

2012 NAIAS 'Educates, Astonishes, Entertains'

by Gerald Scott
News Dept.

For an entire year, we're told by both the auto industry in Detroit and politicians in Washington, D.C., that "the public" desperately wants smaller and more fuel-efficient cars on the road.

Sohowcomesit, so, how comes it, that when the public assembles for the annual Detroit auto show at Cobo, the stands with high-horsepower cars like Corvette and Camaro and Mustang are all mobbed . . . and the small cars are somewhat deserted?

Go figure. But the case in point is made. Visiting the Detroit auto show on Martin Luther King Day last week, for example, were Mike Martinez, his daughters, Kirsten and Chelsea, and their friend, Zach McAuley.

They were so enraptured with the 2012 Chevrolet Corvette convertible, a \$60,000 car, that they took turns taking each other's photos with a digital camera both inside and outside of the car alike.

Said McAuley, "I like the speakers behind the seats . . . plus you push buttons (in lieu of door handles) to get out." Added Chelsea Martinez, speaking of the exterior design, "The car just flows," she beamed.

Indeed, they all agreed that the Corvette convertible is a gorgeous car. Still, it begs the question as to why the V8 sports cars get mobbed at the car show and gas sippers get

only pleasing nods. Maybe it's all in the marketing.

In the meantime, the public kicked the tires at the 2012 North American International Auto Show and the general consensus is that everything is somehow more upbeat and brighter this year, that the good vibe that kicked off with press week continued through the 10-day public run.

The Jan. 14 opening day was the strongest in five years with 92,106 visitors.

All said, show organizers do a good job of packing more oomph into the public days, including an enhanced Education Day on Jan. 18 and an expanded photo contest for amateur car photographers.

"Nearly every display here at NAIAS features an interactive family-oriented element," said Bill Perkins, chairman, NAIAS 2012.

"The more than 500 vehicles are fantastic to look at and sit in, and with today's emphasis on connectivity and advanced technology, the exhibits take the show to the extreme. I've said all along, this show will educate, astonish and entertain. And it's doing just that."

New special events have been added, including the main floor NAIAS Parade of Cars and Stars, which has been pleasing thousands of onlookers twice daily.

Led around the inner loop of the show floor by police motorcycles with flashing lights and sirens, three luxury vehicles – an Aston Martin, Bentley and Chevrolet Corvette – drive



PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

Visiting the Detroit auto show from Toledo are, from left, Mike Martinez, Kirsten Martinez, Chelsea Martinez and Zach McAuley.

slowly around the show as thousands of digital cameras flash. Several characters from The Parade Company follow along, while celebrities (Thomas Hearn, and Miss Michigan USA Kristen Danyal) waved to the crowds Sunday of opening weekend.

At the Cadillac pavilion, UAW members joined their GM colleagues in promoting and explaining the technology on the new cars.

Thomas Nothoff of the UAW-GM Quality Network, based at the UAW-GM Center for Human Resources in Detroit, explained that their members will often be on the show floor for five or six different national auto shows, including NAIAS at Cobo.

He said it was a point of pride for UAW members to



GM Chairman and CEO Dan Akerson, left, greets Ford President and CEO Alan Mulally as both arrive at the North American International Auto Show Charity Preview.

talk to the public about how the cars are built, what technology is being used and other factors that go into today's

modern automobile.

All in all, the public seemed pleased with what they saw on the Cobo floor after all.

GM's Akerson To Testify About Volt Fires in NHTSA Tests

DETROIT (AP) – General Motors CEO Dan Akerson has agreed to testify before a U.S. House subcommittee about battery fires in Chevrolet Volt electric cars.

Company spokesman Greg Martin says Akerson will speak to a subcommittee of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee on Jan. 25.

The committee is looking into why federal safety regulators waited five months before telling the public that a Volt battery caught fire three weeks after a government crash test. The fire happened in June but was not made public until November. Subsequent tests caused two more fires.

GM says no real-world fires have occurred. Coolant leaked from the batteries and caused a short circuit, sparking the fires.

GM is advising Volt owners to take the cars to dealers for repairs that will better protect the batteries.

The original NHTSA probe, announced Nov. 25, was prompted by two fires that followed crash tests. Although the agency was unaware of real-world crashes causing fires, it was "concerned" by the results of the two tests.

The investigation threatened to tarnish the reputation of the plug-in hybrid General Motors has made the centerpiece of its campaign toward greater efficiency.



Detroit Lions running back Jahvid Best meets a fan and signs an autograph at a GMC Monday Night Football event prior to a Detroit Lions game in October.



GMC's Monday Night Football tent in Tampa, Fla., stands ready to accept fans looking to test their football skills and meet current and former NFL players.

Pettigrew, Other NFL Players Work with GM for Kids

DETROIT – GMC, together with the NFL, completed its second annual Monday Night Football Tour, with NFL cities reaping the benefits of more than 300 volunteers who built playgrounds as part of United Way's nationwide effort to get 1.9 million more kids active and healthy by 2018.

Playgrounds were completed in Dallas, Tampa Bay, Detroit, New York City, Kansas City, Philadelphia, Boston, New Orleans and Seattle.

Volunteers, including NFL players like Detroit Lions' tight end Brandon Pettigrew, contributed more than 1,000 hours of labor.

In Kansas City, Mo., a grade school received a playground it was lacking since its original construction 25 years ago. In New York, a new playground gave young children a place to play at a school previously offering only equipment for older students.

The United Way Healthy Kids Zones – driven by GMC – offered thousands of children the opportunity to climb, build upper body strength, promote balance and agility, and develop strength and endurance.

The playground equipment, paid for by GMC and supplied by GameTime, is designed to help children develop active,

healthy bodies, as well as personal and social skills.

"GMC recognizes how important it is to raise awareness about the issue of childhood obesity and to create new opportunities for young people to lead healthier lifestyles," said Craig Bierley, GMC Advertising and Sales Promotion director.

"By working with the NFL and United Way, GMC is helping make communities stronger."

This year's expanded tour

program also invited fans to test their football skills against the pros for a chance to win Monday Night Football game tickets, NFLshop.com gift cards and signed memorabilia.

Fans also had opportunities to meet current and former NFL players such as Deion Sanders and New England Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski. As Tom Brady's favorite target, Gronkowski set a single-season NFL record for receiving yards at his position in the

2011 NFL regular season. ESPN Monday Night Football announcer Mike Tirico also participated.

After testing their skills and meeting the pros, 11,485 men and women in the nine cities test drove the GMC Acadia crossover vehicle, Sierra pickup truck, Terrain smaller SUV and Yukon full-size SUV.

"This year, GMC built on the success of a great program launched in 2010," Bierley said.

Model Ts, 2011 Plug-in, 1896 Duryea Featured in 'Driving America' Exhibit

by Gerald Scott
News Dept.

Nobody in town and perhaps nobody in the country knows cars quite like the Henry Ford Museum.

That's not a given. They could be parochial and lean on Ford in favor of competing brands, but the Museum sure seems to get it right in overall terms of its big new "Driving

America" motor exhibit, which opens Jan. 29.

All brands, not just Ford, get their earned due in this bright new examination of America's endless love affair with the automobile, the open road and the freedom it has all come to represent to more than a century's worth of American motorists.

Centered around an unparalleled collection of historical-

ly significant vehicles, this remarkable mix of authentic artifacts, digital media, interactive play and personal accounts focuses on the enormous influence the automobile has had on American culture – from the automotive innovations that have changed our lives to the everyday choices we make.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

GM Tops Toyota as Global Sales Leader

By TOM KRISHER
AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) – General Motors Co. has retaken the title of world's top-selling automaker, selling just over 9 million cars and trucks across the globe.

The company said Thursday that it sold 9.03 million vehicles worldwide last year, up 7.6 percent from 2010. That's more than 1 million better than Japan's Toyota Motor Corp., which took the title away from GM in 2008.

In 2011, Germany's fast-growing Volkswagen AG took second place behind GM with record global sales of 8.16 mil-

lion, up 14 percent from the year before. The French-Japanese alliance of Renault and Nissan was third, selling 8.03 million vehicles.

Toyota ended up finishing fourth in 2011 with 7.9 million vehicles sold. Its sales were hurt last year because the March earthquake in Japan slowed its factories, and dealers ran short of cars to sell. Toyota is aiming for a comeback and has said it will sell 8.48 million vehicles in 2012.

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PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

A 1978 Dodge Omni, right, is part of the vehicle layout at the new "Driving America" exhibit at Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn.