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SEPTEMBER 2006 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ MOTORTREND.COM

2007-2008

NEW CARS!

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RATED & REVIEWED**



AND ONE YOU CAN'T BUY...

SHELBY GT-H

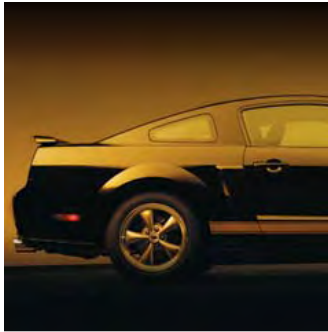
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- **ROADSTER WAR:** BENZ SL550 vs. CADDY XLR-v
- **JEEP'S BIGGEST GAMBLE:** WE DRIVE THE COMPASS
- **THE TRUCK THAT MUST SAVE GM:** NEW SILVERADO
- **OUR TOP TEN:** FAVORITE CARS, HOT TECHNOLOGIES



september 2006



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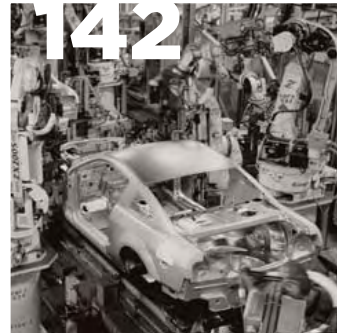
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We rented it, we raced it—we know you want it, too!

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■ Downloadable wallpapers for your computer will allow the true ponycar fanatics the opportunity to keep this racer on their desktops, even if they can't keep it in their driveways.

■ **Cadillac XLR-v vs. Mercedes-Benz SL550**

How does Caddy stand up next to the Mercedes? Can the XLR-v legitimately command a six-figure price tag? Share your opinion at motortrend.com/multimedia/polls/

■ **Motor Trend Radio Podcasts**

Commercial-free archives of *Motor Trend* radio will be podcasting soon! Listen in on a 30-minute "Best of" podcast available at *Motor Trend* online at motortrend.com/multimedia/mtradio/

■ **Used-Car Buyer's Guide**

Search used cars for sale in the auto classifieds at motortrend.com/used_cars/, where you can search used cars by vehicle make, model, body style, and even state to find the perfect used vehicle for you at an affordable price.

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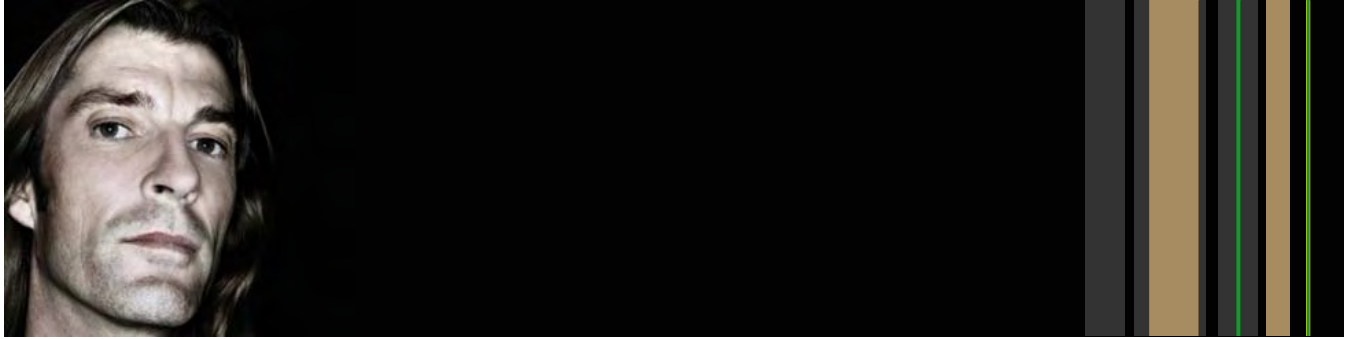
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(the big picture) angus mackenzie

classical gas

Rare in magazine publishing: It's a labor of love

WE GET lots of e-mails and letters here at *Motor Trend*. It's the usual mix: We're either too tough on the American automakers and too soft on the rest, or we're making excuses for Motown and ignoring what's going on in Europe and Asia. We're obsessed with Corvettes and Mustangs, or we're in love with Porsche 911s and Ferraris. We don't test enough real-world cars that people can afford to buy, or we don't test enough 200-mph supercars. Sometimes we even get a pat on the back.

One consistent thread in much of your correspondence, however, has been an interest in classic cars. More than a few of you have written asking that we make more of Matt Stone's excellent "Archive" column in the back of the book and even run more classic-car stories in *Motor Trend*. Well, we've gone one better. We've created a whole magazine devoted to postwar classic cars and car culture. It's called *Motor Trend Classic*.

We had a quiet celebration here in the office a couple weeks back: The first-anniversary issue of *Motor Trend Classic* went to the printers. *Motor Trend Classic* is one of those rare things in modern magazine publishing: a labor of love.

Every one of us here at *Motor Trend* works on *Classic* because we want to, because we believe America deserves a world-class classic-car magazine. It's hard to believe a year and six issues have already gone by, and we'll forgive you if you haven't seen a copy yet—*Motor Trend Classic* isn't as widely available on the newsstands as is *Motor Trend*, though you can order a subscription at motortrend.com.

One of the best things about creating *Motor Trend Classic* is that we don't have to follow the automakers' new-model-launch schedule. While we always try to be first—and more innovative—with our first drives and first tests of new stuff in *Motor Trend*, we know we're not the only ones driving those particular cars and trucks that particular month because the automakers generally release them to all the media outlets at the same time. With *Motor Trend Classic*, however, we're able set our own agenda: Drive the cars we want to drive and tell the stories we want to tell because...well, we can.

In the past year, we've slid behind the wheel of some truly fabulous cars, from Steve McQueen's Ferrari Lusso to Craig Jackson's Hemi 'Cuda to Clark Gable's Mercedes-Benz

300SL Gullwing. We've driven some amazing concept cars, too, from the gorgeous 1959 Corvette Sting Ray to Chrysler's astonishing 1964 Turbine Car to legendary GM design chief Bill Mitchell's Pontiac Pegasus—basically a custom 1971 Firebird with a V-12 Ferrari Daytona engine under the hood.

We've interviewed some fascinating people, from former Ford and Chrysler boss Lee Iacocca to former GM design chief Chuck Jordan to veteran hot-rodder Alex Xydias. And we've used some wonderful locations for photography: Frank Sinatra's Rat Pack-cool Twin Palms Estate in Palm Springs; the 1950s-chic GM Design Center, designed by architect Eero Saarinen; magnificent Mount Rushmore in South Dakota.

Motor Trend Classic celebrates the great cars of the past 60 years and the people who created them, owned them, raced them, loved them. It's about the cars we grew up with, the cars that drew our cultural roadmap, the cars that made us who we are today.

Issue Six will be hitting the newsstands about the time you're reading this. Look out for it; on the cover you'll see Art St. Antoine and John Kiewicz driving the stars—a Shelby 427 Cobra and a Ferrari Daytona Spyder—of the most subversive car movie ever made. The movie? "The Gumball Rally," which hit movie screens around the country exactly 30 years ago.

Wait a minute...! "The Gumball Rally"? Cool cars but goofy plot. How could that be subversive?

Guess you'll just have to read the story to find out. ■

what we've been up to...



Ford fights

Boss Mustang, Fusion Coupe spearhead new product push

FORD MIGHT

be down, but it's not out.

Although the sweeping cuts of Mark Fields's "Way Forward" plan likely mean the end of the road for the Lincoln Town Car, Mercury Grand Marquis, and Ford Crown Victoria (MT, August 2006), Ford's product mavens are working on a number of key new models to take the Blue Oval into the 21st century.

The hugely successful Mustang is scheduled to get a major makeover in 2008, just in time to meet Chevy's new Camaro and Dodge's new Challenger head on in this century's musclecar war. While the underpinnings will be largely carried over, we hear every exterior panel, apart from the roof center, will be changed. It'll still look like a Mustang, say insiders, but will be less retro than the current car.

Before then, though, Ford

will launch a 21st-century Boss Mustang. And like the storied Boss Mustangs of 1969, it'll be powered by a rev-happy V-8 of about 5.0 liters. The new Boss engine is a alloy-block, naturally aspirated V-8 developed from the current modular engine architecture.

Whisper out of Dearborn is it's good for at least 390 horsepower, enough to tackle GM's 400-horse LS2. The Boss interior will be stripped out to keep costs down. But the good news for drivers is the car will get the impressive Shelby GT500 suspension setup.

With sales of the Fusion still holding strong, Ford is moving fast to capitalize on its success by launching a coupe version. Expect modest sheetmetal and specification changes over the sedan to keep costs down; it's a formula that's worked well for Honda Accord and Toyota Camry. Engineering a coupe body for Fusion means there'll be a Lincoln MKZ coupe, too, most likely powered by the new 3.5-liter V-6, though no word on whether the Mercury will be given a Milan coupe.

Ford's ubiquitous D3

architecture (Volvo S80, Ford Five Hundred, Lincoln MKS) will be used to build a big-brother crossover companion to the soon-to-be-launched Edge. The new crossover's design cues will follow themes shown on the Fairlane concept at the Detroit show a couple years back. The decision to build a bigger crossover has been driven by falling sales of the Explorer SUV, once Ford's cash cow. The Explorer won't be axed, however; sources say it'll be refocused as a more off-road-capable vehicle, possibly using technology and expertise from Ford-owned Land Rover. In terms of small cars, Ford will converge the U.S.-market Focus with the more sophisticated European model for the next-generation model, and U.S. buyers also will be offered Focus variants such as the



DIGITAL RENDERING BY TOM DONCHEZ

back!

BOSS MUSTANG



C-Max, a carlike compact minivan similar in concept to the strong-selling Mazda5. Ford also will challenge the Toyota Yaris and Honda Fit in the emerging B-car

segment. Ford's decision to shift global production of its B-car models to Mexico means it can bring these small, fuel-efficient cars to the U.S. market at a much

lower cost. Insiders hint their B-car will rely on high style and character, like BMW's Mini, to win over buyers from Toyota and Honda.

■ **todd lassa**

HOW TO FIGHT BACK

■ BRING BACK THE BOSS

Polishes the Mustang legend with 390 horsepower from new naturally aspirated 5.0-liter alloy-block V-8; stripped interior and Shelby GT500 suspension. Ford is still working the details, but it will have a version of those iconic Boss stripes.

■ COPY TOYOTA & HONDA

Like Accord coupe, Fusion coupe sheetmetal will be close to sedan to keep a lid on costs, and powertrains and suspension will be shared. Lincoln will get a MKZ coupe with new 3.5-liter V-6, but no word yet on whether Mercury will be given a two-door Milan.

■ DON'T RELY ON EXPLORER

One size up from the new Edge, Ford's new big crossover uses Ford's D3 architecture wrapped in Fairlane Concept design cues and could get the Yamaha 4.4-liter V-8. Explorer will be repositioned as more off-road-capable SUV.

■ MAKE SMALL CARS COOL

U.S. Focus will converge with the European model, and next-generation version of the C-Max compact minivan will be among the versions offered U.S. buyers. High-style, Mexican-made B-car will take on Yaris and Fit.

Once around the block: Lincoln MKZ

THERE WAS no chance for instrument testing. There wasn't even the chance to do a standing-start 0 to 60 by watch, but with one lap of Ford Motor's oval test track in Dearborn, it was clear the new 3.5-liter V-6 is going to be a winner for the company. It won't surprise you with dent-the-seatback acceleration, but now, at least, it's acceptable in cars like the midsize Lincoln MKZ—known as Zephyr. Too many Fords have been anchored with the 203-horse, 3.0-liter V-6. With the new 3.5 making an impressive 263 horses and 249 pound-feet, the V-6 is a match for the Japanese competition and for GM's 240-horse, 3.6-liter "high-feature" engine in the Buick LaCrosse. The Linc gets a six-speed automatic, which helps. The 3.5 also bows this fall in the much-needed Ford Edge and Lincoln MKX. ■ **todd lassa**





Return of the Stingray!

600-plus-horse super-Z06 is coming

GM SOURCES have confirmed what we predicted in our July 2005 issue: Chevrolet will launch a super-Z06 by mid-2007. Back then, we suggested the car could bring back the hallowed Super Sport moniker, but word is the 600-plus-horsepower Corvette is expected to revive the famed Stingray name.

The car gets its 911 Turbo-pounding power from a supercharged version of the 7.0-liter V-8 and is expected to come in at 2900 pounds, roughly the same weight as the 170-horsepower Pontiac Solstice. That means what's left of the Z06's noise-stifling insulation is likely to come out. But with a maximum of 4.83 pounds per horsepower to haul around, the Stingray ought to be able to steal the American supercar performance crown away from Ford's GT. ■

WHAT THE STINGRAY MUST BEAT					
	0-60 MPH	QUARTER MILE	HP	WEIGHT	PRICE
CORVETTE Z06	3.8 sec	11.6 sec	505	3169 lb	\$65,800
FORD GT	3.4 sec	11.5 sec	550	3497 lb	\$153,345
FERRARI 599 GTB	3.5 sec*	11.2 sec*	612	3750 lb**	\$280,000*
PORSCHE 911 TURBO	3.2 sec	11.4 sec	480	3495 lb	\$122,900

* Estimates (MT) ** Manufacturer



(*spycam*)



Chevy HHR SS

Performance version closer to reality

CHEVY has hinted at a performance version of the now popular HHR since before the base model's launch. It looks to be ready for the 2007 calendar year, with the same 260-horsepower, 2.0-liter turbo four used in the Pontiac Solstice GXP and Saturn Sky Red Line. ■

BRENDA PRIDDY & CO.



Grand Cherokee goes diesel

The SUV for \$3 a gallon and beyond

MERCEDES-BENZ builds the torquey 3.0-liter common-rail turbodiesel that's under the hood of the new Jeep Grand Cherokee CRD. You're going to hear MORE about that when the sport/utility goes on sale in the first quarter of 2007—Chrysler Group won't be shy about the DaimlerChrysler connection.

We got a limited drive in the Grand Cherokee CRD and can report it's a much better Jeep diesel than the discontinued Liberty CRD, which Chrysler says sold beyond expectations. The Liberty's turbodiesel was an ancient four that won't meet stringent new NOx standards. The Grand Cherokee's Benz diesel is a quiet,

smooth V-6 that comes to the States first this fall in the Mercedes E320CDI.

It's a worthy first diesel in a U.S.-market full-size SUV, good for off-roaders or those who need to tow up to 7400 pounds. Jeep will deliver each G.C. CRD with five-percent biodiesel from its Jefferson Avenue assembly plant in Detroit. It's not gas-engine smooth; you'll feel some shake in the steering wheel. But from inside, there's no smell and little noise to hint at the fuel you're using. Estimated EPA is 19/23 mpg.

The engine has to wind up past 2000 rpm for the turbo to do any serious work, so low-end torque isn't great, and with the diesel's early 4500-rpm redline, you run through the torque band and the five automatic gears quickly. It offers good sport/utility performance, which means it can get you into traffic easily, but it won't be mistaken for a performance vehicle. The engine makes 215 horsepower at 3800 rpm and 376 pound-feet at 1600 to 2800 rpm.

The Grand Cherokee has been on sale with a Mercedes turbodiesel in Europe since the 2005 model year, so import to the U.S. is a no-brainer. And if it does well here, the engine might find its way into other U.S. Chrysler products, including the 300. What's more, it looks like the first in an onslaught of European diesels in U.S.-market SUVs.

■ **todd lassa**



Pocket change

SURE, you could slip your iPod or your cell-phone into your pocket, but does *your* T-shirt have a secure zippered compartment, a Weight Management System to hold your gear without sagging, a Personal Area Network to hide earphone cords, plus 3M Quick Dry fabric to wick away moisture from your body? The SeV Performance T-shirt from Scottevest does. Available in short-sleeve (\$29.99) or long-sleeve (\$34.99) versions; 866/909-VEST, scottevest.com. ■

NEW YORK TIMES hack Thomas L. Friedman ignited a Detroit firestorm when he called GM a terrorist and suggested the world would be better off when Toyota buys the automaker. That would be the same green, fuel-efficient Toyota that sells its fair share of lumbering Sequoias, Tundras, and V-8 Lexus models alongside those expensive Prius hybrids that aren't actually that much more economical than a regular small car on the freeway...GM's **Bob Lutz** compares America's dumb CAFE standards to mandating size-three dresses as a way to fight America's obesity problem. He's right, but there's no escaping the fact that the Big Three have depended on high-profit V-8 trucks for too long, and now the fuel bill has come due. The worry is all those trucks piling up in holding yards might ignite another price war Motown simply can't afford...**Phil Martens** is still the name more and more insiders whisper when they talk of Ford's lack of new product. The hot-potato problem has landed in **Mark Fields's** lap, and it'll be a couple years before we find out whether he's enough of a car guy to sort out the mess...Chrysler Group's not out of the woods yet, either. The company is living off the success of the **300/Magnum/Charger** range, which is now three years old. The Caliber's doing okay, but any new small car's an easy buy in a market coping with \$3-a-gallon gas. The real test of Chrysler's renaissance will be the all-new Chrysler Sebring, and not everyone is convinced it's a home run...At least, the boys at **Auburn Hills** can take heart from the fact that even Mercedes-Benz has its share of dud cars. Apart from the dead-in-the-water Maybach, there's the McLaren SLR, which lingers on like a bad hangover from a party you didn't really need to attend. A convertible version is being hastily engineered in a bid to stir up some interest in the **überBenz**, and there's even talk of a one-make race series...More automakers are getting nervous about doing business in **China**. Seems they're worried about the security of math data that defines the design and engineering of an automobile. Handing over such data to a Chinese partner is usually a precondition to manufacturing in China. But with China's deliberately lax approach to intellectual property rights, many automakers are now worried the data will simply end up being used by other **Chinese manufacturers** to make parts, components, and even entire vehicles.

■ **Got gossip? E-mail mike.connor@motortrend.com**

New CL Coupe revealed

S-Class tech and style in a two-door package

NO QUESTION the all-new Mercedes-Benz CL-Class will trigger arguments over its styling. The next-wave Mercedes design melds an especially wedgy, rakish coupe shape with the 2006 S-Class's bulged fenders and clean, minimalist details (note especially the taillamps). Technologically, the CL is pure Benz *übercoupe*. Mercedes estimates 0-to-60 mph in 4.5 seconds for the CL600, with its 510-horsepower/612-pound-foot 36-valve 5.5-liter V-12 and 5.4 seconds for the CL500, which has the 382-horsepower/391-pound-foot 36-valve 5.5-liter V-8. As with other models, the V-8 is coupled with a seven-speed automatic; the V-12 has a five-speed autobox. Preliminary EPA numbers are 16/24 mpg for the CL550 and 12/19 mpg for the CL600. ■



STYLING DETAILS

- Intelligent Light System headlamps are mounted in polished tubes, designed to look like an expensive camera lens.
- Three-point star in the grille has been positioned at a steeper angle than in past coupes, with chrome louver surrounds.
- Chrome strip on the side windows' upper frame emphasizes the curve of roofline.
- Lack of B-pillar is maintained for the traditional windows-down coupe look.
- Reverse-taper C-pillar echoes outgoing car and 1956 220SE coupe.
- Wraparound rear window also is a heritage design feature.



MAZDA CX-7 starting at \$24,310*

*MAZDA CX-7 Grand Touring AWD with optional Moonroof/Bose® Package as shown \$30,145. MSRP excludes tax, title and license fees. Actual dealer price may vary. See dealer for complete details. ©2006 Mazda Motor of America, Inc.

6-SPEED SPORT AT

DYNAMIC STABILITY CONTROL

ACTIVE TORQUE SPLIT AWD

DIRECT-INJECTED

All-New Mazda CX-7 This is the SUV only Mazda could build. A groundbreaking fusion of sports car and sport utility vehicle. Even standing still it collects adjectives not normally used with SUVs. Like "sophisticated, sleek and sexy." Get it moving and you can add "dynamic, agile and unforgettable." The CX-7's engineering credentials are impressive. Direct-injected. Turbocharged. Intercooled. 244hp. And that's just the engine. Wait until you get to the sport-tuned suspension, interior appointments and safety advancements. You'll understand why we proudly say this is the SUV you never saw coming. CX-7 from Mazda. Where it all comes back to Zoom-Zoom. MazdaUSA.com

244HP

New Lotus Esprit!

It's only taken them 30 years

LOTUS'S long-awaited new Esprit will go into production in Hethel, England, in the first half of 2008. It replaces a car old enough to have starred in a James Bond movie with Roger Moore as 007. That model premiered in 1976 and was last sold in North America in 2004.

The new Esprit will be composite bodied over an aluminum structure made up of castings as well as extrusions and plates. The engine is a turbo V-8, thought to be Toyota's, although there's speculation in Britain it might be a BMW unit. The company's consulting arm, Lotus Engineering, has released renderings of a "possible" supercar chassis and even a complete car, badged Esprit, on its wall calendar last year. Lotus Cars doesn't deny these are early renderings of the real thing.



The car will be built in Britain, though for a time, Lotus's Malaysian owner had investigated building the car in Malaysia. Lotus has a new CEO, but that's unlikely to signal a radical change of direction for the company as he's had the job before. Mike Kimberley ran it after founder Colin Chapman's death and then played emergency-room surgeon to Lamborghini as it came through one of its worst crises in 1994.

■ paul horrell

Aston Rapide is go

Boss Bez lets slip confirmation



ASTON MARTIN CEO Ulrich Bez says the Rapide four-door Detroit show concept is going to reach production. It was an unplanned announcement, made in his native German to a German interviewer—Bez's P.R. minders didn't realize he'd said it until a few days later.

Using a stretched-aluminum DB9 platform and the same 500-plus-horsepower-plus V-12, the Rapide will continue Bez's personal mission to upset his ex-employer, Porsche, where he was chief engineer. The Rapide will go head to head with the Porsche Panamera. Intro date is likely to be 2008, because first the tiny company has to get James Bond's DBS and the V8 Vantage convertible into production.

The DBS and Rapide will cost \$200,000 to \$250,000 and will probably edge the Vanquish out of the model range, though the Vanquish gets a minor interior face-lift first, incorporating the DB9's center console.

■ paul horrell



zoom-zoom

TURBO

The SUV you never saw coming.™

(trend)

NEWS/OPINION/GOSSIP/STUFF



BRENDA PRIDDY & CO

VW attacks!

New model blitz aims to boost sales

IT'S NO secret Volkswagen is preparing a modern, decidedly nonretro Scirocco sport coupe for the last part of the decade. But it's also working on a new version of its retro cutemobile, the New Beetle.

Volkswagen, which has slipped to sixth place among seven major-volume imports in the U.S., with about 244,000 units per year, is still Europe's biggest automaker, but it's facing General Motors-like labor-cost problems. It has to repair Ferdinand Piëch's plans to compete with Mercedes, in light of the VW AG board's vote of confidence earlier this year for corporate chief Bernd Pischetsrieder.

VW division's stout Germanic craftsmanship and envy-inducing quality interiors have created cost problems—it's said to lose money on every Golf it builds—on top of poor initial quality scores in the U.S. "We're in the middle of the bad right now," says VW of America's sharp new chief, Adrian Hallmark. He and VW brand chairman Wolfgang Bernhard are hashing out the future of the automaker in North America in order to aim it toward the good. Here's what we're likely to get:

■ 2008 JETTA WAGON

While nearly as large as a Passat wagon, the Jetta has a faster roofline with a wraparound rear window. The wagon will be about the same length as the sedan, but is 26 mm wider. The 2.5-liter five will be standard. There will be a 2.0 FSI GLI model and probably a diesel after it goes on sale in the second half of 2007.

■ 2008 PASSAT FOUR-DOOR COUPE

Expect a new name and distinct sheetmetal for this car, based on the Passat but designed to fit in VW's lineup between the Passat and the Touareg. Likely to be offered in the U.S. with V-6 engines (no fours) and possibly diesels, it's a poor man's Mercedes CLS.

■ 2008 CONCEPT A PRODUCTION

Just as the Concept 1 became the New Beetle, this year's Concept A from Geneva hints at the small VW SUV, which probably will be offered with the full line of Golf/Rabbit engines as it's based on the same platform. Developed under the names Marrakesh and Bedouin, its name was to be chosen by VW from

five finalists in a German online contest. They are (no, we're not making this up) Nanuk, Mamib, Rockton, Samun, and Tiganu.

■ 2008 POLO SEDAN

As part of the move to revive its value-brand image, VW will sell a small, cheaper-than-Rabbit four-door sedan in the U.S. As long as VW is reviving cuddly animal names in place of blue-blood sports names, it might as well call it the Fox (a name it uses on a smaller car from Brazil).

■ 2009 SCIROCCO

A Wolfsburg insider says this car hasn't been approved for U.S. import, yet. However, the company hints that VW's quick and smooth twincharger four, a supercharged and turbocharged 170-horse, 1.4-liter would make its North American debut in a vehicle by late 2008, and the Scirocco, which will be a nonretro 2+2 coupe based on a new, lower-content 2009 Golf/Rabbit platform, is the likely choice. The 1.4 costs VW twice as much as the inline-five, so don't expect it in any entry-level vehicles, and it won't get the same horsepower on the U.S.'s lower-octane fuel.

■ **todd lassa**

NUMBER CRUNCHING

62

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL U.S. HYBRID VEHICLES SOLD IN THE NATION'S TOP 10 HYBRID STATES, ACCORDING TO R.L. POLK & CO. FROM FIRST THROUGH TENTH, STATES ARE: CALIFORNIA, FLORIDA, TEXAS, NEW YORK, VIRGINIA, ILLINOIS, WASHINGTON AND PENNSYLVANIA (TIE), MASSACHUSETTS, AND MARYLAND.

36.7

VEHICLES PER EMPLOYEE PRODUCED IN 2005 BY HYUNDAI-KIA, ACCORDING TO AUTOMOTIVE NEWS DATA CENTER. TOYOTA RANKS SECOND IN PRODUCTIVITY (31.0 VEHICLES PER EMPLOYEE), FOLLOWED BY GM (25.7), HONDA (24.7), AND FORD (22.1).

3000

REBATE IN DOLLARS THAT BANK OF AMERICA IS OFFERING TO EMPLOYEES WHO LIVE WITHIN 90 MILES OF BOSTON, L.A., OR CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA, IF THEY BUY A NEW HYBRID VEHICLE.

(*spycam*)

Audi expands A3 range

Hi-po S3 launches; softtop A3 coming, too



AUDI S3

BERENDA PRIDDY & CO.

AUDI WILL build a convertible version of the A3 compact, planned for sale by the end of 2007, Erich Schmitt has confirmed to *Motor Trend*. Audi probably will build the A3 Cabrio alongside the TT at its Hungarian factory, according to Schmitt, the Audi board member in charge of purchasing. The plant also makes Audi's 2.0 turbo FSI and V-6 and V-8 gas engines. The two-door softtop will have an engine range similar to the A3 hatchback's, with

FWD and Quattro drivetrains and the DSG (now renamed S-tronic) sequential transmission.

Meanwhile, Audi has already introduced the high-performance S3 in Europe. It's a three-door A3 (not sold in the U.S. to avoid biting into VW GTI sales) with a 265-horsepower version of the 2.0-liter FSI turbo engine. The weight savings versus a 3.2-liter V-6 (the VW R32's engine) should provide for great agility.

■ paul horrell

Shining star

WHO KNEW size matters in car wax? Sure enough, smaller wax molecules—as small as a billionth of a meter—make for a smoother, longer-lasting, easier to apply finish. The science goes like this: Eagle One's tiny NanoWax particles are small enough to fill microscopic cracks and depressions in the paint, and their smaller size and mass allows them to cling more tightly (and durably) to the surface. The liquid wax goes on thin and wipes off without requiring the buffing that can build up a static charge that attracts dust. A 16-ounce bottle goes for \$12.99; eagleone.com. ■



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Full-metal Miata

Folding metal roof opening soon for the world's favorite roadster



MAZDA'S MX-5—still Miata here unofficially—has always been the paragon of lightweight design. It's never even had so much as a power-operated ragtop. Now, Mazda is going beyond that with a folding metal roof option available this fall. To be called Mazda MX-5 Power Retractable Hard Top in North America, Mazda hasn't announced a price yet, but \$30K or so seems likely. Nor has Mazda said how much extra weight the retractable top adds, but we'd guess the car now weighs as much as a Pontiac Solstice/Saturn Sky. ■

(*spycam*)



New Acura MD-X breaks cover

And cleans up its act

THE production version of the MD-X concept we saw at the New York show last spring is cleaner and less snarly looking. These spy shots show a big brother to

the new RDX, with a more expressive interior featuring motorcycle-style gauges. The second-gen MDX carries forth some of the 2001-2006 models' underpinnings, but

with a longer wheelbase and wider track to provide a sportier look and feel. It's expected to get the RL's 290-horsepower, 3.5-liter V-6, with cylinder deactivation. ■

we hear

The next-generation Chevy TrailBlazer isn't a next generation after all. The replacement for the current model has been downgraded to a face-lift, lending more credibility to an expected pulling of the TrailBlazer plug in 2011. As reported here in June, Chevy soon will get its own version of the Lambda crossover platform (Saturn Outlook, Buick Enclave, GMC Acadia).

DaimlerChrysler has announced that smart will finally enter the U.S. market in early 2008, nearly a decade after it first sold cars in Europe. The first, and so far only, model it's announced for sale here is the next-generation fortwo (based on its crosstown show car). Roger Penske's United Auto Group is exclusive dealer for the smart. It has 173 franchises in 19 states, plus Puerto Rico.

McLaren F1 supercar and Formula 1 car designer Gordon Murray has set up a new company, IGM Concepts, to develop a microcar. He likes the DaimlerChrysler smart fortwo city car, but thinks it could be smaller. Murray's design is so short and narrow that four of them could fit into a parking space. He says the price will be about the same as that of an Asian compact, but running costs will be considerably lower. Murray has conceived 12 body styles, many with commercial applications. He intends to sell the rights to a major manufacturer.

On the other end of the scale, Murray also is getting together a team of companies to build a new \$150,000 supercar to have superior aerodynamics and made of advanced materials to produce high-performance and safety with light weight.

Nikolai Smolenski, the 24-year-old Russian owner of TVR, will keep the cottage sports carmaker in Blackpool. He's moved the factory to a site near the old one, with the aim of getting production numbers back to 500 per year. He hopes to bring the car to the U.S. in 2008 (good luck) and take production to 5000 per year when TVR launches a new generation of sports cars. ■

(your say)

letter of the month



NIGEL BUCHANAN

conspicuous consumption

I agree that Detroit and manufacturers doing business in the U.S. cater to America's taste, which at present is for large sedans and trucks ("Big Picture," June). I also agree it's wrong for the government to regulate, through CAFE or some other bureaucratic process, what we drive. But you're way off with the proposal to influence America's driving habits by increasing the tax on gas. The assertion that gas is 25 percent cheaper than 25 years ago is correct, but what's the overall cost of driving compared with 25 years ago? A gas tax is a regressive tax that affects lower-income families more than upper-income. Usually the closer one lives to a job or the mass transit (suburban rail, etc.) that serves that job, the more expensive real estate gets—in other words, the less you make the greater your commute. This translates to increased consumption of gas, more wear and tear on your vehicle, and a higher overall cost to drive. Additionally, even if gas is cheaper, the average American car is more expensive and the average length of financing said vehicle also has increased. To put it bluntly, the average guy commuting to New York City from New Jersey will feel that increase in gas prices even in his fuel-efficient Honda Accord much more than the guy who drives his S500 to the train station two miles from home in Greenwich or Valhalla.

Arthur Moore
Naples, Florida

could've fueled me

An enthusiast magazine that chastises car enthusiasts for outrageous gasoline usage ("Big Picture")? Proposing that we pay more for gas to curb its waste? Scandalous! Don't you know you're supposed to say nice things that make us feel good about ourselves? You've offended a lot of people with your editorial. Thank you. The truth hurts—and takes guts to tell.

Luke Salava
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Whattayanuts? A tax incentive for people to buy more efficient cars? If you really think that's the answer, try this one. Using the CAFE regulations as the standard, an annual tax would be charged as follows: Vehicles getting one mpg below the standard would pay \$1000/year; two mpg below, \$3000/year; three mpg below, \$9000/year—ad infinitum. The revenue could be used to invest in the development of more efficient technologies. However, history shows it would be used to build bridges where they're not needed, buy military equipment the military doesn't want, and provide expensive benefits for senators and representatives—ad nauseam.

Dennis Kelly
Washington, New Hampshire

This should be required reading for all the drivers who have their underwear in a knot over the price of gasoline. Good job!

Ron McElvogue
Laporte, Texas

While I agree that pointing the finger at the car manufacturers is silly, I find myself ready to scream at another mention of cheap gas.

Doug Hart
Spring, Texas

■ letter of the month wins!

Featuring one of 12 musclecar sounds to keep you revved up to the hour, this Legends of the Road American Muscle Car clock comes with a light sensor that deactivates the engine sounds when the room is dark—we don't want to keep you awake with the sound of a 1968 Boss 429 Mustang, Arthur. Courtesy mfgagifts.com.



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(your say)

the back nine

As someone obsessed with driving things to compare them with something else, I agree that golf carts are fun ("The Asphalt Jungle"). One who's crazy enough can power slide and jump in dirt. Still, the suspension is on the soft side and not nearly as confident as something like, say, a Volkswagen GLI with the SMG gearbox. Speaking of which, I felt more comfortable flogging a GLI than a BMW 330i. Maybe it's just the two different approaches to the cars—or maybe just my youth taking a 40-mph corner at 70.

Harvey C. Duncan
Oakdale, California

the force strikes back

Could you explain how the 4.6-liter engine in the Livernois Mustang can produce nearly 1100 pound-feet of torque ("Strike Force")? I cross-referenced this number with the Livernois Web site that states it produces 770 rear-wheel horsepower and only 640 rear-wheel torque. Taking into account a 10-percent drivetrain loss, I can see where you get the claim of 840 flywheel horsepower, but that also would mean 704 pound-feet of flywheel torque. That's nearly 400 off from your claim in the "American Supercar" article. And after looking at the provided dyno chart, I just don't see that engine

producing the stated torque. Furthermore, after looking at the times and numbers you'd think a torque-rich engine like that would pull better times than the ones it did.

Marlin Wilcoxon
DuQuoin, Illinois

The tuners you invited represent the state of the art for modern American musclecars. I'd pay real money to watch that sleeper MTI GTO put a 900-horse spanking on some smirking M5 driver. Anyway, I discovered a problem with the rear-wheel-torque measurement of 962.6 pound-feet for the Livernois Mustang GT. You didn't provide torque curves, but the horsepower-versus-rpm curves give all the data necessary to calculate the torque: $hp = (\text{torque} \times \text{rpm}) / 5252$. Problem is, I can't find any point on this linear horsepower curve where torque could've equaled 962. The highest I can calculate is about 560 pound-feet at 7000 rpm. In addition, Ford's 4.6-liter engine isn't known for such large quantities of torque with or without forced induction. Can you explain?

Burke Bradley
Missouri City, Texas

Good catch. The dynamometer must have suffered a hiccup as it recorded multiple high-torque spikes (including the published 962-pound-foot figure) down low in the revs. The more realistic torque

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Tanks, everybody. Tanks a lot! (Top left) California's Roberto Galang with a Citroën tank at the Musee de l'Armee in Paris, France. (Bottom left) Brian Gilkey of Michigan rides a Soviet tank at the Patriotic War Memorial (Soviet term for WWII) in Moscow, Russia. (Bottom right) sitting atop yet another type of all-terrain vehicle, Andrew Christian of Arizona on a trip to Thailand at the Chiang-Dao Elephant Training Center.



peak, throwing out such anomalies, is 596.3 pound-feet at 6450 rpm measured at the rear tires. As for the torque figure for the Livernois engine photo (on page 56), it was incorrectly keyed in as 1094. We'll type slower next time.—Ed.

I'm a huge fan of Corvettes, so I was happy to see the C6 eat its differential in its quarter-mile bout with the SRT10. It just shows how the C6 has been engineered for the 24 Heures du Mans and not the 10 Secondes du Redneckville. The new Vette is for real drivers who know what a corner is and, moreover, how to negotiate one.

Tanner Cole
Aurora, Colorado

That's it! You guys owe me a new June issue. The ink has smeared hopelessly from the excessive amounts of my uncontrollable drool. Five cars, 4500 horses. I had multiple horsepowergasmms just looking at the cover of this issue. Any chance I could catch a ride in that Viper?

Alex J. Cerrato
Columbia, Mississippi

supermodels

Your writers have proven they're average Americans, just like me ("Postcards from the Edge"). Have you ever seen a rich guy with a farmer's tan like your driver of the Ferrari F430? You've just gotten a subscriber for life.

Miles Buckingham
Kaycee, Wyoming

I thought the Ferrari F430 was a good-looking ride—until I saw it parked next to the Gallardo Spyder. Both would make me turn my head 350 degrees for a second look, but the Lamborghini is the real supermodel, hands down. I've always been a diehard Lambo man. You might take the Ferrari, but the G-car is my dream car.

Ben
Salt Lake City, Utah

oh, ricky!

Rick Wagoner ("No More Mr. Nice Guy") bemoans the higher gas prices, healthcare benefits for retirees, higher raw-material costs, et cetera, blah, blah, blah. Didn't he come to GM right out of Harvard Business School? Don't you think he may be part of the problem? General Motors has been structurally flawed for 50 years. The fact that it had lousy cars that nobody wanted is just one issue. How about that the cars people did buy were a quality nightmare?

Lee Iacocca once said if you build a better car, people will buy it. Too bad nobody at the Big Three knows how to do it. The answer is always the same: Lay off workers who have control over almost no aspect of the build process and give the executives a bonus for cutting costs. The last sound heard in Detroit will be Dr. Deming's ghost pushing the handle on the big toilet that flushes GM and the rest into the Detroit River.

Richard Zoia
Chino Hills, California

thin ice

I've never been a Saab fan, but the going-away shot of the Aero X was sweet, showing some nice lines ("Ice Breaker"). Then I read that "the Aero X will never see production." This just about epitomizes GM's behind-everybody plight. I wouldn't expect the Aero's cockpit to make it—too over the top. But a couple of Lambo hinged doors and thin black pillars could do a neat approximation and give nearly the same visibility. But, alas, the guys at GM still haven't gotten their heads out of their gloomy orifices. The Z06, their only decent car, still has a cheap interior. A \$75K car should have an interior at least as nice as that of a \$50K Lexus. Why no F1 paddle-shift tranny? Putting in a bigger motor and GTO badges on a Grand Am won't fool anybody. Anthony Lo should go to Honda or Toyota to build this car and let GM wallow in its corporate inertia.

Dean Goodman
Concord, North Carolina

picture this

If you need a half-naked girl in the picture, you either have an ugly car that's not worth the film or the photographer doesn't shoot for *Motor Trend*. Thanks for publishing the most magnificent shots of the most beautiful cars on the planet. Now if I can only convince you to bind the magazine on the short side. This'll give the reader an undistorted view of the cars without that pesky fold in the center of the book.

Jessica Huff
Torrance, California ■

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backdraft

Troubled by gas? Try cooling your fanny.

■ illustration **pol turgeon** ■ photograph **lionel deluy**

HERE INSIDE *Motor Trend's* secret subterranean headquarters (hint: look for the volcano shaped like a giant slalom cone), any staff discussion of today's most significant automotive technologies is almost certain to include at least one of the following: GPS navigation systems, hybrid powertrains, computerized paddle-shift transmissions, electronic stability-control systems, the 100-mpg carburetor (whoops—wasn't supposed to mention that one). Never, though, do my esteemed colleagues bring up what I regard as the single most beneficial motoring breakthrough since the Egg McMuffin.

I refer, of course, to seat coolers. Use whatever descriptor you prefer—active-ventilated, climate-controlled, air-conditioned. By any name, these airy thrones are to the overheated

gluteus maximus what the gin & tonic is to the parched tongue.

Curiously, it wasn't an automaker from steamiest Brazil but Sweden's Saab who first brought to market this glorious innovation, introducing ventilated front seats on its 1997 9-5 sedans and wagons. Saab's system used flat electric fans under perforated upholstery to extract the warm, humid air that gets trapped between occupant and seat (especially when Uncle Fred is driving) and vent it toward the floor. More recently, Amerigon's Climate Control Seat (unveiled on the 2000 Lincoln Navigator and now available on models from Ford, GM, Toyota, Nissan, and Hyundai) actively circulates cooled air through breathable cushion trim (the seat's solid-state heat pump is self-contained and runs independently from the car's climate control).

Skip the chrome wheels and the Rally Fun Pack—if you really want to enhance your driving experience, tick the order box for some chilly chairs. Recently, I found myself in *Motor Trend's* long-term Infiniti M45, slogging through L.A. traffic on a summer afternoon so withering I thought I might accidentally have driven onto a prototype Disneyland ride to Venus. The air-conditioning was doing a respectable job, but then my memory was jogged by two small knobs on the center console. Of course! Our M has seat coolers! I twirled the left-hand knob to full blue, and in moments I was floating in a delicious, frosty cloud. That's the verb: "floating." This magic technology does more than drop the temperature of your seat—it seems to lift you right off it. I wasn't uncomfortable before, but suddenly I was levitating like David Blaine, my previously sticky shirt now dry, my previously desiccated brain now utterly refreshed and content. Gridlock? Solar flares? Who cares? At that moment, you couldn't have paid me to jump aboard the traffic chopper gleefully zooming away above our congealed sea of sweltering steel.

And the news gets better. Cooled seats are entirely free of the lingering guilt that's a byproduct of such other indulgences as goose-liver paté and "America's Next Top Model." In fact, the things could even help reduce our dependence on foreign oil. A recent report by the Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory says that because cooled seats are so effective, drivers who use them tend to turn down the air-conditioning. If all the vehicles on the road had ventilated seats, says the NREL's Vehicle Ancillary Loads Project, the national use of vehicular air-conditioning could decrease by 7.5 percent. That translates to a savings of up to 522 million gallons of fuel a year—about 1.5 day's worth at America's current rate of consumption. If you experience a surge of self-satisfaction throwing empty bottles into a recycling bin, imagine how saintly you'll feel floating on the gas-saving breeze of an air-conditioned driver's seat.

For an invention this benevolent, I see a Nobel prize in the offing. After all, it wouldn't be the first time the committee has honored a bum. ■





the NuVinci code

At last, a tranny with some balls

■ illustration **glenn lumsden** ■ photograph **lionel deluy**

MY INNER Rube Goldberg (all good engineerds have one) has been fascinated by continuously variable transmissions since the DAF Daffodil Variomatic rubber-belt tranny. But because the car-buying public couldn't accept the way they were designed to work (it's not slipping, you dolt, the engine's supposed to zing to the power peak when you floor the gas pedal!), all CVTs in production today sacrifice some efficiency to mimic a "normal" automatic's acceleration sound. Now that six, seven, or eight-speed automatics are becoming commonplace, the CVT's torque limitations, bulky packaging, and costly manufacture caused me to give up on them.

But then I test-drove a completely new type of CVT, and the fascination was rekindled. These things are always tricky to describe, so,

like-minded Rube-wannabes, read on (click motortrend.com for links to a video animation); everyone else has my blessing to jump one paragraph down. The continuously variable planetary transmission works like this: A set of balls (the planets) are arranged around a cylinder (the sun) and clamped between two dishlike discs with a C-shaped cross-section (the rings). When the balls spin on an axis parallel to the main power flow, the input and output dishes spin at the same speed (1:1 ratio). Tilting the ball axes one way or the other alters the ratio from underdrive to overdrive.

It's called NuVinci, in a nod to Leonardo, who sketched a CVT 500 years ago, and it's a traction-drive transmission. That means it uses friction to transmit torque between smooth, gearless surfaces, much like Nissan's disc-and-

torus "Xtroid" CVT. If you haven't heard of it, that's because it doesn't work in countries like ours where temperatures can drop to -40° F. But Fallbrook Technologies and Valvoline have managed to solve this thorny problem with a design that inherently requires less clamping force, and with a new Nuvaritorc transmission fluid that momentarily behaves like a solid under high (100,000-400,000 psi) contact pressures to transmit torque, then returns to its liquid lubricating duties—even at low temperatures.

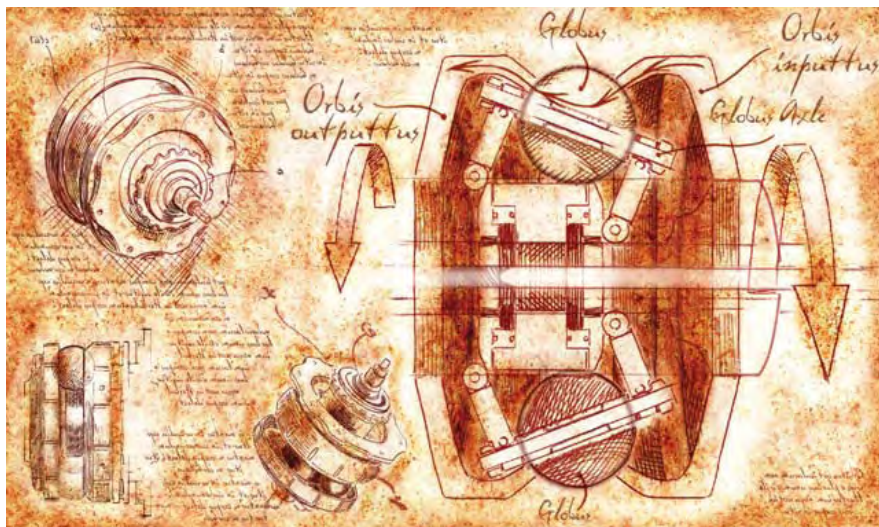
NuVinci's claimed advantages are many. Relative to other CVTs, it can transmit more torque, it's quieter and more durable, and its straight-through torque flow allows it to package in the same envelope as today's conventional automatics. And torque capacity can be adjusted across model variants by adding or subtracting balls, without increasing the overall size. Manufacturing costs are said to undercut other CVTs because there's less precision-machining involved and because none of the bearings has to withstand high speeds and high loads. Lower clamping forces improve overall efficiency, too.

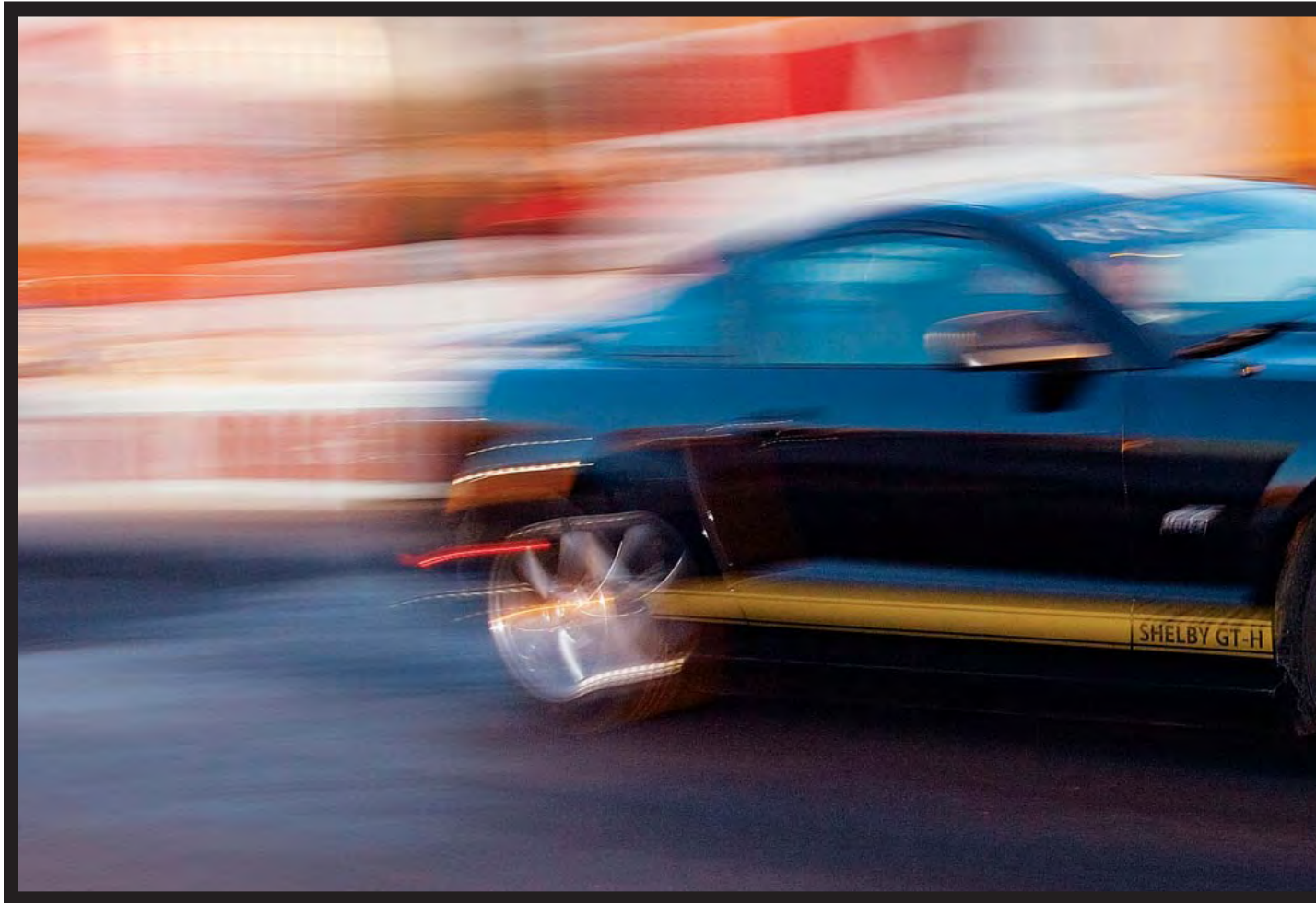
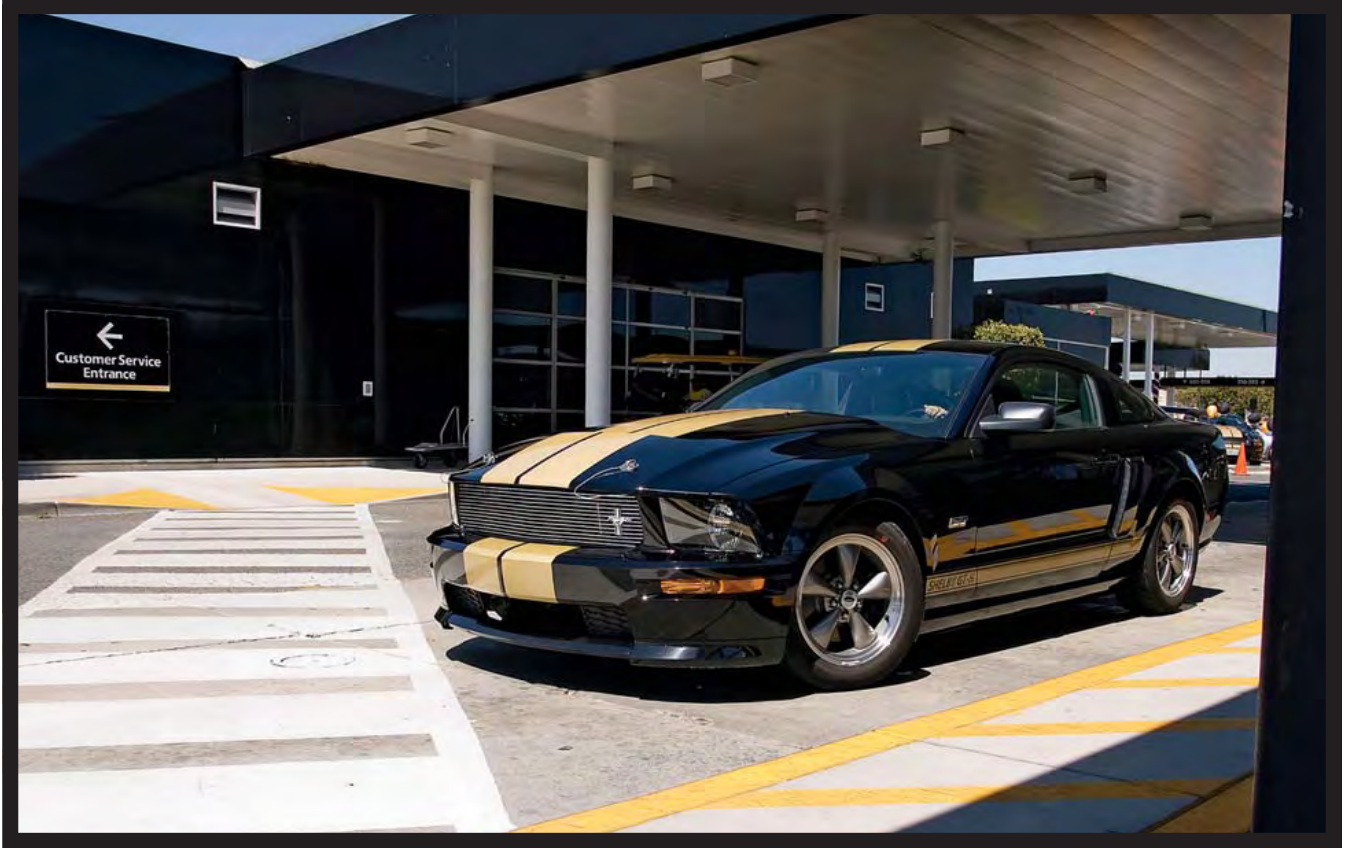
Of course, there's nothing about the NuVinci's design that would keep motorists from making the same "slippage" complaints, so what's the point? Well, suppose the NuVinci wasn't connected to your shift lever, but to your accessory drive. Instead of making an alternator or A/C compressor sized to work at idle and hardened to withstand 7000 rpm, you could optimize it to run more efficiently within a narrower speed range controlled by a tiny NuVinci.

The company is starting small. My NuVinci test drive wasn't in a car, but on what'll be the world's first CVT-equipped bicycle to go on sale later this year from Ellsworth International. It's simply spectacular. You can shift smoothly while standing on the pedals without fear of a derailleur failure, and you also can shift from high to low range at a complete stop.

The CVT may yet play a roll in saving the planet, it just may do so in bikes, heavy trucks, and even huge wind-power generators before drivers learn to love it. My inner Rube is cool with that. ■

fallbrooktech.com





shelby gt-h (cover story)

WE RENT IT WE RACE IT

NOTHING IS MORE FUN THAN DRIVING
SOMEONE ELSE'S CAR

■ words **matt stone**

■ photographs **brian vance/john kiewicz/matt stone/robert kerian**



(cover story) shelby gt-h



IT'S 1966 and you, Mr. Jet Setter, are blowing into Malibu for the weekend. Being a hip man-about-towner, driving a rented Galaxy or Belvedere isn't your scene, even with Bobby Darin playing on the eight-track. You have people to see, parties to hit, and skirts to chase. But don't sweat it, sport. There's a better deal: Drive into a Hertz location and sign up for a 306-horsepower Shelby GT350H. Sure, \$17 a day and 17¢ a mile is a lot for a rental car. But not for a high-roller like you.

Such was the dreamscape Hertz painted for its original Shelby GT350H rental car program: a fast, beautiful ride available to fast, beautiful people at the flick of a Diners Club card. The visuals were accurate, and the dazzling (mostly) black-and-gold Mustangs were popular for executives on business travel or those looking to enhance their Sixties weekend getaway. But these special

Above: Although the times, and the proportions, have changed, the Shelby GT-H is much the same as it was, down to the hoodpins and the galloping-horse badge. A thousand of the original GT350Hs were built, most of this black/gold color scheme.

machines occasionally led a second, less talked-about life.

The tales of GT350Hs being returned to a Hertz lot with holes in the floor to facilitate the mounting of rollbars and/or racing harnesses are the stuff of urban legend. Instead of cruising along the coast highway or languishing at a resort in Palm Beach, some of them spent their weekends on road courses and at dragstrips. Tires—fresh only days before, but now worn to the cord—were another clue to the action they'd seen. One war story recounts a late-night engine swap,

the poor Mustang being dumped back on Hertz with a well-worn 260 under the hood, instead of the fresh, Shelby-modified 289 it came with. The GT350H didn't earn the nickname "Rent-a-Racer" for nothing.

Automotive folklore notwithstanding, the program was a success. Hertz rented a lot of cars, and original H-model Shelybs are now worth a mint. It must have been good P.R., too, as we're still talking about it, four decades later. So much so that the Hertz Corporation, Shelby Automobiles, and Ford Motor Company have decided to launch a sequel. Meet the new GT-H.

There are two stories here. The first is that Hertz is back in the business of renting Shelby Mustangs. The GT-H is the marquee player in the company's Fun Collection, a selection of boredom-fighting cars and other vehicles targeted at the leisure traveler. The deeper issue is that, after a painful litany of licensee



back in business

FROM 1965 THROUGH 1967, Shelby Mustangs were built by Shelby. Cars were assembled by Ford to a certain spec and then delivered to Shelby's Los Angeles area facilities. Mustangs were converted using a combination of Shelby and aftermarket parts, then reserialized and delivered to Ford dealers or, in the case of the H models, to Hertz. With the exception of the shop now being located in Las Vegas, and the fact that this model isn't available new from Ford, today's GT-H program is startlingly similar to the original.

The assembly building—the same used for the Shelby Series I—is outfitted with six lifts, each of which is the epicenter of a Mustang's transformation from GT to GT-H. Two-man teams are responsible for the process from stem to stern. They receive the car, inspect it, and begin the assembly process. The rearend is swapped, as are the exhaust system, shocks, anti-roll bars, intake system, and so on. The hood, fascias, and side scoops are painted on-site in Shelby's own booth. The same guys who bolt on the bodywork are responsible for putting on the ID badges, although a separate team



focuses on the gold-stripe appliqué. About 10 man-hours are required for the conversion, not including paintwork.

The quality-assurance checklists are highly detailed, including each team test-driving the car and placing their signatures on it. "We want every guy on the line to have ownership in the car and the process" says production manager Akos Feher.

"It's their responsibility to get the car right from every aspect. The team also has been the source of many process-improvement suggestions. These cars are their babies." The quality of the finished cars we saw on the production line backs that up.

What's even more heartwarming to Shelbyphiles is that this is real. It's not a licensee agreement, an arrangement with a subcontractor, or a backyard Shelby clone operation. The guys at the factory wear shirts that

say Shelby on them. The building says Shelby on it. The first Shelby Cobra prototype of 1962—CSX2000—sits in the lobby. And the man who owns the place is a Texan named Carroll. Just as it should be. ■



deals with independent shops, dealers, even the Shelby American Automobile Club to build and market wannabes, Carroll Shelby's own company—Shelby Automobiles—is again constructing amped-up Mustangs (see sidebar). "It's important we do things that are right for, and to protect, this historic brand," summarizes Amy Boylan, president, Shelby Automobiles. And the straight-talking former Mattel exec means it.

What put the H on a Mustang GT? "It all happened over the course of about three months," says Paula Rivera, Hertz's public affairs manager. "We have an original Shelby GT350H in the lobby of our corporate headquarters. We see it every day. As we were developing the Fun Collection program, our vice president of fleet, Walt Seaman, said 'Why not this—again?' Once we started talking about this idea with Shelby and Ford, everyone got on board." The GT-H made its debut at the New York auto show in April;

we captured the very same car—Shelby's only prototype—for this story.

One insider confides that some folks at Ford were squeamish about the program initially, thinking the GT-H might cause confusion with the 500-horsepower Ford Shelby GT500 coming to market this fall. But as talks continued, everyone concluded they're different cars with differing appeal. Since Shelby's customer is Hertz, not the public, the GT500's sales, Ford dealer agreements, and Shelby Automobile's contract prohibiting the company from retailing its own Shelby Mustangs won't be affected.

What morphs a GT into a GT-H? A combination of Shelby and Ford Racing Performance Group sourced parts. All 500 GT-Hs will be painted black, accented with those trademark gold stripes on the hood, top, trunk, and rocker panels. The "GT" emblems on the front fenders are replaced

by Hertz badges, and the individual chrome letters that spell "S-H-E-L-B-Y" across the trunk are the same as those on a 1968 GT350 and 500. Body armor consists of side scoops, a new lower front fascia, and a more aggressive hood, including 1960s-style hood pins. The factory grille gives way to a brushed-aluminum replacement wearing an original-style pony badge.

Under that bulging hood is an internally stock 4.6-liter, SOHC three-valve V-8 treated to a Ford Racing Power Pack, which kicks the horsepower rating from 300 to 325. Torque increases by 10 pound-feet. The package (FR1 in the Ford Racing catalog) consists of a 90mm cold-air intake, freer-flowing (read: louder) mufflers, and a reflash of the engine-management system for a more aggressive timing curve. Premium fuel is now required. The exhaust's standard H-pipe crossover is swapped for a less restrictive X-pipe.

What really helps off-the-line punch, especially for a relatively heavy car like the Mustang, is the change from the standard 3.31:1 rear gear to a more aggressive 3.55. It's more cost- and time-effective to swap the entire rearend than to open up the diff and change the ring and pinion, so that's what Shelby does. All GT-Hs are equipped with five-speed automatic transmissions, for self-protection reasons, and the brake calipers are refinished in black.

The car also visits the suspension spa. Ford Racing's FR-3 package includes stiffer springs, which lower the ride height about 1.5 inches; new dampers, tuned by racing-suspension specialists Multimatic; and new anti-roll bars. All three sets of components are calibrated to work as a system. A nifty-looking twin-bar strut tower brace sharpens up the steering response and minimizes camber variations during cornering. The underpinnings are painted a proper Ford Blue. The interior remains stock, save for a serial-number ID badge on the dash (plus a Shelby ID plate under the hood). Why is it named the GT-H instead of the GT350H, like the original? You heard it here: Ford is saving that number for possible future use.

Key the starter, and the response is a deep, mellifluous exhaust burble. This newfound baritone bark pairs perfectly with a throbbing, reedy intake moan from the open-element air filter. Think 428 Cobra Jet-powered GT500 KR at full throttle, sucking gobs of air and fuel through its dual-quad carbs. The power adders help: 0-to-60 comes up in five seconds flat, as opposed to 5.1 for a stock, automatic-equipped GT, although that number must be discounted, as it's from a preproduction car. We've also tested a five-speed manual GT at 5.1 seconds, so the



we race it **and it** hertz so good

IN ORDER TO relive the Rent-a-Racer experience, we head for the tight curves of L.A.'s Mulholland Drive, the famed site of decade's worth of illicit road-racing battles. The GT-H's tighter suspension, increased power, and more aggressive 3.55:1 rear gearing make for a lively drive compared with that of a stock GT. Handling is crisp and predictable, and when pushed the GT-H delivers controllable tailout oversteer and wide grins.

Later that day, we cruise to Irwindale Speedway for some heads-up drag racing on a VHT-prepped launch pad with proper Christmas-tree starting lights. In the staging lanes, our GT-H receives mixed reviews. Young guys think it looks cool but have no idea who Shelby is, and they're clueless to GT350H history. The over-40 crowd knows exactly what the black-and-gold Mustang is all about, but thinks the car lacks enough raw power—interesting, as the original Shelby GT350H had only 35 more SAE gross horsepower than did the original HiPo Mustang; this one has 25 net horsepower more than a standard GT's, which equates to a similar power increase.

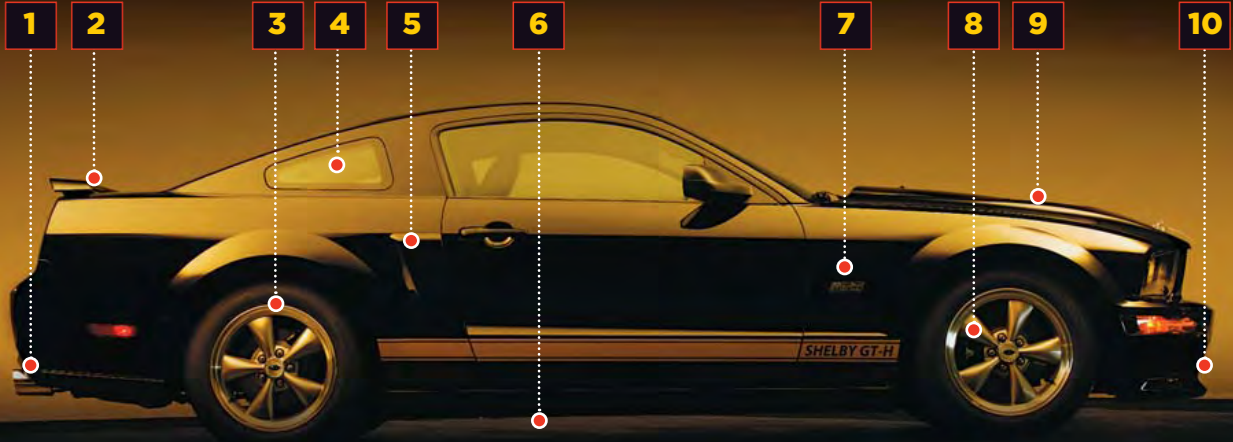


On the dragstrip, spectators watch with enthusiasm. With improved traction (versus the unprepped asphalt surface used for *Motor Trend* testing), the GT-H handles 2400-rpm launches without spinning the rear tires. After each pass, the crowd becomes more interested in the car, especially as the track announcer recites the history of the original Hertz GT350H. The final run of the night has our GT-H taking down an SN-95-based Mustang Cobra as the Cobra driver spins the tires in the attempt to beat our 1.94-second 60-foot launch and 8.7-second eighth-mile time. After our final pass, crowds gather to watch, and we overhear one guy say, "Forget about National. I'm going to Hertz!" Mission accomplished. irwindalespeedway.com ■ **John Kiewicz**



rent me, i'm yours

- 1. At 4.0 inches, exhaust tips are an inch larger than stock
- 2. Wish there were no wing, like the original
- 3. Stock wheels retained due to cost issues
- 4. Rear-side windows originated on 1966 Shelby
- 5. Shelby side scoops recall 1966 model
- 6. Revised suspension lowers ride height 1.25 inches
- 7. Hertz badge replaces "GT"
- 8. Brake calipers now black
- 9. Hood is beefy enough but nonfunctional
- 10. Watch low to the ground front spoiler





shelby gt-h (cover story)

Opposite, below: To avoid disrupting the flow of cars to Hertz locations, we copped Shelby's own GT-H. This one has a stitched-leather dash that stock Mustang GTs don't, and the dash badge reads "Prototype." **Above:** Ford Racing's twin-strut shock tower brace and cold-air intake system are nicely finished bits.

engine mods and the stouter axle ratio at least compensate for any power lost to the automatic trans, and perhaps a smidge more. Midrange punch is particularly strong.

Construction at our test facility kept us off the slalom, so we have no handling numbers for comparison. Subjectively, the stiffer underpinnings and lowered ride height feel as if they improve the car's cornering response without a significant ride penalty. Body motions are more controlled, and the steering is sharper, although you'll feel big whoop-di-dos in your spleen more so than in a stocker.

Deleting the rear wing would've been a nice touch. The original GT350H didn't have one, and some feel the Mustang looks better without it anyway. Shelby Mustangs always had unique alloys—why not Shelby-specific wheels this time out? Simple: cost. And why no functional cold-air hood? Because this piece was originally designed for a SEMA show car called the CS-6, which predates the GT-H. Perhaps some special interior touches, too—Shelby floor mats, even—might better complete the package. But overall, the GT-H looks and drives as a special car should.

How to rent one and how to buy one? Renting is as simple as visiting one of the 19 Hertz select airport locations, in California, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, and Florida, that offer them. Buying one, however, will require patience and timing.

Rental-car rates fluctuate with the season and demand, but the Hertz Reservation Center quoted us \$149.99 per day in Los Angeles and West Palm Beach (but \$189.99 in Las Vegas), which includes the first 75

miles. Add 39¢ per mile thereafter. You must be 25 or older to rent a GT-H. In the spirit of providing the car for business and recreational travelers—not weekend bracket-racers—you must produce a plane ticket or itinerary documenting your out-of-town residency and recent arrival, or you'll be denied. Any concerns about abuse? "We've built that into the cost of the rental. We'll also do a pre- and post-rental inspection with the buyer to make sure everything's as it should be," says Rivera. Shelby vice president of sales Gary Patterson adds, with a cocked eyebrow, that the "factory traction-control defeat switch has been, uh, defeated."

Ms. Rivera adds the company plans to keep GT-Hs in fleet "approximately nine to 12 months or about 16,000 to 18,000 miles" depending on how the program goes. From there, they'll be sold through dealer auctions. While preference will be given to Ford dealers, it'll be possible for a Cadillac or a Lexus dealer to buy one, too. Cost? Since they'll be sold to the public by dealers as used cars, it'll be a supply/demand environment. So get ready for gouging. Once a car is sold to an end purchaser, Shelby Automobiles will provide an aluminum ID plate for the dash, replacing the temporary decal used during the rental period, and will also furnish a plate for the trunk signed by the assembly team.

Will there be more variations on the GT-H theme? Shelby and Hertz's official position is "the final chapter is yet to be written on that." A convertible version, dispatched to us from Hertz's Honolulu locale, would sure be cool. ■

2006 SHELBY GT-H

POWERTRAIN/CHASSIS

DRIVETRAIN LAYOUT	Front engine, RWD
ENGINE TYPE	90° V-8, iron block/ alum heads
VALVETRAIN	SOHC, 3 valves/cyl
DISPLACEMENT	281.0 cu in/4606cc
COMPRESSION RATIO	9.8:1
POWER (SAE NET)	325 hp @ 5750 rpm
TORQUE (SAE NET)	330 lb-ft @ 4500 rpm
REDLINE	6250 rpm
WEIGHT TO POWER	11.1 lb/hp
TRANSMISSION	5-speed automatic
AXLE/FINAL-DRIVE RATIOS	3.55:1/2.41:1
SUSPENSION, FRONT; REAR	Struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar; live axle, coil springs, anti-roll bar
STEERING RATIO	15.6:1
TURNS LOCK-TO-LOCK	2.8
BRAKES, F;R	12.4-in vented disc; 11.8-in vented disc
WHEELS, F;R	17 x 8.0 in, cast aluminum
TIRES, F;R	235/55ZR17 Pirelli PZero Nero

DIMENSIONS

WHEELBASE	107.1 in
TRACK, F/R	62.8/63.0 in
LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT	187.6 x 73.9 x 55.4 in
TURNING CIRCLE	36.5 ft
CURB WEIGHT	3600 lb (MT est)
WEIGHT DIST, F/R	54/46% (mfr)
SEATING CAPACITY	4
HEADROOM, F/R	38.6/34.7 in
LEGROOM, F/R	42.7/30.3 in
SHOULDER ROOM, F/R	55.3/53.4 in
CARGO VOLUME	13.1 cu ft

TEST DATA

ACCELERATION TO MPH	
0-30	1.8 sec
0-40	2.8
0-50	3.8
0-60	5.0
0-70	6.5
0-80	8.2
0-90	10.5
0-100	13.0
PASSING, 45-65 MPH	2.6
QUARTER MILE	13.6 sec @ 102.0 mph
BRAKING, 60-0 MPH	127 ft
TOP-GEAR REVS @ 60 MPH	2050 rpm

CONSUMER INFO

BASE PRICE	\$32,000 (MT est, if you could buy one new)
PRICE AS TESTED	\$149.99-\$189.99 (per day, from Hertz)
STABILITY/TRACTION CONTROL	No/yes
AIRBAGS	Dual front
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
POWERTRAIN WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE	Optional
FUEL CAPACITY	16.0 gal
RECOMMENDED FUEL	Unleaded premium

SUBSTANCE

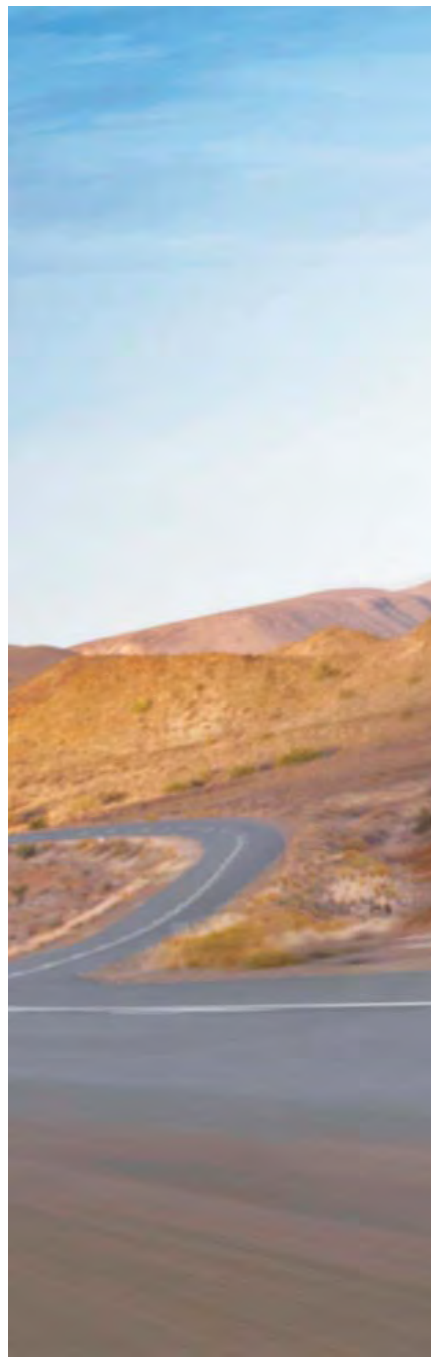
style meets substance

ICONIC DESIGN INTACT,
THE SECOND-GENERATION TT
FOCUSES ON BEING A SPORTS CAR

■ words ron kiino



STYLE
SUBSTANCE





AT THE 2006 24 Hours of Le Mans, Audi clinched its sixth overall victory with an R10 TDI—a 650-horsepower prototype race car propelled by a twin-turbodiesel V-12—making it the first diesel-powered car ever to win Le Mans, the world's most historic endurance race.

What does this have to do with the 2008 TT? Not much, really. Except for the fact that a TT led the race, giving the two front-row R10s a good look at its curvaceous posterior and new square-light-cube taillamps. Okay, so it was the official pace car, and it was for only one lap.

Besides the R10 and TT sharing a presence at this storied event, they also share high levels of shock value—the R10 for jolting the motorsport world by winning Le Mans (not to mention the 2006 12 Hours of Sebring) with a diesel, and the TT for rocking the sports-car segment back in 1998 with its striking shape and avant-garde interior.

For Audi, the TT is an icon, similar to what the 911 is to Porsche—an image leader instantly recognizable even by those who aren't car enthusiasts. The 911, though, a proven winner on road and racetrack and one of the great sports cars of its time, is a perennial benchmark by which others are measured, whereas the TT, a relative fledgling, has so far failed to measure up to yardstick status—its Bauhaus design notwithstanding—falling short of some of its more able competitors.

FOR AUDI, THE TT IS AN ICON SIMILAR TO WHAT THE 911 IS TO PORSCHE



Following a drive in the second-generation through the serpentine roads that dissect the Austrian Alps near Salzburg, it seems the TT, while still not quite the proverbial yardstick, has inched its way closer to the top, now possessing the legs and lungs to legitimately run with 350Zs, Caymans, and Z4s.

Race-styled cockpit gets flat-bottomed wheel, more interior room, and available Nappa leather-covered seats.

Audi estimates that the new lineup—initially composed of a front-drive 2.0 TFSI (200-horse turbo four-cylinder and a six-speed S tronic dual-clutch auto-manual) and an all-wheel-drive 3.2 Quattro (250-horse V-6 paired with S tronic or a traditional six-speed manual)—will sprint from 0-to-60 mph about 0.5 second quicker than its predecessors. The 2.0-liter makes 20 extra horsepower compared with the old 1.8, and the 3.2 is carryover. So how are the new cars that much

quicker? Unwanted weight, the nemesis of performance, has been left wanting thanks to an all-new steel-and-aluminum Audi Space Frame that, utilizing 69-percent aluminum, weighs 48 percent less than an all-steel body, according to Audi. Curb weight, lowered as well by an aluminum-intensive suspension, has dropped by around 200 pounds. Moreover, the new TT is sleeker, slipping through the atmosphere with a 0.30 Cd versus 0.34 for the old model.



(first drive) audi tt**LIGHTER AND SMOOTHER, THE NEW TT POSSESSES THE LEGS & LUNGS TO RUN WITH 350Zs, CAYMANS & Z4s**

Lighter and smoother, the 2008 also is structurally stiffer—the ASF's torsional rigidity is up 50 percent compared with the previous body's—and better balanced, thanks to steel utilized in such key areas as the doors and the rear of the floor panel. Despite denting the scales with less, the TT stretches the ruler with more, gaining 5.4 inches in length, 3.4 inches in width, 0.2 inch in height, and 1.8 inches of wheelbase. Thus, the interior has grown, more comfortably accommodating six-foot adults up front, though the back jump seats remain fit only for kids. The cozy cockpit, which retains the previous circular aluminum vents and cues and adds a racy flat-bottomed steering wheel, feels high quality and appropriately neoclassic.

The TT rides on a fifth-generation VW Golf-based chassis that sports MacPherson struts up front and a new multilink rear setup that replaces the old torsion beam. Front and rear tracks have been stretched by about two inches each, taking better advantage of the standard 17-inch and optional 18-inch wheels that frame larger disc brakes, save for the front rotors on the 2.0-liter, which remain 12.3 inches. The big news is an available magnetic damping system that continuously varies stiffness by means of

voltage-sensitive magneto-rheological fluid in the dampers. This technology—created by Lord Corp. and marketed by Delphi in the Corvette and the Ferrari 599 GTB—can be switched between Normal and Sport modes via a console-mounted button that resides to the left of another new button controlling an electrically operated rear spoiler. Unlike the first TT, which originally came sans a wing but was retrofitted with a gaudy fixed unit after it was discovered that high speeds caused rear instability, the new car's spoiler protracts when the car reaches 75 mph and retracts flush once the car dips below 50 mph.

Out on the long stretches and tight curves in Hohe Tauern National Park, the magnetic damping system proved invaluable, delivering a dichotomy of compliance from forgiving to ultrastiff. For attacking switchbacks, sport is the ideal transformer, tightening the reins for immediate feedback and eradicating noticeable pitch, dive, or roll. With the new independent rear suspension and the rear wing, the TT's rear is far more composed and planted at high gs and high speeds. And because the new car is lighter and stiffer, it not only feels noticeably quicker, but far nimbler and more receptive to inputs from the responsive electromechanical steering.

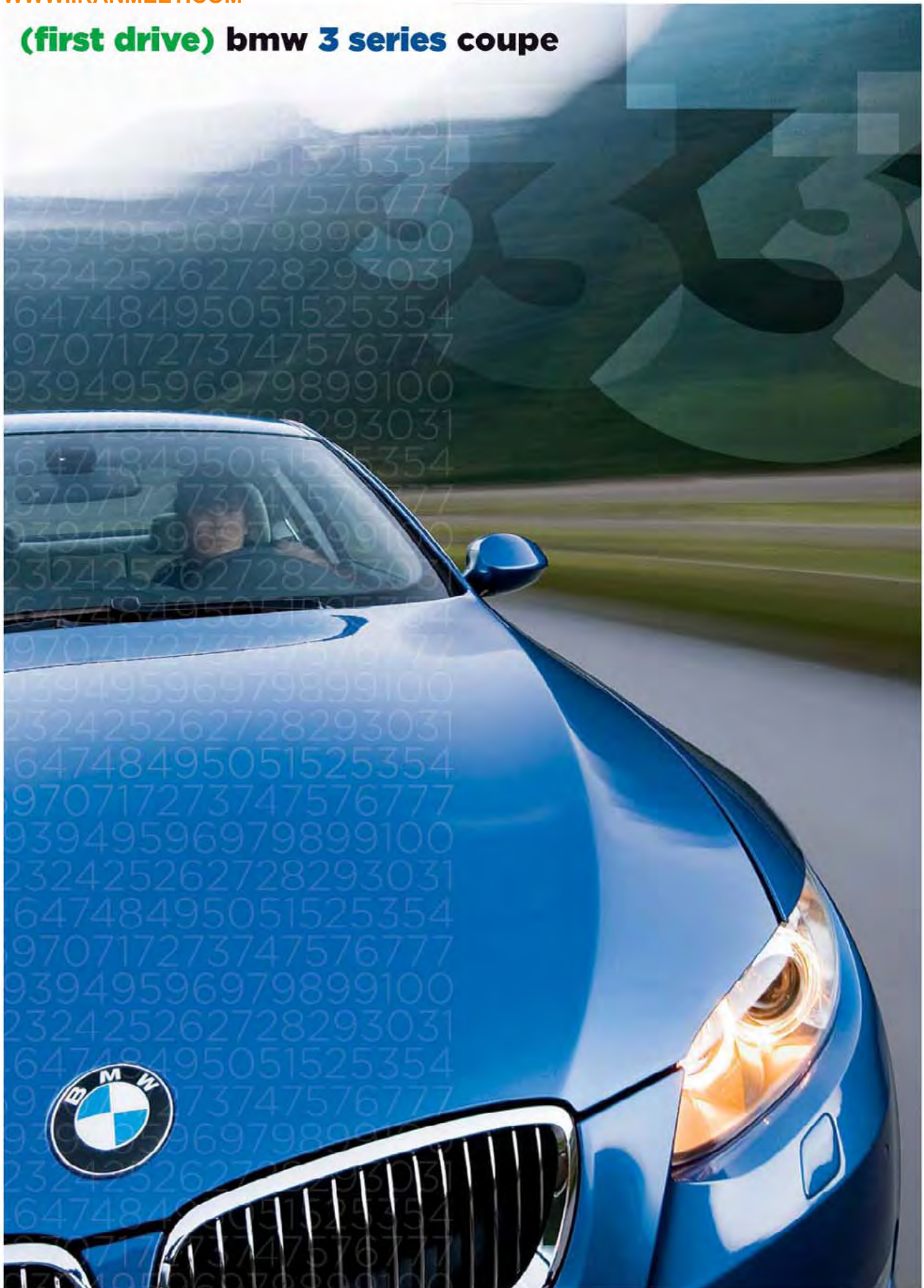
Audi has done a commendable job making both engines perfectly suited to the TT, which feels more eager and lively with the lighter, front-drive 2.0 and more capable and efficient with the all-wheel-drive 3.2. You can't go wrong with either.

Similar to the fifth-generation VW GTI, whose driving dynamics quantum leapt its predecessor's, the second-gen TT shames its forerunner. It's better in every way than the original. ■

2008 AUDI TT

BASE PRICE	\$35,000-\$42,000 (est)
VEHICLE LAYOUT	Front engine, FWD or AWD, 4-pass, 2-door hatch
ENGINES	2.0L/200-hp/207 lb-ft turbocharged DOHC 16-valve I-4; 3.2L/250 hp/236 lb-ft DOHC 24-valve V-6
TRANSMISSIONS	6-speed manual; 6-speed auto-clutch manual
CURB WEIGHT	2800-3200 lb
WHEELBASE	97.2 in
LENGTH X WIDTH X HEIGHT	164.5 x 72.5 x 53.2 in
0-62 MPH	5.7-6.4 sec (est)
EPA CITY/HWY FUEL ECON	18-22 / 25-31 mpg (est)
ON SALE IN U.S.	April 2007

(first drive) bmw 3 series coupe





INTRODUCING
A DIFFERENT KIND
OF BMW POWER

bmwbynumbers

■ words **todd lassa**

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THE 335i, 328i, 330i, and 325i all have 3.0-liter inline-sixes. The 328i is a coupe with a 230-horsepower six that falls between the 255-horse 330i and 215-horse 325i, which are both four-door sedans. Deep breath. The 335i, then, is a twin-turbocharged direct-injection 3.0 that makes 75 percent of the expected power of next year's M3V-8. There's linearity to BMW horsepower

The 3 Series coupe's look goes beyond merely being a two-door version of the current sedan. The trunk and taillight designs are different, and check out the new dual exhausts. Twin-turbo six with automatic gets shifter paddles (below right).

numbers, from the M5/M6's 500-horse V-10 to a 400-horse, 4.0-liter V-8 in the 2008 M3 to 300 horses for this handsome new coupe. This is something different for BMW: Its first—but not last—gas direct-injection engine, with piezo injectors feeding the combustion chambers for a more equal distribution of fuel. The twin turbos act in parallel, each boosting three cylinders. They're inside an all-aluminum block with cast-iron liners that cut cylinder bore by 1.0 mm versus the naturally aspirated 3.0-liter. The world's first twin-turbo inline-six, according to the Bavarian automaker, is its future in providing efficient high performance.

Like all good sport coupes and all good BMWs, the 335i is greater than the sum of its parts: full of unquantifiable qualities, an embarrassment for the car critic who's trying to be critical. It's like butter, that twin-turbo

six, and the turbo lag you might expect melts into smooth acceleration. But there's still a power surge to tell you turbos are in place hard and early. Its exhaust gives off a satisfying rasp that'll quickly become identified with this specific engine to sharp-eared juvenile enthusiasts. Three-hundred pound-feet of torque kicks in from 1400 to 5000 rpm, making it a quick-launching Euro coupe that'll feel at home in the American V-8 environment.

The 335i's suspension offers more compliance than one might expect, although springs and shocks are stiffer than any 3 Series sedan's. North American 335i buyers get as standard the Euro-spec Sport Package suspension, with a delete option. For the U.S., "Sport Package" means 18-inch wheels with 225/40R18F front/225/35R18R rear tires, upgraded from the standard 225/45R17



3 **bmw 3 series coupe (first drive)**



H-rated all-seasons. Both sizes are no-spare run-flats, and their stiff sidewalls allowed German engineers to remain on the supple side of the ride and handling equation. It works as well—or better than—it's always worked for the 3 Series. While our drive was limited to mostly tabletop roads in the Austrian Alps, there was enough rough blacktop to learn that Americans who are used to standard pavement will be comfortable in this car.

Neither the beautiful scenery in the Alps nor the supple ride could detract from the driving. This is an engaging car, whether you tackle the curves like a mogul skier in the World Cup finals or you only find enough traffic holes to drive at a moderately brisk pace. The 335i fits like a sports-car glove, becoming one with you. At higher speeds, the noninterventionism of the active steering feels just right, with a light, direct touch and good feedback.

The active steering, while vastly improved over earlier iterations, is still disconcerting at low speeds, especially for the first miles. On tight mountain roads, it can't organically determine the precise line you want. Good thing it's an option on the 335i and 328i coupes, just as in 3 Series sedans. So is iDrive, but as with the sedans, you can't get a navigation system without it, so your interest in iDrive will depend on how much you dislike getting lost.

Both cars come with a choice of six-speed manuals, ZF in the 335i, Getrag in the 328i, or six-speed automatics by GM in the 328i and by ZF with paddle shifters in the 335i. BMW says shifts take 100 milliseconds with the steering-wheel-mounted paddles, and

selecting this sport mode also sharpens throttle tip-in. The paddles are quick and work well, but they don't offer the same level of control as the manual, of course. This car is so tactile and the stick so central to maintaining the rhythm of driving fast that you'll feel like a downhill skier without his poles if you don't have a clutch pedal.

There are two 230-horse, 3.0-liter coupes (rated 200 pound-feet of torque): the 328i with rear drive starting at \$35,995 and the 328xi, BMW's first AWD coupe, at \$37,795. Neither was available for the intro drive. Whichever of the three coupes you choose, you get that familiar half-ellipse greenhouse, with the requisite Hoffmeister kink, over fresh sheetmetal in a car as handsome as, if less dramatic than, the new Z4 Coupe. The flame surfacing is subtle but it's there, with canted panels on each side of the twin kidneys curving up along the hood to create a power bulge. The side surfacing works better on the coupe than the sedan and ends in an attractive thin strip of taillamps, uneven between the rear fenders and the trunk because of the backup lights, just like the 7 Series face-lift. It works. The car appears long, low, lean, and—BMW's description—elegant. It's slightly longer and lower than the sedan, but on the same wheelbase, and it's 49 pounds lighter in part because of composite-plastic front fenders.

The interior is familiar, with rich leathers and quality construction. The coupe's center console stretches to the rear, and the seatbelts have extender arms for the driver and front passenger. Legroom is good for a coupe, while headroom is tight.

Families of four should consider the coupe

over the sedan, though. No, the kids won't have a lot of room in back, but they'll look good in this, the car that's the epitome of what's made BMW an enthusiast's icon. If you insist on the sedan, the 328i and 335i engines will soon replace the 325i and 330i, and the 5 Series and Z4 may not be too far behind. That ought to solve some math problems. ■



2007 BMW 335i COUPE

BASE PRICE	\$41,295
VEHICLE LAYOUT	Front engine, RWD, 4-pass, 2-door coupe
ENGINES	3.0L/300-hp/300 lb-ft DOHC direct-injection twin-turbo 24-valve I-6
TRANSMISSIONS	6-speed manual; 6-speed automatic
CURB WEIGHT	3600 lb (mfr)
WHEELBASE	108.7 in
LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT	180.3 x 70.2 x 54.1 in
0-60 MPH	5.3 sec (mfr est)
EPA CITY/HWY FUEL ECON	20/29 mpg (mfr est)
ON SALE IN U.S.	September 2007

(head to head)
cadillac xlr-v vs. mercedes-benz sl550





hardcurrency

WHAT WOULD WOODROW WILSON DRIVE?

■ words frank markus ■ photographs wesley allison



CADILLAC XLR-v



WE KNOW what you're thinking. How on earth can these folks hope to connect the name of the progressive Democrat president who steered America through World War I to this pair of plutocratic hardtop roadsters? Here's how: Wilson's likeness adorned the short-lived \$100,000 bill, and Cadillac is asking precisely one Woodrow for its new XLR-v, including guzzler tax and destination charges. That's a one with five zeros, and it's more than four Grover Cleveland K-notes above the opening price of Mercedes Benz's new SL550, the benchmark in the stratospheric sun-tanner segment. Holy dead presidents! Can a Caddy legitimately command a six-figure price tag?

Its credentials are impressive, starting with a supercharged 4.4-liter Northstar V-8 that spins 443 horses and 414 pound-feet of torque back through a rear-mounted six-speed automatic that can be manually shifted. Chassis fortifications relative to the base Corvette-derived XLR include larger cross-drilled brakes, fatter 19-inch Pirelli Euphoria tires, a rear anti-roll bar, stiffer bushings, and a revised calibration of the Magnetic Ride Control shocks for

more body-motion control—especially when the shifter is placed in the manual gate to select the “sport” mode. Interior and exterior spiffs round out the V gear. Mercedes owns 45 percent of this market and isn't ceding a single percentage point of its share without a fight. Toward that end, the company has upgraded its entry-level SL with a fresh quad-cam V-8 that produces



80 more horses and 52 extra pound-feet of thrust than its SL500 predecessor's two-cammer did, routing it all through a seven-speed automatic. Quicker steering and more aggressive active-body-control calibration enhance driving dynamics.

To objectively assess Cadillac's fitness for duty in the C-K-note class, we rounded up

an SL optioned to within four Franklins of the Cadillac, including Keyless-go, bi-Xenon lamps, a leather and wood steering wheel, and heated and cooled multicontour seats (all but the last come standard on the XLR-v), and headed for the hills and the test track. President Wilson was a Ph.D. academician, so if he were selecting between these two worthy roadsters, he'd probably want to start with an objective comparative analysis.

AS A SPORTS CAR: The lighter, more powerful Cadillac easily wins any drag race, zooming to 60 mph in just 4.6 seconds (0.3 ahead of the Benz) and on to the quarter mile in 13.1 seconds at 107.8 mph—an advantage of almost a half-second and 3.4 mph over the SL550. Drop the hammer from 45 mph to execute a pass, and there's a momentary shriek from the supercharger clutch, followed by enormous pressure on the backside that dials up 65 mph in just 2.2 seconds—again, 0.3 ahead of the Benz. Out in traffic, however, the cars seem more evenly matched, as supercharger lag dulls the throttle response slightly in the Cadillac while big-lunged torque and more closely spaced gears in the swift-shifting



MERCEDES-BENZ SL550



Mercedes seven-speed quicken its reflexes. Bend the cars into a turn and Mercedes-Benz's Active Body Control suspension and wider-footprint tires work magic. The SL550 outmaneuvered the 325-pound-lighter Cadillac in all our handling tests, if only slightly (0.2 second on the figure eight, and 0.02 g on the skidpad). That slim margin is magnified from the helm. The Cadillac often feels like the heavier car, owing to its high steering effort and the fact that the noise path from the suspension to the cockpit is less isolated, giving the impression of heavy wheels and tires pounding over bumps, expansion joints, and tar strips.

The Cadillac's steering also demonstrated a disconcerting gain off center that prompted frequent course corrections. The SL's new and improved helm prompted no such carping and inspired greater confidence in the mountains. The XLR's footwell isn't ideally arranged for high-performance driving, either. The dead pedal is an inch forward of an accelerator mounted at an uncomfortable angle that forces the driver's right heel farther back from the pedal, exacerbating the misalignment. All this

conspires to prevent a driver from bracing into the seat and feeling at one with the car. The brake is a good inch and a quarter above the plane of the gas, too. That's great for preventing unintended acceleration lawsuits; lousy for sliding the right foot over to brush off a bit of speed when setting up for a turn. The Benz's pedals are ideally placed on the same plane.



AS A CONVERTIBLE: The SL is a convincing winner here. Both cars feel rigid with their tops up, but lower the Caddy's roof (a process, by the way, that takes almost twice as long as in the Benz), and there's a noticeable increase in cowl and steering-wheel shake. The SL's cockpit remains calmer, quieter, and more conversational in

alfresco mode. The Mercedes's nav screen is brighter and more legible in direct sunlight, and there are way more bins and boxes in which to store stuff in the SL, including a shelf behind the seats, onto which a piece of standard-equipment fitted luggage also can be strapped. There's no place to put a briefcase in the XLR, unless it fits in the 4.4 cubic feet of trunk space that remains when the top's down. The Caddy did trump the Mercedes on a few scores, however. Better-placed air vents help keep occupants much cooler with the top down in 80-plus-degree summer sunshine than did the stylishly raked farther-away circular vents in the SL. Speakers mounted in the tops of seatbacks also helped to better preserve the fidelity of the XLR's Bose sound system at highway speeds with the top down.

AS A FASHION STATEMENT: The Cadillac may have an edge here (literally), depending on your definition of "fashion." The XLR-v's sharp creases and minimalist ornamentation inside and out evince a much more "of the moment" design ethic. It's a uniquely American and unmistakably Cadillac look that may polarize but never fades into the



	2006 CADILLAC XLR-v	2007 MERCEDES-BENZ SL550
POWERTRAIN/CHASSIS		
DRIVETRAIN LAYOUT	Front engine, RWD	Front engine, RWD
ENGINE TYPE	Supercharged 90° V-8, alum block/heads	90° V-8, alum block/heads
VALVETRAIN	DOHC, 4 valves/cyl	DOHC, 4 valves/cyl
DISPLACEMENT	266.7 cu in/4371cc	333.2 cu in/5461cc
COMPRESSION RATIO	9.0:1	10.7:1
POWER (SAE NET)	443 hp @ 6400 rpm*	382 hp @ 6000 rpm
TORQUE (SAE NET)	414 lb-ft @ 3600 rpm*	391 lb-ft @ 2800 rpm
REDLINE	6700 rpm	6500 rpm
WEIGHT TO POWER	8.7 lb/hp	10.9 lb/hp
TRANSMISSION	6-speed automatic	7-speed automatic
AXLE/FINAL-DRIVE RATIOS	2.56:1/1.72:1	2.65:1/1.93:1
SUSPENSION, FRONT; REAR	Control arms, coil springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	control arms, adj coil & oil springs, multilink, adj coil & oil springs
STEERING RATIO	17.0:1	15.4:1
TURNS LOCK-TO-LOCK	2.9	2.6
BRAKES, F;R	13.4-in vented drilled disc; 13.0-in vented drilled disc, ABS	12.3-in vented drilled disc; 11.8-in disc, ABS
WHEELS, F;R	8.5 x 19 in; 8.5 x 19 in, cast alum	8.5 x 18 in; 9.5 x 18 in, cast alum
TIRES, F;R	235/45R19 95W; 255/40R19 96W, Pirelli Euphori@	255/40ZR18 95W; 285/35ZR18 97W, Michelin Pilot Sport
DIMENSIONS		
WHEELBASE	105.7 in	100.8 in
TRACK, F/R	61.6/62.1 in	61.4/60.5 in
LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT	177.7 x 72.3 x 50.4 in	178.5 x 71.5 x 51.0 in
TURNING CIRCLE	39.0 ft	36.2 ft
CURB WEIGHT	3840 lb	4165 lb
WEIGHT DIST, F/R	50/50%	50/50%
SEATING CAPACITY	2	2
HEADROOM	37.6 in	37.7 in
LEGROOM	42.6 in	42.9 in
SHOULDER ROOM	54.3 in	54.0 in
CARGO VOLUME, TOP UP/DN	11.6/4.4 cu ft	10.2/7.3 cu ft
TEST DATA		
ACCELERATION TO MPH		
0-30	1.8 sec	1.7 sec
0-40	2.6	2.7
0-50	3.5	3.8
0-60	4.6	4.9
0-70	5.8	6.5
0-80	7.2	8.2
0-90	9.2	10
0-100	11.3	12.4
PASSING, 45-65 MPH	2.2	2.5
QUARTER MILE	13.1 sec @ 107.8 mph	13.5 sec @ 104.4 mph
BRAKING, 60-0 MPH	115 ft	115 ft
LATERAL ACCELERATION	0.87g avg	0.89g avg
MT FIGURE EIGHT	26.2 sec @ 0.69g avg	26.0 sec @ 0.70g avg
TOP-GEAR REVS @ 60 MPH	1350 rpm	1550 rpm
CONSUMER INFO		
BASE PRICE	\$100,000	\$95,575
PRICE AS TESTED	\$100,000	\$99,625
STABILITY/TRACTION CONTROL	Yes/yes	Yes/yes
AIRBAGS	Dual front, front side/head	Dual front, front side/head
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles	4 yrs/50,000 miles
POWERTRAIN WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles	4 yrs/50,000 miles
ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE	4 yrs/50,000 miles	Unlimited
FUEL CAPACITY	18.0 gal	21.1 gal
EPA CITY/HWY ECON	15/22 mpg	14/22 mpg
MT FUEL ECONOMY	13.5 mpg	14.9 mpg
RECOMMENDED FUEL	Premium unleaded	Premium unleaded
*SAE Certified		



1ST PLACE
MERCEDES-BENZ SL550

The gold standard in posh, topless motoring achieves its boy-racer performance in serene quiet and comfort while always keeping a stiff upper lip.

2ND PLACE
CADILLAC XLR-v

A bold, brash bull in the country-club parking lot that's not afraid to make some noise—the perfect American to crash a stodgy European party.



cadillac xlr-v vs. mercedes-benz sl550 (head to head)

background. The hand-stitched leather that rings the cockpit is by Draexlmaier (it also stitches up Maybach interiors), and the exotic straight-grain Zingana wood trim bits are all real. Clearly money has been spent in here—and yet most staff critics agree that it doesn't look worthy of a Woodrow. A downscale font on the Bulgari gauges and on the black plastic switches is largely to blame. The SL, by contrast, exudes old-world classic elegance. Its shape is readily recognizable by the elite and the hoi polloi alike, although to some eyes this latest rendition is perhaps festooned with a few too many gills, vents, and strakes. The interior also is busier, but the added buttons and switchgear result in a friendlier user interface than that of the touch-screen controlled Cadillac. The SL's materials, fit, and finish are beyond reproach. Choosing between these cars

on this basis becomes a question of what statement you want your rolling stock to make: Old-money types intent on fitting in will gravitate to the Mercedes. Flamboyant extroverts who expect their Wilson to buy them something that swivels heads will find satisfaction at Cadillac.

What would Woodrow Wilson drive? He was a golfer, and his clubs will fit more easily in the Benz, but he served as Commander-in-Chief in a war against the Germans, so that might be a tough sell. Both are sublime cruisers possessing far more athletic ability than most drivers will ever exercise, but we think the discriminating 21st-century bucks-up roadster buyer will find the Mercedes the logical choice on its objective merits, so it wins this face-off. But since when did logic rule when rich folks start dropping W-notes on fabulous toy cars? ■



big bygone bills

MONEY TALKS, but not as loudly as it used to. Before the age of electronic funds, the government minted some mighty big bills, including a few gold certificates used only for intergovernmental funds transfers. All bills larger than \$100 were officially withdrawn from use in 1969 to make it harder for organized crime to transport its ill-gotten booty. The 100-grand note was green in front, orange in back, and was never legal for a citizen to own.

- **\$500—WILLIAM MCKINLEY**—our 25th president, and third to be assassinated
- **\$1000—GROVER CLEVELAND**—the president with the nonconsecutive terms (22nd and 24th)
- **\$5000—JAMES MADISON**—our fourth and shortest president (5 feet 4)
- **\$10,000—SALMON P. CHASE**—a dead treasury secretary (Lincoln's), not president
- **\$100,000—WOODROW WILSON**—28th president, second to win Nobel Peace Prize (after Teddy Roosevelt)



jeep compass (first drive)

NEW DIRECTIONS

HERE'S A GOOD EXCUSE
TO TEACH YOUR DAUGHTER
HOW TO OPERATE A CLUTCH

■ words **todd lassa**





It remains to be seen whether the Compass softroader can tackle terrain tougher than sand. It comes in two trim levels: Sport, with cloth or optional YES Essentials stain-resistant cloth seats, and Limited, with standard leather-trimmed seats. One engine is available: the "Global" 172-horse, 2.4-liter four.

MARLBORO was considered a women's cigarette until some marketing genius placed a guy with a cowboy hat on a horse and a Marlboro in his mouth and filmed him riding into the sunset. From then on, macho hombres as well as women enjoyed Marlboros.

Jeep is doing the opposite with the Compass. Ever since the Willys Jeep helped win WWII, it's been the most macho hombre of nameplates, a credible substitute for the Marlboro Man's horse. Now it has to risk that equity on a FWD car-based four-cylinder "crossover" without bringing down the brand's well-honed reputation.

With Wranglers priced firmly in Toyota FJ Cruiser territory, there's room for a new entry-level Jeep. The company offers two for 2007, saying the Compass and Patriot were equally well received in clinics. Both share their platforms with the Mitsubishi-derived Dodge Caliber, and both get power from a 2.4-liter four from the new DaimlerChrysler/Mitsubishi/Hyundai global engine family (Volkswagen will supply a 2.0-liter turbodiesel for overseas markets). But while the Patriot will come with a trail-rated FWD system, the Compass's optional full-time system, which includes a locking center differential, doesn't. "This active

FWD system is recommended for daily use, including driving in snow and rain," Jeep says. In other words, don't book your Rubicon Trail vacation just yet.

Jeep expects 60 percent of Compass buyers will be female, some 10 points above the overall ratio for the brand. More important, it won't win over potential Wrangler drivers, whatever their gender. You can't show off a bandana-wearing golden retriever in a closed car.

Jeep afforded us a drive over beach and sand dunes on the Oregon coast in Compasses with serious off-road tires, and with the chrome T-handle control in the locked differential position and stability control switched off. On that state's twisty mountain roads, the Compass shines. It's not a sports car of any kind, but it's a well-tuned, tall hatchback—about the size and height of the old Jeep Cherokee.

The Compass rides just tall enough to keep drivers from feeling they're piloting a conventional car and provides enough confidence for carrying speed in fast corners, with moderate body roll. For an entry-level small car (let alone one that fits into the SUV category), its ride is comfortable, with just the right amount of firmness for a car-based small utility. Steering is precise and has good

weight and a nice amount of feedback. If these are "girl's car" attributes, it's time to get in touch with our feminine side.

That feedback also comes into the cabin via road noise on rough surfaces, though. It's not excessive for a small car, but it's not above average in an era in which some small cars are reaching for premium feel.

The Compass comes in two trim levels: Sport (17-inch wheels and roll-up windows standard) and Limited (18-inch wheels, chrome bumper valances and side trim, and heated leather-trimmed seats). You can buy either with front drive or the Freedom Drive 1 4WD and either with a five-speed manual box or a second-generation continuously variable transmission, which in the Limited comes optional with Chrysler's Autostick manual shifting with six ratios.

Chrysler engineers have improved the manual since the Caliber's debut and have enhanced the stick's feel by raising the driver's seat two inches higher than in the Dodge, putting the driver in a better spatial relationship with the gearshift. The five-speed feels precise and positive, in a segment known for vague, spindly gearshifts—it's perhaps the best stick shift in a sport/utility. The taller front seats also allow better rear-seat foot room—the space back

(first drive) jeep compass



Ground clearance is 8.4 inches, approach angle is 20.6 degrees, departure is 32, and breakover is 21. The premium sound system's tailgate speaker flips down for partying. Split 60/40 rear seats are standard; the reclining feature is optional. Sorry, the Compass doesn't feature a compass.

there has good headroom, but tight knee room even with the backs of the front seats scooped out.

The five-speed makes better use of the 2.4-liter's 172 ponies and 165 pound-feet of twist, making it feel sprightly and fun. The CVT by contrast, feels like a dog without the bandana. But that's the nature of CVT power delivery. Jeep claims best-in-class EPA figures of 25 mpg city, 29 mpg highway for the 4x4 manual, which means the FWD version could breach 30 mpg. The 4x4 with CVT drops to 23/26, but CVTs typically get closer to EPA numbers in real-world fuel economy, Jeep says. The six-ratio Autostick helps and at least it diverts your mind from the transmission's sluggish response, but it's no substitute for the manual. In offering only a four-banger in the Compass, Jeep joins the Honda CR-V (and turbo Acura RDX) in this segment, which also is populated with the Toyota RAV4, Hyundai Tucson, and Kia Sportage, all available with V-6s. Compass towing capacity is 2000 pounds.

All this can be had for a few grand more than the Caliber. A well-equipped Limited, with sunroof, premium nine-speaker Boston Acoustics stereo, and other options pushes the sticker into the mid-\$20s, but the Sport model starts at \$15,985, with Freedom Drive

1 an extra \$1600. There's a lot of standard equipment, including front and rear curtain airbags that'll make upper-middle-class parents comfortable about buying one for their college kids. As with the Caliber, the center console has an iPod holder, and the center stack was designed to look like an open laptop and has a jack for that MP3 player. (Unlike the Caliber, the Compass's center armrest adjusts three inches fore and aft to accommodate shorter drivers.) The overhead lamp detaches to work like a flashlight, and the premium sound system's rear speakers flip down for tailgating music. It's a clever, handy interior. As with South Korean brands, you get a lot of stuff for the money, including the standard safety equipment, but the materials are cheap.

The problem is, there's little of the Compass that reminds you you're in a Jeep beyond a couple styling cues: the famous seven-slot grille and the squared-off wheel openings. Plus, it has good approach/departure angles. The bulging rear shoulder line (which caused placing the rear door handles up in the C-pillar) strengthens the Compass's looks, but this is a "cute 'ute," however carefully Jeep avoids the term. It's possible to build a credible Jeep with good carlike ride and handling—the Grand Cherokee

was best-in-class when new—but there's nothing in the Compass driving experience nor in the apparent off-road capability to remind you what brand you're driving. Buyers looking for a sport/utility with good road manners and exceptional fuel economy will find most everything they need in the Compass, but Jeep loyalists aren't likely to be happy about the brand equity given up for this new model. The Marlboro Man isn't ready to ride again. Ah, well, smoking is bad for you anyway. ■

2007 JEEP COMPASS

BASE PRICE	\$15,985-\$21,740
VEHICLE LAYOUT	Front engine, FWD or AWD, 5-pass, 4-door SUV
ENGINE	2.4L/172-hp/165 lb-ft DOHC 16-valve I-4
TRANSMISSIONS	5-speed manual; continuously variable automatic
CURB WEIGHT, F/R DIST	3100-3350 lb
WHEELBASE	103.7 in
LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT	173.4 x 69.3 x 65.2 in
0-60 MPH	9.0-10.1 sec
EPA CITY/HWY FUEL ECON	23-25/ 26-29 mpg
ON SALE IN U.S.	Currently

gmc



chevy



great expectations

IF THIS TRUCK ISN'T A GRAND SLAM
IT MAY BE GAME OVER FOR GM

■ words **mark williams**



(first look) chevrolet silverado/gmc sierra

THESE NEW GMT900s aren't just better than the trucks they replace; they're out to change the way people think about trucks.

We got an early look at the new Silverado platform and spoke with engineers who've spent the last five years developing the GMT900 trucks. They're ready to tell their story, and the first thing they want you to know is that much of the technology that went into the currently popular full-size SUVs (Tahoe, Yukon, Suburban, Avalanche, Escalade, Denali) came from the work they were doing on the GMT900 pickups. They're pleased the Tahoe, Escalade, and Yukon are selling well (all three sales numbers far

A NEW cargo system allows for separators, extenders, and lockable storage, with quick-release latches.

**once around the gmt900**

- **1. ALL MODELS** will have unique grilles, headlamps, bumpers, flares, and box outers.
- **2. EVEN SUVs** and pickups will have distinct characteristics. Headlights will be independent units, different for GMC, Chevrolet, Denali, and Cadillac.
- **3. CLASSIC FLARE** designs typically create a full arch over front and rear of the wheel opening. The new Silverado's flare is borne out of the front headlamps and dives over the opening. The look is rugged and, some might say, a bit odd. GMC front flares are softer and more traditional.
- **4. CONTINUING THE** squared-off design, the Chevy's rear flares bulge into the bed body, creating a look more akin to the Silverado HD 3/4-ton and 1-ton dualies.
- **5. LOOK FOR** more headroom, legroom, and hip room from all three cab configurations. Extended Cab models will have rear doors that open 170 degrees for full pass-through loading. Likewise, rear seats flip up for substantial loading volume. All rear-seat hardware is out of sight.
- **6. THE NEW** coil over-shock setup allows for a significant range of control, yet still keeps the necessary strength needed for heavy load carrying.
- **7. GM ENGINEERS** started from a blank sheet of paper to help create the exact frame they needed. Hydroformed to precise specs, the frame allows for chassis tuning data not previously utilized.
- **8. UNLIKE ITS** familial SUV bumpers, the Silverado has maintained a traditional bumper setup. With gaps reduced in size and a low-hanging air dam pushing air down and around the front of the truck, the new front end not only channels more cooling air into the engine, but it also gets rid of more extraneous air around the sides of the tires for increased aerodynamics.
- **9. SILVERADOS WILL** come standard with 17-inch steel rims, but offer both 18-inch and 20-inch aluminum rims as options. GM tells us they expect the new Silverado to provide more options than any other vehicle sold in the U.S.
- **10. THE NEW** Silverado's NHT Max Trailer package uses a heavy-duty version of the four-speed automatic, the L76 6.0-liter V-8, 4.10:1 ring and pinion gears, and unique rear leaf springs. In Extended Cab 4x4 configuration, the half-ton is reported to be capable of towing 10,500 pounds comfortably. Maximum payload capability is said to be over 2000 pounds in regular cab configuration.



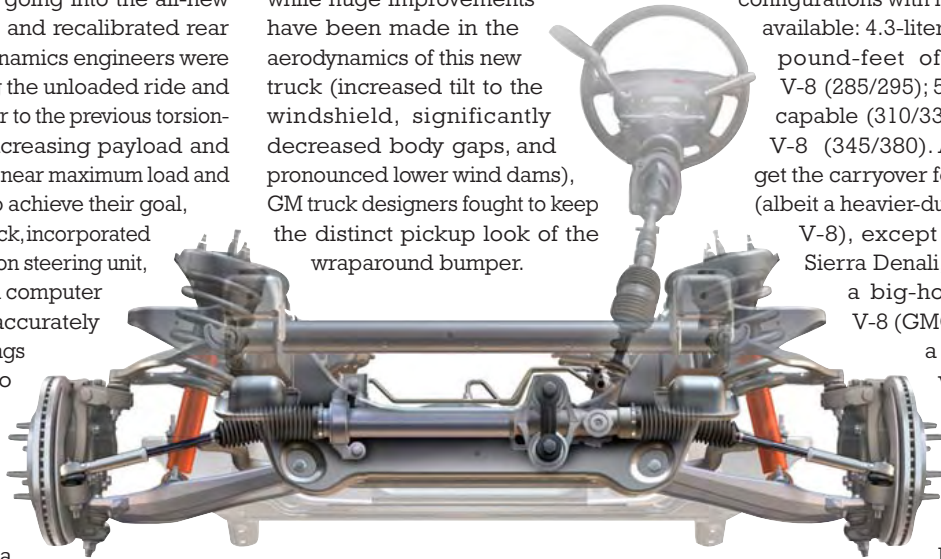
exceed last year's), mostly because it could be a predictor of what happens when their Silverado hits the market.

As with the SUVs, there's not much carry-over on this new platform. The foundation starts with a new frame, most of the engineering effort going into the all-new coil-over front end and recalibrated rear leaf suspension. Dynamics engineers were tasked with making the unloaded ride and handling far superior to the previous torsion-bar setup, while increasing payload and towing stability at or near maximum load and carrying weights. To achieve their goal, they widened the track, incorporated a new rack-and-pinion steering unit, and used advanced computer software to more accurately tune leaf-spring ratings to shock valving to frame harmonics to various load scenarios.

The maximum towing number for the new pickup is a class-leading 10,500 pounds, with a class-leading maximum payload rating of 2070 pounds. However, that might not be the most impressive detail about the new Silverado and Sierra, especially since we now know what they look like.

From the unique hoodlines and fender flares to dramatic headlight and grille treatments, the differences between the two

family members are more than apparent. GM didn't allow the pickup grilles to be clones of those on the SUVs. The GMC grille is like a large, open mouth, while the Chevy grille wears the more familiar three-bar slats, with a prominent bow tie in the center. Further, while huge improvements have been made in the aerodynamics of this new truck (increased tilt to the windshield, significantly decreased body gaps, and pronounced lower wind dams), GM truck designers fought to keep the distinct pickup look of the wraparound bumper.



Each of the GMT900 trucks also will have unique hood designs: The GMC with a single pronounced bulge, the Chevy with a wide double-crease appearance. Chevy gets the more chiseled, cinderblock-looking flares and more defined cuts, whereas the GMC has smoother, almost polished humps over the wheel arches.

Silverados will come in LS, LT, and LTZ

EXTENDED-CAB Silverados and Sierras offer a fully articulating rear door, opening nearly 180 degrees. Rear seats appear suspended to allow for more floor cargo space.

configurations with five different engines available: 4.3-liter V-6 (195 horse/260 pound-feet of torque); 4.8-liter V-8 (285/295); 5.3-liter V-8, one E85 capable (310/335), and one 6.0-liter V-8 (345/380). All the pickups will get the carryover four-speed automatic (albeit a heavier-duty version for the 6.0 V-8), except for the new GMC Sierra Denali, which not only gets a big-horsepower 6.2-liter V-8 (GMC will most likely get a detuned 380-horse version), but also the all-new six-speed

trans currently in the Cadillac SUVs. The 5.3-liter and 6.0-liter V-8s (and most likely the 6.2-liter) will offer Active Fuel Management for fuel savings. GM reports AFM fuel savings over similarly equipped non-AFM models average 10 percent. Current predictions have EPA estimates hovering around 16 mpg in the city/21 mpg on the highway with the 5.3-liter V-8. Expect that number to improve when the six-speed transmission replaces the four-speed (both

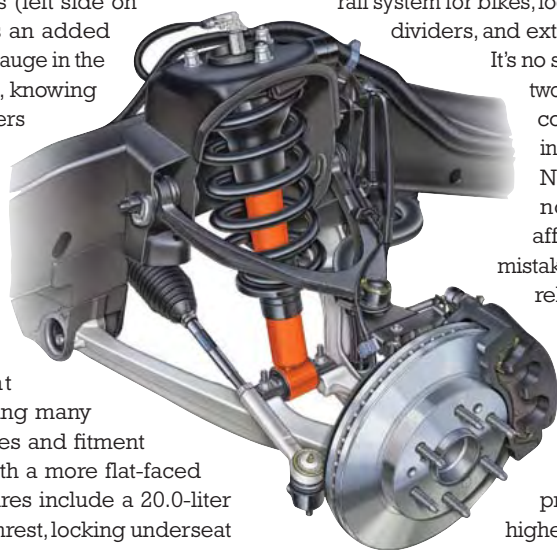


column shifters with an improved hand-contoured grip) in the SUVs and pickups in the next model year.

Inside, the GMT900s are bigger, longer, and taller. LTZ interiors will remind drivers of the vastly improved current Tahoe and Yukon interiors. About the only difference to the dash and gauge setup is that the 4WD dial is on the right side of the steering column on pickups (left side on SUVs), and there's an added trans temperature gauge in the cluster. In addition, knowing that some truck buyers aren't going to want such an upscale dash and center console, the bench-seat setup allows for a completely different dash and instrument panel setup, keeping many of the same textures and fitment advantages, but with a more flat-faced surface. Cool features include a 20.0-liter center console/armrest, locking underseat storage, two gloveboxes, and a modular cupholder able to hold a Big Gulp. Although the models we saw were early production units, both dash choices are stunning, with the "work truck" (GM calls it its "Pure American

Pickup" dash) option looking light-years ahead of the GMT800's dash design.

Other standouts and options include extended-cab rear doors that swing open almost 180 degrees (the hinges are a work of art), rear seats that fold flat into the cab wall, remote start, StabiliTrak and rollover mitigation standard on all Crew Cabs, optional 18- and 20-inch wheels, a cargo rail system for bikes, lockable trunks, dividers, and extenders.



It's no secret that our two American car companies are in dire straights. Neither Ford nor GM can afford product mistakes, especially relative to their high-volume, solid-profit half-ton pickups. A miss here in the most profitable, highest-volume segment in the largest

automotive market in the world could stop General Motors in its tracks. Ford, Toyota, and Dodge have come to market with vastly improved products since the last Silverado

LS OR LT BUYERS who choose the front bench-seat configuration will get the "work truck" dash—more traditional looking, with a flatter front surface.

came out in 1999. Nissan even put a brand-new truck in the corral. And Toyota is about to introduce another Tundra to go on sale just months after the new Silverado bows. Two years ago, Ford hit a home run with its new F-150 (our 2004 Truck of the Year winner). Now, it's the General's turn at bat. ■

2007 CHEVROLET SILVERADO

BASE PRICE	\$17,000-\$35,000
VEHICLE LAYOUT	Front engine, RWD, 4WD, 3-6 pass, 2- and 4-door pickup
ENGINES	4.3L/195-hp/260 lb-ft OHV V-6; 4.8L/285-hp/295 lb-ft OHV V-8; 5.3L/310-hp/335 lb-ft OHV V-8; 6.0L/345-hp/380 lb-ft OHV V-8; 6.2L/385-hp/400 lb-ft OHV V-8
TRANSMISSIONS	4- or 6-speed auto
CURB WEIGHT	4700-5200 lb
WHEELBASE	119.0, 133.0, 133.7, 143.5, 157.5
EPA CITY/HWY FUEL ECON	15/20 (4.3L); 16/21 (4.8L); 16/21 (5.3L); 15/20 (6.0L) mpg (mfr est)
ON SALE IN U.S.	October 2006

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- FUEL FOR YOUR SOUL ★ ★ ★ ★
- DRIVE BEFORE YOU DIE ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

■ words **motor trend** editors



Acura RL

BASE PRICE: \$49,500 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Big AWD sedan adds an MP3 audio jack and optional rear-park assist and introduces a more affordable non-nav system "base" model. The new standard Technology Package gets nav, the rearview cam, Active Front Lighting, and wood interior accents, while the stage II upgrade adds the Collision Mitigation Braking System and PAX run-flat tires.

BEST BUY: The standard RL still offers serious luxury and the brilliant Super Handling All-Wheel Drive system, but now opens under \$50K.

SUM UP: HIGH-TECH GOODIES IN A LOW-PROFILE PACKAGE. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.5L/290-hp SOHC V-6
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, AWD
TRANSMISSION	5A
0-60 MPH	7.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18/26 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Acura TL

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$34,000-\$38,000 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Front and rear fascia enhancements and interior tweaks are due across all versions of Acura's midsize sedan, but the big news here is the yet to be officially confirmed arrival of a hot new Type-S that should bring nearly 300 horsepower, a performance-spec suspension, bigger wheels/tires, and a serious bump in its fun-to-drive index.

COOL FACT: Groundbreaking DVD-A audio technology offers 500 times higher sound resolution levels than a conventional CD system.

SUM UP: AIMS AT 3 SERIES. BUT JUST MISSES. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.2L/258-hp SOHC V-6
OPT ENGINE	3.5L/300-hp SOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 5A
0-60 MPH	5.8-7.2 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-20/26-29 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Acura TSX

BASE PRICE: \$29,000 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: With the RSX dropped for 2007, the TSX becomes the de facto entry-level Acura and gains a tire-pressure monitor in the process. As ever, this high-content/high-value sport sedan comes fully loaded with everything from leather upholstery to HID headlamps—and your option choices remain limited to colors, 6M/5A transmissions, and nav or not.

COOL FACT: The compact TSX shares common platform engineering with a slightly smaller, Euro-only version of the current Honda Accord sedan.

SUM UP: IMPRESSIVE PERFORMER, GREAT VALUE. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/205-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 5A
0-60 MPH	7.9-8.3 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	22/30-31 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Aston Martin DB9

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$162,050-\$175,550 BODY TYPE: Coupe, conv

WHAT'S NEW: Restyled seats with head/thorax side airbags, dual-stage heating/lumbar adjustment. Key-fob trunk release/garage-door opener and increased luggage space. New options include three-position seat/mirror memory, front parking sensors, and Sports Pack with forged alloys, retuned suspension, revised undertray, lower ride height.

COOL FACT: It might be as suavely British as 007, but the Aston's V-12 is in fact built in Cologne, Germany.

SUM UP: SEX ON WHEELS, BRITISH STYLE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	5.9L/450-hp DOHC V-12
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6-sp auto-clutch man
0-60 MPH	4.7-4.9 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	11-13/18-19 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	2 yrs/unlimited miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 4



Aston Martin V8 Vantage

BASE PRICE: \$110,600 BODY TYPE: Coupe

WHAT'S NEW: Restyled seats with head/thorax side airbags, twin-lumbar adjustment, and high-level electric-seat release. New standards: full leather trim, key-fob trunk release, LEDs in door handles. New options: dual-stage seat heating, three-position memory seats, garage door opener, nonstandard leather colors, 19-inch anthracite painted alloy wheels, Pirelli PZero Corsa tires, and front stone guards.

COOL FACT: Aston boss Ulrich Bez also developed the 993 Porsche.

SUM UP: IF YOU'RE BORED WITH 911S, TRY THIS. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	4.3L/380-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	6M
0-60 MPH	4.8 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	13/19 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	2 yrs/unlimited miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 4



Audi A3

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$25,230-\$34,660 BODY TYPE: Hatch

WHAT'S NEW: S line package replaces Sport. Equipment is the same except for the meaner-looking front and rear fascias and S line badging. Two other packages, Technology (includes bi-Xenons with Adaptive Front Lighting) and Audio (includes Sirius Radio), bring the A3 further up the luxury ladder.

BEST BUY: 2.0T FWD base model has the refinements—performance, styling, comfort—expected in an Audi at an under \$30K price.

SUM UP: "LUXURY HATCHBACK" ISN'T AN OXYMORON. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/200-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	3.2L/250-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6-sp auto-clutch man
0-60 MPH	5.9-6.9 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	21-25/27-32 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 4

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/200-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINES	3.2L/255-hp DOHC V-6, 4.2L/340-420-hp DOHC V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6A
0-60 MPH	4.8-7.3 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	14-24/20-34 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6

Audi A4

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$29,000-\$66,700 BODY TYPE: Sedan, conv, wagon
WHAT'S NEW: Package and stand-alone options are the only changes for A4 sedan and wagon variants. S4 sedan and wagon carry over from 2006 with new 18-inch wheels and sunroof standard. Latest member of the S4 lineup is the Cabriolet (A4 pop top is new, too). All feature the 340-horse, 4.2-liter V-8. The new star, the 420-horse RS4, gives M3 a run for its money.
DRIVER'S CHOICE: S4 Avant: Hauling offspring and their toys is no chore in a 340-horse wagon. RS4: For that NASCAR V-8 rumble and easy power.
SUM UP: THE THINKING MAN'S BMW ALTERNATIVE. ★★★★★



BASE ENGINE	3.2L/255-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINES	4.2L/350-hp DOHC V-8, 5.2L/435-hp DOHC V-10
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSION	6A
0-60 MPH	5.1-7.3 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	14-21/20-29 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6

Audi A6

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$41,085-\$65,045 BODY TYPE: Sedan, wagon
WHAT'S NEW: One of the best in the midsize luxury range, the A6 gets sportier with the addition of the S line package for the wagon, a new 350-horse, FSI 4.2-liter V-8 for both body styles, and the introduction of the eagerly awaited V-10-powered S6. A6 has additional standard features such as MP3 playback capability, new cupholders, and a Driver Info Center.
BEST BUY: At just over \$41K, the 3.2-liter V-6 A6 has the right balance of power and standard features.
SUM UP: JUST DIFFERENT ENOUGH TO BE COOL. ★★★★★



BASE ENGINE	4.2L/350-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINES	6.0L/450-hp DOHC W-12, 5.2L/450-hp DOHC V-10
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, AWD
TRANSMISSION	6A
0-60 MPH	5.0-6.3 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	14-18/20-24 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6

Audi A8

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$69,490-\$129,700 BODY TYPE: Sedan
WHAT'S NEW: As with A6, the A8 gets the 4.2-liter FSI engine. Other enhancements: Bose Surround Sound System standard and an optional Bang & Olufsen system; the W12 now has a rearview camera and Sirius Radio as standard. V-10-powered S model launches this fall. While the power is the same as in the W12, the S8 weighs less for better handling.
DRIVER'S CHOICE: S8: There's something delightfully wicked about driving a full-size luxury sedan with a high-performance Lambo engine.
SUM UP: THE STEALTH PLAYER IN THE LUX SEGMENT. ★★★★★



BASE ENGINE	3.6L/280-hp DOHC V-6 (2008-9)
OPT ENGINES	4.2L/420-hp DOHC V-8, 5.2L/450-500-hp DOHC V-10
DRIVETRAIN	Mid-engine, AWD
TRANSMISSION	7-sp auto-cl man (V-8, V-10)
0-60 MPH	4.0-6.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	Not yet rated
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags 4 (est)

Audi R8

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$75,000-\$100,000 (est) BODY TYPE: Coupe
WHAT'S NEW: Everything, as it's Audi's first mid-engine exotic sports car. The R8 is named after the company's Le Mans-winning racer and shares its chassis architecture with the Lamborghini Gallardo. There'll be a variety of powertrains, and expect a standard-setting cabin design. The final look has yet to be revealed, so Audi's Le Mans Quattro concept is shown here.
DRIVER'S CHOICE: It'd have to be the Lambo-derived, 450-500-horse V-10, but the 420-horse V-8 borrowed from the RS4 won't be a slouch.
SUM UP: TOP THIS, BMW AND MERCEDES. (NOT RATED)



BASE ENGINE	2.0L/200-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	3.2L/250-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6-sp auto-clutch man
0-60 MPH	5.7-6.4 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-22/25-31 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6

Audi TT

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$36,700-\$47,500 BODY TYPE: Coupe, conv
WHAT'S NEW: There won't be a TT coupe or roadster for 2007. Fans of the iconic Audi must wait until the 2008 model year. The all-new TT utilizes an aluminum and steel spaceframe and the coupe is 69-percent aluminum, allowing it to weigh less than its predecessors, even though it's longer. Two engine choices: a 200-horse 2.0T and the 250-horse, 3.2-liter V-6.
DRIVER'S CHOICE: We're not picky; we'll take the coupe or roadster in 3.2-liter trim.
SUM UP: SUCCESSFUL EVOLUTION OF AUDI'S ICON. ★★★★★



BASE ENGINE	6.8L/400-hp OHV twin-turbo V-8
OPT ENGINE	6.8L/450-hp OHV twin-turbo V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	4A
0-60 MPH	5.5-5.9 sec (mfr)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	10/14 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/unlimited miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 4

Bentley Arnage

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$217,250-\$248,870 BODY TYPE: Sedan, conv
WHAT'S NEW: Though refreshed in 2005, the Arnage continues to exhibit old-school aristocratic style. Maybe that's because the basic car dates back to the late 1990s. Powerful and exceedingly well appointed, the immense sedan comes in three levels of excess: R and RL, and T, which has 450 horses. The convertible version, called the Azure, should face stiff competition from its newer sibling, the GTC.
COOL FACT: Bentley chief engineer Ulrich Eichhorn once worked for Ford.
SUM UP: PROOF THEY DO BUILD 'EM LIKE THEY USED TO. ★★★★★





Bentley Continental Flying Spur

BASE PRICE: \$168,290 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Flying Spur now features a DVD-based nav system and wireless phone with Bluetooth. For those with a desire for more luxury, the Mulliner Driving Specification (20-inch wheels, upgraded veneers, quilted hide in all the right places) also is available.

COOL FACT: Bentley badge means it's escaped the gentleman's agreement that limits German sedans to 155 mph. So it does nearly 200.

SUM UP: MAKES THE ARNAGE FEEL OLD AND SLOW. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	6.0L/552-hp DOHC twin-turbo W-12
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, AWD
TRANSMISSION	6A
0-60 MPH	4.9 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	11/18 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/unlimited miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 8



Bentley Continental GT

BASE PRICE: \$168,290 BODY TYPE: Coupe, conv

WHAT'S NEW: Ignore any jokes that this is an upscale version of the VW Phaeton; the GT is a beautifully built and appointed luxury coupe. Three years into its lifecycle, the GT's updates include a DVD-based nav system and new 19-inch wheels. It also gets an equally svelte topless stablemate. The GTC is powered by the same W12 and is a mere 0.1 second slower to 60.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: The GTC. Driving the open-top version lets everyone know you have exceptionally good taste—and lots of money.

SUM UP: DEFINES THE ULTRA-LUX GT SEGMENT. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	6.0L/552-hp DOHC twin-turbo W-12
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, AWD
TRANSMISSION	6A
0-60 MPH	4.7-4.8 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	12/19 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/unlimited miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 4



BMW 3 Series

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$32,500-\$56,500 BODY TYPE: Sedan, coupe, conv, wgn

WHAT'S NEW: Moving to the E90 platform used by the sedan/wagon, the new 3 Series (designated 328 and 335) coupes and late-arriving convertibles usher in upgraded engines for all models, highlighted by a 300-horse twin-turbo I-6. Coupes get unique styling, run-flat tires, and xDrive AWD for the first time; M3s get new V-8-powered model for 2008.

COOL FACT: BMW's new 3.0-liter twin-turbo six develops its 300 pound-foot of max torque from 1400-5000 rpm.

SUM UP: IT'S STILL THE SPORT SEDAN BENCHMARK. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.0L/230-hp DOHC I-6
OPT ENGINE	3.0L/300-hp DOHC twin-turbo I-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6A
0-60 MPH	5.3-7.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-20/25-28 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



BMW 5 Series

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$44,195-\$82,300 BODY TYPE: Sedan, wagon

WHAT'S NEW: Save for M5, due shortly, 2007 versions of BMW's midsize sedan/wagon went on sale in spring. Modest upgrades (also due on the M5) include auxiliary audio input, optional HD radios, four years of TeleService vehicle monitoring. BMW Night Vision is available, and Sport Package gained a new steering wheel and 20-way multicontour seats.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: A 500-horse V-10, seven-speed sequential gearbox, and world-class handling make M5 the superstar of this illustrious family.

SUM UP: GOOD ENOUGH TO OVERLOOK iDRIVE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.0L/215-hp DOHC I-6
OPT ENGINES	3.0L/255-hp DOHC I-6, 4.8L/360-hp DOHC V-8, 5.0L/500-hp DOHC V-10
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6A, 6-, 7-sp auto-cl man
0-60 MPH	4.5-7.0 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	12-21/18-30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



BMW 6 Series

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$73,000-\$104,000 BODY TYPE: Coupe, conv

WHAT'S NEW: Hottest news here is that an M6 droptop joins the coupe at the top of the 6 Series line. Both M and regular 650i models add a real-time traffic feature to their nav systems and offer a new premium leather upgrade. The optional LOGIC7 sound package becomes a stand-alone extra, but its CD changer departs in favor of an available iPod adapter.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: Double its choice of body styles and the 500-horse V-10 M6 suddenly becomes the twice best pick.

SUM UP: TOURING DOESN'T GET MUCH GRANDER. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	4.8L/360-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	5.0L/500-hp DOHC V-10
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6A, 6-, 7-sp auto-cl man
0-60 MPH	4.5-5.7 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	12-17/18-25 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 4



BMW 7 Series

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$73,500-\$121,000 (est) BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Building on a 2006 midlife upgrade that gave it a tidier look, enhanced amenities, and a more potent V-8, BMW's flagship gains a handful of neat touches including power folding mirrors for all, standard heated seats for the 750i/Li, and BMW's superb comfort seats for the 750i. The 750i Sport Package upgrades to 20-inch alloy rims.

BEST BUY: Unless V-12 bragging rights are worth about \$40K to your ego, forego the 760s in favor of a nicely appointed 750.

SUM UP: ÜBERSEDAN ADDS TO ITS LAURELS. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	4.8L/360-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	6.0L/438-hp DOHC V-12
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	6A
0-60 MPH	5.4-5.8 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	15-17/22-25 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 10

(new car buyer's guide)

**BMW Z4**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$36,600-\$53,500 (est) **BODY TYPE:** Coupe, conv

WHAT'S NEW: Coming off a series of performance-enhancing updates during 2006 that brought more powerful engines, new transmissions, and revised interior trims while adding a sexy coupe and hot M-spec variations to the original Z4 roadster theme, BMW's edgy two-seater gains only a tire-pressure monitor and several new colors for 2007.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: Fortified with a scintillating 330 horses and serious suspension tweaks, the M Coupe is most fun on your favorite backroad.

SUM UP: OPEN OR CLOSED, IT'S PUREBRED FUN. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.0L/215-hp DOHC I-6
OPT ENGINES	3.0L/255-hp DOHC I-6, 3.2L/330-hp DOHC I-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6A
0-60 MPH	4.9-6.6 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	16-21/24-30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6

**Buick LaCrosse**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$22,500-\$28,000 **BODY TYPE:** Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: In its third year, the LaCrosse gets a few minor changes for 2007, including an improved OnStar navigation system with turn-by-turn instructions. The gauges have been freshened with red pointers and a tire-pressure monitor system is standard. The smaller twin-cam V-6 powers the more athletic CXS variant, which gets a sport-tuned suspension.

AVOID: Base model. Though a direct competitor to the Honda Accord and Toyota Camry it's much less refined to drive.

SUM UP: THIS AIN'T THE FUTURE OF BUICK. FORTUNATELY. ★★

BASE ENGINE	3.8L/200-hp OHV V-6
OPT ENGINE	3.6L/240-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSION	4A
0-60 MPH	7.6-8.6 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	19-20/27-30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Stab: 0; Trac: 0; Airbags: 4

**Buick Lucerne**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$26,000-\$35,000 **BODY TYPE:** Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Elegant Lucerne replaced the venerable LeSabre and Park Avenue last year. It offers improved handling and an optional V-8—the first in a Buick in a decade. A heated leather-wrapped steering wheel, improved nav, and new colors are the only changes for 2007. CXS features sport-tuned suspension and Magnetic Ride Control with StabiliTrak.

COOL FACT: Opt for the CXL with a V-8, and you've got the only V-8-powered luxury sedan on the market for under \$30,000.

SUM UP: MODEST LUXO SEDAN FOR LITTLE MONEY. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.8L/197-hp OHV V-6
OPT ENGINE	4.6L/275-hp DOHC V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSION	4A
0-60 MPH	7.5-8.8 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	17-19/25-28 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: 0; Airbags: 6

**Cadillac CTS**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$30,190-\$52,990 **BODY TYPE:** Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: No changes scheduled for Cadillac's sport sedan, which continues with two V-6s and the V-8 that bowed in the CTS-v in 2006. With massive power, broad torque band, and excellent chassis, the CTS-v is an authentic challenger to the Ms and AMGs of the sport-sedan segment.

COOL FACT: XM NavTraffic, integrated with the navigation system, provides continuously updated traffic info, including speeds, congestion from crashes or construction, and alternate routes.

SUM UP: CTS-v IS AMERICA'S BEST SPORT SEDAN. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.8L/210-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINES	3.6L/255-hp DOHC V-6, 6.0L/400-hp OHV V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5A, 6M
0-60 MPH	4.8-8.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	16-18/25-27 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: 0; Airbags: 6

**Cadillac DTS**

BASE PRICE: \$42,000 **BODY TYPE:** Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Except for revised colors and new key-fob design, Cadillac's FWD luxury sedan remains unchanged. With available six-passenger seating and a generous complement of standards, the DTS is the epitome of the traditional American big car, but the excellent dynamics afforded by the Performance Package make it feel more like a yacht than a barge.

COOL FACT: Industry-first front-passenger airbag deploys small or large airbag depending on crash severity, seatbelt usage, and seat position.

SUM UP: NEW LOOK, BUT OLD-SCHOOL AMERICAN LUXURY. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	4.6L/275-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	4.6L/291-hp DOHC V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSION	4A
0-60 MPH	7.1-7.6 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	17/24-25 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: 0; Airbags: 6

**Cadillac STS**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$41,800-\$77,100 **BODY TYPE:** Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: The lineup of V-6, V-8, and supercharged V-8 sedans continues unchanged except for standard fitment of a six-speed auto on all V-8 models. Naturally aspirated STSs available with RWD or AWD, while the 469-horse STS-v (the most powerful Cadillac ever), puts power to the ground with the rear wheels through a six-speed auto.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: STS-v. A quick, composed Euro-style sport sedan. Only problem is Caddy's Euro-style pricing.

SUM UP: NEARLY, BUT NOT QUITE, A 5 SERIES RIVAL. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.6L/255-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINES	4.6L/320-hp DOHC V-8, 4.4L/469-hp s-chg'd V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5A, 6A
0-60 MPH	4.6-5.7 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	15-18/23-27 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 8



Cadillac XLR

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$77,295-\$100,000 BODY TYPE: **Convertible**

WHAT'S NEW: All XLRs have the six-speed auto that made its debut on XLR-v. Taller gearing and revised overall ratio deliver lower rpm at cruising speeds, yet acceleration and fuel-mileage figures improve by five percent. A few limited-edition XLRs will include a version with Passion Red paint and, late in the year, a Platinum edition with special interior features.

COOL FACT: Almost half of the supercharged engine's components new or revised to handle extra thermal and mechanical stresses from 443 horses.

SUM UP: MUCH MORE PERFORMER THAN POSEUR. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	4.6L/320-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	4.4L/443-hp DOHC s-chg'd V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	6A
0-60 MPH	4.5-5.8 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	15-17/22-25 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Chevrolet Aveo

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$9995-\$13,925 BODY TYPE: **Sedan, hatch**

WHAT'S NEW: A slightly larger, all-new body enhances the LS and LT sedan models. The interior has been upgraded, and improved suspension helps the ride. The drivetrain remains the same, but there are more options including the latest in audio systems. The more versatile Aveo5 hatch gains improved suspension tuning.

COOL FACT: Last year, the Aveo was easily the top-selling subcompact. Chevy's timing for a fresh Aveo is good as econocars are back in favor.

SUM UP: TACKLES FIT, VERSA, AND YARIS FOR LESS. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	1.6L/103-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	10.2-11.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	26-27/34-35 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 4



Chevrolet Cobalt

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$13,000-\$20,500 BODY TYPE: **Sedan, coupe**

WHAT'S NEW: All eight Cobalt models, other than hot-rod supercharged SS, get a slight boost in power from Ecotec engines. Otherwise, changes are minimal, such as an iPod-compatible audio system, for this modern lineup of premium compact sedans and coupes. There's an increased range of dealer-installed accessories, including performance-boosting kits.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: The performance SS delivers fun driving with good economy at a price less than its competitors'.

SUM UP: PUNCHING HARD IN A TOUGH SEGMENT. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.2L/148-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINES	2.4L/173-hp DOHC I-4, 2.0L/205-hp DOHC s-chg'd I-4
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	6.1-9.5 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	23-25/29-34 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 2



Chevrolet Corvette

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$45,000-\$66,000 BODY TYPE: **Coupe, conv**

WHAT'S NEW: A larger glovebox. That's it—the only improvement to the base 2007 Corvette. We guess that confirms the current C6 is satisfying its target clientele. Small changes to option packages, such as cross-drilled brake rotors included with the Magnetic Selective Ride Control option. The optional head-up display with G-force meter is a unique feature.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: What more can any sports-car enthusiast ask at the price? No wonder the Corvette is the top-selling sports car in America.

SUM UP: PROOF GM CAN BUILD A REAL SPORTS CAR. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	6.0L/400-hp OHV V-8
OPT ENGINE	7.0L/505-hp OHV V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6A
0-60 MPH	3.5-4.6 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	16-18/26-28 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 2



Chevrolet HHR

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$15,900-\$16,900 BODY TYPE: **Wagon**

WHAT'S NEW: Now in its second year on the market, retro-looking HHR gets slight boost in power for both Ecotec engines, otherwise no changes. As it's based on the Cobalt, it delivers carlike manners with decent performance, especially with a manual transmission. It seats five and the rear seat folds into the floor to provide 58 cubic feet of flat storage space.

BEST BUY: Spend the extra money on the 175-horse engine, and you'll enjoy the drive a whole lot more.

SUM UP: THE COOLEST SMALL CHEVY EVER. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.2L/149-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	2.4L/175-hp DOHC I-4
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	8.0-9.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	22-23/30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 2



Chevrolet Impala

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$21,000-\$27,000 BODY TYPE: **Sedan**

WHAT'S NEW: After last year's face-lift, Impala remains unchanged for 2007 save for some new exterior colors. The LTZ's 3.9-liter V-6 (optional on the LT) gets GM's Active Fuel Management System. It shuts off half the cylinders when full power isn't needed, saving up to eight percent in fuel. The same system is on the V-8 that powers the SS model.

COOL FACT: If you need a large sedan that seats six and care about fuel economy, the Impala is one of the most economical sedans in its class.

SUM UP: AT LEAST YOU CAN GET ONE WITH A V-8. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.5L/211-hp OHV V-6
OPT ENGINES	3.9L/233-hp OHV V-6, 5.3L/303-hp OHV V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSION	4A
0-60 MPH	5.7-7.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-21/27-31 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 4

(new car buyer's guide)

**Chevrolet Malibu**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$17,000-\$23,500 (est) **BODY TYPE:** Sedan, hatch

WHAT'S NEW: 3.5-liter V-6 engine in the LTZ and Maxx LT is upgraded with variable valve timing. It delivers almost the same fuel economy as the far less powerful base 2.2-liter four-cylinder engine in the LT. All models get head-curtain front and rear-side impact airbags as well as upgraded dual-stage front airbags with GM Passenger Sensing System.

AVOID: The Malibu sedan is nothing to get excited about. Maxx is a better bet, but still not as voluminous as a real wagon.

SUM UP: HOW COME EUROPE GOT THE GOOD-LOOKING ONE? ★★

BASE ENGINE	2.2L/144-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINES	3.5L/217-hp OHV V-6, 3.9L/240-hp OHV V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSION	4A
0-60 MPH	7.5-8.5 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-24/26-32 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6	

**Chevrolet Monte Carlo**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$20,500-\$26,500 (est) **BODY TYPE:** Coupe

WHAT'S NEW: The last of a dying breed, the Monte Carlo is the only full-size two-door coupe on the market. After getting a face-lift last year, there are few new changes: a tire-pressure-monitoring system, upgraded OnStar navigation with turn-by-turn directions, new colors, and a reduced choice of just two engines.

AVOID: Do you really want a large, somewhat impractical, two-door coupe that looks as antiquated as the NASCAR cars modeled after it?

SUM UP: IT'S NO THREAT TO THE MUSTANG. ★★

BASE ENGINE	3.5L/211-hp OHV V-6
OPT ENGINE	5.3L/303-hp OHV V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSION	4A
0-60 MPH	6.0-7.6 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-21/28-31 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 2	

**Chrysler 300**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$24,500-\$40,600 **BODY TYPE:** Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Not content with six models for the 300 (RWD, Touring RWD, Touring AWD, 300C RWD, 300C AWD, and 300C SRT8), Chrysler introduces the 300 Long Wheelbase. Adding six inches to the 120-inch wheelbase, the 300 LW comes in two configurations: Touring RWD and 300C RWD. The 300C gets a Luxury Group II package.

AVOID: The base V-6. The price is tempting until you realize most safety features are options and there are only 190 horses for a 3700-pound sedan.

SUM UP: STILL THE QUINTESSENTIAL AMERICAN SEDAN. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.7L/190-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINES	3.5L/250-hp SOHC V-6, 5.7L/340-hp OHV V-8, 6.1L/425-hp OHV V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	4A, 5A
0-60 MPH	5.1-10.5 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	14-21/20-28 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Stab: 0; Trac: 0; Airbags: 2	

**Chrysler Crossfire**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$34,800-\$40,140 **BODY TYPE:** Hatch, conv

WHAT'S NEW: Did anyone notice there were no Crossfires for 2006? If not, they should have, as this is a well-packaged coupe and roadster. The latter boasts more torque (229 pound-feet) than the base-model Boxster and Z4. The 2007s have a monochromatic look for a sleeker appearance. On the inside is new standard safety equipment.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: Roadster with the supercharged V-6. Think of it as a slightly contented down and more affordable version of the Mercedes SLK.

SUM UP: HIGH STYLE. BUT NO ONE'S LOOKING. ★★

BASE ENGINE	3.2L/215-hp SOHC V-6
OPT ENGINE	3.2L/330-hp SOHC s-chgd V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 5A
0-60 MPH	4.9-6.9 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	17-21/24-28 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 4	

**Chrysler PT Cruiser**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$15,200-\$29,700 **BODY TYPE:** Hatch, conv

WHAT'S NEW: More female than male buyers might explain the new colors for the 2007 hatchback and convertible: Pastel Yellow, Tangerine Pearl, and Opal Pearl. Chrysler adds remote keyless entry on the base model and a console flood lamp across the range. Questions of palette taste aside, there's no denying the appeal and versatility of the vehicle.

BEST BUY: Ignore the gas mileage, and go for the high-output turbo GT Hatchback; at around \$24k it's still a bargain.

SUM UP: ALMOST OLD ENOUGH TO BE A REAL CLASSIC. ★★

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/150-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	2.4L/180-230-hp DOHC turbo I-4
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	7.2-8.8 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	19-22/26-29 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 3	

**Chrysler Sebring**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$20,500-\$26,700 **BODY TYPE:** Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Inside and out, the all-new Sebring gets a much-needed redesign, bringing it into the 21st century. In its quest for younger buyers, Chrysler has filled the midsize sedan with a plethora of electronics. Most notable is the harman/kardon information, entertainment, and safety/nav/audio system, and a heated/cooled cupholder.

AVOID: The underpowered 2.4-liter I-4 and opt for the new-to-the-model 235-horse 3.5-liter V-6 with the six-speed gearbox.

SUM UP: WILL PROVE IF 300C WAS A FLUKE. (NOT RATED)

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/172-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINES	2.7L/190-hp DOHC V-6, 3.5L/235-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	4A, 6A
0-60 MPH	7.3-8.9 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	19-23/28-31 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 6	



Dodge Caliber

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$13,985-\$21,500 BODY TYPE: Hatch

WHAT'S NEW: Much-needed replacement for the outgoing Neon, the Caliber combines entry-level pricing with a good mix of engines, drivetrains, and trannies, along with a versatile interior with an array of standard equipment. However, the all-new SRT4, with its 300-horse 2.4 turbo and race-car features and styling cues, will garner the most attention, exciting tuner-heads everywhere.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: SRT4, what else? 300-horse four-door hatch for \$21K.

SUM UP: LOOKS GREAT. IF ONLY IT DROVE THE SAME. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	1.8L/148-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINES	2.0L/158-hp DOHC I-4, 2.4L/172-hp DOHC I-4, 2.4L/300-hp DOHC turbo I-4
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6M, CVT
0-60 MPH	5.9-10.1 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	20-28/25-32 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 4



Dodge Charger

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$23,021-\$36,020 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: It may be a reincarnated musclecar, but it has the amenities and handling of a performance-oriented family car. Two models join the Charger clan: the SXT and R/T with AWD. New options include DVD-based nav, Sirius Radio, and a decklid spoiler. Need more? Try the SRT8 with a 6.1-liter Hemi, which gives more of everything.

BEST BUY: The 340-horse V-8 R/T RWD; you get a Hemi and a boatload of extras as standard for about \$30K.

SUM UP: MUSCLE GETS BRAINS AND LOOKS. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.5L/250-hp SOHC V-6
OPT ENGINES	5.7L/340-hp OHV V-8, 6.1L/425-hp OHV V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD/AWD
TRANSMISSION	5A
0-60 MPH	5.0-7.6 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	14-21/20-28 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 2



Dodge Magnum

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$23,310-\$38,066 BODY TYPE: Wagon

WHAT'S NEW: If only the inside looked as good as the outside, which might explain the new sunscreen privacy glass now standard on all Magnum models. Four engines—from the anemic 190-horse V-6 to the potent 425-horse V-8 Hemi in the SRT8—two drivetrains and optional packaging allow for multiple combinations to suit nearly everyone's needs.

AVOID: The base Magnum with the wimpy 190-horse V-6. It's not enough power to move this hefty wagon with anything close to style and speed.

SUM UP: MAGNUM MAKES WAGONS COOL AGAIN. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.7L/190-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINES	3.5L/250-hp SOHC V-6, 5.7L/340-hp OHV V-8, 6.1L/425-hp OHV V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	4A, 5A
0-60 MPH	5.1-8.1 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	14-21/20-28 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 2



Dodge Viper SRT10

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$82,800-\$84,000 BODY TYPE: Coupe, conv

WHAT'S NEW: Not much, really. The Viper is a carryover from 2006, so technically there isn't a 2007 model. However, Dodge offers new exterior and interior colors, small bumps in power and torque (500 to 510 and 525 to 535, respectively), and a choice of three wheel designs/sizes. Look for greater changes with the 2008 model year.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: The coupe. You still get 0-to-60 times of under four seconds and a stiffer chassis for crisper handling.

SUM UP: Z06 HAS IT BEAT, BUT IT'S STILL STUPID FAST. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	8.3L/510-hp OHV V-10
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	6M
0-60 MPH	3.9-4.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	12/20 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 2



Ferrari 599 GTB

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$250,000-\$260,000 BODY TYPE: Coupe

WHAT'S NEW: GTBs have always been among the most desirable Ferraris, and the newest Gran Turismo Berlinetta is no exception. New 6.0-liter V-12 is mounted well back, and gearbox is behind the driver for a lower center of gravity and better handling. It comes complete with traction control and other mod cons to help keep those fabulous wheels on the road.

COOL FACT: Surprise! The 599 GTB adopts a derivation of the impressive Magnetic Selective Ride Control found in Cadillacs and the Corvette.

SUM UP: STELLAR. FABULOUS. AND THAT'S NO HYPE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	6.0L/612-hp DOHC V-12
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	6M, 6-sp auto-clutch man
0-62 MPH	3.7 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	9/15 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/unlimited miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 4



Ferrari 612 Scaglietti

BASE PRICE: \$267,000 BODY TYPE: Coupe

WHAT'S NEW: Ferrari's "family car" continues unchanged for its second year. It's a 2+2 coupe with a well-appointed interior that includes plenty of luxurious features. The all-aluminum space-frame structure helps keep the weight of this large car down so maximum performance can be obtained from the V-12 engine and paddle-shift manual transmission.

COOL FACT: Scaglietti designed and built racing Ferraris in the 1960s and mastered the art of forming aluminum bodies.

SUM UP: A FERRARI FOR FOUR. AND IT WORKS. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	5.7L/533-hp DOHC V-12
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	6-sp auto-clutch man
0-60 MPH	4.6 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	10/17 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/unlimited miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 2

(new car buyer's guide)



Ferrari F430

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$170,000-\$205,000 BODY TYPE: Coupe, conv

WHAT'S NEW: Coupe or Spider, manual or auto clutch? It doesn't matter. Unchanged in its second year on the market, the 430 continues to visibly display its gorgeous V-8 through a glass cover behind the cockpit. The optional paddle-shifted automatic manual transmission includes a manettino control on the steering wheel to adjust shifting modes.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: Choose the coupe for best looks and best handling, the convertible for looking best.

SUM UP: SCALPEL-SHARP PRECISION DRIVING TOOL. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	4.3L/483-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Mid-engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6-sp auto-clutch man
0-60 MPH	3.8-4.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	12-13/17 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/unlimited miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 2



Ford Crown Victoria

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$25,310-\$28,310 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Simplification seems the theme for 2007 as evidenced by the streamlining of trim levels and packages. The Crown Victoria has only two trim levels, Standard and LX, two packages for the LX, and a small list of stand-alone options. The Standard sports the 224-horse V-8; the LX has the engine with a 15-horse bump courtesy of a free-flowing dual exhaust.

AVOID: The Standard model. The sedan is dull enough without limiting the list of standard features and horsepower.

SUM UP: COPS LOVE 'EM. SOMEONE HAS TO... ★★

BASE ENGINE	4.6L/224-hp SOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	4.6L/239-hp SOHC V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	4A
0-60 MPH	7.0-7.4 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	17/25 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 2



Ford Five Hundred

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$23,420-\$28,845 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: The lineup has been simplified with the Five Hundred as well; down to two, SEL and Limited both available with either front- or all-wheel drive. A six-speed auto gearbox is now standard on all FWDs, and AWDs are equipped with the CVT. Interior convenience packages for each trim level also are new for 2007. Spacious, well appointed yet slow.

COOL FACT: Chrome is back. The Five Hundred offers a package with 18.0-inch chrome-clad wheels and a chrome mesh grille.

SUM UP: A GOOD CAR LOOKING FOR A GREAT ENGINE. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.0L/203-hp V-6 DOHC
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6A, CVT
0-60 MPH	8.1 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	19-21/26-29 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 2



Ford Focus

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$13,995-\$18,065 BODY TYPE: Sedan, hatch, wagon

WHAT'S NEW: The Focus is offered in so many iterations it's a task to keep them straight: S, ST, SE, and SES trims, wagon, sedan, and hatch. The packages and options are just as plentiful. There's versatility and then there's overkill. A bit long in the tooth, the Focus has faded into the background of its better equipped and styled competitors.

AVOID: Most of them. A refreshed and refocused (ahem) model is due in 2008, giving Ford's small car a much-needed update.

SUM UP: WAS CLASS LEADING. LAST CENTURY. ★★

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/136-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	2.3L/151-hp DOHC I-4
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	8.5-8.9 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	22-26/31-34 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 2



Ford Fusion

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$17,800-\$22,400 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Even though it was new in 2006, the 2007 Fusion has several new enhancements and features. Front-seat side airbags and side-curtain airbags are standard on all models; an AWD system has been added as an option for the V-6 models; and Sirius Satellite Radio is available across the line. Look for a Fusion Hybrid in 2008.

BEST BUY: Fusion SEL, powered by the 221-horse V-6 with the six-speed auto gearbox, is comparably equipped to higher-priced sedans.

SUM UP: CLASSY LOOKS. NEEDS THE POWER TO MATCH. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.3L/160-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	3.0L/221-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6A
0-60 MPH	7.5-8.5 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	21-24/29-32 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6



Ford Mustang

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$19,995-\$46,500 BODY TYPE: Coupe, conv

WHAT'S NEW: Not a lot of changes for Ford's recently retro-designed icon. GT Premium model gets a new California Special package, featuring unique front and rear fascias and GT stripes. Comfort package (heated front seats, six-way passenger seat, rearview mirror with compass) also is offered for V-6s and GTs; the Deluxe/Premium packages model specific.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: Shelby GT500. Real horsepower under the hood, real manners on the road, and real cool looks.

SUM UP: STILL WONDERFUL 42½ YEARS ON. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	4.0L/210-hp SOHC V-6
OPT ENGINES	4.6L/300-325-hp SOHC V-8, 5.4L/500-hp DOHC s-chg'd V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 5A
0-60 MPH	4.5-7.6 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	15-19/20-25 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: S; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 2



Honda Accord

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$18,700-\$33,700 BODY TYPE: Sedan, coupe

WHAT'S NEW: Honda's best-selling vehicle line awaits a full redo for 2008 by adding a new high-value Special Edition V-6 four-door to otherwise carryover coupe, sedan, and Hybrid models. The latest Accord SE entry adds stability control, 17-inch alloys, rear disc brakes, steering-wheel audio controls, a CD changer, and an alarm system to the basic LX sedan mix.

BEST BUY: The well-turned-out SE V-6 sedan makes a cost-effective alternative to a topline EX.

SUM UP: SLIGHTLY VETERAN, STILL A SOLID CHOICE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/166-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINES	3.0L/244-hp SOHC V-6, 3.0L V-6 + elec motor/253-hp
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6M, 5A
0-60 MPH	6.5-8.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	20-26/29-34 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 6



Honda Civic

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$15,300-\$24,500 BODY TYPE: Sedan, coupe

WHAT'S NEW: Coming off of its 2006 redesign, the wide-ranging lineup of our Car of the Year winner gets even broader, adding a new Si-spec Sedan that offers the same 197-horse i-VTEC engine, six-speed manual gearbox, limited-slip diff, and 215/45R17 performance tires as on the Si coupe. On the green front, the Civic Hybrid and the CNG-powered GX bowed as a 2006½ and return unchanged.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: No question here. Coupe or Sedan, just say "Si."

SUM UP: LOTS OF CHOICES, ALL GOOD. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	1.8L/140-hp SOHC I-4
OPT ENGINES	2.0L/197-hp SOHC I-4, 1.3L I-4 + elec motor/110-hp, 1.8L/113-hp SOHC CNG I-4
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6M, 5A, CVT
0-60 MPH	6.9-9.0 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	23-49/32-51 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6



Honda Fit

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$14,400-\$15,720 BODY TYPE: Hatch

WHAT'S NEW: Hoping to find a perfect Fit for U.S. buyers, Honda returns to the subcompact arena with a five-door/five-place hatch that offers sprightly performance, lots of flexible interior space, ABS, and six standard airbags. Moving up from base to Sport adds cruise control, an upgraded sound system, shifter paddles for the automatic, and bigger wheels/tires.

COOL FACT: In addition to a 60/40 fold-flat rear seat, the Fit's front seatbacks fully recline to create an extended bedlike "relaxing space."

SUM UP: GOOD THINGS DO COME IN SMALL PACKAGES. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	1.5L/109-hp SOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 5A
0-60 MPH	11.9-12.6 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	31-33/37-38 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6



Honda S2000

BASE PRICE: \$35,000 BODY TYPE: Convertible

WHAT'S NEW: Having gained standard stability control and numerous interior upgrades last year, the sole 2007 change for Honda's two-place adrenaline generator is the addition of high-profile Imola Orange to its exterior palette. With a high-winding VTEC four, slick-shifting six-speed manual, and brilliant handling, the not-for-poseurs S2000 remains an inspired formula for pure fun.

COOL FACT: S2000's free-revving 2.2-liter four redlines at 8000 rpm.

SUM UP: ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREAT SPORTS CARS. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.2L/237-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	6M
0-60 MPH	5.8 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	20/25 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 2



Hyundai Accent

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$10,995-\$14,495 BODY TYPE: Sedan, hatch

WHAT'S NEW: For 2007, Hyundai expands its Accent line by adding GS and SE three-door-hatch variants to the existing GLS sedan. Like the four-door, the new hatch has best-in-class interior space, and even the entry-level GS offers impressive features for the money. While the GLS gains standard A/C, four-wheel disc brakes with ABS are now options.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: Topline SE hatch with sport suspension, standard ABS, 205/45VR16 tires on alloy rims, optional Sun and Sound Package.

SUM UP: CHEAP, BUT NOT A PENALTY BOX. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	1.6L/110-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	10.5-11.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	28-32/35-36 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	5 yrs/60,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6



Hyundai Azera

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$25,500-\$27,500 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Hyundai's full-size, full-featured four-door enters its sophomore year with minor functional upgrades for both SE and Limited, including a tire-pressure monitor and turn-signal indicators in new sideview mirrors. Impressively built and outfitted, dynamically engaging and priced to please, this sedan takes Hyundai to an entirely new plateau.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: Limited adds leather, heated seats, and bigger wheels to the SE's punchy V-6, traction/stability controls, and eight airbags.

SUM UP: THE RIGHT STUFF AT A RIGHTEOUS PRICE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.8L/263-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSION	5A
0-60 MPH	6.5 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	20/28 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	5 yrs/60,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 8

(new car buyer's guide)

**Hyundai Elantra**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$14,500-\$16,500 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Completely redesigned, the 2007 Elantra becomes a midsize sedan with more total interior volume than an Acura TL plus equipment upgrades across all three trim lines. A far stouter unit body helps sharpen handling, and even the slightly Spartan GLS boasts a peppy 2.0-liter engine, four-wheel discs with ABS, and six standard airbags.

BEST BUY: The midrange SE's bounty of standards plus an upgraded wheel/tire package make it the smart choice.

SUM UP: A BIG STEP UP IN STYLE AND SUBSTANCE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/132-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	8.5-9.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	28/36 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	5 yrs/60,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6

**Hyundai Sonata**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$17,795-\$23,595 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: All-new in 2006, the full-size Sonata gets a host of detail changes and moves from four to three—GLS, SE, and Limited—trims. Bigger inside and better equipped for the price than comparable Accord/Camry competitors, the Sonata's key adds include a tire-pressure monitor and XM Satellite Radio, both of which become standard in late fall.

COOL FACT: Sonata backs comprehensive array of standard safety systems with five-star ratings from NHTSA in front- and side-impact protection.

SUM UP: ARE YOU PAYING ATTENTION, TOYOTA, HONDA? ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/162-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	3.3L/235-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A, 5A
0-60 MPH	7.1-8.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	20-24/30-34 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	5 yrs/60,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6

**Hyundai Tiburon**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$17,000-\$22,500 BODY TYPE: Coupe

WHAT'S NEW: Freshened styling, improved lumbar support, and a tire-pressure monitor enhance a reshuffled lineup, which now runs GS, GT, GT Limited, and SE. While the top three all have a modestly potent V-6 and 17-inch wheel/tire packages, only the newly elevated SE boasts a Euro suspension, stability/traction control, and cross-drilled rotors on its ABS.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: An astute handler in any trim, a host of long-overdue functional upgrades make the revamped SE an easy call here.

SUM UP: AGING, BUT ONLY SEMIGRACEFULLY. ★★

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/138-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	2.7L/172-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 4A, 5A
0-60 MPH	8.0-9.0 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-24/26-30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	5 yrs/60,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 4

**Infiniti G35**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$32,000-\$34,500 BODY TYPE: Sedan, coupe

WHAT'S NEW: A split season for the sporty G Series: The RWD/AWD sedan enters its second generation, gaining crisper styling cues, a more powerful and heavily revised version of the 3.5-liter VQ V-6, redesigned suspension, and a new interior treatment while the RWD coupe largely carries over until spring, when it gets a similar update and launches as an early 2008.

COOL FACT: The design of the G35 sedan's aluminum interior trim mimics the Washi pattern of traditional Japanese paper.

SUM UP: A BMW 3 SERIES WITH A FAR-EAST FLAIR. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.5L/275-293-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 5A
0-60 MPH	5.6-6.8 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	17-19/24-26 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/60,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6

**Infiniti M35/45**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$42,000-\$51,500 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: M Squad enters the new year with minor upgrades to the V-6 and V-8 sedans, including corner-following HID headlamps for the M45 (optional on M35s), climate-controlled front seats on the M45/M35x (M35 optional), and a reshuffling of content in its key Journey, Technology, and Advanced Technology Packages.

BEST BUY: Nicely balanced, superbly appointed, and a solid all-around performer, the M35 is the definitive value driver in this family.

SUM UP: SPORTY SPIRIT WITH A LUXURY STREAK. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.5L/280-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINE	4.5L/335-hp DOHC V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD/AWD
TRANSMISSION	5A
0-60 MPH	5.4-6.7 (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	17-18/23-35 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/60,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6

**Jaguar S-Type**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$46,500-\$66,500 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Upgraded standards, including more supple leather and new burled walnut trims, enhance V-6, V-8, and supercharged R versions. Premium Package goods are now part of S-Type 3.0 kit, while the 4.2 picks up a navigation system and Bluetooth technology. The new S-Type R SV8 gets all that plus adaptive cruise control and a power rear sunblind.

AVOID: Barring an outrageous deal on an S-Type 4.2, wait for the all-new, more high-styled/high-tech replacement due for 2008.

SUM UP: ADDING MORE MAKEUP CAN'T HIDE AGE LINES. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.0L/235-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINES	4.2L/300-hp DOHC V-8, 4.2L/400-hp DOHC s-chg'd V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	6A
0-60 MPH	5.3-7.5 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	17-19/23-28 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Jaguar XJ-Series

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$64,250-\$116,000 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: All XJs now boast Bluetooth technology and a tire-pressure monitor. The Vanden Plas nets front park assist while the XJ8/XJ8 L add heated 16-way front seats and softer, XJR-style leather. Fitted with the 400-horse supercharged V-8 from the XJR/Super V8, the limited-edition Super V8 Portfolio returns as the most luxurious Jag ever.

BEST BUY: Quick, comfortable, capable, a LWB Super V8 is plenty luxu in its own right—and costs \$25K less than the over-the-top Portfolio.

SUM UP: OLD-SCHOOL LOOKS, NEW-AGE DRIVE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	4.2L/300-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	4.2L/400-hp s-charg'd DOHC V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	6A
0-60 MPH	5.5-6.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	17-18/24-27 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Jaguar XK-Series

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$75,500-\$93,000 BODY TYPE: Coupe, conv

WHAT'S NEW: Get beyond its stunning appearance, and you'll find the all-new, aluminum-intensive XK packs performance—thanks to a 300-horse V-8 and six-speed manumatic—plus a full range of luxury features like an Alpine sound system and DVD-based navigation. Supercharged R versions of the coupe and convertible make close to 400 horses.

COOL FACT: The XK is the first Jag to offer a sequential automatic transmission and steering-wheel-mounted paddle-shift levers.

SUM UP: READY TO KICK SOME ASTON MARTIN. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	4.2L/300-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	4.2L/400-hp DOHC s-chg'd V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	6A
0-60 MPH	5.9 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-19/26-28 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 4



Jaguar X-Type

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$33,500-\$37,500 BODY TYPE: Sedan, wagon

WHAT'S NEW: Hoping to pump some life into its moribund entry-level line, Jag adds stability control to all X-Types, a moonroof, a split/folding rear seat to the sedan and rear park assist to the wagon. New Luxury Package replaces former VDP and Premium Packages, Sport Package disappears, and Premium Sound Package is stand-alone sedan option.

COOL FACT: Subaru Impreza WRX was used as one of the benchmarks for tuning the handling of the first ever AWD Jaguar.

SUM UP: STILL PRETTY, STILL PRETTY IRRELEVANT. ★★

BASE ENGINE	3.0L/227-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, AWD
TRANSMISSION	5A
0-60 MPH	7.1-7.3 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	17-18/23-27 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 7



Jeep Compass

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$15,985-\$21,740 BODY TYPE: Wagon

WHAT'S NEW: Sharing a platform with the Dodge Caliber hatch, the new Compass is one of two Jeep crossovers to reach showrooms in 2007. More contemporary and carlike than any other Jeep, it offers good fuel economy for its class, a full complement of standard safety features, and lots of optional amenities. All trim lines can be fitted with either FWD or AWD.

BEST BUY: "E" package adds power foldaway mirrors, driver one-touch power window, reclining rear seats, and a 115-volt auxiliary power outlet.

SUM UP: JEEP MAY BE ON TO SOMETHING. THEN AGAIN... ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/172-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/4WD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, CVT
0-60 MPH	8.5-10.1 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	23-25/26-29 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Stab: S; Trac: S; Airbags: 4



Kia Amanti

BASE PRICE: \$28,700 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Introduced in 2004, the Amanti continues to mark Kia's advancement into the world of luxury-appointed cars. Its flagship sedan features price-leading appointments, such as dual-zone climate controls, one-touch up-and-down power windows, and a power sunroof. Handling characteristics could be better, but at under \$30K, this is a bargain.

COOL FACT: The Infinity Package adds a 225-watt stereo system with a six-disc in-dash CD player and nine speakers.

SUM UP: SELLS ON PRICE, NOT STYLE. LIKE KIAs USED TO. ★

BASE ENGINE	3.5L/200-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSION	5A
0-60 MPH	8.9 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	17/25 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	5 yrs/60,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 8



Kia Optima

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$16,955-\$21,000 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: All-new Optima introduced as a 2006 1/2, so you'd expect little to change for the 2007 model. Not so, says Kia. The newer version will offer even more value with added standard and optional amenities. The Optima's simple, yet pleasing to the eye, styling cues reinforce the marque's intent to take on the American and Japanese manufacturers.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: Optima EX V-6; decent performance and handling, along with good interior appointments for a mere \$21 grand.

SUM UP: BETTER THAN SONATA? COULD BE... ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/161-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	2.7L/185-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5A, 5M
0-60 MPH	8.2-8.8 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	22-24/30-34 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	5 yrs/60,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 6

(new car buyer's guide)



Kia Rio

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$11,310-\$14,240 BODY TYPE: Sedan, hatch

WHAT'S NEW: All new for 2006, the Rio and Rio5 roll into 2007 basically as is. The entry-level vehicles are low-priced, but remember that you get what you pay for. Surprisingly, all Rios come standard with six airbags, yet four-wheel disc brakes with ABS are optional (you might not need the airbags if you could stop better).

AVOID: The base-model Rio four-door. You can't expect much for \$11K, but this is too bare bones for even the most stingy buyer.

SUM UP: HONEST BUDGET MOTORING. ★★

BASE ENGINE	1.6L/110-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	9.1-9.2 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	29-32/35-38 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	5 yrs/60,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6	



Kia Spectra

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$14,900-\$17,200 BODY TYPE: Sedan, hatch

WHAT'S NEW: In their fourth year on the market, the Spectra and Spectra5 still look current, fitting in with the new Honda Fit and Nissan Versa. And both models (as do all Kias) have the best warranties in their class. They also come fairly well loaded—carpeted floor mats, six-way adjustable driver's seat, and an in-dash CD player.

BEST BUY: Spectra5; even with the optional ABS and moonroof, the five-door hatch comes in under \$18K, and it gets good gas mileage, too.

SUM UP: SPORTY DOESN'T MEAN EXPENSIVE. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/132-138-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	8.8-8.9 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	25/33-34 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	5 yrs/60,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6	



Lamborghini Gallardo

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$178,500-\$197,230 BODY TYPE: Coupe, conv

WHAT'S NEW: This year brought the Gallardo Spyder to Europe as a companion to the high-powered coupe. The U.S. gets it as a 2007. The standard high-end/high-speed necessities are in both coupe and roadster. While the only place to legally experience the Gallardo's top speed of 191 mph in the States is on a track, it's a burden many will be happy to bear.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: Gallardo Spyder with e-gear paddle-shifters because they were originally meant for supercars.

SUM UP: THE BEST LAMBORGHINI YET. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	5.0L/513-hp DOHC V-10
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Mid-engine, AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6-sp auto-clutch man
0-60 MPH	4.0-4.1 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	9-10/16-18 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	2 yrs/24,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 4	



Lamborghini Murciélago

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$293,800-\$350,000 BODY TYPE: Coupe, conv

WHAT'S NEW: The Murciélago will get a new stablemate this year: a compact coupe called the LP640: LP for longitudinale posteriore (the engine's position) and 640 for the horsepower. This makes a total of five supercars from Lamborghini. All three versions of the Bat are brimming with high-dollar appointments worthy of supercar status. Ceramic carbon brakes are optional on all models.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: If a choice must be made, the new LP640.

SUM UP: PROVES TOO MUCH IS NEVER ENOUGH. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	6.2L/572-hp DOHC V-12
OPT ENGINE	6.5L/631-hp DOHC V-12
DRIVETRAIN	Mid-engine, AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, auto-clutch man
0-60 MPH	3.4-3.8 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	9-10/13-15 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	2 yrs/24,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 4	



Lexus ES 350

BASE PRICE: \$33,865 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Gaining scale, power, and sophistication, all-new ES 350 redefines entry-level luxury in typical Lexus fashion. L-Finesse-inspired sheetmetal wraps larger, upgraded interior while a 272-horse V-6 makes it quicker and more fuel efficient than the old ES 330. Primo options include Mark Levinson audio, a panoramic glass roof, and extra-supple leather.

COOL FACT: First Lexus to offer optional HID adaptive lighting that permits both headlamps to "turn" into a corner simultaneously.

SUM UP: NO LONGER JUST A GILDED CAMRY. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.5L/272-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSION	6A
0-60 MPH	6.8 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	21/30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 6	



Lexus GS

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$45,000-\$55,550 (est) BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Lexus was mum on changes to traditional side of GS line, but with IS/ES now fitted with the new 3.5-liter V-6, there's good reason to suspect the GS 300 will follow suit and become a GS 350. Already in dealers is the new GS 450h, a V-6/electric hybrid that's quicker yet more fuel-efficient than the GS 430 and offers an active roll-control option.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: Unless you're desperate to go green, a GS 430 with its adaptive suspension still strikes the best cost/benefit balance.

SUM UP: STYLISH, BUT STILL STERILE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.5L/300-hp DOHC V-6 (est disp/hp)
OPT ENGINES	4.3L/288-hp DOHC V-8, 3.5L/292-hp DOHC V-6 + 180-hp fr & 197 rr elec motors/339-hp comb
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6A, CVT (450h only)
0-60 MPH	5.2-7.0 sec (MT est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-27/25-30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 8	



Lexus IS Series

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$31,000-\$36,500 (est) BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Formal changes due the IS 250 and IS 350 were still embargoed as we went to press, but the sportiest members of the Lexus set will likely get minor cosmetic and performance enhancements as the Gen-II iteration enters its the sophomore season. Strongest enthusiast buzz continues to focus on an upgraded suspension package.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: There's just something fundamentally right about matching up 300-plus horses and sport sedan. Step up to the IS 350.

SUM UP: MOVING EVER CLOSER TO A 3 SERIES. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.5L/204-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINE	3.5L/306-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD, AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6A
0-60 MPH	5.2-8.0 sec (MT est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	20-24/28-32 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Lexus LS Series

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$58,500-\$62,500 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Staking its claim for world's best luxury-sedan honors, all-new LS mixes bold styling, luxurious interior appointments, and crisper handling while adding its first long-wheelbase variant. LS 460 and LS 460L share a new 380-horse V-8 and advanced vehicle dynamics/stability control and a 19-speaker Mark Levinson audio package with rear-seat DVD.

COOL FACT: The new LS Series is the first production car to be fitted with an eight-speed automatic transmission.

SUM UP: PUTS THE NEW S-CLASS ON NOTICE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	4.6L/380-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	8A
0-60 MPH	5.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	20/27 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 8



Lexus LS 600h L

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$75,000-\$85,000 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: The LS 600h L takes Lexus to a new ultralux plateau. Sharing basic platform with LS 460L, this new flagship features the world's first V-8 hybrid drivetrain—a 430-plus-horse package that promises V-12 performance and V-6 economy—plus a dual-stage CVT transmission, AWD, adjustable suspension, and stunning interior appointments.

COOL FACT: The LS 600h L is expected to meet SULEV emissions levels, a feat never before achieved by any vehicle in this category.

SUM UP: LEXUS IS ABOUT TO CHANGE THE WORLD. AGAIN ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	5.0L DOHC V-8 + ff/tr ele/430+ hp
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, AWD
TRANSMISSION	CVT
0-60 MPH	5.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	24/30 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 8



Lexus SC 430

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$66,500-\$68,000 (est) BODY TYPE: Convertible

WHAT'S NEW: Expect to see only detail changes on this primo 2+2 retractable steel-roof drop-top. Although the SC 430's 288-horse V-8 will serve up 60 mph in an invigorating 5.8 seconds, a supple suspension, rich leather upholstery, and standards like a Mark Levinson audio system and voice-activated navigation are more likely to impress the typical buyer.

COOL FACT: High-dollar European yachts provided design inspiration for the look and feel of the SC 430's posh interior.

SUM UP: SMOOTH? YES. STYLISH? NO. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	4.3L/288-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	6A
0-60 MPH	5.8 sec (mfr est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18/25 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 4



Lincoln MKS (concept)

BASE PRICE: TBA BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: While no production or on-sale date has been given, the all-new MKS concept shows what Lincoln is capable of producing. The full-size luxury sedan has full complement of high-end appointments, such as full-grain leather seats that adjust 14 ways (heating and cooling included) and a 14-speaker, 500-watt DVD audio—the same as in the new MKZ.

COOL FACT: The Lincoln Mobile Media nav system eliminates the layers of drop-down menus for idiot-proof use.

SUM UP: THE COOLER CAR LINCOLN BADLY NEEDS. (NOT RATED)

BASE ENGINE	4.4L/315-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, AWD
TRANSMISSION	6A
0-60 MPH	TBA
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	TBA
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6



Lincoln MKZ

BASE PRICE: \$31,560 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: The return of the Zephyr designation was short-lived; one year later the midsize sedan is now the MKZ (yes, it's Mark Z). The new name comes with a freshened face—reworked waterfall grille and front fascia—a significant power upgrade and optional AWD. Sirius Satellite Radio and a spectacular audio system also are available.

COOL FACT: The MKZ offers the industry's first THX II Certified audio system with 14 speakers providing the patented surround sound.

SUM UP: MKZ = ZEPHYR – CHARISMA. GO FIGURE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.5L/263-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSION	6A
0-60 MPH	7.0 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	20/28 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6

(new car buyer's guide)

**Lincoln Town Car**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$42,900-\$51,370 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Minor changes for 2007. Most significant are the new power tools: adjustable pedals, programmable keyless entry, and dual-zone electronic climate controls. A power open and close trunk is standard on Signature Limited and L lines. Speaking of which, the lines are Signature, Signature Limited, Designer, and Signature L.

COOL FACT: The first car in history to achieve five-star government safety ratings in five categories four years in a row.

SUM UP: THE LAST OF ITS TYPE. THANKFULLY. ★

BASE ENGINE	4.6L/239-hp SOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	4A
0-60 MPH	7.4-7.5 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	17/25 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 4

**Lotus Elise**

BASE PRICE: \$44,790 BODY TYPE: Convertible

WHAT'S NEW: With no major changes for 2007, the Elise stays in place as a lightweight (a mere 1984 pounds) track car that happens to be street-legal. The Elise has an optional limited-slip differential and traction-control system. From an amenities standpoint, consider the Elise the Philip Glass of roadsters—minimalism is king.

COOL FACT: As appropriate for a potential track toy, the A/C system may be omitted at purchase to save weight.

SUM UP: ONE FOR THE TOY BOX. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	1.8L/190-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Mid-engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	6M
0-60 MPH	4.7-4.9 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	22/29 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 2

**Lotus Exige**

BASE PRICE: \$52,950 BODY TYPE: Coupe

WHAT'S NEW: As with the Elise, the Exige continues into 2007 as a reasonably priced racetrack-destined coupe. Weighing a tad more than the roadster (2015 pounds), the Exige is equally minimal on amenities. A Touring pack offers leather seating, an upgraded stereo, power windows, carpeted floors, and additional sound-deadening material.

COOL FACT: The Exige has even better track potential than the Elise, thanks to body modifications that improve the vehicle's downforce.

SUM UP: GET YOUR SCCA LICENSE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	1.8L/190-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Mid-engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	6M
0-60 MPH	4.9 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	22/29 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 2

**Maserati Coupe/Spyder**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$80,000-\$105,000 BODY TYPE: Coupe, conv

WHAT'S NEW: There are no changes to the three models in Maserati's "entry-level" lineup as Maserati readies an all-new range for 2008. Thanks to a longer wheelbase, there's more space for rear-seat passengers than you'll find in many other 2+2 coupes. Maserati continues to be an exotic and rare alternative to a Porsche 911, Jaguar, and Aston Martin.

BEST BUY: The coupe. Not only is it fast, Italian, and rare, but you can actually put your kids in the back seat.

SUM UP: POOR MAN'S FERRARI. OR RICH MAN'S VETTE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	4.2L/385-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	4.2L/395-hp DOHC V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6-sp auto-clutch man
0-60 MPH	4.7-5.2 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	12-13/18-19 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 4

**Maserati Quattroporte**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$105,000-\$117,000 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Two new models join the two-year-old four-door luxury-sedan lineup. The Sport GT includes 20-inch wheels; Executive GT focuses on an even more finely appointed interior with soft leather and other lux touches. With its Ferrari-based engine and rear-mounted transaxle for better weight distribution, this Maserati is more sports car than sedan.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: It's a real performance sedan, an ideal alternative to a topline Mercedes-Benz or Jaguar.

SUM UP: EXOTIC SEDAN WITH REAL CHARISMA. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	4.2L/395-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	6-sp auto-clutch man
0-60 MPH	5.3 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	12/18 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	5 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6

**Maybach**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$335,250-\$385,250 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Still one of the most exclusive cars on the road, the newest member of the family is the 57S. The S stands for "special": a sportier look, a more powerful AMG-built twin-turbo V-12, and lowered suspension. A new Business Package that includes a wireless color printer and wireless Internet access is available for all three models.

COOL FACT: It takes five months to handcraft each Maybach to meet every buyer's individual requests.

SUM UP: THE ANSWER TO A QUESTION NO ONE ASKED. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	5.5L/543-hp DOHC twin-turbo V-12
OPT ENGINE	5.5L/604-hp DOHC twin-turbo V-12
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	5A
0-60 MPH	4.9-5.4 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	11-12/16-17 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/unlimited miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 10



Mazda3

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$14,300-\$24,000 BODY TYPE: Sedan, hatch

WHAT'S NEW: Minor freshening includes new trim and taillights. Offered in eight different configurations as either a four-door sedan or five-door hatchback. A new Dynamic Stability Control system and Traction Control are available for the Touring and Grand Touring models. Details are scarce, but look for the 250-horse MazdaSpeed3 later in the year.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: The Mazda3 shares the same platform as the Volvo 40-series, which gives it a leg up over plain-Jane compacts.

SUM UP: FUN TO DRIVE AND GOOD LOOKING. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/144-148-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINES	2.3L/151-156-hp DOHC I-4, 2.3L/250-hp DOHC turbo I-4 (est)
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6M, 4A, 5A
0-60 MPH	7.5-8.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	22-28/29-35 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 2



Mazda5

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$18,000-\$19,500 BODY TYPE: Wagon

WHAT'S NEW: Mazda describes its Mazda5 as a multiactivity vehicle, yet despite its minivan-ish versatility, it handles like a stretched Mazda3 on which it's based. The only change for 2007 is the addition of a Grand Touring Package with leather-trimmed seats, black head- and taillight bezels, and Xenon/High-Intensity Discharge headlights.

COOL FACT: Seating for six in three rows, 45 storage compartments, sliding doors. It all adds up to efficient transportation.

SUM UP: A MINIVAN YOU CAN ENJOY DRIVING. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.3L/157-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	8.6-9.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	21-22/26-27 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6



Mazda6

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$19,700-\$30,500 BODY TYPE: Sedan, hatch, wagon

WHAT'S NEW: After last year's freshening, there are no significant changes in 2007 other than adding ABS, traction control, and side airbags with side curtain airbags as standard equipment on all models. The MazdaSpeed6 is one of the best-performing cars in the segment thanks to its 274-horse turbo engine and Active Torque Split AWD system.

COOL FACT: Mazda6 offers the most extensive lineup of body styles—sedan, hatch, and wagon—in the midsize segment.

SUM UP: THE SPORTY MASS-MARKET COMPACT. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.3L/153-160-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINES	3.0L/215-hp DOHC V-6, 2.3L/274-hp DOHC turbo I-4
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6M, 5A
0-60 MPH	5.8-7.5 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	19-24/25-32 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6



Mazda MX-5

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$21,000-\$27,500 BODY TYPE: Convertible

WHAT'S NEW: The big news is the availability of a power retractable hardtop later in the year. This will appeal mainly to those looking for more security as the current softtop is easier to raise and lower than in most roadsters. Other than this significant upgrade, there are no other changes for the second year of the third-generation Miata.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: The six-speed manual. It takes the original winning formula to the next level.

SUM UP: LOTS OF SMILES PER MILE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/166-170-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6M, 6A
0-60 MPH	6.6-8.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	23-25/30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: N; Stab: N; Airbags: 4



Mazda RX-8

BASE PRICE: \$27,000 BODY TYPE: Coupe

WHAT'S NEW: This unique four-seater sports car, with two rear-hinged back doors, is unchanged for 2007. For over 40 years, Mazda has continued developing the rotary engine, and last year it was further refined to make more horsepower without hurting fuel economy. It produces 238 horses with a manual transmission and 212 with the new six-speed automatic.

COOL FACT: The only manufacturer to have persisted with Felix Wankel's design, Mazda has been building rotary engine cars since 1967.

SUM UP: PART SEDAN, ALL SPORTS CAR. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	1.3L/212-238-hp twin-rotor Wankel
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6A
0-60 MPH	5.8-6.3 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18/24-25 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Mercedes-Benz C-Class

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$30,000-\$41,000 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: C230 becomes flex-fuel vehicle using E85 ethanol as well as gasoline. C280 and C350 Sports get AMG rear spoiler, dual-tip exhaust, bird's-eye maple interior trim. C280 Luxury gets standard power front seats and memory steering column. Luxury and Sport models roll on new wheel designs. C55 AMG discontinues as Mercedes preps all-new C-Class for 2008.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: C350 Sport's torque-rich six, six-speed manual, and performance-tuned suspension are counterthrust against BMW's 330i.

SUM UP: AGING WELL AND STILL APPEALING. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.5L/201-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINES	3.0L/228-hp DOHC V-6, 3.5L/268-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5A, 6M, 7A
0-60 MPH	6.1-8.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	19-21/24-30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6

(new car buyer's guide)

**Mercedes-Benz CL-Class**BASE PRICE RANGE: **\$97,000-\$131,000** BODY TYPE: **Coupe**

WHAT'S NEW: Redesigned following the styling language established by the new S-Class, Mercedes's big coupe will at first be powered by the 5.5-liter V-8 and twin-turbo V-12 from the flagship sedan. No word yet on an AMG version, but expect a spectacular follow-up to the CLS65 AMG *übercoupe*. It will be very fast.

COOL FACT: Tapered C-pillar pays subtle homage to the 1956 220SE coupe as well as just superceded model.

SUM UP: WORLD-CLASS SELF-INDULGENCE. (NOT RATED)

BASE ENGINE	5.5L/382-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	5.5L/510-hp SOHC twin-turbo V-12
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	7A, 5A
0-60 MPH	4.6-6.1 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	12-16/19-24 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 8

**Mercedes-Benz CLK-Class**BASE PRICE RANGE: **\$47,000-\$85,000** BODY TYPE: **Coupe, conv**

WHAT'S NEW: AMG's monster 6.2-liter V-8 gets wedged into the CLK63 AMG Cabriolet (AMG coupe is reserved for foreign markets) that replaces the CLK55 Cab. Output jumps from 362 horses to a hurricane-force 475. The CLK550 succeeds the CLK500, powered by the 382-horse V-8 first in the S-Class, and an all-new Sports Appearance Package tarts up the CLK350.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: The 5.5-liter V-8 is so strong and smooth it's hard to justify the extra money for the scalp-lifting AMG.

SUM UP: THE BLUE-CHIP COUPE/CONVERTIBLE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.5L/268-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINES	5.5L/382-hp DOHC V-8, 6.2L/475-hp DOHC V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	7A
0-60 MPH	4.6-6.4 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	16-19/22-28 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6

**Mercedes-Benz CLS-Class**BASE PRICE RANGE: **\$66,000-\$88,000** (est) BODY TYPE: **Sedan**

WHAT'S NEW: Beauty is magnified by brawn with introduction of 5.5- and 6.2-liter V-8s in CLS550 and CLS63 AMG that replace CLS500 and CLS55 AMG. PRE-SAFE safety system, six-disc CD changer, and harman/kardon sound system are now standard. A CLS600 with twin-turbo V-12 may arrive late in the year; Mercedes is toying with the idea of a lower-priced CLS350.

COOL FACT: PRE-SAFE senses the car's braking and handling behaviors and reacts in two stages to prepare occupants for optimum protection.

SUM UP: SUBLIME, SEXY, SWIFT, AND SAFE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	5.5L/382-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	6.2L/507-hp DOHC V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	7A
0-60 MPH	4.5-5.5 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	14-16/20-24 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6

**Mercedes-Benz E-Class**BASE PRICE RANGE: **\$51,000-\$84,000** BODY TYPE: **Sedan, wagon**

WHAT'S NEW: Gets meatier with more powerful E550 sedan, E63 sedan and wagon, and ultraclean E320 Bluetec turbodiesel, which can be sold nationwide. Revisions to steering and front suspension sharpen dynamics, a mild face-lift updates the look, and proactive PRE-SAFE increases passenger security. Sunroof and six-disc CD changer are standard.

COOL FACT: Bluetec eventually will include a system with an aqueous urea solution that transforms nitrogen oxide into harmless base elements.

SUM UP: STILL THE CAR THEY TRY TO COPY. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.5L/268-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINES	3.0L/211-hp DOHC turbodiesel V-6, 5.5L/382-hp DOHC V-8, 6.2L/507-hp DOHC V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5A, 7A
0-60 MPH	4.3-6.5 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	15-27/21-37 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6

**Mercedes-Benz S-Class**BASE PRICE RANGE: **\$86,175-\$169,000** BODY TYPE: **Sedan**

WHAT'S NEW: The totally revamped S550, the first of the more agile new S-Class models, is now joined by the V-12-powered S600 and S65 AMG. S65 has an AMG-developed twin-turbo V-12 with an amazing 738 pound-feet of torque that puts the S into supercar league. Yet it can still carry four people in comfort and even those in the back can recline in luxury.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: Storming 604-horse S65: A four-door limousine that thinks it's a supercar.

SUM UP: BEST IN CLASS. AGAIN. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	5.5L/382-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINES	5.5L/510-hp SOHC V-12, 6.0L/604-hp SOHC twin-turbo V-12
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	7A, 6A
0-60 MPH	4.5-5.4 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	12-16/19-24 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 8

**Mercedes-Benz SL-Class**BASE PRICE RANGE: **\$95,575-\$186,775** BODY TYPE: **Convertible**

WHAT'S NEW: SL550, SL55 AMG, SL600, and SL65 AMG get more direct steering, a deeper front air dam, new wheel designs, a three-bar grille, clear taillights, and new interior colors. Limited-edition SL550 celebrating the 300SL's 50th anniversary comes in pewter metallic with an exclusive interior and a list of standard equipment usually optional for the SL.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: SL55 AMG Performance Package: compound brakes, special limited-slip, track-calibrated active body control, 186-mph top speed.

SUM UP: SPORTS CAR AND LUXURY GT IN ONE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	5.5L/382-hp DOHC V-8
OPT ENGINES	5.5L/510-hp SOHC s-chg'd V-8, 5.5L/510-hp SOHC twin-turbo V-12, 6.0L/604-hp SOHC twin-turbo V-12
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5A, 7A
0-60 MPH	4.2-5.3 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	12-14/19-24 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Mercedes-Benz SLK-Class

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$44,000-\$63,000 BODY TYPE: **Convertible**

WHAT'S NEW: Not much. The Mercedes-Benz SLK280, SLK350, and SLK55 AMG all continue unchanged except for availability of an enhanced AMG Sport Package and new Appearance Package for the Mercedes SLK280 and SLK350.

BEST BUY: For well under \$50 grand, the SLK280 is a bargain. Its torquey six and six-speed manual pull the hardtop convertible from 0-to-60 mph in 6.1 seconds while delivering good fuel mileage.

SUM UP: NOT A CHICK CAR ANYMORE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.0L/228-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINES	3.5L/268-hp DOHC V-6, 5.4L/355-hp SOHC V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 7A
0-60 MPH	4.9-6.1 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	16-20/22-27 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Mercury Grand Marquis

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$25,580-\$30,235 BODY TYPE: **Sedan**

WHAT'S NEW: A simplified lineup marks the Grand Marquis's entrance into 2007. Only two trim levels are available, GS and LS. The latter has a new Palm Beach edition offering designer touches such as Palm Beach-logo adorned seats. The full-size sedan is still the sales leader in its class; however, Mercury's old warhorse was last updated in 2003, and it's beginning to show.

COOL FACT: A Flex-fuel version is offered in select states.

SUM UP: READY FOR THE RETIREMENT HOME. LIKE ITS BUYERS. ★

BASE ENGINE	4.6L/224-hp SOHC V-8
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	4A
0-60 MPH	7.5 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	17/25 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 2



Mercury Milan

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$18,710-\$23,300 BODY TYPE: **Sedan**

WHAT'S NEW: V-6 AWD and Premier V-6 AWD models are new for 2007. Front-seat side airbags, side-impact air curtains, and ABS have become standard on all models, and traction control is standard on the V-6s. The well-designed and appointed interior also gets a boost with optional DVD-based nav and Sirius Satellite Radio.

AVOID: Any four-cylinder version; they're below the class average in power and speed, but above it in price.

SUM UP: GREAT STYLING, AVERAGE POWER. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.3L/160-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	3.0L/210-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 5A, 6A
0-60 MPH	7.3-8.6 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	21-24/29-32 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6



Mercury Montego

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$24,220-\$29,845 BODY TYPE: **Sedan**

WHAT'S NEW: The two-year-old full-size "performance" sedan doesn't have much new going for it in 2007. As with the Milan, traction control and side airbags and curtains are now standard on all models. New colors, optional 18-inch chrome-clad wheels and available Sirius Satellite Radio are the only other changes. Customers must be happy with it as is, since it received AutoPacific's "Ideal Vehicle Award."

COOL FACT: It's the first Mercury in history to share parts with a Volvo.

SUM UP: GREAT ROOM. AT A PRICE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.0L/203-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6A, CVT
0-60 MPH	7.8-8.1 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	19-21/26-29 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6



Mini Cooper

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$18,000-\$31,870 BODY TYPE: **Hatch, conv**

WHAT'S NEW: The Coopers stay relatively unchanged until 2008 when the joint venture Peugeot/BMW engines replace DaimlerChrysler's. One addition to 2007's lineup is the Cooper S JCW GP, which has a seven-horse bump and a missing back seat. Of limited production, the 2000 promised GPs are already sold out.

BEST BUY: An un-optioned Mini Cooper S with six-speed manual. You can get out the door with a zippy, fun-to-drive coupe for less than \$22K.

SUM UP: STILL THE KING OF SMALL-CAR COOL. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	1.6L/115-hp SOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	1.6L/163-214-hp SOHC s-chg'd I-4
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6M, 6A, CVT
0-60 MPH	6.5-10.2 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	23-28/32-36 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 6



Mitsubishi Eclipse

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$20,294-\$28,864 BODY TYPE: **Coupe, conv**

WHAT'S NEW: Fully redesigned for 2006, the sporty Eclipse coupe gains a droptop running-mate for 2007. Both of these high-profile 2+2 front-drivers are well appointed and offer the choice of I-4 (GS) or more potent V-6 (GT) power. The Spyder's 650-watt Rockford Fosgate sound system is a coupe option, and leather is available for either GT model.

BEST BUY: While trailing the GTs in thrills per mile, the GS Eclipses are the clear winners when it comes to cost-effective fun running.

SUM UP: LOOKS BETTER THAN IT DRIVES. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/162-hp SOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	3.8L/260-hp SOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6M, 4A, 5A
0-60 MPH	5.6-8.5 sec (MT est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-23/27-30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	5 yrs/60,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 4

(new car buyer's guide)**Mitsubishi Galant**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$18,595-\$28,595 (est) **BODY TYPE:** Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Bolder front styling, nicer interior treatments, and mechanical upgrades headed by a five-speed Sportronic manual gearbox on V-6 models. New Ralliart model tops the range (DE, SE, and GTS), boasting distinctive bodywork, a 258-horse engine, special sport suspension, leather, and primo audio system.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: The Ralliart. Hot styling, cool handling, big power, and a 360-watt Rockford Fosgate sound package.

SUM UP: IS IT ENOUGH? IS IT TOO LATE? ★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/160-hp SOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	3.8L/230-258-hp SOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	4A, 5A
0-60 MPH	6.2-9.0 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-23/27-30 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	5 yrs/60,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6

**Mitsubishi Lancer**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$16,000-\$22,000 (est) **BODY TYPE:** Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Dropped for 2007, an all-new Lancer launches in spring as an early 2008. Looking like the Evo Concept X sans big flares and rear wing, the FWD Lancer is bigger and better appointed than before. Expect a new 2.0-liter DOHC four and optional CVT transmission to be included in the initial mix, although the all-new Evo X won't arrive for a year or so.

COOL FACT: Mitsubishi is considering the possibility of offering a sportback/crossover variation on the new Lancer theme.

SUM UP: KEY TO DECIDING MITSU'S U.S. FUTURE. (NOT RATED)

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/150-hp DOHC I-4 (est)
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, CVT
0-60 MPH	8.0-9.0 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	27-29/35-36 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	5 yrs/60,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 4

**Nissan 350Z**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$28,500-\$42,000 **BODY TYPE:** Coupe, conv

WHAT'S NEW: Not due in dealers until January, 350Z changes were still being finalized at press time. But following a major revamp last year, the multitiered coupe/convertible lineup will likely carry forward with some new colors, smart airbags, and "minor performance enhancements." Rumors persist of a new Base-model droptop.

BEST BUY: Barring the arrival of a base-level convertible, best bang for the buck comes from a Touring-spec coupe or roadster.

SUM UP: GOOD LOOKS, GOOD VALUE, GOOD FUN. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.5L/287-300-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 5A
0-60 MPH	5.5-6.8 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-19/24-25 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 2

**Nissan Altima**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$18,500-\$33,000 (est) **BODY TYPE:** Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Complete redesign ramps up power and sophistication across entire Altima line. More potent I-4 and V-6 variants are joined by a gas/electric hybrid, and all will offer a new CVT automatic. Stiffer unit body and revamped suspension promise to improve handling and eliminate torque steer; interiors gain a softer feel and more technology.

COOL FACT: The Altima HEV uses a hybrid system licensed from Toyota and can run on either—or both—of its power sources.

SUM UP: PUTS ACCORD AND CAMRY ON NOTICE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.5L/165-hp DOHC I-4 (est)
OPT ENGINES	3.5L/265-hp DOHC V-6, 2.5L DOHC I-4 + elec motor/225-hp comb (est)
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, CVT
0-60 MPH	6.0-8.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	20-35/30-32 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 6

**Nissan GT-R**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$50,000-\$70,000 (est) **BODY TYPE:** Coupe

WHAT'S NEW: Next generation of the automaker's most lusted-after supercoupe finally will come to America in spring 2008—wearing a Nissan badge. Expect dramatic bodywork, either a 450-horse twin-turbo V-6 or big V-8 underhood, AWD, and the brilliant driving dynamics that made previous Skyline GT-Rs legendary.

COOL FACT: The ancestor of the GT-R, the Skyline GT, was first made in 1964 by Prince Motors, which merged with Nissan in 1966.

SUM UP: START SAVING NOW. (NOT RATED)

BASE ENGINE	3.7L/450-hp DOHC twin-turbo V-6
OPT ENGINE	4.5L/500-hp DOHC V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6-sp auto-clutch man
0-60 MPH	3.9-4.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	15/19 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 4

**Nissan Maxima**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$28,655-\$30,905 **BODY TYPE:** Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Smart new fascias, more elegant interior appointments, and a revamped powertrain highlight a major Maxima refresh. While the sporty SE and upline SL models share a 255-horse V-6, it's now backed by Nissan's Xtronic CVT transmission plus standard traction and optional stability controls. SL adds luxu standards like leather and a Bose stereo.

COOL FACT: The mileage-optimizing CVT on both Maxima models also incorporates a performance-enhancing manual-shift mode.

SUM UP: NEAT UPGRADES ADD EVEN MORE APPEAL. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.5L/255-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSION	CVT
0-60 MPH	7.0 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	21/28 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: 0; Airbags: 6



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(new car buyer's guide)

**Nissan Sentra**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$16,000-\$18,000 (est) **BODY TYPE:** Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Generational changeover brings more sophisticated styling and technology to Nissan's popular small sedan while increasing cabin volume by nearly 10 cubic feet. The base Sentra and sportier S share the same 135-horse engine and standard six-speed manual or optional CVT, but a more serious SE-R version is due within the year.

COOL FACT: Nissan has a patent pending on the innovative adjustable divider that enhances the utility of the Sentra's rear-storage area.

SUM UP: SOLID BET TO STEAL MARKET SHARE. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/135-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, CVT
0-60 MPH	8.5-9.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	29-30/36-37 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6	

**Nissan Versa**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$13,055-\$15,055 **BODY TYPE:** Sedan, hatch

WHAT'S NEW: Versa represents an impressive blend of Nissan and Renault design and engineering flair. Lots of soft-touch interior bits, a choice of manual, auto, or CVT gearboxes, plus optional Rockford Fosgate premium sound and Bluetooth hands-free technology all bode well for this cheeky newcomer.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: Slightly funkier style plus even greater space and versatility put the Versa hatch a half step up on the sedan.

SUM UP: NICE, BUT LOADED ONES GET PRICEY. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	1.8L/122-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 4A, CVT
0-60 MPH	9.0-9.7 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	28-30/36-38 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 4	

**Pontiac G5**

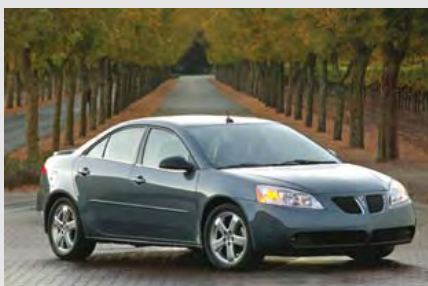
BASE PRICE RANGE: \$13,000-\$18,000 (est) **BODY TYPE:** Coupe

WHAT'S NEW: G5 replaces Sunfire, last seen in 2005. Based off the Chevy Cobalt, the G5 is offered only as a two-door sporty coupe. The GT gets a sport-tuned suspension, 17-inch alloy wheels, and a more powerful 173-horse derivation of the Ecotec four-cylinder. Both models are well equipped for an entry car with A/C and power windows/doors/mirrors.

COOL FACT: The G5 is likely a stop-gap car as GM plans to move Pontiac to rear wheel drive platforms across the board.

SUM UP: BADGE ENGINEERING = NO ONE FOOLED. (NOT RATED)

BASE ENGINE	2.2L/148-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	2.4L/173-hp DOHC I-4
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	8.0-9.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	24-25/32-34 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 2	

**Pontiac G6**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$17,645-\$29,150 **BODY TYPE:** Sedan, coupe, conv

WHAT'S NEW: The coupe and sedan GTP models get a new sophisticated 3.6-liter V-6 with variable valve timing hooked up to a six-speed auto. The four-cylinder engine is offered only in the base sedan, and if you want a manual trans it's available only in the GT with the 3.9-liter V-6. All models, except the convertible, get head-curtain side airbags for 2007.

COOL FACT: The G6 GT convertible joins the VW Eos as the only convertibles with a retractable metal top on the market for under \$30,000.

SUM UP: CHOICES GALORE FOR A SMART LOOKER. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/169-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINES	3.5L/224-hp OHV V-6, 3.6L/252-hp DOHC V-6, 3.9L/240-hp OHV V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 4A, 6A
0-60 MPH	6.0-9.0 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-23/24-32 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 5; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 2	

**Pontiac Grand Prix**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$21,500-\$27,500 **BODY TYPE:** Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: New wheels, five new colors, and a standard tire-pressure monitoring system are the only changes to the 2007 Grand Prix. If your fuel or purchase budget can't stretch to the fast GXP, there's a new Special Edition package for base and GT models that includes unique ground-effects body parts for a pseudo-performance look.

COOL FACT: The high-performance GXP includes F1-style paddle shifters on the steering wheel plus StabiliTrak to keep the wheels planted.

SUM UP: FRONT DRIVE AND 303 HORSES—WHOA! ★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.8L/200-hp OHV V-6
OPT ENGINES	3.8L/260-hp OHV s-chg'd V-6, 5.3L/303-hp OHV V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSION	4A
0-60 MPH	6.5-9.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-20/27-30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 2	

**Pontiac Solstice**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$20,000-\$24,000 (est) **BODY TYPE:** Convertible

WHAT'S NEW: Addition of a turbocharged 2.0-liter derivation of the Ecotec engine with direct injection that boosts available power by 47 percent. It'll propel the seductive roadster to 60 mph in under six seconds. Other enhancements include the addition of StabiliTrak, standard on the GXP and optional on the regular Solstice.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: The turbocharged, 260-horsepower GXP. Now the Solstice can go as fast as it looks.

SUM UP: FINALLY, THE CORVETTE HAS A LITTLE BROTHER. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/177-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	2.0L/260-hp DOHC turbo I-4
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 5A
0-60 MPH	5.5-7.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	19-22/26-30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 2	



Pontiac Vibe

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$16,500-\$20,500 BODY TYPE: Wagon

WHAT'S NEW: Gone is the GT with its high-strung engine. Now there's just one model in this good-looking station-wagon lineup. It's available with a manual or automatic with front or all-wheel drive. The Vibe received a styling makeover last year, so this year an optional cargo cover and some adjustments to the Monotone Package are the only changes.

BEST BUY: Manual, AWD. A sensible, underrated, attractive, economical, practical alternative to a gas-hogging SUV with just as much room inside.

SUM UP: GOOD PACKAGE, FUNKY LOOKS. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	1.8L/126-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	8.5-9.5 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	28-29/33-36 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 2



Porsche 911

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$72,000-\$122,900 (est) BODY TYPE: Coupe, conv

WHAT'S NEW: As if the eight Carrera models weren't enough, Porsche marks the welcome return of important faster variants for 2007. The lightweight GT3 is powered by a 415-horse version of the 3.6-liter boxer engine, while the iconic 911 Turbo reaches supercar status with 480 horses and 457 pound-feet on tap from the twin-turbo 3.6-liter boxer engine.

COOL FACT: The GT3 is the most powerful ever nonturbo 911 while the sixth-generation Turbo is the most powerful road-legal 911 yet.

SUM UP: AN ICON. FOREVER. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.6L/325-hp DOHC flat-6
OPT ENGINES	3.8L/355-hp DOHC flat-6, 3.6L/415-hp DOHC flat-6, twin-turbo 3.6L/480-hp DOHC flat-6
DRIVETRAIN	Rear engine, RWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 5A
0-60 MPH	3.2-5.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	15-19/23-26 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Porsche Boxster

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$45,600-\$55,500 BODY TYPE: Convertible

WHAT'S NEW: The base engine gains five horsepower with the adoption of Porsche's VarioCam Plus, which provides variable intake valve timing. The boxer engine in the S model has been enlarged from 3.2 to 3.4 liters and also gets VarioCam Plus. The optional Tiptronic S transmission also has been revised for better responsiveness.

BEST BUY: The base model with a manual tranny. It's still the cheapest way to get into a new Porsche.

SUM UP: A PROPER PORSCHE. JUST SOFTER. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.7L/245-hp DOHC flat-6
OPT ENGINE	3.4L/295-hp DOHC flat-6
DRIVETRAIN	Mid-engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6M, 5A
0-60 MPH	5.1-5.8 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-20/27-29 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Porsche Cayman

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$50,200-\$59,700 BODY TYPE: Coupe

WHAT'S NEW: Although the recently introduced Cayman coupe is based on the Boxster roadster it has a different look and handles even better, thanks partially to a stiffer bodyshell. It has the same engine and drivetrain combinations and high-tech features include the Porsche Stability Management system and a Motronic electronic accelerator pedal.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: The Cayman S. It's almost as fast around the Nurburgring as a base 911.

SUM UP: MORE THAN JUST A POOR MAN'S 911. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.7L/245-hp DOHC flat-6
OPT ENGINE	3.4L/295-hp DOHC flat-6
DRIVETRAIN	Mid-engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6M, 5A
0-60 MPH	5.1-5.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-20/27-29 (est) mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Rolls-Royce Phantom

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$328,750-\$385,000 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: An extended-wheelbase version, already available in Europe, reaches the U.S. early in the year, preceding the droptop (name still undisclosed) to badged as a 2008. Current Phantom mechanically unchanged, but gets new wheel-design option, iPod connectivity, and 12-inch video monitors for rear-passenger entertainment.

COOL FACT: More than 260 man hours to make each Phantom, much of that time used preparing the up to 60 separate wooden interior elements.

SUM UP: A TRUE LUXURY CAR, IN EVERY SENSE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	6.7L/453-hp DOHC V-12
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSION	6A
0-60 MPH	5.7 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	12/19 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/unlimited miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 8



Saab 9-3

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$27,000-\$43,000 BODY TYPE: Sedan, conv, wagon

WHAT'S NEW: Lots of detail upgrades for Saab's engaging entry-level player, which returns in 2.0T and Aero trims. All boast interior-trim tweaks, improved climate control and, "infotainment" packages, plus new wheel options. OnStar is now optional on all 9-3s, while XM Satellite Radio becomes an Aero standard and 2.0Ts upgrade to a six-speed manual.

BEST BUY: A punchy force-fed turbo four gives the 2.0T plenty of kick for thousands less than a V-6 Aero, especially with the new 6M trans.

SUM UP: FUN WITH STYLISHLY SWEDISH TWIST. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/210-hp DOHC turbo I-4
OPT ENGINE	2.8L/250-hp DOHC turbo V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 5A, 6A
0-60 MPH	7.0-9.0 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	17-22/27-31 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6

(new car buyer's guide)

**Saab 9-5**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$35,000-\$37,000 **BODY TYPE:** Sedan, wagon

WHAT'S NEW: Major refresh in 2006 breathed new life into Saab's aging senior line, but omitted what it needs most: at least six cylinders underhood. Variations on 2007 theme replace/rename 2.3T Sport Package with an equivalent Aero counterpart and adding new wheel/tire combos. A cosmetics-only Anniversary Special Edition arrives midyear.

AVOID: All of them. Even diehard Saabophiles find it hard to rate the current 9-5 as anything but marginal in its segment.

SUM UP: WAIT FOR ALL-NEW 2008 MODEL. ★★

BASE ENGINE	2.3L/260-hp DOHC turbo I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 5A
0-60 MPH	6.5-8.1 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-21/28-29 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 4

**Saturn Aura**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$20,595-\$24,595 **BODY TYPE:** Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Though all-new Aura is based on the same competent platform as the Chevy Malibu and Pontiac G6, it has a different look. Initially available with only two V-6s, a third will be the Aura Green Line, which will be GM's first ever hybrid sedan. The uplevel XR has a six-speed automatic transmission and includes a four-panel sliding panoramic roof. **COOL FACT:** Saturn is now effectively aligned with GM's Opel division in Germany and will share products and design cues..

SUM UP: THE CAR THAT WILL REINVENT SATURN. (NOT RATED)

BASE ENGINE	3.5L/224-hp OHV V-6
OPT ENGINE	3.6L/252-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	4A, 6A
0-60 MPH	N/A
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-20/27-30 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: 0; Airbags: 6

**Saturn Ion**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$12,750-\$20,360 **BODY TYPE:** Sedan, coupe

WHAT'S NEW: Apart from a slight boost in horsepower for the Ion 2 and Ion 3 sedans and coupes, there are no changes in the car's final year on the market. For something different, the Quad Coupe with its half-opening rear doors is appealing. Likewise the Red Line coupe offers a substantial boost in performance and improved handling for a reasonable price.

AVOID: All of them. Plastic panels might improve resistance to dents, but at the expense of kit-car looks. Wait for the 2008 Astra.

SUM UP: ARE YOU STILL HERE? ★★

BASE ENGINE	2.2L/145-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINES	2.4L/175-hp DOHC I-4, 2.0L/205-hp DOHC s-chg'd I-4
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	6.2-10.5 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	23-26/29-35 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 2

**Saturn Sky**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$23,690-\$26,000 **BODY TYPE:** Convertible

WHAT'S NEW: Saturn's all-new halo car is as close as they come to a modern British sports car—its sexy shape was inspired by the Vauxhall VX Lightning concept. Rather than relying on skilled panel beaters, many of the curvaceous body panels are shaped by hydroforming. Well-balanced sports car is powered by the Ecotec engine with variable valve timing.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: Yes, we are talking Saturn. As with the Pontiac Solstice, go for the 260-horse turbo.

SUM UP: A SATURN THAT'S FUN TO DRIVE. TRULY. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/177-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	2.0L/260-hp DOHC turbo I-4
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, RWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 5A
0-60 MPH	5.5-7.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	19-22/26-30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 2

**Scion tC**

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$15,540-\$16,940 **BODY TYPE:** Coupe

WHAT'S NEW: Sportiest of the Scion set, the tC line gets new seat fabrics and adds a tire-pressure monitor. Big news is an aftermarket-friendly Spec Package that keeps the basic good stuff but dispenses with items like alloy wheels, cruise control, and the opening Panoramic roof to create a more cost-effective starting point for creatively inclined owners.

BEST BUY: If you're planning on a major makeover, the new Spec Package will trim \$1400 off the tC's price entry.

SUM UP: SMOOTH OPERATOR, BUT STILL NO CIVIC SI. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/160-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	8.0-9.0 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	22-23/29-30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 3

**Scion xA**

BASE PRICE: \$13,300 **BODY TYPE:** Hatch

WHAT'S NEW: Rolling into 2007 unchanged, Scion's entry-level four-door hatch still provides plenty of attractive standards—including A/C, a 160-watt Pioneer sound system, power windows/locks/mirrors, and ABS—for a bargain price. In addition to a bounty of accessory upgrades, xA buyers can also opt for front-side and side-curtain airbags.

COOL FACT: Seeking to please radioheads of all stripes, Scion offers the xA with either Sirius or XM Satellite systems.

SUM UP: NOT QUITE AS COOL AS IT USED TO BE. ★★

BASE ENGINE	1.5L/103-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	8.8-9.8 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	31-32/37-38 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 2



Scion xB

BASE PRICE: \$14,600 BODY TYPE: Wagon

WHAT'S NEW: With a generational changeover in the offing, the multifaceted xB enters 2007 as carryover. Motive force remains modest, but its easy-to-reconfigure interior, world-class roster of standards that includes such premium touches as traction/stability control, and loads of personalization potential add unique cachet to this high-profile cruiser.

COOL FACT: The space-efficient xB actually has more rear head- and legroom than a BMW 7 Series.

SUM UP: THE BOX STILL ROCKS. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	1.5L/103-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	10.0-12.0 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	31/33-34 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 2



Subaru Impreza

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$19,000-\$34,000 BODY TYPE: Sedan, wagon

WHAT'S NEW: From merely sporty to outright stunning, Impreza line continues with few changes save for the addition of a slick STI Limited variant. Subaru will produce 800 of these more "refined" 293-horse road-ragers, characterized by a deeper front spoiler, more subtle rear wing, bespoke wheels/tires/brakes, better soundproofing, power moonroof.

COOL FACT: The STI's Driver Controlled Center Differential allows on-the-fly adjustment of the car's front/rear torque bias.

SUM UP: THE ARCHETYPE OF PRACTICAL PERFORMANCE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.5L/173-hp SOHC flat-4
OPT ENGINE	2.5L/230-293-hp DOHC turbo flat-4
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6M, 4A
0-60 MPH	4.7-8.0 (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-23/24-29 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 4



Subaru Legacy

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$22,800-\$35,000 (est) BODY TYPE: Sedan, wagon

WHAT'S NEW: New six-speed manual and VDC stability control add spark to spec.B while Subie's new SI-Drive setup provides three levels of driver-selectable engine responsiveness and helps bump in-town fuel economy by up to 10 percent on all models with the 2.5-liter turbo four. Upgraded audio systems gain MP3/iPod capability and optional XM Satellite Radio.

COOL FACT: Having proven its value as a halo car, spec.B moves from limited edition to regular production model for 2007.

SUM UP: VASTLY UNDERRATED ACCORD ALTERNATIVE. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.5L/170-hp SOHC flat-4
OPT ENGINES	2.5L/243-hp turbo flat-4, 3.0L/250-hp flat-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6M, 4A, 5A
0-60 MPH	5.3-8.0 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	19-23/26-30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 6



Suzuki Aerio

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$14,800-\$17,000 BODY TYPE: Sedan

WHAT'S NEW: Save for the departure of its wagon variant, the Aerio motors into 2007 unchanged. That's not all bad, given that standard equipment on this fairly well-appointed sedan includes such items as A/C, cruise control, and AM/FM/CD/MP3 sound, plus a responsive 155-horse engine that's potent enough to handle the Aerio's optional QuadGrip AWD.

COOL FACT: Suzuki Works Techno markets a host of rally-inspired functional/cosmetic Aerio extras directly through Suzuki dealers.

SUM UP: LOST IN A CROWD OF NEWCOMERS. ★★

BASE ENGINE	2.3L/155-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	9.5-11.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	24-25/29-31 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 4



Suzuki Forenza

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$14,500-\$15,100 BODY TYPE: Sedan, wagon

WHAT'S NEW: Suzuki's best-selling car line adds a tire-pressure monitor, but is otherwise unchanged. Both sedan and wagon are available in base or more fully featured Premium trim grades, however even the standard models come with air conditioning, power windows/locks/mirrors, and an AM/FM/CD/MP3 sound system.

BEST BUY: Premium is cost-effective way to add ABS, alloy wheels, cruise control, keyless remote entry, steering-wheel audio controls.

SUM UP: BETTER CHOICES EXIST IN THIS CATEGORY. ★★

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/127-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	11.5-12.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	21-23/30-31 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 4



Suzuki Reno

BASE PRICE: \$14,000 BODY TYPE: Hatch

WHAT'S NEW: Sharing all its key mechanicals with the Forenza family, this more youthfully styled hatch also gains a tire-pressure monitor as its sole 2007 update. Although it remains Suzuki's lowest-priced offering, the Reno has an attractive list of standards that grows even longer when you step up to Convenience- or Premium-spec versions.

BEST BUY: Convenience Package nets cruise control, keyless remote, a sunroof, and an upgraded sound system for less than a grand.

SUM UP: FEATURE SET OUTSHINES PERFORMANCE. ★★

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/127-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	11.5-12.5 sec (MT est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	22-23/30-31 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 4

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/143-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	9.5-11.0 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	23-24/29-31 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 6

Suzuki SX4

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$15,600-\$18,600 BODY TYPE: Hatch
WHAT'S NEW: New SX4 gives Suzuki an appealing entry into the hot compact-crossover segment. In addition to edgy sheetmetal and standard all-wheel drive, the SX4 complements its roomy, well-appointed interior with a dynamic sport-tuned suspension, 16-inch wheels/tires, and ABS disc binders. Premium versions add automatic A/C and stability control.
COOL FACT: Suzuki says the new SX4 will be the most affordable AWD vehicle sold in America.
SUM UP: LOOKS PROMISING ON PAPER. (NOT RATED)



BASE ENGINE	3.5L/268-hp DOHC V-6
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSION	5A
0-60 MPH	6.2 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	22/31 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 7

Toyota Avalon

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$27,500-\$35,000 BODY TYPE: Sedan
WHAT'S NEW: Toyota's full-size sedan adds a tire-pressure monitor across its four-tier lineup and makes a navigation system optional on the Touring model. Despite its conservative exterior, the Avalon's potent 268-horse V-6 plus a roomy, quiet, and well-appointed cabin make it a first-rate cruiser with sport-sedan quickness.
BEST BUY: Upgraded suspension, HID headlights, and plenty of option choices make Touring model the most value-oriented Avalon.
SUM UP: WHAT A FULL-SIZE SEDAN SHOULD BE. ★★★★★



BASE ENGINE	2.4L/158-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINES	3.5L/268-hp DOHC V-6, 2.4L/158-hp I-4, 141-hp elec motor/187-hp
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 5A, 6A, CVT
0-60 MPH	6.5-9.5 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	22-40/31-38 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 7

Toyota Camry

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$18,850-\$26,480 BODY TYPE: Sedan
WHAT'S NEW: Gaining a new level of overall sophistication, the Gen VI Camry boasts a bolder appearance, a larger cabin, and more power across the line—including a new hybrid variant. Even the base CE offers a full range of power assists, ABS, and a 160-watt sound system while the toney XLE takes the sting out of waiting for that Lexus.
DRIVER'S CHOICE: With its reinforced body shell and stiffer suspension bits, the new SE—particularly V-6—boasts enthusiast-grade credentials.
SUM UP: CAN YOU SAY BEST-SELLER? ★★★★★



BASE ENGINE	2.4L/155-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	3.3L/210-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 5A
0-60 MPH	8.5-10.0 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	20-24/29-33 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 4

Toyota Camry Solara

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$20,510-\$31,040 BODY TYPE: Coupe, conv
WHAT'S NEW: Awaiting a move to the "new" Camry platform, the Solara coupe and droptop get minor fascia tweaks, front-side airbags, and various interior trim/audio system upgrades. SE Sport becomes just Sport and gains HID headlamps plus new wheels and rear spoiler; all coupes also add side curtain airbags. Topline SLEs gets a nav-package option.
BEST BUY: Sport complements full-line upgrades like Optitron gauges, JBL sound, six-CD changer, new HID headlamps, and 17-inch alloys.
SUM UP: STILL JUST AN AGING BOULEVARDIER. ★★



BASE ENGINE	1.8L/126-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	8.8-9.8 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	28-32/34-41 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: 0; Trac: 0; Stab: 0; Airbags: 2

Toyota Corolla

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$14,700-\$17,400 BODY TYPE: Sedan, wagon
WHAT'S NEW: Except for the departure of the 164-horse XRS models, the demise of Matrix AWD, and no leather option for the Corolla LE option, this popular duo ride out their final year before a major redesign as pure carryovers. All share a 126-horse four and a reputation for being well built and reliable, if now a bit less exciting.
DRIVER'S CHOICE: Special Edition M-Theory has functional upgrades like 17-inch alloys, strut tower brace, four-wheel ABS discs.
SUM UP: FAR FROM THE CLASS LEADER. ★★★



BASE ENGINE	1.5L/76-hp I-4 + 67-hp elec motor
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSION	CVT
0-60 MPH	10.5 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	60/51 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: 0; Airbags: 2

Toyota Prius

BASE PRICE: \$22,500 BODY TYPE: Hatch
WHAT'S NEW: The world's most popular hybrid heads into the new year by adding side curtain airbags to the list of standards and a new Touring Edition that packages HID headlamps, integrated foglights, 16-inch alloys, and a larger rear spoiler. The waiting lines have shortened, but the Prius still sets the benchmark as a real-world hybrid.
COOL FACT: Since its 1997 launch in Japan, the Prius has sold over 500,000 units—and more than half of them were purchased here in the U.S.
SUM UP: GOLD STANDARD OF HYBRIDS. ★★★★★





Toyota Yaris

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$11,530-\$13,905 BODY TYPE: Sedan, hatch
WHAT'S NEW: Edgier replacement for the near-invisible Echo, the all-new Yaris retains a center-mounted instrument cluster but steps up in style, space, features, and functionality. Sharing a single 106-horse four and offering 5M/4A transmission choices, the subcompact sedan and three-door hatch skew more toward comfortable cruising than corner carving.
BEST BUY: A Power Package on the non-S sedan brings most of the good stuff—including a split/folding rear seat and 15-inch wheels—plus ABS.
SUM UP: SAFE, SANE—BUT NOT ENGAGING. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	1.5L/106-hp DOHC I-4
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 4A
0-60 MPH	9.8-10.4 sec (est)
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	34/39-40 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: 0; Trac: N/A; Stab: N/A; Airbags: 2	



Volkswagen Eos

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$27,990-\$36,850 BODY TYPE: Convertible
WHAT'S NEW: Like the new Volvo C70, the Eos is cashing in on the hardtop convertible craze that started in Europe. The four-seater is fully loaded with ESP (stabilization system), foglights, power windows, and cruise control. As with all 2007 VWs, the Eos has long list of options, such as a 12-way power driver seat, a premium sound system, and a trip computer. With all the extras, the Eos still comes in under \$37K.
COOL FACT: There's a sunroof mode in the folding hardtop.
SUM UP: THE SUMMER'S HOTTEST RIDE? ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/200-hp DOHC turbo I-4
OPT ENGINE	3.2L/250-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSION	6-sp auto-clutch man
0-60 MPH	7.3-8.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	19-24/26-32 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 4	



Volkswagen Jetta

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$18,885-\$25,785 BODY TYPE: Sedan, wagon
WHAT'S NEW: Four trim levels for the 2007 sedan: Jetta, 2.5, 2.0T, and GLI. The first two are powered by the 150-horse 2.5-liter, while the last two get the 200-horse 2.0T along with the optional DSG tranny. Jetta trim is as basic as it gets; other trim levels have two level-specific option packages. New AWD wagon in 2008. Popular TDI diesels on indefinite hiatus.
AVOID: Base-model Jetta and 2.5. We find this five-cylinder to be too unrefined for a German sedan. Better to save up for the 2.0-liter and DSG.
SUM UP: VW BUILDS A COROLLA. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.5L/150-hp DOHC I-5
OPT ENGINE	2.0L/200-hp DOHC turbo I-4
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6M, 6A, 6-sp auto-cl man
0-60 MPH	7.8-9.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	22-25/30-32 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6	



Volkswagen New Beetle

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$18,150-\$24,080 BODY TYPE: Coupe, conv
WHAT'S NEW: How do you change a once-revamped icon? You don't. Volkswagen is continuing the New Beetle as is until 2010 or so. Coupe options include a power sunroof combined with a premium audio system and heated front seats. For the convertible, there's a semi-automatic top, along with the premium audio system, windblocker, and heated seats.
BEST BUY: The New Beetle Convertible with six-speed auto is hard to beat for fun-in-the-sun cruising. Just remember to bring your sunscreen.
SUM UP: STILL CUTE. BUT NOT TOO CUTE. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.5L/150-hp DOHC I-5
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6A
0-60 MPH	8.6-8.9 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	22-23/30-32 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 4	



Volkswagen Passat

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$23,590-\$33,730 BODY TYPE: Sedan, wagon
WHAT'S NEW: All-new wagon follows on the heels of the 2006 sedan. Both models offer four trim levels—Passat (Value Edition for the wagon), 2.0T, 3.6, and 3.6 4Motion. The 2.0T and 3.6 versions offer a Sport as well as a Luxury package. The base models range of standard features includes an eight-speaker MP3/CD sound system and power heated mirrors.
BEST BUY: Passat Sedan 3.6 4Motion. A good-looking, well-equipped four-door with AWD at price that's hard to beat.
SUM UP: COMPETENT, BUT LACKING CHARACTER. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.0L/200-hp DOHC turbo I-4
OPT ENGINE	3.6L/280-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 6A
0-60 MPH	5.9-8.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-23/26-32 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6	



Volkswagen Rabbit

BASE PRICE RANGE: \$14,990-\$32,000 BODY TYPE: Hatch
WHAT'S NEW: The all-new fifth-generation Golf has been renamed or (more accurately) returned to its original North American moniker, Rabbit. Joining the 2006 GTI, the hatch comes in two- and four-door versions powered by a 150-horse I-5. Also new for 2007 is the uber Rabbit: the R32. It comes with a 250-horse V-6, AWD, and a 10-speaker sound system.
DRIVER'S CHOICE: Rabbit R32 with the optional DSG tranny; a 250-horse hatch never looked this good.
SUM UP: RABBIT REDUX IS A GOOD THING. ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.5L/150-hp DOHC I-5
OPT ENGINES	2.0L/200-hp DOHC turbo I-4, 3.2L/250-hp DOHC V-6
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6M, 6A, 6-sp auto-cl man
0-60 MPH	5.8-8.6 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	21-25/27-32 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: 0; Airbags: 6	

(new car buyer's guide)



Volvo C30

BASE PRICE: **TBA** BODY TYPE: **Hatch**

WHAT'S NEW: C30 should appear sometime in 2007. The small hatchback (nine inches shorter than the S40) is intended for customers with an active lifestyle who alternate between hauling briefcases and sports equipment. Four-piston Brembo brakes, Pirelli Corsa tires, and the 260-horse I-5 attest to the hatch's sporty nature.

COOL FACT: The design combines elements from the classic P1800 ES and the Safety Concept Car, making for a modern (and Swedish) appearance.

SUM UP: ORDER YOURS NOW. (NOT RATED)

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/260-hp DOHC turbo I-5
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine FWD
TRANSMISSION	6M
0-60 MPH	6.0 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	TBA
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Volvo C70

BASE PRICE: **\$39,405** BODY TYPE: **Convertible**

WHAT'S NEW: The completely new 2006 C70 motors on into 2007 as is with plenty of bells and whistles. Designed to seat four adults, the convertible combines safety, sleek good looks, and lots of amenities. Unique to the C70 is a door-mounted inflatable curtain providing rollover and side-impact protection even with windows open and top down.

COOL FACT: Built on the same architecture as the S40, the new C70 is five inches shorter than the old one.

SUM UP: ...OR IS THIS THE SUMMER'S HOTTEST RIDE? ★★★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.5L/218-hp DOHC turbo I-5
OPT ENGINE	None
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 5A
0-60 MPH	7.0-7.4 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	20-21/29 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Volvo S40/V50

BASE PRICE RANGE: **\$24,520-\$30,515** BODY TYPE: **Sedan, wagon**

WHAT'S NEW: The S40 and V50, with ultramodern interior and exceptional exterior styling, have only minor changes for 2007. Most significant are DSTC (stability/traction system) standard, new overhead console, simplified packaging structure that includes Sport and Body Styling packages for the 2.4i, Dynamic Trim package for T5/T5 AWD.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: T5 AWD with Audio Package and Sirius Satellite Radio for sporty handling accompanied by an awesome stereo system.

SUM UP: GOOD LOOKS, BUT AN AVERAGE DRIVE. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/168-hp DOHC I-5
OPT ENGINE	2.5L/218-hp DOHC turbo I-5
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5A, 6M
0-60 MPH	7.4-8.5 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	20-22/28-32 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Volvo S60

BASE PRICE RANGE: **\$31,250-\$39,100** BODY TYPE: **Sedan**

WHAT'S NEW: The S60 (2.5T, T5, and R) gets refreshed with a new front grille and bumper design and new outside mirrors for more differentiation from its siblings. DSTC is now standard across all models, the 2.5T has firmer shocks and springs, and the R now boasts "active" bi-Xenon headlights. Packaging is simplified and stand-alone options are added.

BEST BUY: Under \$39K, S60R is a great deal for a 300-horse sport sedan. It may not beat the Germans, but at this price, who cares?

SUM UP: SPORTY, STYLISH, SWEDISH. AMAZING. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/208-hp DOHC turbo I-5
OPT ENGINES	2.5L/257-300-hp DOHC turbo I-5
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	6M, 5A, 6A
0-60 MPH	5.8-7.9 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-22/24-30 mpg
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Volvo S80

BASE PRICE RANGE: **\$38,500-\$40,800** BODY TYPE: **Sedan**

WHAT'S NEW: The S80 has been completely redesigned for 2007. The edges have been smoothed over, and the engine bay is filled with either the 4.4-liter V-8 from the XC90 or an all-new inline-six. Sedan is the same length as its predecessor, but wider and taller, increasing interior space, and standard-features list runs several pages, as do the high-tech options.

BEST BUY: S80 V-8. Even fully loaded with options the price is still significantly under a comparably equipped German sedan.

SUM UP: ALL THE ABOVE. WITH A V-8, TOO. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	3.2L/235-hp DOHC I-6
OPT ENGINE	4.4L/311-hp DOHC V-8
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSION	6A
0-60 MPH	6.0-7.4 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	TBA
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



Volvo V70

BASE PRICE RANGE: **\$30,400-\$40,830** BODY TYPE: **Wagon**

WHAT'S NEW: All 2007 Volvos have DSTC as standard and a relocated DSTC button on the steering-wheel stalk. The 2.4 and 2.5T offer a dual-screen rear-seat entertainment system, and the 2.6T and R can be equipped with a DVD-based nav system. All three models feature new outside mirrors with integrated turn signals.

DRIVER'S CHOICE: The AWD-equipped V70R with nav Pro Logic sound system for antiquing along back roads and byways at speed.

SUM UP: WHAT VOLVO STILL DOES BEST. ★★★

BASE ENGINE	2.4L/165-168-hp DOHC I-5
OPT ENGINE	2.5L/208-300-hp DOHC turbo I-5
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine FWD/AWD
TRANSMISSIONS	5M, 6M, 5A, 6A
0-60 MPH	5.8-8.6 sec
EPA ECON CITY/HWY	18-22/24-30 mpg (est)
BASIC WARRANTY	4 yrs/50,000 miles
SAFETY	ABS: S; Trac: S; Stab: S; Airbags: 6



THE TOP TEN LISTS
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THE TOP TEN LISTS

EDITORS'
CHOICES
RARE
GROOVES
CARS
WORTH
WAITING
FOR
HOTTEST
TECHNOLOGY
FUEL
TEMPERANCE
GAS
MISERS



TOP TEN EDITORS' CHOICES

00.1 PORSCHE CAYMAN S

You could buy a more powerful Chevy or a flashier BMW, but the Cayman's mid-engine chassis dynamics, sublime steering, flat-six engine song, and slinky, sinuous styling make this Porsche the most satisfying two-seater for the money. Don't be dissuaded by its modest-looking specifications sheet, this baby's the real deal.

Frank Markus

00.2 DODGE MAGNUM SRT8

"Wagon" was a dirty word until Dodge shoved 425 horses' worth of Hemi under the hood of this broad-shouldered bulldog. Trust us: That word carries no negative baggage when you're laying a 40-foot patch or knocking down 13.1-second quarters at 108 mph. Perfect for when the groceries need getting, now.

Frank Markus

00.3 FORD SHELBY GT500

Here's the surprise: The GT500 is no raw, sweaty musclecar, but a fast and remarkably civilized 500-horse grand tourer. The supercharged 5.4-liter V-8 delivers an elastic surge of power and weapons-grade torque. And the beautifully linear chassis enables you to make the most of it. Best of all, it just looks bitchin'.

Angus MacKenzie

00.4 HONDA CIVIC

Our 2006 Car of the Year, the Civic was an easy choice as the small car we'd drive home. Whether it's saving the environment via the fuel-friendly 50-mpg hybrid or destroying so-called pocket-rockets with the race-bred Si, the innovative Civics offer the ultimate blend of performance, economy, and technology.

Ron Kiino

00.5 MAZDA MX-5

For \$20,995, no convertible soaks up the sun or carves up coastlines better than the MX-5. Replete with a slick softtop and the essence of a sports car—a perfectly balanced rear-drive chassis, a gutsy engine, and a pinpoint shifter—the MX-5 makes the demands of life and twisty roads easier to swallow. Convertible hardtop version coming soon.

Ron Kiino

WE DRIVE MORE NEW CARS THAN THE TIMES YOU'VE VOTED FOR THE NEXT AMERICAN IDOL— BUT IF WE HAD TO CHOOSE JUST ONE...

■ words **motor trend editors**

00.6 FERRARI 599 GTB FIORANO

It can transform the almighty F40 into a speck in its rearview mirror. Its paddle-shift gearbox and chassis electronics are worthy of Schumacher's F1 car. Its body could've come from Botticelli. Other cars move you—the 599 stabs your heart with a hypodermic of adrenaline and sets fire to your neural synapses. Before driving, see your doctor for a complete physical.

Arthur St. Antoine

00.7 MERCEDES-BENZ S550

Some may say Mercedes has launched an all-new luxury sedan. We say the German maker has slashed 60 percent off the price of a Maybach. Pay more if you wish, but it's doubtful you'll find an automobile with a sweeter blend of comfort, room, power, and cutting-edge hardware—hey, this thing will even stop and go by itself—than this stunning Benz.

Arthur St. Antoine

00.8 MINI COOPER S

BMW deserves credit for making small hatchbacks stylish here with its Mini Cooper. But the big hero is the S, an urban enthusiast's dream that's as entertaining in its own little way as any sports car or V-8 musclecar. The wagon version—Mini Traveller—is just around the corner.

Todd Lassa

00.9 AUDI RS4

The RS4 proves Audi can build a hot car with balls. This protein-slugging compact sport sedan looks the business and delivers big horsepower, terrific handling, strong brakes, a lux interior, no-nonsense 'tude, and a sound that makes you think big-block 1967 Corvette. Rare, expensive, cool—all stuff we like.

Matt Stone

00.10 TOYOTA CAMRY HYBRID

Just when gas-price shock and global warming are starting to rock our economy and environment arrives the Toyota Camry Hybrid. The answer to all our problems? No. But it's close, placing third on our list of top-mileage makers at nearly 40 mpg in real-world conditions (bettering several pint-size alternatives), while still offering comfortable size and relaxed driving for most Americans' tastes.

Kim Reynolds

00.1



00.6



00.2



00.7



00.3



00.8



00.4



00.9



00.5



00.10



00.1



00.6



00.7



00.2



00.3



00.8



00.4



00.9



00.5



00.10

TOP TEN RARE GROOVES

WHEN ALL
YOUR
BUDDIES
HAVE
PORSCHES

■ words **motor trend** editors

00.1 BUGATTI VEYRON

Do you have \$1.25 million burning a hole in your pocket? Then why not extinguish it with the quickest, fastest, most expensive production car ever sold. The 16-cylinder, 1001-horse Veyron rips from 0 to 60 in just over 2.0 seconds, maxes out at over 250 mph, and costs the equivalent of five Ferrari 599 GTBs.

00.2 DEARBORN DEUCE

None of the Rare Grooves lets the good times roll quite like the Dearborn Deuce, a back-to-the-future interpretation of a 1932 Ford hot rod. Manufactured to contemporary standards by Hot Rods & Horsepower of Connecticut and ASC of Michigan, the Deuce sports a computer-designed body, a commodious cockpit (compared with the original), and a small-block Chevy engine.

00.3 FISKER TRAMONTO

Penned by Danish designer Henrik Fisker—Z8, anyone?—the Tramonto, based on a Mercedes-Benz SL AMG, is a custom-tailored roadster with unique aluminum and carbon-fiber bodywork, a handcrafted cockpit, and up to nearly 700 horsepower. The cost? At least \$250,000. C'mon, exclusivity never comes cheap.

00.4 MERCEDES SLR MCLAREN

Overshadowed by the more outlandish Ferrari Enzo and Porsche Carrera GT, the SLR is not to be overlooked. With 617 horses on tap from a supercharged V-8, the \$455,750 Benz is fast enough to run 207 mph yet tame enough to run to the mall. Paris Hilton owns one, so you know it can do the latter.

00.5 MORGAN AERO 8

With a heritage that traces back nearly 100 years, the English-built Morgan Aero 8 has styling that embraces the past yet technology that welcomes the future, evidenced by a bonded and riveted all-aluminum chassis and a BMW V-8. An available carbon-fiber top makes it a neoclassic alternative to the Caddy XLR-v.

00.6 MOSLER MT900S

Warren Mosler despises weight, which is why the 2500-pound MT900S was relegated to a diet of spaceframes and carbon fiber and deprived of extras like power steering. Propelled by a 5.7-liter Z06 V-8, the MT900S has been crash tested and has airbags, so it's street legal. Now don't you go breaking the law!

00.7 PAGANI ZONDA F

Come 2008, Horacio Pagani promises the exotic Zonda F will make it to the U.S. Cross your fingers—now! With 594 horses galloping from a handbuilt AMG V-12 and an interior that could wear a Prada label, the Italian-made \$500,000 Zonda F is a boutique supercar for those who find Enzos and Murciélagos passé.

00.8 SALEEN S7 TWIN TURBO

When Jim Carrey played God in 2003's "Bruce Almighty," his supernatural ride was a 550-horsepower S7. Now you, too, can feel like you own the world—or at least the road—with the even mightier 750-horse S7 Twin Turbo, whose 7.0-liter V-8 will blur your corneas as it pushes 144 mph in the quarter.

00.9 SPYKER C8

For those who prefer to go Dutch, there's the Spyker C8, a bespoke all-aluminum exotic with an Audi V-8 powerplant, a quilted-leather cockpit, and myriad propeller motifs to signify the company's aviation heritage. Variations include the Spyder (convertible), Laviolette (coupe), and Double 12 S (Le Mans race-car-inspired coupe), each flying you Dutch in utter style.

00.10 PANOZ ESPERANTE

Hailing from Georgia, the Ford Mustang-engined Esperante is a peachy alternative to those pricier European exotics already littering valet lines like runway models at a fashion show. With fewer than 100 built per year, the V-8 Esperante—available in base, GT, and supercharged GTLM trims—offers American exceptionalism at an "affordable" price.

TOP TEN CARS WORTH WAITING FOR

WHAT'S ANOTHER YEAR OR TWO WHEN YOU COULD HAVE ONE OF THESE GORGEOUS SHAPES OF METAL IN YOUR DRIVEWAY?

■ words **angus mackenzie**

00.1 AUDI R8

On sale spring 2007, the Lamborghini Gallardo-based R8 launches with Audi's new 4.2-liter FSI V-8 from the RS4. A 500-plus-horsepower version using the 5.2-liter V-10 from the S8 will follow, with a 280-horse, 3.6-liter V-6 coming in 2009. A seven-speed DSG transmission will be optional on the V-8 and V-10. (Le Mans quattro concept shown).

00.2 ASTON MARTIN RAPIDE

Due in 2008, the sexy V-12 Aston Martin Rapide should beat Porsche's Panamera into production by at least a year. Built on the flexible VH spaceframe architecture, it's nearly a foot longer than the DB9, but only 1.6 inches taller. It'll replace the Vanquish as Aston's flagship, allowing development of a more powerful DB9.

00.3 BMW M3

BMW's fourth-generation M3 arrives late in 2007. Under the hood is a 400-horsepower, 4.0-liter V-8 engine that revs to a screaming 8250 rpm. Shorter than the current M3's I-6, the V-8 also is mounted farther back in the car to improve weight distribution. The car will get revised versions of the BMW M5's seven-speed sequential transmission and E-diff.

00.4 CADILLAC CTS-v COUPE

Bob Lutz gave "Today Show" viewers a glimpse of a coupe version of the next-gen CTS. Those who've seen it say the two-door is a stunning evolution of Cadillac's Art and Science design with a classy interior. Better yet, GM sources hint the v-series versions due in 2008 will have north of 500 horsepower. (Spy shot of 2008 CTS sedan shown.)

00.5 CHEVROLET CAMARO

The new Camaro will make its debut in model year 2009. Entry-level cars will feature a V-6-engine, with the mainstream V-8 being the 400-horsepower LS2. A 500-horsepower LS7—a new ZL-1 perhaps?—also is under consideration to take on the Shelby GT500. All transmissions will be six-speed, and a convertible is to be added to the mix.

00.6 DODGE CHALLENGER

DCX has yet to greenlight the Challenger. But with Ford giving the Mustang a major makeover in 2009 and Camaro coming, the question is: Can it afford not to? The Challenger would roll on a shortened version of the new LY rear-drive platform, with the 5.7-liter Hemi V-8 and 6.1-liter SRT engines under the hood. A V-6 version won't happen, say sources.

00.7 LEXUS LF-A

Production-ready panels on Lexus LF-A prototypes show Toyota's first supercar is nearing launch, probably in 2008. The engine will be either a 4.5-liter V-8 or 5.0-liter V-10, with enough power for 200 mph, and there may be a hybrid version. The front end has changed from the concept's, note the stacked headlights, but triple exhaust and ground-effects venturis stay. (Latest scoop shot of the LF-A at the Nürburgring.)

00.8 MINI TRAVELLER

A subtly redesigned but all-new Mini makes its European debut next month, with a new BMW-designed 1.6-liter engine and a new interior. The wagonlike Traveller is set to appear in September 2007. Basically a Mini stretched nearly eight inches, the Traveller is believed to have Mazda RX-8-style rear doors for better cabin access. (Latest scoop shot of Traveller.)

00.9 MITSUBISHI EVO X

Apart from changes around the front end, the Evo X will look much like the Concept X show car. Engine remains 2.0-liter turbo four with more than 300 horsepower, but the six-speed transmission gets paddle-shifters. The Evo X's secret weapon is a new Super All Wheel Control system incorporating active braking, steering, and roll.

00.10 NISSAN GT-R

After a lengthy gestation, the Nissan GT-R finally arrives here in spring 2008. Heir to Nissan's Porsche-baiting GT-R dynasty, this version retains the all-wheel drive and all-wheel steering that made its predecessors famous. The engine is likely a Cosworth modified twin-turbo version of Nissan's 3.5-liter V-6, with 450 to 500 horsepower and 500 pound-feet of torque.



HANS G. LEHMANN

TOP TEN HOTTEST TECHNOLOGIES



00.1 STABILITY-CONTROL PLUS

Now: The latest versions of this 10-year-old technology employ individual-wheel braking to prevent skids and rollovers and even bring swaying trailers back into line.

Soon: As electric power-steering and active-steering systems proliferate, expect to see electronics grabbing the wheel and executing the steering inputs you should've learned in driver ed to prevent an accident. **Disclaimer:** Electronics still can't overturn laws of physics.



00.2 LANE-DEPARTURE/BLIND-SPOT WARNING SYSTEMS

Now: Cameras monitor lane markings while radar or infrared sensors watch for unseen cars in the blind spot.

Signal a lane change into an occupied lane or drift out of your lane without signaling, and lights flash in the sideview mirror or seat vibrations simulate rumble strips. **Soon:** Cameras could handle both tasks.

Disclaimer: Turn-signal-averse drivers likely will switch off the lane nanny.



00.3 ADVANCED CRUISE CONTROLS

Now: Radar or lasers sense vehicles in the lane ahead to maintain a safe following distance, with the latest examples able to brake to a stop if necessary.

Soon: Forward-looking cameras may improve functionality and reduce the cost of such systems (possibly replacing the radar/lasers), and navigation maps may be used to enhance accident prevention.

Disclaimer: Don't expect a full-on auto-pilot in our litigious society.



00.4 INTELLIGENT LIGHTING

Now: Many headlamps bend into turns, and some dim high beams for oncoming traffic. **Soon:** Clever new lenses or LED lamps will tailor the beam pattern to suit driving conditions—a broad beam in town,

wider still at intersections, far-reaching on the open road, etc. Taillights will flash quickly or illuminate wider to signal panic braking. **Disclaimer:** Lighting regulations will need to be changed to accommodate these technologies.



00.5 ON-BOARD TV AND INTERNET

Now: Receiving satellite TV and broadband services requires an expensive dish the size of most SUV roof racks. **Soon:** Cheaper microdish arrays will be integrated

into the roof to resemble a sunroof. Or use your satellite radio antenna to download video-on-demand content tailored to fit smaller in-car screens, saving programs to a TiVo-like hard-drive. **Disclaimer:** More likely to rot childrens' brains than playing "I Spy."



00.6. COMPRESSION IGNITION

Now: Diesel engines using urea injection capable of meeting stringent new emissions standards are rolling out over the next two years. **Soon:** Homogeneous-charge compression ignition gasoline engines will marry the efficiency of diesel with the quiet power and inherently lower emissions of gasoline. **Disclaimer:** The tech requires highly sophisticated sensing and control of the ignition process, which has yet to be perfected.



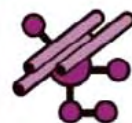
00.7 CAR SCRAP INTO OIL

Now: Most automotive plastics and old tires are overstressing our landfills. **Soon:** he long-chain organic molecules that make up these troublesome waste products will be fed into a pressure cooker and baked at about 600 psi and 500 degrees F. These thermal depolymerization plants will chop long molecules into useful hydrocarbon chains that can be profitably refined into gasoline or diesel fuel. **Disclaimer:** Unless Big Oil takes umbrage.



00.8 TURBOCHARGERS AND BLOWERS

Now: Turbos and superchargers enable small engines to produce big power on demand while sipping fuel at all other times. **Soon:** Fitting an engine with a turbocharger and a supplemental low-speed supercharger or coupling the turbo to an electric motor will eliminate low-speed turbocharger lag and high-speed supercharger drag. **Disclaimer:** Such systems add cost, and turbos complicate emissions compliance.



00.9 NANOTECHNOLOGY

Now: Ultrafine particles as small as a billionth of a meter are being used in scratch-resistant paints and molded-in-color composites in vehicle waxes and polishes and similar coatings. **Soon:** Carbon nanotubes will bring the next quantum leap in increased computing power in a dramatically smaller package, facilitating all sorts of new on-board electronics. **Disclaimer:** The computers will probably still crash.



00.10 ELECTRONIC SUSPENSIONS

Now: Shocks using magnetically controlled fluids or fitted with variable-flow orifices provide active damping for improved ride and handling. **Soon:** Electromagnetic rams under development at Bose will offer a vastly greater range of variability in spring and damping rates than today's air, oil, or steel suspensions can achieve, promising unprecedented ride quality and dynamic handling. **Disclaimer:** We have yet to sample the promise.

TEN TIPS FOR FUEL TEMPERANCE

00.1 SPEED KILLS (ECONOMY)

Wind drag increases with the square of speed at a cost of about 10 percent in economy for every five mph over 60 mph. At \$3/gallon, plan on spending \$10 to \$30/hour for the time you save by speeding.

00.2 TOP UP THE TIRES

A drop of just six psi in recommended tire pressure can increase fuel consumption by five percent, according to Tire Rack tests. It also diminishes handling precision and increases tire wear. Such a tire won't look deflated, so check pressures frequently.

00.3 MAINTAIN THE MOTOR

Follow the recommended change intervals for plugs, fluids, and filters (a clogged air filter can gobble four percent more fuel). And never ignore the check-engine light—a dead oxygen sensor increases consumption far more.

00.4 NO JUNK IN THE TRUNK

Fuel economy depends a lot on mass times acceleration. You know jack-rabbiting swills gas, but so does lugging unnecessary cargo. Jettison 100 pounds of stuff, and you could save three percent. In the winter, brush snow off the whole car, not just the windows—it's heavy.

00.5 DRIVE SMARTER, NOT HARDER

Combine multiple errands into one trip to save the fuel wasted to warm up a cold engine, avoid zero-mpg idling, and find the sweet speed at which you can make all the green lights on frequently traveled routes.

00.6 FLOOR IT TO SAVE GAS

Cracking the throttle wide open reduces pumping losses and improves efficiency, but only at low revs (2000 and below), which means this works only on manual-transmission cars or manumatics that won't downshift. It also won't work on turbocharged or supercharged engines. But for all the others, using full throttle and shifting early (so you're not accelerating any harder) is the smart bet.

00.7 AIR THINGS OUT

In hot weather, drive the first mile or so with the windows open to bring the interior down to ambient temperature, then set the temperature as high as you can stand and run in recirculate mode to reduce the load on the compressor. At highway speeds, A/C generally beats windows-down drag.

00.8 DRIVE SLICK

Remove aftermarket deflectors that keep bugs off the windshield or dirt off the back window and resist the urge to install wings and spoilers that add drag. Keep the roof clear, too, or use aerodynamic rooftop carriers.

SIPPING TIPS FOR THE FUEL-PARCHED

■ words **frank markus**

00.9 DON'T SPLURGE

Run your engine on the manufacturer's recommended fuel grade. There's no economy payoff in burning premium in a regular car. Beware of cheap off-brand gas, though, as it may lack additives that keep the fuel system clean.

00.10 CRUISE MORE

Unless your foot is uncommonly steady, running cruise control can eliminate consumptive slowing and accelerating when driving in the flatlands. In the hills, you're better advised to let the car slow down a bit uphill and regain speed on downhills.

TOP TEN GAS MISERS

MANUFACTURER/MODEL (TRANSMISSION)	CITY	HWY	COMB
00.1 TOYOTA PRIUS (automatic)	60	51	55
00.2 HONDA CIVIC HYBRID (auto)	49	51	50
HONDA CIVIC (auto)	30	40	34
HONDA CIVIC (manual)	30	38	33
00.3 TOYOTA CAMRY HYBRID (auto)	40	38	39
00.4 TOYOTA COROLLA (man)	32	41	36
TOYOTA COROLLA (auto)	30	38	33
00.5 TOYOTA YARIS (man)	34	40	36
TOYOTA YARIS (auto)	34	39	36
00.6 HONDA FIT (man)	33	38	35
HONDA FIT (auto)	31	37	33
00.7 TOYOTA SCION XA (auto)	31	38	34
TOYOTA SCION XA (man)	32	37	34
00.8 HYUNDAI ACCENT (man)	32	35	33
& KIA RIO (man)	32	35	33
00.9 PONTIAC VIBE (man)	30	36	33
& TOYOTA COROLLA MATRIX (man)	30	36	33
00.10 FORD ESCAPE HYBRID FWD (auto)	36	31	33



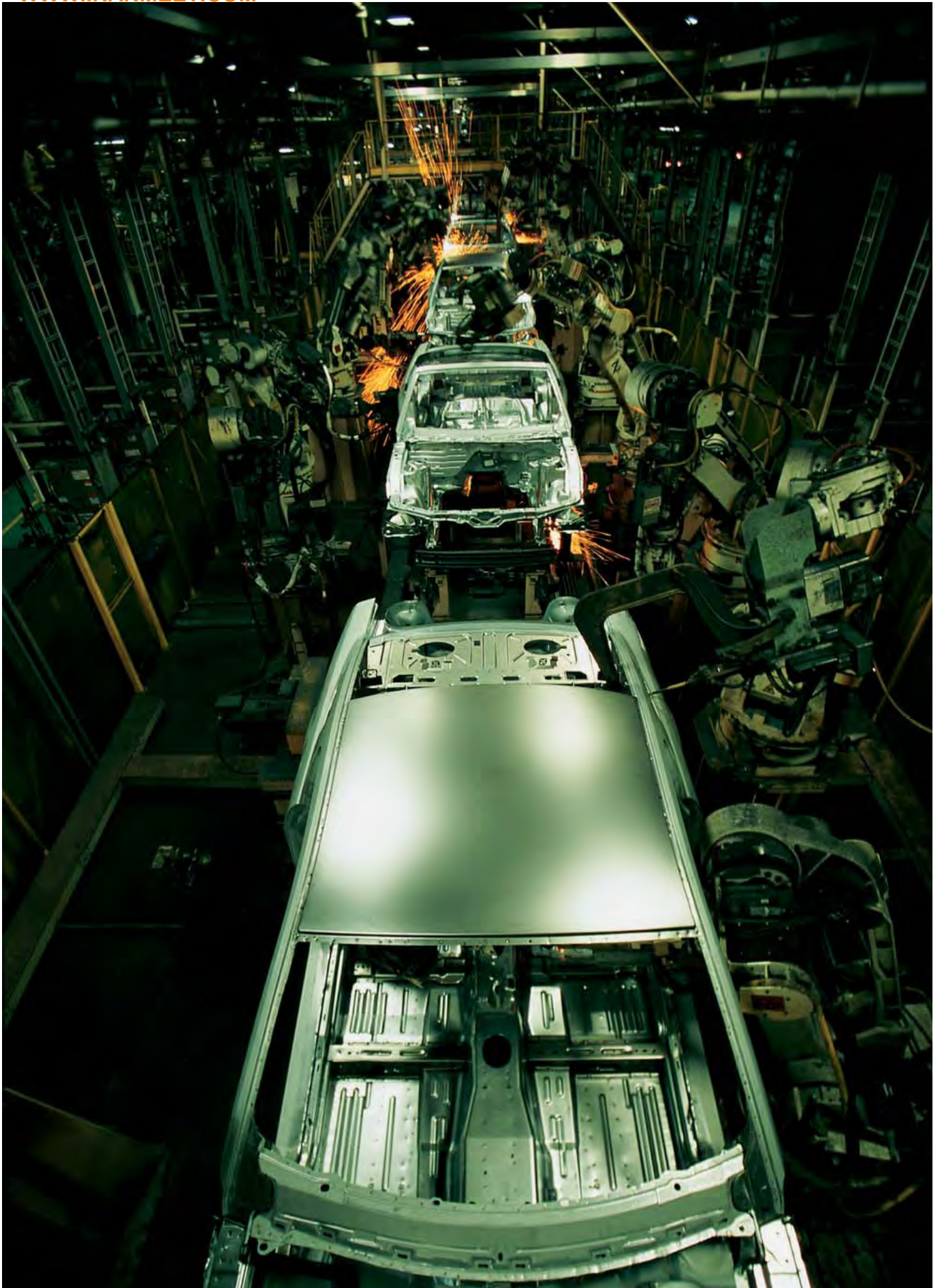
REQUIRE ASSEMBLY REQUIRE

(feature) build your own **mustang**

* **some
assembly
required**

FORGET INSTANT GRATIFICATION. YOU CAN
STILL ORDER A CAR THE WAY YOU WANT IT—
JUST LIKE THEY DID IN THE OLD DAYS.

* words & photographs **winston goodfellow**





right down the line



10.00 p.m.



10.20 p.m.

ASSEMBLY



02.00 a.m.

ASSEMBLY starts at 8:50 p.m. with a freshly painted, empty metal shell hanging in an overhead cradle on the tilt line at a 45-degree angle. Twenty minutes later, the car moves onto stands on line two, a conveyor belt, and is ready for assembly. By 10:00, the instrument panel is ready to be put together



02.10 a.m.

on the preinstallation line. The engine is completed on the engine-production line between 10:20 and 11:00. At 11:45, the instrument-panel assembly is united with the body, and at 12:20, the engine is placed into the engine bay. Wheels are added to the car at 1:50 in the morning, and at 2:00 robots

build your own mustang (feature)

FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES who've seen me run through a series of used high-end collector cars during the past two-plus decades were surprised to learn I'd never bought a new car for myself. Back in the 1980s and 1990s, when interesting stuff was much less expensive, new cars couldn't touch the performance and personality that second-hand exotics, luxury, and musclecars offered.

Flash forward to 2006, and it's a different ballgame. For around \$30,000, Ford's new Mustang dishes out the cachet and fun of a classic car (and more) without the headaches. I was bitten from the moment it was introduced.

That's how I found myself at Salinas Valley Ford, walking the lot with general manager Lars Frieberg. "The green Stage 1 Roush caught my eye," I told him. Frieberg said the first owner hadn't kept up with the payments, and I figured on using that situation to my advantage to save a bundle on the purchase. But after the test drive, I came away unconvinced it was the Mustang for me. Frieberg and I strolled the rest of the lot, looking for that one car to give my guts a good twist.

But nothing satisfied my craving.

"Let's head up to my office to see what other dealers have in stock," Frieberg suggested. "What exactly are you looking for?"

My ideal Mustang started with deleting the rear spoiler, the factory's tacked-on appendage that to my eye hinders the purity of the car's shape. It also had to have a V-8 and five-speed tranny. Color combinations were up in the air, though a black interior was low on the list. I don't like sitting in a dark cave.

Frieberg printed out spec sheets for different Mustang GTs. The spoiler delete eliminated 90 percent of the cars available, and the five-speed just about took care of the rest. Colors and interior packages were all over the board.

After an hour or two, I'd honed my choices down to five sheets, each summarizing a Mustang. I liked them all, but none screamed loudly enough for us to start dealer negotiations.

"Do you have to have the car tomorrow?" Frieberg asked as I shuffled the sheets yet another time.

"No, I can wait!"

"Then I'd recommend custom ordering your Mustang. That way, you get exactly what you want. After all, you'll be living with it for quite some time!"



11.45 p.m.



12.20 a.m.



02.35 a.m.

install the front and rear glass. The interior nears completion as the seats are installed by 2:10. Doors, initially removed for interior work, are reattached at 2:35. The car nears the end of the final trim assembly line by 3:00, where the remaining trim items are installed. Final inspection of the completed



03.15 a.m.

Mustang takes only five minutes between 3:10 and 3:15. The fully assembled vehicle comes to the end of the line at 3:20, when the wipers, lights, and horn are checked. The brand-new Mustang is then fired up for the first time and driven away to a holding lot.



(feature) build your own mustang

**“ONLY THREE TO FIVE PERCENT OF OUR CLIENTS
CUSTOM ORDER THEIR CARS. WHEN YOU DO THAT
THE CAR IS TRULY YOURS.”**



He spoke of how customers walk in and want to drive away something immediately. “Only three to five percent of our clients custom order their cars,” he said. “When you do that, the car is truly yours!”

With those words ringing in my ears, I took the sales brochures and sheets home for some serious thinking. A week later, I returned, convinced I knew how I wanted my Mustang: tungsten gray, red interior, spoiler delete, and 18-inch polished mags.

“I’m always looking for an excuse to fire it up,” said Frieberg, as he drove up in a tungsten gray GT and beamed over the burbling exhaust. He maneuvered it into the sunlight so I could visualize its color on the Mustangs parked nearby. We went to lunch minutes later, convinced I’d found my color.

But, later, as I walked around another tungsten gray Mustang and looked at the GT parked not too far away, something no longer felt right. It soon became apparent: Because they’re assembled in different plants, the GT and Mustang’s version of tungsten gray are not the same.

I returned to square one, now favoring a lighter blue color—though a dark-red/tan-interior V6 five-speed coupe with different 18-inch rims beckoned me for a look. Should I stick with the gray and get a black interior or go for the blue or do something else altogether? I’d have it for a long time, so I wanted to make sure it’s right.

The moment of truth came when we sat down in Frieberg’s office to place the order. He was halfway through the process when I blurted out, “Forget the blue and the gray. Order dark red with the parchment [tan] interior!”

It wasn’t just the color combo and big wheels that got me. The V6 coupe I saw had the Ford Racing “Handling Pack” that dropped ride height 1.5 inches. In addition to anti-roll bars, different springs, and a strut tower brace, the package’s lowered height changed the Mustang’s stance, making a good thing even better. Working with accessories specialist Chris Davis, I ordered that and the Power Pack (good for 20-plus horses at the rear wheels); both would be installed at the dealership upon my car’s arrival.

For the next two weeks I turned into a nervous, expectant father. I called friends and kept going back to the brochures, driving by other dealerships to look at cars, wanting to confirm the chosen colors and options were indeed right. Outside of a single photo in the brochure, I had yet to see the 18-inch polished mags I’d ordered. Would they be too flashy for my taste?

Two weeks later, that question was answered at Mustang Mecca, the assembly plant in Flat Rock, Michigan (I followed the car down the line as a journalistic endeavor—thanks, Ford). It’s been a long time since I pulled an all-nighter, but with my car being produced on the B shift, this expectant father sucked it up and shook off just four hours sleep the previous night.

I arrived a bit before 9 p.m. and was escorted to see my car’s red body shell gleaming in its overhead cradle on the production line. During the next six and a half hours, final-assembly superintendent Rod Gray ran me from one end of the factory to the other, watching the car and various components being built and installed.

The experience was surreal. I’ve photographed many factories, but this was different. I’d grin every once in a while, remembering this was my car being constructed, not something for a magazine article or book.

At approximately 3:30 a.m., the wipers, horn, and headlights were tested, and the engine turned over for the first time. I smiled as the V-8 rumbled to life, and my Mustang was driven off the line and over to the finishing area. The wheels looked great, particularly in motion.

It’s now several weeks since my car was delivered, and I’m still a proud father who couldn’t be happier. The lowered ride height, the clean shape, the colors, the larger wheels—this Mustang GT is everything I wanted and more. It gets 30 mpg at 65 mph!

Take my advice: If you can resist scratching the instant-gratification itch, place a custom order. You deserve the car you really want. ■



MATT STONE



2007

GG Motorrad Technik

And now for something completely different

THROW traditional out the window. Get rid of common, too. Clear your mind of all preconceived thoughts of normal. Now strap on a helmet and throw your leg over the 2007 GG Motorrad Technik "quad." Don't mind the fact that you've never ridden a street bike, just fire up the BMW twin-cylinder boxer engine, let out the clutch, and set out for adventure.

For years, Walter Gruter has been building, selling, and riding his Swiss-made, TÜV-approved, street-legal quad in Europe. And now it's headed for America. As of this writing the quad is under the persnickety eye of DOT officials in Washington, D.C. If approved for roadworthiness, U.S. importer Keith Smith will be taking orders before year's end.

So what exactly is the Motorrad Technik? It's part motorcycle (engine, handlebars, gauges, electrics), part car (four OZ 17-inch "car" wheels, four-wheel independent suspension, four-wheel disc brakes), and part engineering masterpiece (much of the suspension, frame, and Quaiffe LSD rearend housing are CNC-machined from billet aluminum). Add to the mix aerodynamic body panels, headlights, turn signals, luggage compartments, room for a passenger, and you've got the recipe for a seriously fun commuter.

Despite extensive use of billet aluminum, the Motorrad weighs in at a few ticks less than 900 pounds, about double the weight of a normal sport bike. Propulsion comes from a fuel-injected,

computer-controlled 1130cc two-cylinder flat-four engine from a BMW R1150RT motorcycle. The engine is bone stock (read reliable and fuel-efficient) and even makes use of the R1150RT's stock exhaust system—thus, it's quiet.

To improve standing-start acceleration, the engine's factory first gear has been replaced with a more aggressive R1150GS first gear. Rev the engine to 5500 rpm, engage the clutch, and the Motorrad charges to 60 mph in just 4.9 seconds. If danger approaches, dive hard on the racing-spec four-wheel disc brakes, and you'll scrub speed faster than the Road Runner stopping for a pile of ACME birdseed.

With Dunlop SP Sport 9000 tires, adjustable coil-over shocks/springs, and a low center

of gravity, the Motorrad takes tight corners with ease, but be careful with steering input as the quad's steering is much more sensitive than a top-end sports car's. Street-bike-riding experience helps, but isn't required for the GG quad. Drive the Motorrad normally, and you'll get over 30-mph fuel economy, and in traffic/parking-challenged cities the quad opens up a world of possibilities. Of course, such fun and performance come at a price. Initial MSRP should be around \$49,500, but prices may drop if sales are strong. The Motorrad also includes such options as heated handlebar grips, a BMW anti-theft alarm system, lockable side storage boxes, a trailer-hitch assembly, and even an optional Garmin GPS route guidance system. ■



	2005 Mustang GT	GG Motorrad Quad
Power	300 hp	95 hp
0-60 mph	5.1 sec	4.9 sec
Quarter mile	13.5 @ 104.0 mph	14.0 sec @ 91.8 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	125 ft	115 ft
Figure eight	26.4 sec	25.8 sec
Skidpad, 200-ft dia	0.87 g	0.90 g

SOURCE: GG QUAD NA; 214/559-4597; GG-QUAD-NORTHAMERICA.COM



JULIA LAPALME '03

2006

Mazda MX-5 Grand Touring

Already a classic by name alone

ANY TIME you're handed the keys to a roadster, odds are it's going to be a good day. The odds get even better when the keys belong to the 2006 Mazda MX-5. Sure, we had to get used to

the alphanumerics—even when it came out in 1989, MX-5 was part of the name, but it's always been referred to as a Miata. At its core, however, this third generation is still the same lovable, European-

inspired compact droptop. The MX-5 is all-new for 2006: The platform, structure, engine, suspension, exterior design, cabin, and steering have been completely redesigned or

significantly revised, qualifying it for *Motor Trend's* Car of the Year competition, where it proved impressive enough to merit a longer look. Our Grand Touring model was sprayed in Winning

OUR FLEET UPDATE words neil g. chirico



2006 AUDI A3

Total Mileage 9249

POSITIVE declarations are filling the logbook about our A3's Direct Shift gearbox: "The DSG is as close to perfect as a sequential manual gets. Downshifts are so smooth and seamless you sometimes don't know they're happening, except for the hyper-quick

tach-needle movement. The best part is that there's no upsetting of the chassis when downshifting for a fast, tight curve. Hit the paddle twice and you go from fourth to second, and the chassis stays perfectly settled. So much fun!" It isn't just the gearbox that's causing the staff to fall in love with the A3 after just one drive—this is a sweet car all the way around.

- Average fuel econ 21.8 mpg
- Unresolved problems None
- Maintenance cost \$0 (First service)
- Normal-wear cost \$3 (one quart oil)

2006 HONDA RIDGELINE RTL

Total mileage 12,233

SENIOR EDITOR Ron Kiino hung out the "gone fishing" sign and took the Ridgeline from Death Valley to Mammoth Lake for some quality hook time. One former truck owner logged, "It's not the tough truck most truck guys have learned to live with even when they don't need to. I wouldn't use it to rip a tree trunk out of the ground, but how many people actually do that with their trucks anyway?" Still, we're using it the way most truck owners do use theirs: commuting to work,

hauling stuff from the grocery or hardware stores, and going fishing.

- Average fuel econ 16.3 mpg
- Unresolved problems Service campaign to replace inner door-handle clip
- Maintenance cost \$47.70 ("A" service)
- Normal-wear cost \$0





JULIA LAPALME

from the logbook

"The short throws on the six-speed, responsive four-banger, grippy suspension, and nimble size make for an excellent weekend runner." ■ Brian Vance

arrival	
2006 Mazda MX-5	
Base price	\$24,995
Price as tested	\$25,495
Vehicle layout	Front engine, RWD, 2-pass, 2-dr roadster
Engine	2.0L/170-hp/140 lb-ft DOHC 16-valve I-4
Transmission	6-speed manual
Curb weight (dist f/r)	2478 lb (52/48%)
Wheelbase	91.7 in
Length x width x height	157.3 x 67.7 x 49.0 in
0-60 mph	6.9 sec
Quarter mile	15.3 sec @ 90.1 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	122 ft
600-ft slalom	66.5 mph
EPA city/hwy econ	24/30 mpg
Total mileage	3963 mi
Average test mpg	22.7 mpg
Unresolved problem areas	None

Blue paint and has a black leather interior and matching cloth top. Mechanicals include a 170-horsepower, 2.0-liter four, backed by a six-speed manual transmission. For handling gusto, we opted for the Suspension Package (\$500), which includes a sport-tuned suspension, Bilstein shocks, and a limited-slip.

The long-termer arrived with 1498 miles on the odometer, and

after two months has been driven nearly 2500 miles. Not bad for a car that essentially has no cargo- or people-carrying abilities. It's already been taken through the local canyons and up and down the California coast, from north of Malibu to near San Diego. With all lead-foot instincts intact, the Miata provided fuel economy of 22.7 mpg, a tad below the EPA-estimated city rating, but if

you drive it the way it deserves to be driven, you shouldn't expect stellar gas mileage.

But you will get good performance numbers: At the track, it reached 60 mph in 6.9 seconds, sped through the quarter mile in 15.3 seconds at 90.1 mph, and zigzagged the cones at 66.5 mph—that's faster than the Lexus IS 350. For skeptics who think the MX-5 has gained too much

weight for the bigger engine to make a difference (curb weight has increased by 296 pounds), 0-to-60 times are down nearly two full seconds from the first-gen, and the weight-to-power ratio is reduced from 18.8 to 14.9. If the first two months are any indication, we're in for a lot of fun with this roadster and are looking forward to extended time with Mazda's newest legend. ■

OUR FLEET UPDATE words neil g. chirico



BRIAN VANCE

2005 PORSCHE 911 CARRERA S

Total mileage 14,966

OUR 911'S driver-side muffler started to sound like a rattling tin can, so we made a special trip to the dealer. We also had them inspect a peeling, aluminum engine-displacement appliqué. When we went to retrieve our car, we discovered the appliqué

hadn't been installed, so we waited an additional hour and a half for them to replace it and the air box it sits on. But we still had an improperly operating muffler system, and the dealer failed to warn us that both rear tires had cord coming out. Alarming, since they'd been working in that area when they replaced the muffler.

- Average fuel econ 16.2 mpg
- Unresolved problems Sport setting on muffler system inoperative
- Maintenance cost None
- Normal-wear cost \$5 (one quart Mobil 1 oil)

2005 ACURA RL

Total mileage 26,624

THE ACURA RL'S keyless, touch-and-open entry came in handy when one editor took the RL skiing. At the end of the day, the fob was buried deep in his jacket pocket and his cold extremities were aching for the warmth of the heater vents. Without having to remove his gloves, he was able to unlock the car, start the engine, and begin warming up. We suppose this system also would prevent you from ever locking your keys in the car again. So many vehicles today have this as an option, yet it

still surprises us with the ways it comes in handy.

- Average fuel econ 20.0 mpg
- Unresolved problems Wipers won't seat properly
- Maintenance cost \$53.99 ("A" service); \$196.33 ("B" service); \$94.44 ("A" service)
- Normal-wear cost \$0

For vehicle specs, go to motortrend.com



EVAN WOLLENBERG



2005

Mazda3 S 5-Door

Good things come in small packages

THOSE WHO'VE been keeping their eye on Mazda know that lately the company's been doing a good job of making practical, solidly built transportation with just the right amount of sporty intention to draw buyers away from the bigger, blander Japanese manufacturers. Case in point is the Mazda3 5-Door. First impression? This car looks, feels, and drives more expensive than it really is.

When it hit the market in early 2004 as a 2005 model, it became one of the best small cars for the money, dethroning the then-aging Civic and kicking the Corolla down a notch on the benchmark pole. And though Chevrolet launched its new Cobalt at about the same time as the Mazda's debut, the compact from GM doesn't measure up to the Global C1 platform underpinning the Mazda (also used in Volvo's S40 and the Euro Ford Focus).

A benefit of sharing a platform and significant chassis, suspension, and steering components with a much pricier car like the Volvo S40 is that many of the shared bits were designed to compete at a higher level in the marketplace; when engineered into a less expensive car, that lesser car reaps the reward of superior engineering. Examples of this are found throughout the Mazda. The steering feel is a cut above most of its class peers and provides better than expected feedback. The suspension also is more engaging than in many

compact sedans/wagons and can be pushed to playful levels of enthusiasm without producing a harsh ride.

The four-cylinder, 160-horsepower engine, standard in this "S" version of the 3, has been the subject of many entries into our logbook. Some staffers were perfectly content with its power output, commenting that the combination of horsepower and vehicle

weight allows one to drive the car to its limits without surpassing their personal limits of control. Of course, power-hungry staff members think a chassis as capable as this one deserves more juice under the hood (we're happy to report a MazdaSpeed version is on its way). Dropping in the S40's six-speed might make the car seem quicker, even though it probably wouldn't be.

Despite our disagreements on engine power, we concur that the premium look and feel of the 3's interior are top notch. Bonuses include auxiliary stereo controls on the steering wheel, a tilt/telescope steering column, Eurolike orange backlighting, and a glovebox big enough to store everything from paperbacks to sandwiches in the passenger side of the dash. One surprised editor says, "The 3 has the largest, most useful glovebox I recall encountering. It's extraordinarily deep and has a large pocket on the door that alone holds as much as most boxes."

Unfortunately, what the Mazda's interior lacks is a second power point to accommodate a cell-phone charger, radar detector, or an iPod FM modulator. Younger buyers snatching up these cars most certainly bring with them more than one gadget that requires a 12-volt.

A small glitch in the cabin came in the form of a loose-fitting plastic panel that surrounds the 12-volt power point. Over time, it

our car	
Base price	\$17,650
ABS, side-curtain airbags, front-seat torso airbags (package)	\$800
Moonroof, six-disc CD changer (package)	\$890
MSRP, as tested	\$19,340
Total mileage	19,546 miles
Avg fuel economy	26.5 mpg
Problem areas	None
Maintenance cost	\$143.64
Normal-wear cost	\$172.98 (replaced flat tire with new one)
Current value, wholesale/retail*	\$13,655/\$18,525
Recalls	None

*source: intellichoice.com



threatened to pop off whenever we unplugged a cord.

Two trips across the United States, a wintertime dash to Lake Tahoe, and numerous weekend drives out of town demonstrated that the 3 is a terrific long-distance hauler. Some staffers made note of high-speed wind and road-noise intrusions, but considering the price point on this car, we'd be surprised if the sound insulation were better than it is. The front seats are well bolstered, and the adjustable lumbar support kept our bottoms from going numb on those long jaunts.

Unlike many compacts, the rear seat in the 3 is far from being a penalty box. The rear windows roll all the way down past the sill, and even with our tester's moonroof, there's plenty of headroom. Although the back seat is best for two passengers, three bodies fit fine there for short trips. Folding the rear seats down increases the cargo area generously, and while

the rear seatbacks don't fold completely flat, rarely did we wish for more space.

Even though there's no shortage of these Mazdas on the road, the combination of our tester's bright-blue paint, attractive 17-inch wheels, upgraded grille, and monochromatic trim turned many a head. The 3 has a decidedly handsome, European look and does a great job of masking its wagonlike proportions.

Perhaps the most telling story about how much we enjoyed the Mazda is that four staff members made separate comments in the logbook that, were they in the market for a new car, the 3 would be a top choice—this from a staff that gets behind the wheel of almost every new car. The combination of its under-\$20K sticker price, its ability to serve up a passionate driving experience without guzzling gas, and the practicality of its five-door body style makes the Mazda3 an excellent ride in the ever-growing compact segment. ■

from the logbook

"The driving experience is a lot of fun, and I often find myself having to slow down or risk getting pulled over. It may not be the fastest, but it handles well, and for zipping around town, commuting to work, or a weekend escape, it's a great car."

■ Allyson Harwood

"I can vouch for it being sporty and fun to drive—maybe too much fun to drive. Just ask the officer who pulled me over and wrote me a ticket. Speed creeps up on you in this car. It's responsive and deceptive, two qualities I typically like in a car—just not today."

■ Mark Williams

"I'm not convinced this 160-horsepower engine feels any quicker than the 140 horsepower in the new Civic, plus Honda upped the ante by offering a hi-po version of the Civic (the Si) right out of the gate while we continue to wait for the MazdaSpeed version of the 3."

■ Brian Vance

"The taut, sporty suspension encourages taking turns at higher than socially acceptable speeds. The handling is the standout characteristic of this car, but the penalty for the firm dampers can be felt on bad roads."

■ John Kiewicz

2005 Mazda3 S 5-Door

POWERTRAIN/CHASSIS	
Drivetrain layout	Front engine, FWD
Engine type	I-4, alum block/ alum head
Valvetrain	DOHC, 4 valves/cyl, variable intake-valve timing
Displacement	137.6 cu in/2261cc
Compression ratio	9.7:1
Power (SAE net)	160 @ 6500 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	150 @ 4500 rpm
Redline	6500 rpm
Weight to power	18.2 lb/hp
Transmission	5-speed manual
Axle/final drive ratios	4.11:1/3.12:1
Suspension, front; rear	Struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, anti roll bar
Turns lock-to-lock	2.9
Brakes, f;r	11.8-in vented discs; 11.0-in disc, ABS
Wheels	17 x 6.5, aluminum
Tires	P205/50R17 88V M+S Goodyear Eagle RS-A
DIMENSIONS	
Wheelbase	103.9 in
Track, f/r	60.2/59.6 in
Length x width x height	176.6 x 69.1 x 57.7
Turning circle	34.1 ft
Curb weight	2914 lb
Weight dist, f/r	60/40%
Seating capacity	5
Headroom, f/r	38.2/38.3 in
Legroom, f/r	41.9/36.3 in
Shoulder room, f/r	54.9/54.0 in
Cargo volume	17.1/31.2 cu ft (seats up/folded)
TEST DATA	
Acceleration to mph	
0-30	2.7 sec
0-40	4.0
0-50	5.8
0-60	7.7
0-70	10.3
0-80	13.5
0-90	17.6
0-100	23.8
Quarter mile	15.9 sec @ 87.4 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	116 ft
600-ft slalom	66.4 mph avg
Lateral acceleration	0.88 g avg
Figure eight	27.4 sec @ 0.62 g avg
Top gear revs @ 60 mph	2550 rpm
CONSUMER INFO	
Stability/traction control	No/no
Airbags	Dual front, front side (opt), f/r head curtain (opt), front torso (opt)
Basic warranty	4 yrs/50,000 miles
Powertrain warranty	4 yrs/50,000 miles
Roadside assistance	4 yrs/50,000 miles
Fuel capacity	14.5 gal
EPA city/hwy econ	25/32 mpg
Recommended fuel	Regular unleaded



FORD

Fantasy for Rent

One more look at 1966's coolest rental car

THIS WAS THE dream Hertz, Ford, and Carroll Shelby were selling (or renting): The sun is shining. It's just you and your date out for a lazy, hazy, crazy summer drive. Maybe you didn't have the scratch to afford your own Shelby Mustang, but you could always rent one. Heck, she didn't have to know it wasn't yours. Even though the new GT-H coupes will all be trimmed in black and gold, and all of them will have automatic transmissions, that wasn't the case with the original GT350Hs. They were available in other colors, although black/gold was the predominant combo. A few were built with stickshifts; can't imagine how many came back to the Hertz lot with smoking clutches. Strange as it may sound, the original H cars were considered second-class Shelybs for decades. Collectors felt they were just used rental cars. That's all changed, and today, they're highly sought by Shelbyphiles. Check out this issue's cover story on these Shelby "Rent-a-Racers." ■

coverage november 1966



HOWEVER MUCH things change, fall is always "New Car Buyer's Guide" time. Of all the cars on this cover, we'll take the 1967 427-powered Corvette roadster. Or maybe the

Checker Marathon described on page 89. Back then, we'd dedicate an entire page in our buyer's guide for each new model—almost impossible now with so much competition on the market. The story behind the gunslinging cowboy guy with the couple and the Dodge Dart? Don't ask. We have no idea.

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