or camping equipment on the weekend," says Sara Ford, marketing manager for TrailFX.

Tonneaus are also versatile, helping them appeal to a wide customer base.

"With rising theft rates and more people storing gear in their trucks, secure tonneau covers are in higher demand," says Justin MacLauchlan, director of marketing for EGR USA. "Tonneau covers are also seen as a styling element. Drivers want a sleek, clean look that matches modern truck aesthetics."



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Secure tonneaus are in high demand. (Photo courtesy EGR USA)

The outside factor most driving the market is options, says Scott Moyer, director of marketing for Dee Zee.

"There are a lot of tonneau solutions on the market, but each user has unique needs," he says.

Tim Watts, vice president of sales for Rough Country, notes that increased consumer demands have prompted tonneau cover designs that:

- Work with OEM and aftermarket systems, such as trail gear or overlanding rigs.
- Offer flexibility between secure storage and open bed access.
- Incorporate smart tech like remote operation and/or lighting.

"This need for versatility and customization has been bolstered by the rise in outdoor and active lifestyles, especially post-pandemic," he says. "More buyers are using trucks for camping, biking and travel—all of which call for gear that's rugged, modular and integrated."

SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

While tonneau covers may seem like a simple product, Forssman explains that buying one is a big decision for many customers.

"We aim to have them fully supported through every step of the process," he says. "There are so many options out there on the market and even within our own product line, so it is really important to get a sense of what specifically the customer is looking for at the beginning of the process. From there, we also see some struggles with installation, so we place a huge priority on ensuring that our dealers are equipped to install our products correctly and give customers both peace of mind and education during this process."

How the vehicle is outfitted is an important piece of the puzzle.

"A common mistake is not realizing what other truck accessories are on a customer's vehicle, like racks, track systems or bed caps," says Konkle. "Sometimes it is a customer issue, because someone wants to purchase a certain tonneau cover while not understanding if it will fit correctly. Sometimes it is a salesperson issue by recommending a popular tonneau that may or may not work on a bed. It can all be easily avoided by just taking a few minutes and talking through things with the customer."

Gathering knowledge from the customer benefits the seller as well.

"When shops skip assessing the customer's needs, they miss a chance to recommend features the customer may not even know exist," Ford notes. "Many truck owners come in thinking they need a basic cover for weather protection, but with the right questions, a shop can reveal how a more advanced option could better support their lifestyle."

Donahue recommends tailoring the experience to the customer's specific needs.

"On the sales side, many associates default to recommending their personal favorite rather than actively listening and presenting the best-fit solution—missing the opportunity to upsell based on true value and function," he explains. "On the installation side, improper fine-tuning—such as failing to shim rails or make necessary adjustments—can lead to fit issues and customer dissatisfaction."

Potter warns against overlooking the customer's lifestyle.

"Too often, shops recommend a tonneau based solely on looks or price without considering how the truck will actually be used," he says. "A contractor hauling tools and lumber has different needs than a camper loading coolers and tents."

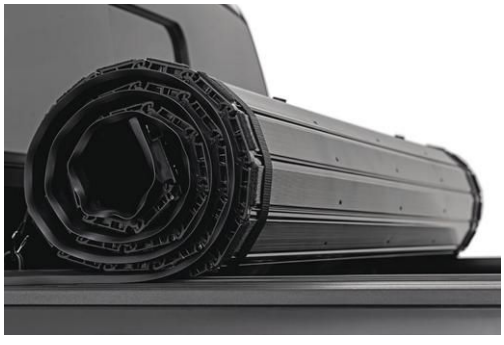
If the vehicle isn't present at the time of purchase, Savasta recommends asking about other potential bed accessories customers may fail to mention, such as toolboxes or tailgate guards.

"Those items will factor into which tonneau cover is compatible," he says, adding

Consumer demands have prompted tonneau cover designs that work with OEM and aftermarket systems. (Photos courtesy Rough Country)









As consumers invest more in their vehicles, they're seeking ways to enhance utility, security and value. (Photo courtesy RealTruck)

"don't leave out walking the customer through the features and operation of the cover so they'll know they have made the best choice for their requirements."

And, if the vehicle is present, "make sure you measure the bed," he suggests. "I know it sounds obvious, but customers don't always understand which bed they have when you ask them."

For new customers particularly, there's value in positioning the tonneau cover as part of a larger system.

"Too often, the sale is treated as a one-and-done transaction, rather than the beginning of a relationship," Watts notes. "By not exploring how the customer uses their truck—whether for work, recreation, overlanding or daily driving—shops miss out on the opportunity to offer complementary products like bed racks, cargo management systems, tailgate assist kits or lighting solutions. This approach not only ensures the customer gets the most functional setup but also opens the door to future sales and long-term customer loyalty."

After securing the sale, professional knowledge and experience can then ensure the perfect fit and function.

"Installation is a significant value-add during the purchase and shops can continue to capitalize on that service," Moyer says.

Once in the work bay, it's important to remember each cover has its own set of installation processes and procedures.

"A common issue shops face when installing tonneau covers is skipping or





Customers prefer a product that blends with the overall trim and style of their truck. (Photos courtesy Westin Automotive)

skimming the instructions and assuming the process is the same as other covers. This often leads to improper wiring or ECU setup on electric covers, or missing steps during cover installation, which leads to backtracking on the install," says MacLauchlan. "Another frequent mistake is neglecting key calibration steps, such as setting travel limits or enabling lockout features—critical for safety and performance. Additionally, installers sometimes overlook the importance of squaring and leveling the side rails, which can cause the cover to bind or jam. Taking the time to carefully read and follow each step of the installation guide ensures a proper fit, smooth operation and satisfied customers."

FULLY COVERED



Truck owners are looking for solutions that let them seamlessly transition between work and play. (Photo courtesy TrailFX)

ENJOYABLE JOURNEY

Working with tonneau clients begins with their future plans.

"Placing the customer first and understanding their journey always has positive ripple effects for every business," says Forssman from Truck Covers USA. "Understanding what the customer is looking for and being able to offer them unique solutions from our product line that match their needs will lead to more conversions. And, we have seen that word of mouth travels fast and a lot of our continued sales come from positive interactions and placements with our dealers."

Rough Country's Watts recommends selling the lifestyle and not just the product.

"Focus on how the cover enhances the customer's truck experience—whether it's keeping gear dry on a weekend adventure, securing tools for work or giving the truck a sleek, upgraded look," he says.

Qualifying questions can include:

- How often do you haul gear?
- What kind of gear?
- Do you need quick bed access?
- Are you planning to add additional accessories like a rack system or lighting?

"This consultative approach positions your shop as a solutions provider—not just a parts installer—and builds trust that drives both initial sales and repeat business," Watts adds.

Potter recommends building excitement and focusing on possibilities.

"Show them how a solution like Sawtooth adapts to their cargo, weather and daily needs," he says. "Reframe the conversation around possibilities. Use lifestyle-based sales language, share demo videos and display real use cases in-store. Customers don't just want 'a cover'—they want the freedom to use their truck the way they want."

One of the biggest keys to increased sales is an educated, engaged sales team.

"The more a salesman knows about tonneau covers—things like product materials, weatherproofing ability, ease of installation, features of hard versus soft roll-up covers, etc.—the easier it will be to overcome sales objections," says Quadratec's Konkle. "It isn't enough any longer to just rap your knuckles on a hard cover and say this one is the best. Confidently discussing tonneau cover features and benefits with a customer is a proven service that eliminates buying hesitation and boosts conversion rates."

Businesses will want to know the products they carry inside and out.

"Shops should continue to be well-versed in the large variety of tonneau covers on the market and ask WDs or manufacturers directly for sell sheets, training opportunities and ways to get exposure to new product releases," says Dee Zee's Moyer.

Meanwhile, customer education can come in the form of showroom units offering the chance to interact with the products.



Trucks have become more versatile over the last few years. (Photo courtesy Truck Covers USA)

"Having in-store displays or an installed tonneau cover on a shop truck creates a hands-on experience for customers," says Ford from TrailFX. "Many shoppers don't fully understand the differences between covers until they can see, touch and operate them in person."

Dedicated in-store displays should feature the most popular styles (soft roll-up, hard folding, retractable), paired with clear signage highlighting key benefits, says Donahue from RealTruck.

"Train sales staff to lead with lifestyle-based questions like, 'Do you use your bed for tools, gear or groceries?' to recommend the right cover for each customer," he advises. "These in-store-only personalized shopping experiences set retailers apart from online browsing."

Westin's Savasta says tonneaus are feature-rich products that deserve an in-depth discussion prior to purchase.

"Be sure to order our product displays for your showroom so you can show the customer the difference in our tonneau covers. Ask your sales rep about our four-in-one tonneau display, which shows off all of our truck bed cover styles. Also, leave a little extra time to go over the tonneau operation with the customer after the installation. The extra customer care will go a long way in building trust with your customer for the next upgrade."

Shops may also want to keep popular models in stock.

"Customers often want immediate availability. Training staff members on product features and benefits is also essential, enabling them to confidently explain why one cover may be better suited for a customer's needs," says MacLauchlan from EGR USA. "Displaying an installed demo on a shop vehicle or showroom floor helps customers visualize the product and encourages impulse decisions."

Finally, he suggests "bundling tonneau covers with installation services adds value and convenience, making it easier to close the sale. Additionally, promoting manufacturer rebates or limited-time offers both in-store and online creates urgency and drives more conversions." ***TS***





Help drivers understand all the factors involved when adding an off-road bumper. (Photo courtesy Magnum RT Bumpers)

THE LEADING EDGE

PART II
BY JEF WHITE

Off-road bumpers make a strong first impression & can spark future sales.

Editor's note: *This is the second in a two-part article highlighting the off-road bumper market. Part I, featuring additional manufacturers and suppliers, appeared in the May 2025 issue of THE SHOP magazine.*

Today's aftermarket off-road bumpers have become so prevalent that it seems strange to see an overlander or 4x4 rig without one. Offering appearance, performance and sometimes even safety benefits, the products are often the first step to a full vehicle upgrade.

A variety of styles allows for total customization, with benefits that can include mounting a winch or light bar and/or securing recovery items. Approach angles are improved as well in many cases, accommodating larger wheel and tire setups.

With so many suppliers and products on the market, education is important for professionals looking to meet the needs of local off-roaders. Manufacturers offer observations on the state of the industry, successful sales tips and hot products to give you the leading edge on aftermarket bumper sales.



There's no substitute for seeing the products in action. (Photo courtesy Magnum RT Bumpers)

GET TOGETHER

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OFF-ROAD BUMPERS

HOT PRODUCTS:
aFe Terra Guard Bumpers & Bull Bars for SUVs & CUVs
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Made in Corona, California, from heavy-gauge steel; designed to bolt on with no drilling or cutting for easy installation and removal; integrated recovery shackle mounts; light tabs to accept many off-road light configurations; winch mount available on some models.

aFe POWER
John Gray
VP of Exhaust & Exterior Products

HOT PRODUCTS:
Magnum RT Jeep Bumpers
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Designed for serious off-roaders who demand durability and functionality; built from cold rolled steel and finished with a three-stage powder-coating process; front bumpers are winch-ready and feature the signature angled RT Light Bar Mount.

Magnum RT Bumpers
Jesse Brown
VP of Operations

HOT PRODUCTS: Carnivore Series Front and Rear Bumpers
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Three separate, aggressive looks in full length, mid-width and stubby designs; durable black powder-coated 6-gauge steel construction; precision cut and robotically welded; tow hook recovery points; D-ring mounting locations; accommodate LEDs.

Quadratec
Matthew Konkle
Content Managing Editor

HOT PRODUCT:
Rugged Ridge Arcus Front Bumper Without Overrider
FEATURES & BENEFITS:
Stubby, winch-ready front bumper without overrider; heavy-duty 11-gauge stamped steel construction with corrosion-resistant satin black powder-coat finish.

RealTruck
Trina Hemann
Marketing Manager



Many consumers want to make their vehicles more capable and reliable and add protection. (Photo courtesy aFe POWER)







Shops will want to get comfortable with the products and the people who buy them. (Photos courtesy aFe POWER)

can be traced to the burgeoning 4x4 and overlanding markets and the enthusiasts who get together to enjoy an outdoor adventure, sharing tips about exciting products while on the trail.

"Jeep clubs are helping increase the interest in bumpers and the overall off-road market," says Trina Hemann, marketing manager for RealTruck.

It's a trend that reaches back to the COVID-19 pandemic, says Matt Konkle, managing editor for Quadratec.

"The sheer number of new people who took up overlanding and off-roading was extremely noticeable—the chance to get out in the wilderness, have fun and enjoy open air with friends and family while still giving others a good amount of distance, was an overwhelming pull," he recalls.

Interested buyers quickly outstripped available products—an issue the market still faces today.

"Unfortunately, that demand quickly ran into supply chain issues, shipping delays and a more expensive product, thanks to increased material and labor costs," Konkle notes. "Those supply issues persist even

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TOYOTA & ONX LAUNCH NATIONWIDE TRAIL REVIVAL PROJECT

Off-road navigation products company onX is partnering with Toyota to launch the Trail Revival Project—a nationwide initiative to protect and preserve access to the trails that fuel outdoor adventure.

This spring and summer, the Trail Revival Project is rallying outdoor communities to restore and maintain trail systems at five key events in California, Colorado, Montana, North Carolina and Pennsylvania. Together, onX and Toyota aim to address one of the biggest threats to outdoor recreation—loss of access due to trail deterioration, overuse, downed trees and debris, and under-resourced land management organizations, officials note in a press release.

"At a time when access to public lands is feeling increasingly uncertain, we're inviting the outdoor community to help protect the places they love," says Frances Kershaw, onX brand director. "This initiative is about more than just trail maintenance—it's about coming together to safeguard our shared landscapes for the future."

Hosted in collaboration with local organizations, off-road clubs and land management agencies, each Trail Revival Project is an opportunity for volunteers to roll up their sleeves and make an impact, the officials state. From clearing fallen trees to rebuilding trails, the community-powered days of service will help ensure that trails remain open, accessible and safe for the upcoming season.

Toyota Trucks will help drive the efforts by bringing in gear, equipment and volunteers, and hauling out debris and trash.

The first two of the five planned Trail Revival Project events were held in May at Mendocino National Forest in California and the Famous Reading Outdoors OHV Park in Pennsylvania. Planning is still underway for the Colorado, Montana and North Carolina events.

"Whether you're out hiking, biking or overlanding, access is critical," says Mike Tripp, group vice president of Toyota Marketing. "As brands who engage with outdoor enthusiasts, we have a unique opportunity to rally our communities to protect the places we all love."

In addition to the planned events, onX and Toyota are also encouraging off-road clubs to apply to host their own Trail Revival Projects. Selected groups will receive $5,000 in funding and equipment donations; chainsaws and trail tools; and support, resources and mentorship from Toyota and onX's Access and Stewardship program. Learn more at onxmaps.com/onx-access-initiatives/toyota-onx-offroad-trail-revival-project.





Toyota and onX are partnering on the Trail Revival Project, a nationwide initiative to protect and preserve access to the trails that fuel outdoor adventure. (Photos courtesy onX)



Bundling off-road bumper sales with additional accessories is a good approach for customers looking to embrace the overlanding lifestyle. (Photo courtesy Quadratec)

today and force shops across the country to do a delicate dance of meeting customer needs while trying to still pull a profit."

Carmakers have quickly recognized the potential of off-road-ready vehicles, further advancing the market.

"As the overland lifestyle continues to grow, many of the OEMs are producing vehicles that are capable of driving on light off-road trails for overland enthusiasts. SUV and CUV makers like Subaru, Honda, Toyota and even Nissan are now offering vehicles marketed toward the overlanding community," says John Gray, vice president of exhaust and exterior products for aFe POWER. "With that, many consumers want to make their vehicles even more capable and reliable and add protection."

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Familiarity with the functions and fitments of the off-road bumpers your shop carries can help staff compile appropriate packages for different drivers. (Photos courtesy RealTruck)





Many different styles and designs are available. (Photo courtesy RealTruck)

Economic uncertainty, however, can slow purchases from even the most interested buyers, sometimes forcing shops to pivot with changing market dynamics.

"Inflation and rising interest rates have had a tremendous impact on consumer spending, particularly on discretionary purchases like off-road upgrades," notes Jesse Brown, vice president of operations for Magnum RT Bumpers. "When economic conditions are uncertain, many customers prioritize essential expenses and put off vehicle modifications, leading to fluctuations in demand within the aftermarket industry."

KNOW YOUR PRODUCTS

The popularity of the off-road bumpers market has attracted a growing number of manufacturers, meaning shop owners will need to brush up on the offerings from their particular suppliers.

"Be aware of all the products available in the marketplace," Gray advises. "Many shops and installers do not know that aFe POWER offers products like grille guards, sliders and steps for this market."

Familiarity with the functions and fitments of the off-road bumpers your shop carries can reduce installation times and help technicians and salespeople compile appropriate packages for different drivers.

"Some shops may not know that the bumper port for the fog light, which fits right in the bumper, will accommodate the OE fog light (except for the Jeep Rubicon). This may cause the shop to charge more for an aftermarket fog light when it may not be necessary," Hemann observes.

Most shops do a good job matching specific bumpers with a customer's vehicle and then installing the products if the customer does not feel comfortable doing it themselves, Konkle observes.

"However, following installation, a common mistake is sending the customer out the door without providing much, if any, education on the bumper itself. Things like how to take care of it each season, regular bolt checks to make sure it remains snug, understanding possible airflow reduction or weight gains, what kind of winch will work, where and how to use recovery points, and what happens if it gets scratched up are all excellent questions to work through with a customer before they leave the shop," he says. "Doing things like this will not only instill customer confidence in the shop but also provides a chance for add-on sales that can increase profits."

Off-road bumpers are serious, often heavy-duty accessories. Knowledgeable salespeople and installers can help drivers understand all the factors involved with the products.

"One frequent issue is when shops fail to consider the total bumper weight and how it will impact the suspension," Brown says. "Heavier steel bumpers can affect a vehicle's ride height, suspension performance and



Most shops do a good job of matching a specific bumper with a customer's vehicle and installing it if needed. (Photo courtesy Quadratec)

steering, especially if paired with a winch or additional accessories. Shops that don't inform customers about the potential need for suspension upgrades, such as stronger springs or leveling kits, may leave them facing handling issues down the road."

PAINT A PICTURE

When it comes to increasing off-road bumper sales, shops will want to get comfortable with the products and the people who buy them.

"The overland, light off-road market is growing rapidly, and you may be missing out on new customers," says Gray from aFe POWER. "Attend a local overland event or meet-up to get educated by enthusiasts and become more aware of the products available in different market segments."

Back at the shop, bundling off-road bumper sales with additional accessories like winches, fog lights, auxiliary lighting and recovery items is a good approach for drivers looking to embrace the overlanding lifestyle, says Konkle from Quadratec. Showroom displays are an effective way to showcase the possibilities.

"Outfit a bumper in the shop and utilize it as a display piece so the customer can see and understand just what, overall, that bumper can offer besides just being a slab of metal on the front or back of the vehicle," he explains. "Then, give the customer a list of features and benefits on these extra products, and link them all back to how that bumper can provide extra performance, on the road or off-pavement, thanks to this full bundle of products. Also, definitely provide a discount on the bundle depending on what the customer ends up adding onto the purchase. Customers are more likely to reach a purchasing decision when they feel they are getting additional value."

There's no substitute for seeing the products in action, says Brown from Magnum RT Bumpers.

"You can potentially increase your off-road bumper sales by showcasing installed bumpers on shop vehicles, customer builds or interactive displays within the showroom," he advises. "Seeing the bumpers in action—whether in person, on social media or through professional photography—helps customers make informed decisions. Additionally, you should emphasize benefits beyond aesthetics, such as added protection, recovery points and winch integration to drive more sales."

For adventurers seeking guidance, top shops can view off-road builds as a blank canvas ready for an artist's touch.

"Overall, it's important to understand the wide range of bumper options available," says Hemann from RealTruck. "There is a vast array of styles, from stubby to full-length to winch-ready. With many different styles and designs available, shops need to understand what consumers want and what they are looking for to help them make the best selection." ***TS***



Bringing Restyling to the Masses

Catching up with Kevin McGowan, the PRO Council's 2025 Lifetime Achievement honoree.

BY JOSH POULSON
PHOTOS COURTESY JOSH POULSON & AUTO TRIM RESTYLING



Tuesday night, Nov. 5, 2024, I was at the SEMA PRO reception that was held on the third level outside the West Hall of the Las Vegas Convention Center as the council's annual awards were being handed out. Every year it is an amazing honor to even be considered for, let alone win, awards such as Restyler of the Year, PRO Person of the Year or Manufacturer of the Year.

Included in the accolades is the Nat Danas Lifetime Achievement Award, which honors a person's career commitment to the restyling market. The 2024 winner was Kevin McGowan from Auto Trim Restyling in St. Louis, Missouri.

McGowan is known in industry circles as the "Ambassador of Aftermarket" and has lived up to that nickname in many ways. I recently had a chance to sit down with him and get some details on his beginnings, his challenges and what makes his company really stand out.



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

CAR DEALERS AS CLIENTS

Growing up on the north side of Chicago, McGowan was a big Cubs baseball fan and loved to attend games. But you can't talk to him very long without him bringing up his immediate family—wife Wendy (married 35 years), sons Michael and Ryan, and daughters Megan and Rachel.

He recalls Aug. 8, 1988 (8-8-88), as a very special night, not only because of the unique date, but also because it was the very first night game in Cubs history. It was also the night he met Wendy through mutual friends at the game.

Their relationship quickly developed, and they were married two years later on Sept. 1, 1990.

Kevin has always been a natural salesperson and at the time was selling cars while Wendy was working a corporate job with Shell Oil Co. In 1991, Wendy was given the opportunity to take a job in Los Angeles and Kevin happily followed, knowing he'd be able to find something to sell.

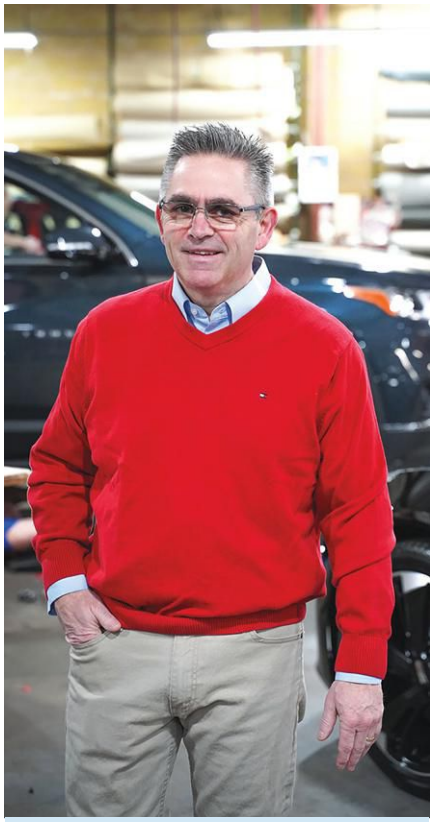
He started by selling cellular phones and plans, and even setting up agents, including local car dealers. This gave him his first taste of making car dealers his primary customer base and learning how to sell and support them.

In 1993, Wendy's career took them to St. Louis. Kevin again found his niche by working for Flex-N-Gate, which offered aftermarket accessories including bumpers, bedliners and hood shields. He sold and delivered them to car dealer parts departments and was very successful growing his territory.

(left) Kevin McGowan and Auto Trim Restyling have partnered with the St. Louis Auto Show, helping develop an Aftermarket Alley where they have performed live vehicle builds and shown consumers ways to accessorize.



Auto Trim Restyling offers dealership and retail accessorization services.



McGowan has worked hard for many years to live up to his title "Ambassador of Aftermarket."

After the company went through some adjustments, McGowan found himself back selling cars until 2000, when a man named Tony Hinton bought a vehicle from him. Hinton was running a local restyling shop in St. Louis and loved McGowan's passion and energy.

It wasn't long before McGowan began working with Hinton as a sales rep and together they quickly built the business. In fact, McGowan was able to grow his territory from $1 million in sales to $2 million while focusing more on the products that dealers couldn't do themselves, such as power sunroofs and leather interiors.

McGowan was thriving in his role of selling to car dealers and being their go-to person for aftermarket accessories.

He remembers making a sales call at Alton Toyota where he witnessed a manager giving





ATR's 2024 Toyota Land Cruiser package won the Fan Favorite award in last year's PRO Cup Challenge build contest at the SEMA Show.

an earful to a salesperson who had been gone for four hours, waiting at a shop down the street while a remote start was being installed. The salesperson had not only given the remote start away to the customer at no charge, but had then taken time away from selling by waiting on the install.

McGowan remembers saying "I can fix that," explaining how his shop would pick up and deliver cars and also train the dealership's salespeople on how to present and charge for the products. Thus started a great relationship that continued to grow, as McGowan honed his skills of teaching dealerships how to view aftermarket products as a profit center instead of a necessary evil.

STEPPING UP

Things were going well for McGowan as a sales rep, but around 2005 the restyling business he and Hinton worked for was having ownership problems. The business was in trouble and the pair's jobs were on the line, along with those of all the other employees that had become like family.

In response, in June 2006, McGowan and a partner became the owners of a new company that saved the jobs of all the former shop's employees and maintained the car dealer business that he had substantially grown.

The only problem was deciding what to call the new company. McGowan remembers sitting at the kitchen table with his kids and talking about how he needed to come up with a name. The kids said he should call it "restyling" and the name Auto Trim Restyling was born.

The business began offering new services and products such as remote starts, DVD entertainment systems, window tint and spoilers. In late 2008, McGowan and his partner bought a building for the fledgling company—only to have the Great Recession hit soon after.

Those were challenging times for ATR and the shop had to do some creative things to keep the doors open and make sure it was taking care of its employees and their families. Like many restyling shops, the company grew stronger from those tough times and soon after began to thrive.

In 2012, McGowan bought out his partner and became sole owner of a business he loves dearly. He was able to bring his two sons into the business—Michael is now in sales and Ryan is in the tint/PPF department.

Both are very proud of their father and were there in person, along with Wendy, at last fall's SEMA Show when the Lifetime Achievement honor was awarded.

MOVING FORWARD

Today, Auto Trim Restyling (atrstl.com) continues to have success with leaders such as James Johnson as shop manager and Lindsey Lawson in sales, along with many other office support staff members, technicians and drivers.

The shop has transitioned into different products over the years including spray-on liners, truck lifts and accessories, PPF, fleet products and chrome delete. It has made a consistent effort to grow its retail business, which today makes up about 30% of total sales.

ATR has shown its creativity and industry leadership by competing twice in the PRO Cup Challenge build competition at the SEMA Show, winning the Fan Favorite award last year for its awesome 2024 Toyota Land Cruiser package. In fact, it turned out so well that a local St. Louis dealer sold it and then eventually it was sold again through a Bring a Trailer auction, showcasing the customization skill and creativity of the ATR team.

McGowan and Auto Trim Restyling have also actively partnered with the St. Louis Auto Show, helping develop an After-





Current hot products include spray-on liners, truck lifts and accessories, PPF, fleet products and chrome deletes.

market Alley where they have performed live vehicle builds and shown consumers ways to accessorize everything from Ford Mustangs to Jeep Wranglers. He has also been instrumental in helping the industry on a national level with his time as a volunteer on the SEMA PRO Select Committee, where he served three different two-year terms.

McGowan's passion and willingness to give of his time has always been something to be admired, and our industry as a whole is better for it.

In fact, he and his ATR team even won the prestigious Restyler of the Year honor in 2011.

MR. AMBASSADOR

With all the success and joy the business and the industry has brought him, I asked McGowan about the challenges he's faced over the years. I really appreciated his honesty as he opened up about past struggles with alcohol.

He's been sober since Dec. 26, 2006, and says he's learned valuable life lessons that he hopes to pass along to his family and others. He is active in the Alcoholics Anonymous community as a volunteer and reminds himself every day how fortunate he was and still is to have a supportive wife and kids despite his past challenges.

Finally, I had to find out how he ended up with the nickname "Ambassador of Aftermarket."

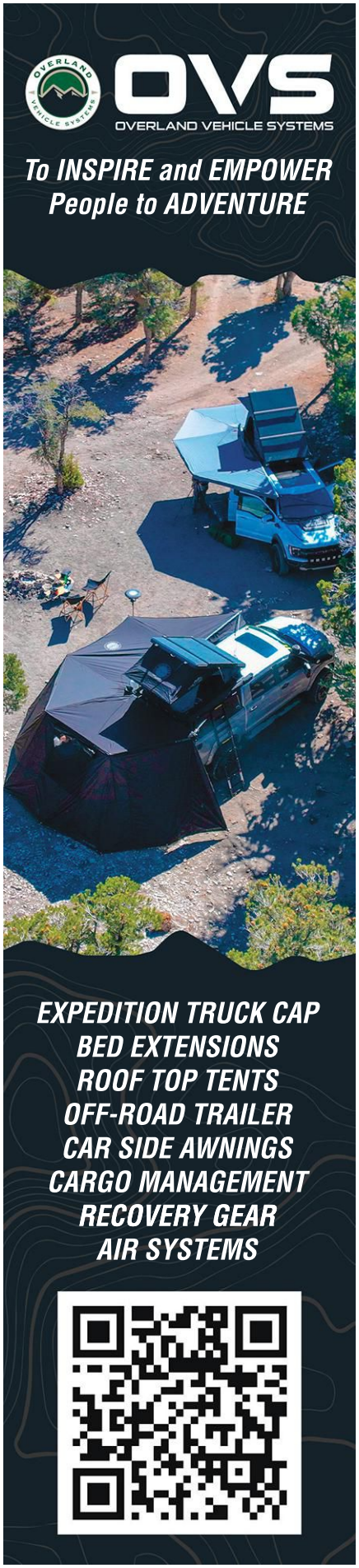
He says he was at the St. Louis Auto Show one year, where he ran into a couple of fellow restylers.

One of the guys he was talking to was brand new and working for his competition. That person introduced himself as a "business development manager," which McGowan knew was just a fancy way of saying "sales rep."

McGowan found it funny, so when the man asked what his role was, he responded with "ambassador of aftermarket."

People seemed to like the catchy new title and, as a joke, McGowan put it on his business cards to get a laugh out of his dealer customers and vendors. Others, including his product manufacturer reps, soon started using the nickname as well, and over time it stuck.

I think I can speak for many in the industry when I say that he has definitely proven his role as an ambassador in many ways over the years. Here's to you, and your award, Mr. Ambassador! **TS**



Fun in the SUN

As a fairly new restyling shop, Florida's LINE-X of Palm Beach is just warming up.

BY MAURA KELLER
PHOTOS COURTESY LINE-X OF PALM BEACH



From vans and fleets to coastal cruisers, there are plenty of vehicle upfitting projects to be found for Ervin Otankis, franchise owner of LINE-X of Palm Beach in Riviera Beach, Florida.

Going on its third year, the restyling and accessorization shop is already building a strong customer base through a variety of product and service offerings for business and pleasure. Starting with the franchise brand's signature spray-on bedliners, enthusiasts can also find a variety of protection, appearance and utility items such as step bars, light bars, bumpers, tonneau covers, truck toppers and film products.

"The accessory side is a major part of our business, as well as fleet work and many partnerships with some of the best brands like XPEL," Otankis says.

The plan was to create a one-stop shop so drivers don't have to visit multiple businesses to build the personalized vehicle they've always wanted.



LINE-X of Palm Beach in Riviera Beach, Florida, serves professional and enthusiasts looking for protection, utility and appearance items for their vehicles.

MEMORABLE PROJECTS

Although LINE-X of Palm Beach has only been around a few years, Otankis and his team already have experience working on several special projects.

One particularly memorable customer request involved lining a cold plunge chest freezer. "The customer told us what he wanted and we delivered," Otankis recalls.

Starting with the franchise brand's signature spray-on bedliners, drivers also drop in for items such as step bars, light bars, bumpers, tonneau covers, truck toppers and film products.



"I take my time to listen to every customer and make sure I deliver exactly what they want. This case was no different—the customer was so impressed he left one of the best reviews I've ever received."

Beyond automotive work, the business recently branched out by spraying HVAC equipment for an entire high-rise building on Singer Island. The original job included coating air handling ductwork and every piece of equipment that was exposed to the harsh South Florida sun.

Otankis has found success serving a mix of retail and commercial clients. He's fostered relationships with local auto dealerships, building a reputation for providing quick service and quality products.

Currently, the shop has five full-time employees, and Otankis is quick to recognize their value.

"Finding somebody who genuinely cares

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Fun in the SUN



LINE-X of Palm Beach has five full-time employees, and shop owner Ervin Otankis is quick to recognize their value.



and wants to do a good job is who I look for when hiring," he says. "Experience matters much less to me than being a conscientious person. I can teach somebody how to sand a truck or install a cover. I cannot teach someone how to care and make sure whatever they're doing is done to the best of their abilities, as if they were working on their own vehicle. That's the kind of employees I have, and it has led to many positive things for me."

Their combined success results in positive word-of-mouth advertising. The shop builds on such recognition with marketing efforts through Google Ads, Facebook and Yelp.

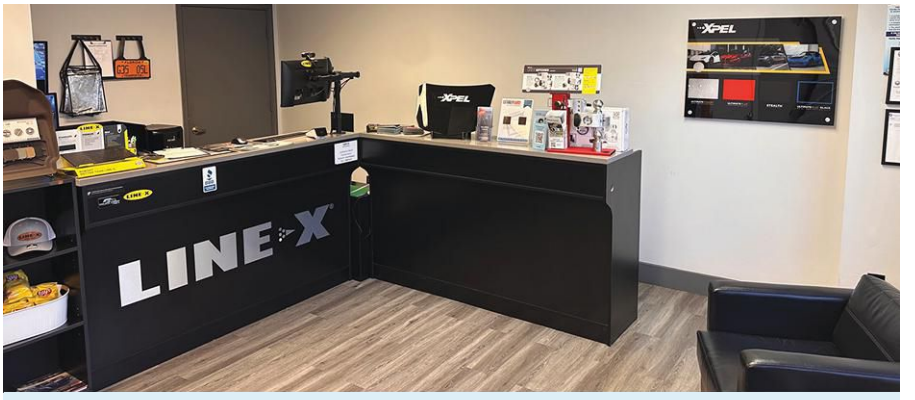
Giving back to the community is another way in which Otankis has built his company's reputation.

"I sponsor a lot of local community events such as fishing derbies and golf tournaments, as well as city cultural events that have silent auctions, and my neighborhood annual run. I don't think I have ever said 'no' when asked to sponsor or donate to a charity," he reports.

SEEING IS BELIEVING

Enthusiasts can find LINE-X of Palm Beach (linex.com/us/palm-beach-line-x-f1421) on social media through posts showcasing recent projects and highlighting connections with others in the industry.

"I have alliances with many local businesses, most notably many body shops that have had a hard time finding somebody who does quality work. Not only do I believe my



The shop strives to keep a full inventory, so customers don't have to wait long for their accessories.



quality is the best, but I also get back to people in a timely manner and provide quick turnaround times," Otankis says. "Simple things such as getting back to a customer within an hour is seen as impressive here in Florida. To me that is just common courtesy, but I do get the comment very frequently that I am appreciated for responding to customers quickly."

To further offer a streamlined process, Otankis strives to keep certain popular products in stock, including bed covers for the most popular truck models. It seems that, especially around the holidays, customers don't want to wait for their accessories.

"I want to make sure I can provide this service whenever possible," Otankis explains.

Building the brand in its 6,300-square-foot facility starts with service and "helping people understand the quality of the products we offer versus some fly-by-night, pop-up location in someone's garage."

The space was recently expanded by 2,500 square feet to accommodate paint protection film (PPF), ceramic coatings and tint installation services—all high-demand protection products important to drivers in the Sunshine State.

The response has been such that Otankis is considering adding another location on the south side of Palm Beach County.

"I enjoy meeting new people, which is something that comes readily in this type of business," he explains. "There are so many times, in the waiting room, I will have people from different businesses making connections and networking, all while waiting for their trucks. I find these organic connections are the best way to meet people you wouldn't typically meet. I have met so many amazing people from all walks of life and different occupations." ***TS***





MADE IN USA

The benefits of producing products close to home.

In a world where global sourcing is now commonplace—as recent tariff talks have shown—are there still benefits to domestic manufacturing for the automotive aftermarket?

The Warn Group—which offers made-in-the-USA truck, Jeep and off-road products through its Fab Fours, Fabtech, Factor 55 and Warn Industries brands—can actually name three.

"Top of the list is quality control," says Corby Phillips, vice president of aftermarket sales for The Warn Group. "If we find an issue with any product, our engineers are steps away to view the problem and take corrective action."

Agility is next on the list.

"We can adjust production to the needs of the market quickly," Phillips notes, "as filling customers' needs is a top priority here at Warn."

Finally, there's creating jobs for American workers.

"Keeping a strong workforce employed here in the States is important. We have sub-suppliers, and they have sub-suppliers—the trickle-down of what it takes to produce products in the U.S. has a positive impact on our economy."

Your customers may feel the same way, which is why THE SHOP is highlighting products that manufacturers market as "Made in the USA" on the following pages. Check them out to find the parts and accessories produced close to home.



The Warn Group enjoys real-world benefits from offering products made in the USA. (Photo courtesy The Warn Group)

CrossBeam Shackle

Factor 55, Boise, Idaho, presents the CrossBeam Shackle recovery link. The shackle mount resists leg-spreading under sideload for added stability, and the large circular opening accepts both synthetic and steel shackles. Optimized for quick hookups with gear like the UltraHook, product features include laser-engraved angle charts, clear WLL markings and a 5:1 safety factor. Weighing 39 ounces and available in a range of colors to match any setup, CrossBeam is CE/UKCA compliant and engineered and made in the USA.



Tundra/Sequoia Lift Kits

Tuff Country EZ-Ride Suspension, West Jordan, Utah, presents its new 3-inch Lift Kits for 2022-25 Toyota Tundra and 2023-25 Sequoia applications. Made in the USA, the kits include easy-to-install boxed upper control arms that are used to reduce stress on ball joints and keep proper front-end geometry.



Super Duty Ranch-Style Front Bumper



Fab Fours, Lancaster, South Carolina, presents its Black Steel Ranch-Style Front Bumper, offering durability, functionality and style for Ford Super Duty applications. Engineered to withstand all off-road conditions and made in the USA, the bumper delivers maximum durability without sacrificing style and includes customization options such as a winch tray, D-ring mounts, 2-inch receiver and lower guards. The product includes tow hooks, accommodates the factory camera and 3-by-3-inch LED cubes, and is available in full guard, prerunner guard or no guard configurations.

Tacoma UCA System

Fabtech, Chino, California, introduces its latest 3-inch Ball Joint Upper Control Arm Suspension Systems tailored specifically for 2024 Toyota Tacoma applications. Featuring the company's ball joint upper control arms, the kits offer enhanced strength and durability coupled with a sleek, modern aesthetic. Paired with Fabtech or Dirt Logic shocks, the UCAs improve on- and off-road performance.





Performance Winch

Warn Industries, Clackamas, Oregon, presents the WARN ZEON XP performance winch. The reliable, American-assembled winch has been re-engineered from the ground up with wired and built-in HUB wireless controls, live feedback with real-time updates on winch status, dynamic lighting with color change based on winch status, best-in-class line speed and easy operation with a remote clutch with manual override.

New Ironworker

Scotchman Industries, Philip, South Dakota, introduces the fully integrated FI 125 Ironworker. Made in the USA, the 125-ton unit is built for performance, precision and productivity, tackling high-volume, repetitive operations. Capable of punching a 1-1/2-inch hole through 1-inch mild steel with ease, the system includes five built-in tool stations and a fully integrated, single-operator design. Standard features include a 6-by-6-by-1/2-inch angle shear, channel shear that handles a 6-inch channel, rectangular notcher for up to 3-by-5-by-1/2-inch material and more.





Truck Bed Toolboxes

Westin Automotive, San Dimas, California, presents its Brute Series Toolboxes, manufactured entirely in the USA. Built tough for tradesmen, contractors and serious truck owners, the toolboxes deliver premium strength, durability, and secure storage for professional-grade tools and equipment. Features include heavy-duty aluminum construction, reinforced lids and hinges, and industrial-grade stainless steel latches. They are available in multiple configurations including topsiders, underbodies and crossovers for any truck bed setup.

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Ford Raptor Phantom Front Bumper

Addictive Desert Designs, Chandler, Arizona, presents its Ford F-150 Raptor Phantom Front Bumper that combines a knife's-edge design and bold lighting options for aggressive styling. The bumper closely contours to the Raptor's factory lines, while the central 20-inch radiused light bar mount and two 10-inch light bar mounts on the wings provide a sleek aesthetic. The bumper is designed and made in the USA.



Corvette Cat-Back Exhaust



aFe POWER, Corona, California, presents Cat-Back Exhaust Systems for Chevrolet Corvette C8 models. Created to deliver a deep, powerful, American Muscle tone with no tuning required, the systems are available with or without mufflers, and for vehicles with or without NPP valves. Available with 4.5-inch quad tips in carbon fiber, polished stainless or ceramic coated black finishes, the bolt-on exhausts are made in the USA with mandrel-bent, 304 stainless steel tubing.

Land Cruiser Bumper

Rago Fabrication, Chandler, Arizona, presents its Toyota Land Cruiser 250 Series Center-Mount Winch Front Bumper that features a low-profile design with lighting and recovery options for enhanced off-road utility. The bumper's 30-inch dual-row light bar mount and pair of cube light mounts provide lighting options for low-visibility conditions. The heavy-duty standard winch mount and two D-ring mounts offer vehicle recovery capabilities. Made in the USA, the bumper can be paired with Rago's Land Cruiser Brush Guard for maximum protection and style.



Exhaust Wraps



Design Engineering Inc. (DEI), Avon Lake, Ohio, presents its Titanium and Glass Fiber Exhaust Wraps that are made in the USA. The Titanium Exhaust Wrap is constructed from real pulverized lava rock—stranded, woven and crafted into a proprietary diagonal weave that delivers strength, flexibility and heat resistance. It wraps tight, lasts long and handles extreme temps up to 2,500 degrees without the need for sprays or soaking. The Glass Fiber Exhaust Wrap drops under-hood temps by up to 50% to protect components and boost power.



Subaru BRZ/ Toyota GR86 Cat-Back Exhaust

BORLA Performance Industries, Johnson City, Tennessee, presents its Cat-Back Exhaust System for 2022-25 Subaru BRZ/Toyota GR86 models that improves horsepower and torque. System 140912 features the aggressive ATAK sound without any drone or resonance inside the vehicle and an Extended Polyphonic Harmonizer muffler core design. The system is made in the USA from T-304 stainless steel with a brushed tip. It features all-welded construction for durability and long life.

Locking Dry Box

Tuffy Security Products, Cortez, Colorado, presents its new Tuffy 75 Locking Dry-Box, designed and rigorously tested to keep gear safe in rain, snow, sand or mud. Featuring a four-digit combination lock with key override and locking pins for stacking and mounting, the boxes are available with an optional MOLLE panel inside lid for customized storage for gear pouches, tools or essentials.





JL/JT Armored LED Headlights

Delta Tech Industries, Chino, California, introduces its made-in-the-USA Armored Headlights for Jeep Wrangler and Gladiator JL/JT applications. Equipped with a protective crossbar that shields the LED light source from debris, the lights are part of the Quad-Bar Series and come equipped with precision DOT-compliant glass prismatic optics, built-in LED light source, LED blinker and optional Switchbacks. Each light source produces 4,000 lumens and is rated at 22,000 operating hours at near-daylight visibility. A halo-equipped DRL version is available.

Tundra TRD Pro Lift Springs



Eibach Inc., Corona, California, presents its PRO-LIFT-KIT Lift Springs for 2022-25 Toyota Tundra TRD Pro 4WD models. The block-resistant springs are designed to lift and level the front and rear of the Tundra TRD Pro while ensuring consistent ride height. Made in the USA, extensive testing shows the spring lifts allow full range of suspension travel without additional stress on bushings and ball joints as seen with spacer lift systems.

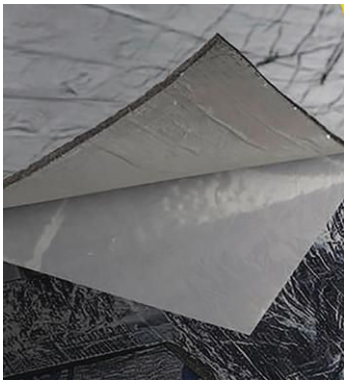


Rooftop Cargo Carriers

ProMaxx Automotive Accessories, Jasper, Indiana, presents its ProMaxx Rooftop Cargo Carriers. Designed to fit most OE and aftermarket cross rails, the rugged carriers are crafted from durable, all-season HDPE material. Quick and hassle-free, they assemble without tools and include all necessary mounting hardware. Featuring a dual-side opening design, the carriers are made in the USA and available in 10- and 18-cubic-feet sizes.

Heat Control & Sound Damping

Thermo-Tec Automotive, Greenwich, Ohio, presents its race-proven Heat Control and Sound-Damping Materials, including adhesive-backed Thermo Guard FR. Made in the USA, the high-tech foil heat barrier blocks more than 90% of radiant heat and protects against temperatures up to 1,500 degrees. With a new adhesive backing, installation is faster, cleaner and more efficient. The material can be used for insulating interiors and features the company's lightweight, durable construction.



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The Warn Group: Four Brands, All With US Manufacturing

The Warn Group—Fab Fours, Fabtech, Factor 55 and Warn Industries—are not only American-based companies, but they all also offer American design, engineering and manufacturing. This commonality among the four brands helps keep them at the top of the heap with high-performance premium products.

Each brand specializes in something unique, with some facilities featuring ISO and IATF quality certifications. Lancaster, South Carolina-based Fab Fours is known for its highly stylized and rugged truck and SUV bumpers and truck bed accessories. Don't let its wild designs fool you—this is tough stuff. For over 35 years, Fabtech has manufactured premium suspension products including shock absorbers, springs and other components. It also has manufacturing in Lancaster, South Carolina, but research and design is in California. Based in Boise, Idaho, Factor 55 made a name for itself by producing the best precision-made recovery equipment in the biz and developing "closed system winching," a technique for the ultimate in vehicle recovery safety. Warn Industries, a titan in the off-road world, has been manufacturing its products in the Pacific Northwest since 1948. It has over 200,000 sq. ft. of factory space in Clackamas, Oregon. There it produces its legendary winches, bumpers, 4WD hubs and more for consumers, OEMs and military customers.

Together, the four brands have 140+ years of U.S. engineering, design and manufacturing know-how, and employ around 500 Americans in a variety of roles. This includes design, engineering, testing, machining, welding, assembly, quality control, accounting and marketing. The quartet of companies offers innovative, quality products WDs and consumers want. Their products help vehicles perform better, increase their off-road capability and versatility, and be more self-reliant for various adventures and work needs across the U.S. and the globe.



Reach out to a sales rep to see how your business can benefit from offering products from The Warn Group and further meet your customers' needs. Four brands, one trade name: The Warn Group.



FOUR BRANDS, ONE MORE ADVANTAGE

It's true, four respected American-based manufacturing companies—Fab Fours, Fabtech, Factor 55, and Warn—are now part of The Warn Group. This family of top-tier American brands promises to provide retailers with greater access to more innovative, premium off-road products than ever before.

And there's more to come, with efficiencies in ordering and freight that lower your costs while raising your profits. But that's just the start. Reach out to your sales rep today to learn how your business can prosper by partnering with The Warn Group to meet your customers' needs.



Fab Fours FABTECH FACTOR 55 WARN



Protective Coating

Rhino Linings, San Diego, presents its Rhino Hybrid XP protective coating, engineered to offer increased adhesion for superior bonding strength, improved UV resistance to withstand harsh conditions and a faster cure time for higher efficiency. Made in the USA, the coating features reduced moisture sensitivity, enabling better curing in humid climates, and higher abrasion resistance, making it suitable for vehicle, industrial and off-road protection uses.



Wrangler Brake Kits

Wilwood, Camarillo, California, presents a new Rear Big Brake Kit to accompany its popular Front Aero6-DM Brake Kits for 2007-18 Jeep JK Wrangler, 2018-21 Jeep JL Wrangler and 2020-21 Jeep JT Gladiator models. The systems upgrade the factory floating calipers with rigid forged aluminum Superlite calipers and larger 13.50-inch premium alloy rotors for improved performance and pedal feel and better thermal capacity. The rear kits were designed to be compatible with factory master cylinders and ABS, and fit most 17-inch or larger wheels.

Limited-Slip Differential

Auburn Gear, Auburn, Indiana, presents the Grip-N-Loc Limited Slip 8.875-inch, 12-bolt differential for 1964-72 GM Chevrolet/Pontiac/Oldsmobile vehicles. Offering American-made quality, the system features specially engineered cone clutch technology that provides increased performance, heat-treated steel gears that deliver a powerful grip and case material shown to be 50% stronger than OE.





Custom Receiver Hitches

Blue Ox, Pender, Nebraska, presents Custom-Designed Receiver Hitches engineered to meet the unique specifications of a vehicle's make and model, enhancing towing efficiency while elevating its appearance. Manufactured in the USA, the hitches feature a premium textured black powder-coat over an e-coat for rust and corrosion protection. A convenient wiring plug mounting bracket makes installation quick and easy.



Vapor Canister

Vapor Trapper, Gilbert, Arizona, presents its rechargeable billet aluminum charcoal Vapor Canister that eliminates the raw fuel smell from fuel tank vent lines. Made in the USA, the patented canister offers easy installation and can be used in cars, trucks, hot rods, boats and more. The charcoal contents can be replaced when they eventually become saturated.

Jeep JL/JT High-Steer Knuckles

RockJock 4x4 by John Currie, Corona, California, offers RockJock High Steer Knuckles for all Jeep JL Wrangler and JT Gladiator models. For use on factory axles or axles that retain factory inner C-knuckles, the upgrades raise the tie rod 2-3/4 inches and the drag link 2-1/2 inches. Intended for use with the company's other high steer components, the knuckles are made in the USA from 65-45-12 ductile iron castings with precise machining and a gloss black finish. Extra threaded steering stop bolt holes ahead of the axle allow a second set of stops to be added.





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Ford Ranger Raptor
PRO-LIFT-KIT

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Fender Flares

EGR, Ontario, California, presents its Baseline Fender Flare lineup, designed to deliver rugged protection, precision fitment and a bold, American-made style. Built for off-roaders, daily drivers and custom builders, the Baseline series offers a clean, contoured look that complements oversize off-road tires while protecting against rocks, debris and harsh road conditions. They provide up to 2 inches of additional tire coverage with a lightly textured, UV-protected matte finish.



Aluminum Flywheel

Centerforce Clutches, Prescott, Arizona, presents Aluminum Flywheels manufactured from aircraft-grade billet aluminum for light weight and low inertia. Featuring mechanically retained starter ring gears and replaceable steel friction surfaces that have been heat-treated for abrasion resistance and can be swapped out in the field, the flywheels are CAD/CAM-designed and CNC machined in the USA to deliver a no-hassle, bolt-in installation. They are available for popular domestic and import car and truck models and are SFI certified.

Door Glass Complete Kits

Vintage Glass, Gainesville, Florida, presents Door Glass Complete Kits for cars and pre-1972 truck models. The tempered flat glass windows can be custom-made based on vehicle year, make, model, number of doors and roof type. Tempering creates a glass that, if broken, will crumble into small, non-sharp granular pieces instead of splintering into jagged shards for safety.





Muscle Car Tilt Columns

Flaming River Industries Inc., Berea, Ohio, presents its 33-inch Muscle Car Floor Shift Tilt Key Columns. Designed to serve as direct-fit units for popular muscle car applications and to connect to the original rag joint, the columns offer an integrated ignition located at the 3 o'clock position with no welded-on attachments or extra relays. Made in the USA, the columns come complete with a GM-coded key assembly, wiring and ignition switch made from state-of-the-art, all-new components. Finishes include polished, black powder-coat, and paintable mill.



Bronco Adjustable UCAs

Specialty Products Co., Longmont, Colorado, presents Adjustable Camber/Caster Upper Control Arms, now available for 2021-25 Ford Bronco applications. Designed to improve droop travel, drivability and tire wear as well as adjust tire position in the wheel well, the UCAs are equipped with maintenance-free ball joints and xAxis sealed flex joints in bonded rubber sleeves. A tubular steel design provides strength and durability for demanding environments, and the removable and replaceable arms are sold in pairs and made in the USA.

Cargo Organization

Tmat, Wheatland, Oklahoma, presents its U.S.-made Tmat Cargo Organization System designed to organize and secure cargo in trucks, vans and trailers. Featuring a modular grid-based structure within a bed mat that slides out onto the tailgate for easy access and customizable cargo blockers and accessories that prevent items from shifting, the versatile, affordable system is easy to install.



3M | Protection Wrap Film

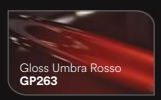
Combining the easy installation and customization of vinyl wrap film with the long-lasting durability of paint protection film.

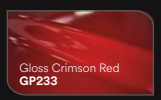


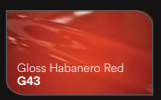
Limited Time
Price Drop

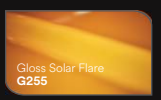
Available in nearly 30 premium colors, including gloss or matte finishes and flips.

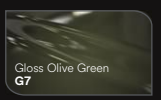
Gloss

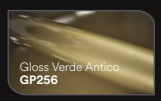


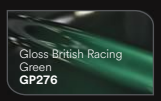


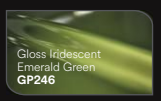


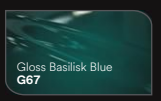


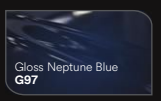


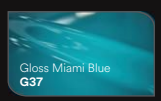


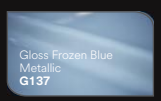




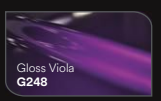




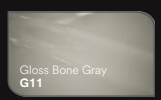




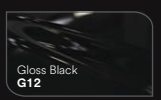




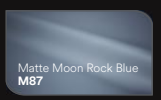


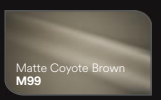






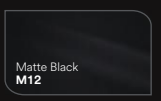
Matte



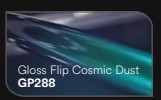


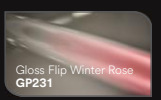


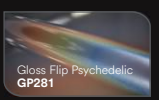




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Color-Change Vehicle Wrapping Film



Avery Dennison, Mentor, Ohio, presents its Yiannimize color collection, adding four new colors to its Supreme Wrapping Film vehicle color-change film series. The colors are Gloss Metallic Vibrant Violet, Gloss Pearl Tutu Pink, Gloss Pure Red and Satin Metallic Spy Grey. The new films, inspired and selected by celebrity installer Yianni Charalambous, better known as "Yiannimize," enhance the ability of installers to create unique custom looks with a wide range of colors and special effects. The films provide improved durability and conformability.

Toolbox & Tonneau Cover Combo



Truck Covers USA, San Diego, presents the American Work Cover, a toolbox and rolling tonneau cover combination for work truck applications. The made-in-the-USA products feature superior construction with OEM-grade locking mechanisms, two sliding removable trays, LED cargo lighting and remote locking options.

Pro Speaker Kit



Dynamat, Hamilton, Ohio, presents the Dynamat Pro Speaker Kit. The American-made kit is designed to improve the performance output of vehicle speakers using three specialized materials to reduce vibration, back wave distortion and sound migration. All necessary materials are combined in one box, including two 18-by-18-inch sheets of Dynamat Xtreme, two 10-by-10-by-1-inch sheets of Dynamat Back Wave Closed-Cell Foam and four 32-inch Pro Speaker Ring strips—enough material to treat up to two 10-inch door speakers.

Flex Fuel Performance Solutions



Advanced Fuel Dynamics, Troy, Texas, introduces the E-Sense billet-housed, made-in-the-USA Flex Fuel Content Sensor engineered for high-performance fuel systems. Designed to move up to 12 times the fuel of the OEM GM/Continental unit, E-Sense eliminates flow restrictions and the turbulence and heat that come with them. A modular fitting system (5/16-inch, 3/8-inch, 1/2-inch quick-connect or -6/-8/-10/-12 AN, and -8 ORB) allows builders to drop the sensor straight into everything from street cars to 2,000-plus-hp drag builds without bulky bypass plumbing.

Mustang Performance Brakes

SSBC, Elma, New York, presents its new Redline Performance Brakes with applications for 2005-23 Ford Mustang S197 and S550 models. Made in the USA, the 6-piston system fits OEM wheels and rotors, drastically increases stopping power and includes an aircraft-grade billet aluminum body. Highlights include dual custom seals (square-cut pressure and dust) and powder-coated red or black or clear anodized finishes, with custom colors available.



Truck Bed Cover

BAKFlip, Springfield, Missouri, presents the BAKFlip MX4 TS from **RealTruck**, a top-of-the-line hard-folding truck bed cover with easy rack compatibility. Engineered to combine versatility and resilience, the cover includes integrated T-slot channels in the bed rails that make it easier than ever to add aftermarket crossbars, racks, cargo baskets, carriers and a variety of cargo accessories. It features a low-profile design constructed from high-quality materials, including heavy-duty aluminum top panels finished with a matte black specialty automotive coating.





Heavy-Duty Bumpers

Bodyguard Bumpers, Paris, Texas, offers a premium lineup of heavy-duty Replacement Bumpers that are 100% designed and manufactured in the USA. Steel aftermarket front and rear replacement bumpers are available for truck, Jeep and Bronco applications in diamond plate and smooth plate styles, along with work truck and off-road bumpers. Other products include sleek off-road steps and rugged upgraded metal fender systems for the trails.

Diesel Treatment

Hot Shot's Secret, Mt. Gilead, Ohio, presents its Everyday Diesel Treatment (EDT) engineered for ease of use and compatibility with modern diesel fuel systems, now available in a newly designed twin-neck bottle. The upgraded packaging is made in the USA with globally sourced components, delivering the multi-functional diesel fuel additive that's designed to improve performance, protect vital fuel system components and extend the life of diesel engines. It is suitable for use in all diesel applications including pickups, semis, fleet vehicles, RVs and more.





Big-Block Ford Headers

Hedman Hedders, Whittier, California, presents its American-made, 50-state-legal Long-Tube Headers for 1974-79 Ford F-Series 2WD trucks running 429- to 460-ci big-block engines. Featuring mandrel-bent mild steel primaries and stout 3/8-inch header flanges, the headers are hand-welded for precision and feature a shiny polished silver ceramic finish rated to 1,400 degrees. Highlights include a free-flowing, mandrel-bent tube design and gasket-less ball-and-socket-style collectors for easy installation.

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Folding T-Handle

Eberhard Manufacturing, Strongsville, Ohio, presents its American-made 8400 Series Recessed Folding T-Handle, a versatile and secure solution for toolboxes, service body doors and cargo enclosures. Part of the company's complete line of latches, handles and electronic access systems, the access hardware is engineered to meet the needs of aftermarket, off-road and custom builders.

Jeep JL Hydraulic Release Bearing Kit

McLeod Racing, Anaheim, California, offers a Jeep JL Hydraulic Release Bearing Kit featuring a hard-anodized billet aluminum piston, quality elbow swivel fittings and high-pressure stainless steel lines for durability. The bearing is self-adjusting and designed to work with the factory master cylinder but does not work with any self-adjusting clutch.





4L80E Transmission

FTI Performance, DeLand, Florida, presents the FTI Performance 4L80E Transmission with a high torque capacity to handle substantial horsepower and torque. Electronically controlled so it's an easy fit for street and track use, the 4L80E includes an overdrive gear that provides additional fuel economy and drivability for the street. It is designed for durability and reliability in performance applications.

Short-Throw Shifter

Silver Sport Transmissions, Rockford, Tennessee, presents its STX Short-Throw Shifter. Available for a variety of applications, the systems can be used as a bolt-on replacement for the stock shifter or can be moved to a forward position with the company's Shifter Relocation Kits. Designed in-house by mechanical engineers, the shifters are made of billet aluminum and steel components and use a double-trunnion design for quality and durability, offering positive, smooth, fast shifts.



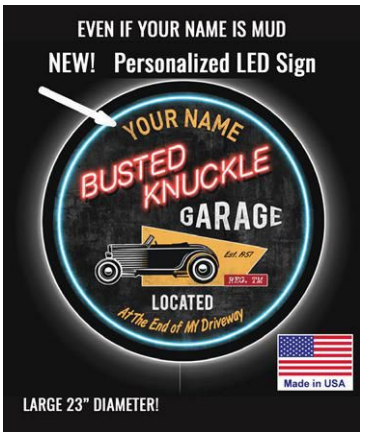


EV Transmission Adapter

Torque Trends, Wittmann, Arizona, presents its TorqueBox EV Transmission Adapter. With an 8-inch diameter, the planetary-based TorqueBox is available in 1.58-, 1.90- and 3.00-to-1 ratios to fit into tight places and most automotive transmission tunnels. Weighing less than the transmission it replaces, the unit adds range and installs easily. The input shaft allows up to 15 degrees of flex in both directions of rotation without damage, reducing the chance of fracture due to high spike torque loads. The HD TorqueBox handles up to 1,250 pound-feet of torque.

Personalized Shop Sign

Busted Knuckle Garage, Prescott, Arizona, presents its Busted Knuckle Garage LED Sign. The rugged, stylish sign features the Busted Knuckle Garage logo illuminated by bright, energy-efficient LEDs to give garages or workspaces a bold, industrial vibe. Made in the USA, the 23-inch-diameter sign can be personalized with a name or any text and features LED backlit illumination for a soft, vibrant glow. The sign is created for indoor use only.





Mini Injector Test Bench

Dynocom Industries, Fort Worth, Texas, introduces its AiC Mini Injector Test Bench. Features include a primary fluid pump offering 540 lph at 40 psi, estimated max fluid flow at 43.5 psi, max injector flowrate (flow sensor limited) at 2,500cc/min, optional ultrasonic cleaner output wiring, optional Ultrasonic 3L unit, 3.2-gallons fluid tank, heat exchanger/cooling, quick injector lock-and-load system, integrated parts service tray, separate peak and hold injector driver module and automatic injector voltage control.

Chrome-Delete Overlays

Ecological, Rocklin, California, presents its BumperShellz chrome-delete overlays. Made in the USA, the overlays are designed to protect and restyle truck bumpers and trim while covering dents, dings and rust. Similar to a vinyl wrap, the overlays do not cause any permanent damage to the truck. ***TS***



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PERFORMANCE

FULL STOP



Performance brake products help counteract all that under-hood power.

BY JOHN CAROLLO

(Image credit: Collection - stock.adobe.com)



Today's vehicles are faster and heavier than ever, placing greater demands on the brake system. (Photo courtesy Disc Brakes Australia)

One would think a market that is all about slowing down would not be known for steadily accelerating in importance. But that's exactly how the performance brake market is doing these days.

People are no longer treating their brake systems as afterthoughts. Instead, they are bringing brakes in early in their builds. After all, something has to counteract all that under-hood power found in today's performance and race vehicles.

More options and specialized features mean there's a lot to learn about today's performance brake market. Suppliers are here to comment on market trends, sales strategies and the hottest new brake products that deliver a full stop when it's needed.

MEETING TODAY'S CHALLENGES

As is usually the case in most areas of the aftermarket, observations on the health of the performance brakes market start with how buyers feel about the nation's economy.

"During our first two years, everyone was dealing with the cause and effects of the pandemic. Once things loosened up, people started buying again, but the supply chain was still recovering, so it was difficult to get raw materials and some components. Things started rolling in 2023 but then got tighter in 2024—most distributors saw big increases in their overall brake category but declines in sales for their premium brake products," says Tom Reid, president and CEO of SSBC-USA. "Recently, things are picking up for American manufacturers that have reliable inventory available and are not affected by tariffs."

As the market has evolved, insiders say brake technology has improved at both the factory and aftermarket levels. Today's drivers expect smooth, solid stops every time.

"When someone goes to either build or have a car built, they expect more from the brake system being installed," says Michael Hamrick, events and promotions manager at Wilwood Disc Brakes. "Along with brake components having to keep up with the times, so have the wheel, tire and suspension companies. Your 'daily driver' has become a much better performance vehicle than you drove 10 years ago with all the engineering that is being put into cars now."

Brake, suspension and wheel/tire companies have also turned their attention to bringing similar performance to vehicles built in the 1960s and '70s, he adds.

"Higher-quality manufactured parts, better and more extensive testing along with customer feedback go much further than they used to."

Joshua Russell, from the marketing

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PERFORMANCE BRAKES

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■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Modern disc brake upgrades at an affordable price; complete engineered solutions for early domestic cars; deliver value and performance by retrofitting early domestic cars with modern disc brake kits instead of stock reproduction parts.

Baer Brakes
Rick Elam
Director of Braking

■ **HOT PRODUCT:** Brawler-LT (Light Truck) Series for 1/2-Ton Trucks
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** 100% American-made billet aluminum calipers and Dimple Drilled & Slotted (DDS) rotors; direct fit; stainless steel pistons, bleeders and pad clips; eye-catching design; Red Line series available for late-model Mustangs and American muscle cars.

SSBC-USA
Tom Reid
President/CEO/Founder

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** 4000 & 5000 Series Brake Discs
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Vane structure called the "kangaroo paw" is a unique pillar design inside the rotor that allows for more cooling and better internal strength, delivering a more consistent and stronger disc.

Disc Brakes Australia
Mathew Roskey
USA Sales Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** Redstuff Brake Pads
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Premium NAO (nonasbestos organic) ceramic granule-enhanced brake pads; low-dust formula; enhanced braking performance; reduced rotor wear; meet ECE R90 brake safety regulations; Brake-In surface coating facilitates quicker bed-in.

EBC Brakes
Joshua Russell
Marketing

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** MaxGrip Lite 4-Piston Aluminum Caliper Front Disc Brake Conversion Kits
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Popular choice for classic and muscle car owners looking for a substantial upgrade in braking performance, safety and aesthetics; straightforward installation process; combine multipiston caliper benefits with high-performance MaxGrip XDS rotors.

LEED Brakes
Bill Cummings
President

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** Z36 Truck & Tow Brake Pads
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** Carbon-fiber ceramic brake pad formula provides severe-duty stopping power without sacrificing everyday drivability; low dust; noise-free.

PowerStop
Jake Walenga
Marketing Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** Aero6-DM Direct Mount Front Brake Kits
■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:** True front brake upgrade for many late-model 1/2-ton and midsize trucks and SUVs including Chevy, Ford, Ram, Toyota, Jeep and Mercedes-Benz Sprinter vans using 17-inch and larger wheels; forged aluminum 6-piston Aerolite calipers and one-piece vented rotors.

Wilwood Disc Brakes
Michael Hamrick
Events & Promotions Manager



Today's daily drivers and racers expect smooth, solid stops every time. (Photo courtesy Wilwood Disc Brakes)

department at EBC Brakes, notes today's cars are faster, heavier and more capable than ever—whether it's a turbocharged hot hatch, a performance SUV or even a high-powered EV.

"This shift means the demands placed on braking systems have increased significantly, even for everyday driving. What was once considered track-only equipment is now often needed for fast road use," Russell says. "As a result, EBC Brakes has had to adapt, offering products for a broader range of vehicles and driving styles. Ultimately, as vehicles have become more advanced, the performance aftermarket has followed suit—offering components that can keep up with today's high demands while still delivering everyday usability."

Mathew Roskey, USA sales manager for Disc Brakes Australia, has also seen new car and truck models prompt brake system updates.

"Vehicles today are heavier and faster from the factory than ever before. This has increased the demand for the brakes substantially, even causing the OEMs to go to a two-piece disc design," he reports. "We also need to look at the EV platforms. In day-to-day driving the regenerative braking does most of the stopping, but when you drive the vehicle on a track or in HPDE events, the speed and extra weight that is being carried due to the battery puts a high demand on the brakes. In racing we have not seen 4,000-plus-pound vehicles on track."

Such innovations for specific market segments means more education is needed at the shop and installer levels, says Rick Elam, director of braking at Baer Brakes, part of the Holley Performance Brands portfolio.

"On the early/classics side, there are way



Quality brake systems can be an important part of an overall performance package. (Photo courtesy Baer Brakes)

more options for suspension and brakes, which can be good and bad," he says. "There are more high-quality parts than ever before, but the sheer volume of options can be overwhelming, often leading to confusion and hesitation for customers. Over the years, we've found that it's essential to look at the vehicle as a whole, understanding how our parts interact with and affect other systems, to ensure we deliver a complete package for the customer. We want to make sure our parts work smoothly with the rest of the vehicle and fit what the customer plans to do with it."

Meanwhile, since most late-model vehicles come with capable brakes from the OEMs, "the aftermarket has adapted, offering upgrades that complement modern performance and take braking to the next level," he adds.

More systems have also meant more suppliers entering the aftermarket.

"The performance brake market has grown to become diluted with options, with a few brands flattering PowerStop by imitating us. Despite this, we still see the quality of the product and brand recognition as what sets us apart," says Jake Walenga, marketing manager at PowerStop Brakes.

Shops may be happy to hear that the folks doing brake jobs are not forgotten.

"Mirroring trends across the aftermarket, the performance brake market has undergone a significant evolution in its approach to installer-focused designs," says Bill Cummings, president of LEED Brakes. "Today's kits boast enhanced ease of installation, greater completeness and a wealth of embedded knowledge. Driven by years of customer feedback regarding past struggles, many companies have proactively identified and addressed these pain points in their product development."

SLOW & STEADY

While they are seemingly straightforward systems, shops will still want to take a slow, steady approach to identifying and installing performance brakes in order to maximize efficiency and driver satisfaction.

"When it comes to performance brakes, especially on classic 1960s and '70s vehicles with their myriads of factory brake configurations (spindles, wheels, master cylinders, boosters, etc.), thorough upfront questioning isn't just helpful—it's absolutely critical," says Cummings. "Failing to meticulously gather information about the customer's exact vehicle specifications and their long-term vision is a recipe for misdiagnosis, incorrect parts, fitment nightmares and ultimately, a dissatisfied customer.



Focus on education and consultation rather than just parts replacement. (Photos courtesy EBC Brakes)





Today's kits boast enhanced ease of installation, greater completeness and a wealth of embedded knowledge. (Photo courtesy LEED Brakes)



Increasing brake system business starts with highlighting your shop's knowledge and experience. (Photo courtesy LEED Brakes)

Investing the time to ask detailed questions at the outset streamlines the entire process, ensuring you guide them to the right product the first time. Furthermore, understanding their future aspirations allows you to strategically recommend current solutions that will seamlessly integrate with planned upgrades, potentially including advice on wheel and suspension compatibility."

Walenga recommends getting to know the customer and what they expect.

"Our products not only solve issues and reduce comebacks for repair shops and mechanics but are also specifically geared toward the driving habits and application of the end user. It's important to understand how the end user drives their vehicle to be able to recommend the correct braking solution."

Hamrick offers a question list to get conversations started.

"What are they going to do with the car once it's built? How and where are they going to drive it? Who is going to drive it? Will it be a daily driver? Do they plan to autocross the vehicle? Take it to an open track? Will it have big horsepower and amenities like their newer daily-driven car? Does the customer have some driving experience or are they looking to become a better driver?" he asks. "If the shop does not select parts that will meet their customers' expectations and if these parts do not work well together, it's a recipe for failure."

As is the case in many segments of the specialty aftermarket, it's important to remember that not every user needs top-of-the-line performance.

"One of the most common mistakes shops make when selling or fitting performance brake products is assuming that 'more performance' automatically means 'better,'" says Russell. "It's tempting to recommend the most aggressive pad compound or highest-spec rotor, but if those parts don't suit the customer's vehicle or driving style, it can lead to disappointing results—or even safety concerns. For example, fitting a race-focused pad on a daily-driven road car might result in excessive noise, poor cold bite, increased rotor wear and even reduced stopping performance during normal driving."

Quality features and benefits make more of a lasting impact on drivers than price alone.

"Sometimes it's hard for shops to sell value based on increased safety, more reliability or the benefits of being American made," says Reid. "Many shops make the mistake of wanting to be price leaders and not value-added sellers."

Another common mistake is mixing and matching parts to save a few dollars, says Elam.

"There is no such thing as a universal disc brake master or a drum master. It is matching the correct components together to work properly," he says. "Brakes must work together—it's a complete system."

Finally, when it comes to actual brake



Quality features and benefits make more of a lasting impact on drivers than price alone. (Photo courtesy SSBC-USA)

installation, Roskey offers a quick checklist:

1. Clean the hub for the disc to sit flush
2. Properly torque the wheel
3. Bed in the brakes properly

THERE'S NO STOPPING BRAKE SALES

Increasing brake system business starts with highlighting your shop's knowledge and experience.

"Boost sales with expert service and proactive performance solutions," says Cummings from LEED Brakes. "Elevate performance brake sales by providing thorough service that builds trust. When diagnosing brake issues, proactively educate customers on past experiences and the advantages of performance upgrades. Set clear expectations about the value of performance options. Consistently delivering on promises creates satisfied customers open to future upgrades."

Russell from EBC Brakes suggests focusing on education and consultation rather than just parts replacement.

"Many drivers aren't aware of the options available beyond standard OEM-style components," he reveals. "By taking the time to ask about their driving style—whether they do track days, tow, or simply enjoy spirited driving—shops can recommend a product that genuinely enhances their experience behind the wheel. When customers understand that a properly matched pad and rotor combination can improve safety, feel and confidence—not just performance—they're far more likely to upgrade."

In-depth discussions lead to purchases based on value instead of price.

"So many shops and service advisers assume they are doing their customers a service recommending only the most eco-

nomical options, while the vehicle owner may be more satisfied with a product that fits their driving style better," says Walenga from PowerStop.

Those low-cost options are likely not up to the task of stopping upgraded vehicles, says Reid from SSBC-USA.

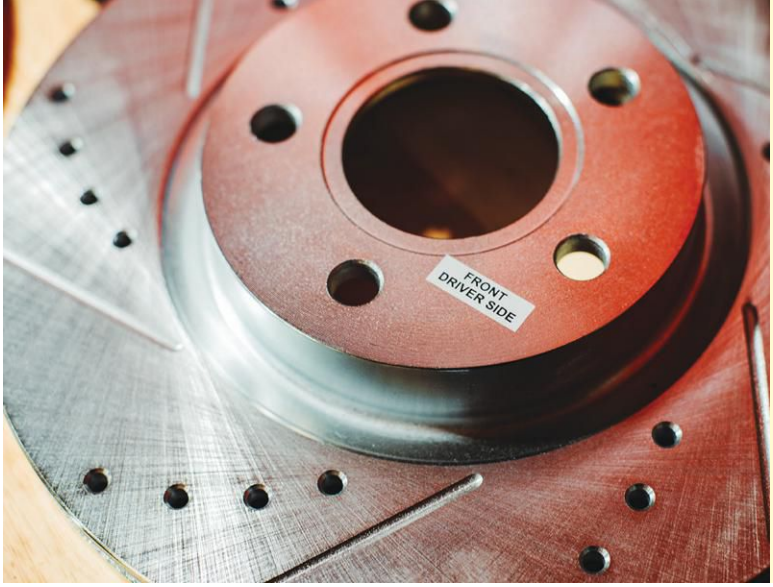
"For vehicles that have been modified or enhanced, it is important to explain that the standard OEM system was not designed to stop a vehicle with larger wheels/tires, more weight, higher engine output or any changes in the vehicle's stance or center of gravity (height). The vehicle will behave completely differently during braking and more stopping power is usually required to ensure proper performance and safety," he says. "For all vehicles, it is important to tell vehicle owners that they get what they pay for. If they are interested in better performance and reliability, a low-cost solution is not going to get them there."

Meanwhile, quality systems can also be an important part of an overall performance package.

"Brakes are a common upgrade if changing rear ends or suspension," says Elam from Baer Brakes. "At the time of sale of these parts, make sure you add the brake sale to it instead of having your customer purchase parts from another source. Early domestic cars are getting more expensive—the brakes are a safety add-on that helps protect their investment. Many customers want to upgrade but aren't sure where to start, so be sure to educate customers on how these upgrades can make their vehicle safer and more enjoyable to drive."

The systems have a real impact on safety and drivability, making them a logical add-on to vehicle upgrade projects.

"If the customer is having larger wheels and tires installed, talk to them about the importance of upgrading the brakes, as the increased rotational mass will have a major effect on braking performance. Or, if you are putting on a tire with more grip, let the customer know that you can add more brake torque to give the car a much-improved driving experience," says Roskey from Disc Brakes Australia. "If the customer installs a suspension upgrade it will add additional mechanical grip, allowing you to add more stopping power without getting into the ABS. If you add weight or speed to the vehicle, it will need to have the brakes upgraded to handle the added demands."



The right system will be geared toward the driving habits and application of the end user. (Photo courtesy PowerStop)

Once established as a local performance brake system expert, shops can then work on efficiency to minimize job times and maximize profits.

"If the shop is usually doing the same types of builds—let's say 1965-73 Ford Mustangs—try to work on a method and process that works," says Hamrick from Wilwood. "Which aftermarket components work well together? Which suspension manufacturers sell brakes with their systems? These must work in sync together because they offer them together. What wheel and tire size and fitment works well with this suspension and brake package selected? How does it work? Can it be tweaked to make it work better for the customer later? Can they change brake pads in the car to meet their level of driving performance a year later without having to change the brake system?"

Choosing the right brake kit the first time creates repeat customers and new customers that know you have a formula that works, he concludes. ***TS***



Finishing a Crate Long-Block, Part III

Finishing up & a trip to the dyno where we hit 430-plus hp.

BUILD, TEXT & PHOTOS BY MIKE MAVRIGIAN



Mike Mavrigian owns and operates Birchwood Automotive in Creston, Ohio, where he builds custom engines and street rods and performs vehicle restorations. He has written thousands of technical articles as well as nine books on automotive technology during the past 30 years. Mike can be reached at (330) 435-6347 or birchwdag@frontier.com. Visit Birchwood's website at birchwoodautomotive.com.

Editor's note: *The following is the third and final installment in a series outlining a crate long-block engine build. Part I appeared in the January 2025 issue of THE SHOP magazine and Part II appeared in April 2025.*

DISTRIBUTOR & COIL

Our distributor of choice is MSD's Ready-to-Run distributor P/N 83521, which features a steel gear to accommodate the steel roller cam gear. The "ready-to-run" unit requires no separate ignition control.

The housing features a smaller 5/8-inch diameter, ideal for tight applications. Other features include a built-in rev limiter, polished and QPD-coated steel shaft and sealed ball bearing, CNC-machined billet housing, a built-in module producing a 7.5-amp single spark through the entire rpm range and vacuum advance (which can be locked out for crank trigger applications).

The No. 1 piston was brought to top dead center on the compression stroke, then initial timing was set at 13 degrees before TDC. The supplied O-ring was lightly oiled and installed, and the supplied assembly lube was applied to the steel distributor gear.

Since we're running a steel roller cam, a steel gear is required. (BluePrint recommends a steel gear instead of a bronze gear, simply from a longevity standpoint, especially for street-driven applications where engine teardowns are not anticipated.) The distributor was carefully installed, engaging the gear to the cam gear and the oil pump driveshaft, with the rotor aligned with the distributor cap's No. 1 plug wire terminal. The spark plug wire connection to the cap follows a counterclockwise pattern.



Our favorite distributor for small-block Ford engines is MSD's Ready-to-Run, P/N 83521. No external ignition box is required, and features include a built-in rev limiter, billet aluminum construction and small-diameter housing/cap for better clearance.

To secure the distributor, we installed a stainless steel distributor stud, washer and 12-point nut and an aluminum hold-down clamp.

Note: *BluePrint engines utilize the later-generation firing order of 1-3-7-2-6-5-4-8, as opposed to the early-gen order.*

The ignition coil is MSD's Blaster 2, P/N 8202, mounted to the front of the right (passenger side) cylinder head using a new OE bracket, secured with a single 7/16-14 x 3/4-inch bolt and lock washer. The coil bracket shares the same bolt used to secure the dipstick tube tab.



Our spark plug wire set is a universal (cut to length) kit from MSD, featuring 8.5mm wire, multi-angle (bend-adjustable) spark plug boots/connectors and 90-degree boots/connectors for the cap.



Rather than running the spark plug wires across the valve covers, we opted to route them along the valve cover lips, using MSD wire separators to create a tidy, uniform flow.



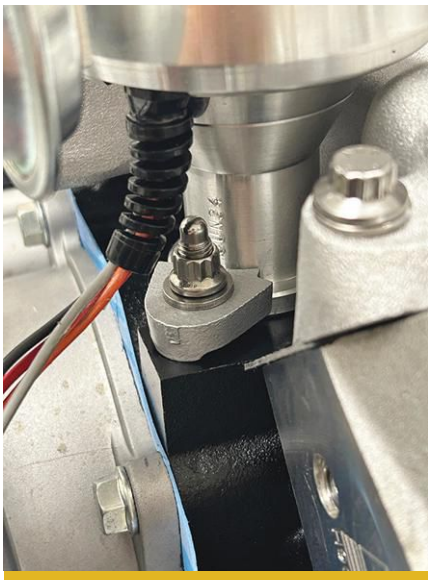
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The MSD distributor's vacuum advance is connected to the carb's ported vacuum port using a length of silicone 1/8-inch vacuum hose.



Rather than using a bolt for the distributor hold-down tab, we prefer ARP's stainless steel stud kit.



We mounted the MSD Blaster 2 ignition coil to the right (passenger) side cylinder head, securing the coil bracket using the same bolt that secures the dipstick tube.



Header clearance to vintage Mustang power steering and shift linkage Z-bar is always a concern. The JBA left-side header definitely accommodates with close attention to design.

HEADERS

Our exhaust headers of choice are mid-length headers from JBA, P/N 1650SJS. Features include 409 stainless steel construction treated with a silver ceramic coating, 1-5/8-inch primary tubes, 2-1/2-inch collectors, 16-gauge tubing and 3/8-inch thick flanges. This is accompanied by JBA's H-pipe kit, P/N 1650SH, which allows direct secondary pipe connection to the headers.

We mounted the headers using a set of ARP stainless steel header studs (the left bank required a few small hex-head header bolts due to the bend radius at a few locations).

This was my first experience with JBA headers and I was very impressed. The high-luster, ceramic-coated headers are drop-dead gorgeous, feature a meticulous level of detail and fit like the proverbial glove, with no fitting or installation problems at all. As with almost any set of tubular headers, due to the expected fastener clearance issues at various primary tube locations, we used a combination of ARP stainless steel studs and hex-head bolts where required.

I prefer using studs whenever possible. At a minimum, using at least two studs on each side is helpful from an installation standpoint, as the studs offer quick initial alignment of gaskets and flanges to the heads, and an easy way to initially "hang" the gasket and headers.



The right header bank allows the use of either bolts or studs.



On the left side, simply due to the primary tube bends directly adjacent to the flange, there were a few locations that would not accommodate studs (behind cylinder No. 5 pipe, behind cylinder No. 6 pipe, and in front of cylinder No. 7 pipe—note the temporary black marks). Bolts were required in those locations.

The H-pipe kit is designed for these specific headers, providing an easy connection to the header collectors. Secondary pipes are 2-1/2-inch O.D. The crossover H-pipe (2-1/4-inch O.D.) is a nice touch, providing a bit of bank-to-bank cylinder pulse balance for added efficiency and performance.

Each side of the secondary pipe features threaded bungs for those applications using fuel injection, offering provision for O2 sensors. We plugged these holes using provided 3/8-inch NPT plugs.

SPARK PLUGS

BluePrint Engines recommends NGK BKR5E plugs, gapped at 0.035-inch and torqued to 18 to 21 pound feet. We gapped the plugs, applied anti-seize to the threads and torqued to 18 pound feet.

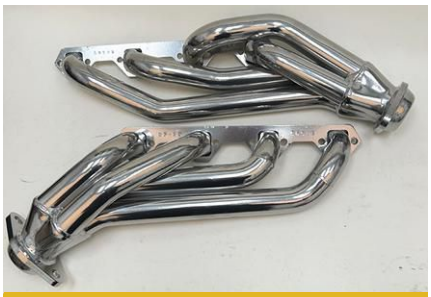
Note that socket wrench access is quite tight to the angled-plug wells in the heads. You definitely need a thin-wall 5/8-inch spark plug wrench, which still results in a very close fit in the access passage.



The JBA H-pipe kit allows a super-easy connection to header collectors.



Each secondary pipe features a female 3/8-inch NPT bung for applications requiring oxygen sensors.



The JBA mid-length headers include a ceramic coating.



Our flywheel/clutch assembly is the Hays Hot Street clutch kit, P/N 93-2001. The kit is rated to handle up to 550 hp.

VALVE COVERS

While our long-block came with a pair of chrome stamped steel valve covers, we opted for a set of tasteful black satin steel covers from Edelbrock, P/N 4603, instead. These feature a roof height of 3 inches, grommeted breather holes and built-in oil deflectors under the breather holes. The covers are secured with 1/4-20 x 5/8-inch socket head cap screws.

The left valve cover features an Edelbrock breather, P/N 42133, and the right valve cover is fitted with an Edelbrock PCV valve, P/N 4406, plumbed to the carb's rear full manifold vacuum port.

We chose Fel-Pro valve cover gaskets, P/N 1684. These are silicone molded rubber gaskets that feature a steel core and compression limiters. Thickness is 0.200-inch.

OIL

This engine features a front sump oil pan. Including the Motorcraft oil filter, total capacity is 5 quarts.

We initially added 5 quarts (filling the oil filter first) of BP's 30W break-in oil. BP recommends this break-in oil for the first 500 miles. This will be followed with 10W-30 Castrol (nonsynthetic).

Prior to firing, the engine was oil primed.

Flywheel-to-crank flange features ARP flywheel bolts.







Flywheel bolts were torqued to 80 pound-feet in a crisscross pattern.



The Hays Hot Street clutch disc was centered during pressure plate installation using the supplied pilot tool. Pressure plate bolts were tightened in a crisscross pattern to evenly distribute the clamp load.

ENGINE SPEED	HP	LB-FT TORQUE
2500	177.7	373.4
2600	188.5	380.8
2700	199.4	387.9
2800	210.7	395.2
2900	222.7	403.3
3000	235.2	411.7
3100	244.6	414.4
3200	252.9	415.0
3300	262.7	418.2
3400	271.5	419.4
3500	279.5	419.4
3600	289.4	411.1
3700	303.3	430.5
3800	314.4	434.5
3900	323.7	435.9
4000	334.2	438.8
4100	343.4	439.9
4200	351.6	439.6
4300	360.0	439.7
4400	368.4	439.7
4500	376.0	438.8
4600	383.0	437.3
4700	388.7	434.3
4800	394.0	431.1
4900	399.4	428.0
5000	404.6	425.0
5100	410.7	422.9
5200	417.0	421.2
5300	422.2	418.4
5400	425.0	413.3
5500	426.6	407.4
5600	427.8	401.2
5700	429.7	395.9
5800	430.8	390.1

The dyno sheet graph recorded 430.8 hp at 5,800 rpm and 439.9 pound-feet of torque at 4,100 rpm.

OUR ADDED COMPONENTS

Hays Hot Street clutch kit	93-2001
Edelbrock RPM Air Gap intake manifold	7521
Edelbrock aluminum water pump	8841
Edelbrock valve covers	4603
Edelbrock air cleaner	1224
Edelbrock AVS2 carburetor	1906-BP
Edelbrock PCV	4406
Edelbrock breather	42133
Edelbrock carb fuel line	8126
Edelbrock fuel pump	1725
Earl's Pro Lite 350 -6 fuel hose	350606ERL
Earl's -6 120-deg full flow hose end for fuel pump outlet	812006ERL
Earl's -6 straight hose ends	AT800106ERL
Earl's fuel filter	AT230206ERL
Russell fuel gauge	650330
Russell adjustable fuel pressure regulator	8190
Fluidampr balancer	650211
MSD Ready-to-Run distributor	83521
MSD coil	8202
MSD spark plug wires	31189
Holley mechanical fuel pump	12-833
Holley Brawler carburetor	67212
JBA headers	1650SJS
JBA H-pipe kit	1650SH
Fel-Pro intake manifold gaskets	1262R1
Fel-Pro valve cover gaskets	1684
Fel-Pro fuel pump gasket	6579
Fel-Pro water neck gasket	35440
BluePrint Engines Break-In Oil	BPP710
Motorcraft oil filter	FL1A
ARP intake manifold bolts	454-2102
ARP water pump bolts	454-1503
ARP balancer bolt kit	150-2501
ARP distributor stud kit	450-1701
ARP exhaust header stud kit	400-1404
ARP carburetor stud kit	400-2403
ARP flywheel bolts	200-2802
ARP pressure plate bolts	150-2201
NGK spark plugs	BKR5E

While we normally prime fresh engines using a pressurized Goodson oiling system, we wanted to verify oil pump operation via the intermediate shaft (distributor to oil pump), so we removed the distributor and used a specialty adapter to drill-turn the pump.

While turning the pump, we slowly rotated the crank a full 360 degrees in order to better distribute oil to all main and rod bearings, allowing bearing oil holes to intersect with oil passages.

FLYWHEEL/CLUTCH

Since the engine is mated to a Ford 4-speed top-loader manual transmission, we opted for the Hays Hot Street clutch kit, P/N 93-2001. This includes a billet steel flywheel (157-tooth), diaphragm pressure plate and 10.5-inch 10-spline sintered metallic disc, rated at handling up to 550 hp.

Since the flywheel bolt holes on the crank's rear flange are open to oil, a high-temperature thread sealant was required on all flywheel bolts.

Securing the flywheel to the crank required a set of ARP low-profile bolts, torqued to 85 pound-feet. The Hays kit includes pressure plate-to-flywheel hex-head bolts, size 8mm x 20mm, with thread distance of 1.25mm. These bolts were torqued to 35 pound-feet.



The finished Ford Mustang long-block build from BluePrint Engines reached 430-plus horsepower.

ENGINE DYNO

As delivered from BluePrint Engines, this long-block was dyno-tested prior to shipping, reaching 430.8 hp at 5,800 rpm, and 439.9 pound-feet of torque at 4,100 rpm. Yes, even the long-block packages have been dyno-tested (proven by obvious traces of carbon soot in the exhaust ports). ***TS***

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GM Crate Engine Piston Kit

MAHLE Motorsport, Fletcher, North Carolina, offers a new POWERPAK Piston Kit for GM LS 6.2L CT525/DR525 crate engines. Engineered to exacting tolerances, the pistons are forged from 4032 alloy and deliver a 10.7:1 compression ratio. They feature a flat top with no valve reliefs and are available in 4.065-inch stock bore size or over-bore sizes of 4.070 and 4.075 inches. The kit comes complete with HV385 coated steel 1.0mm top ring, 1.0mm second ring and 2.0mm oil ring set, precision CNC machined pin bores, and heavy-duty wrist pin and locks.

Tacoma Superchargers

ProCharger, Lenexa, Kansas, presents its ProCharger Supercharger system for 2016-23 Toyota Tacoma 3.5L D4-S V-6 engine models. Shown to deliver 40%-45% power gains for the street or trail, the complete turnkey system is designed for 200,000-mile durability with increased torque for towing and quiet operation for work truck and daily driver use. The air-to-air intercooling provides consistent, reliable, smooth power, even in extreme conditions.





Ford Plug-N-Play Tach Adapter Harness

AutoMeter, Sycamore, Illinois, presents its Plug-N-Play Ford Tach Adapter Harness that connects the AutoMeter 9117 Tach adapter to late-model Ford engines in minutes. OEM connectors and wiring make installation hassle-free with no splicing, and the setup is fully reversible and designed for a perfect fit.

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Toyota GR86/Subaru BRZ Tuner Kits

Vortech Superchargers, Oxnard, California, presents Tuner Kits for 2020-23 Toyota GR86/Subaru BRZ models. The new centrifugal supercharging system harnesses proven technology to dramatically improve performance and efficiency while preserving reliability and precision. The kit is powered by an internally lubed V-3 H67B supercharger equipped with a 3.60-inch drive pulley and a G3 helical gear configuration. Manifold boost pressure reaches approximately 6-6.5 psig at redline on the stock engine.



2400cc Injectors

DeatschWerks, Oklahoma City, presents 2400cc Injectors. Available for a wide variety of makes and models, every set of injectors is flow-matched and balanced with an application-specific fitment. Features include ethanol compatibility, injector tuning data and injector pre-filters.

Line & Clamp Kits



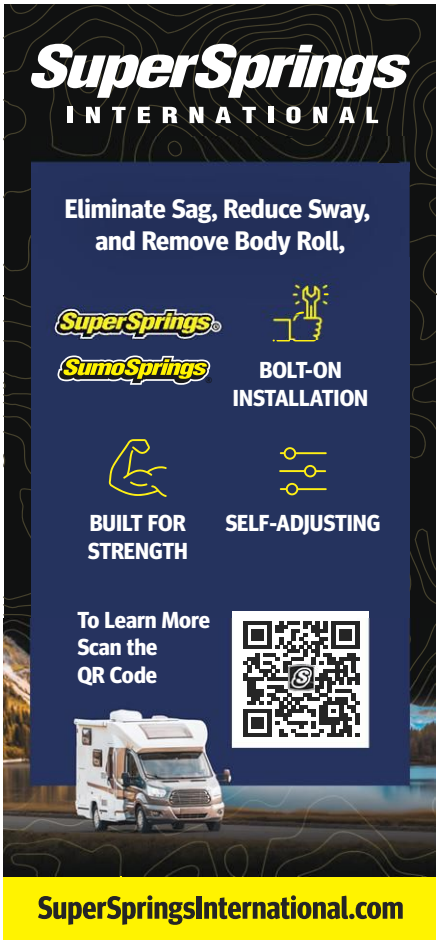
Lokar Performance Products, Knoxville, Tennessee, and its Made-4-You line presents All Plumb, Brake Line and Racer T-Clamp Kits to clean up and organize brake lines, cables and more. Molded from nylon, the clamps will not fade, stain or discolor and are impervious to automotive fluids. Each kit contains a variety of T-Clamps designed to keep cables in place, as well as stainless steel hardware and a durable plastic storage case.

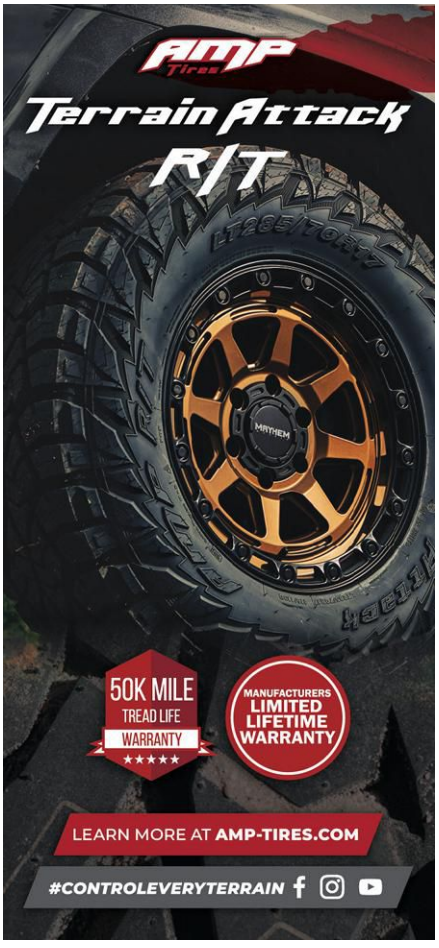


Heavy-Duty Extended-Life Coolant

Shell Rotella, Houston, presents its Shell Rotella ELC HD, a high-performance, extended-life coolant designed to meet the demands of heavy-duty diesel, gasoline, natural gas and LNG engines. Created to offer enhanced performance and long-term reliability for on- and off-road applications, the coolant is formulated with modern organic additive technology (OAT) and molybdate for improved corrosion protection. The versatile coolant fully meets CAT EC-1 and Cummins (CES14603 & CES14439) approvals. ***TS***







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New York Auto Show Celebrates 125 Years

The New York International Auto Show celebrated its 125th anniversary in April with a showcase of vintage, classic and iconic vehicles chosen to "tell the story of America's love affair with the automobile."

As the first auto show in North America, it set the stage for the industry's evolution, introducing groundbreaking technologies from the first mass-produced cars to the earliest electric vehicles over a century ago.

In 1900, New York City was abuzz with innovation and possibility. The dawn of the 20th century saw the rise of a brand-new invention—the automobile. While horse-drawn carriages still filled the streets, a handful of visionaries saw the future, and they wanted to show it to the world.

Enter The First Annual Automobile Show, held at the original Madison Square Garden. With more than 160 gleaming vehicles on display, the event attracted nearly 50,000 visitors, according to officials.

The show was a spectacle of innovation, showcasing everything from steam-powered delivery wagons to electric cars with "Electrant" charging stations offering a 25-mile recharge for just a quarter. It even featured a dramatic 53-foot-high hill climb to prove which vehicles could conquer the toughest terrain, and a 20-foot-wide wooden track where daring drivers demonstrated the power and reliability of their new machines.

This year's 125th anniversary special exhibition highlighted the decades of innovation unveiled at the show:

- ***1900s: 1909 Cadillac Model 30 Demi Tonneau***—a game-changer, introducing the first mass-produced vehicle with interchangeable parts.
- ***1910s: 1910 Ford Model T***—affectionately known as the "Tin Lizzie," it was the car that put America on wheels.
- ***1920s: 1927 Dodge Brothers Standard Six***—embodied the spirit of the Roaring Twenties with its blend of rugged reliability and refined styling.
- ***1930s: 1933 Pierce-Arrow Model 1247***—a symbol of Great Depression-era luxury, dubbed the epitome of elegance and craftsmanship.
- ***1940s: 1947 Mercury Eight Convertible***—captured the optimism of post-war America with its sleek, curvaceous design and powerful performance.
- ***1950s: 1956 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwing***—instantly recognizable by its signature upward-opening doors.
- ***1960s: 1963 Chevrolet Corvette Split-Window Coupe***—one of the most recognizable and collectible American cars ever made.
- ***1970s: 1979 Pontiac Firebird Trans Am***—a symbol of 1970s American muscle and aggressive styling.
- ***1980s: 1986 DeLorean DMC-1***—designed by Giorgetto Giugiaro, it featured distinctive gullwing doors and a brushed stainless steel body.
- ***1990s: 1999 Acura NSX***—redefined the supercar with its mid-engine precision and daily drivability.
- ***2000s: 2006 Bugatti Veyron 16.4***—shattered automotive records as the world's first 1,000-hp production car.
- ***2010s: 2019 Chevrolet Volt***—America's first mass-produced plug-in hybrid, it combined a gasoline-powered generator with a battery-electric drivetrain.
- ***2020s: 2022 Porsche 911 GT3 RS***—proclaimed the pinnacle of track-inspired performance for the modern era.



The New York International Auto Show celebrated its 125th anniversary in April with a showcase of vintage, classic and iconic vehicles. (Photos courtesy New York International Auto Show)

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