

Camaro, Mustang, Challenger Land 82% Of Nation's Sports Car Buyers in 2011

DETROIT – According to GM, Chevrolet is America's favorite performance brand, with Camaro and Corvette accounting for one out of every three sports cars sold in the United States in 2011.

Chevrolet accounted for 37 percent of the sports-car segment last year, selling 88,249 Camaros, which surpassed its nearest competitor, the Ford Mustang.

The Dodge Challenger also did well, selling almost 40,000 units, in keeping with Chrysler's remarkable resurgence.

Top 5 Sports Cars by 2011 market share and total units:

- Chevrolet Camaro - 37% with 88,249 units;
- Ford Mustang - 29% with 70,438 units;
- Dodge Challenger - 16% with 39,534 units;
- Honda CR-Z - 5% with 11,330 units;
- Hyundai Veloster - 4% with 9,284 units.

Chevrolet also accounted for 28 percent of the luxury-sports-car segment in 2011, selling 13,164 Corvettes. Currently, the only domestic car in the segment, Corvette more than doubled the sales of its nearest competitor, the Porsche 911.

Top 5 Luxury Sports Cars by 2011 market share, total units:

- Chevrolet Corvette - 28% with 13,164 units;
- Porsche 911 - 13% with 6,016 units;
- BMW 6-Series - 8% with 3,903 units;
- BMW Z4 - 7% with 3,479 units;
- Mercedes SLK - 7% with 3,220 units.

Big 3 Reporting Wide Range of Gains During Month of Feb.

DETROIT – The Big Three carmakers all gained in sales during February, although the range was wide.

Chrysler led the way with a 40 percent monthly sales gain followed by Ford (14 percent) and GM (1 percent).

A reasonable analysis of the Big Three's fortunes coming out of February were offered by Alec Gutierrez, senior marketing analyst at Kelley Blue Book (KBB).

"Chrysler benefited from strong sales of the 200 and 300 sedans, which were up more than 300 percent each, year-over-year," he said.

"The 200 has been a strong performer for Chrysler since its launch last year, and it performed surprisingly well in February due to the 30 mpg rating of its 2.4L, four-cylinder engine.

"(Meanwhile), Ford improved 14 percent versus one year ago, led by sales of the redesigned Ford Focus, which was up 114 percent, year-over-year.

"The Focus has been well-received since its launch late last year and with fuel prices at record levels, the 40 mpg Focus should continue to be an excellent choice for consumers looking to save at the pump.

"Rounding out the domestic automakers is General Motors, which posted a 1 percent gain year-over-year on strong compact-car sales from the Cruze, Verano and Sonic.

"Combined, these models posted an increase of 43 percent year-over-year. All three of these vehicles offer approximately 40 mpg on the highway with amenities consumers have come to expect and all at an affordable price," KBB's Gutierrez further observed.

"With the addition of the Camaro ZL1, there are only a handful of brands in the world with two cars that can match the performance, technology, and excitement of Corvette and Camaro," said GM North America President Mark Reuss.

"Unlike many competitors' performance cars, the Corvette ZR1 and Camaro ZL1 are appropriate for both daily drivers and track use from the factory – with standard coolers for brakes and drivetrain."

"And, we challenge any company to bring two cars to compete with the Corvette ZR1 and Camaro ZL1, dollar for dollar," Reuss said. "They will discover what enthusiasts already know – that Chevrolet Camaro and Corvette are the world's best performance cars for the money."

For that matter, the entire sports car category is enjoying a notable resurgence, witness the warm reception for the debut of the 2013 Shelby GT500 at the Chicago auto show last month.

And to demonstrate the capabilities of the Corvette and Camaro, Chevrolet recently tested full-production models with no performance modifications on the "Grand Course" at Virginia International Raceway.

The Grand Course configuration is a challenge for production cars because it requires prodigious power, precise handling and tenacious grip to record a fast lap.

In a 2012 Corvette ZR1, equipped with new Michelin Pilot Sport Cup tires, Corvette engineer Jim Mero lapped the Grand Course in 2:45.6 –

faster than the published lap time for any production car.

In a 2012 Camaro ZL1, Camaro engineer Aaron Link lapped the Grand Course in 2:52.4 – more than six seconds faster than the published lap time of a 2011 Ford Shelby GT500 driving on the same track.

Car and Driver Magazine, which conducts the annual Lightning Lap shootout at Virginia International Raceway, called the track "the nearest thing to the Nurburgring's fabled Nordschleife."

"The Grand Course at VIR is an excellent test of all-around vehicle performance," said Reuss. "Like the Nurburgring, a single lap at VIR tests every aspect of a car, including power, brakes, steering, tire grip

Tru 140S, Code 130R Concepts Impress Millennials

by Gerald Scott
News Dept.

Back on the first media day of the Detroit auto show in January, GM wowed 'em with a one-two punch – a pair of concept vehicles from Chevy designed to impress the younger generation, so to say.

And impress the younger generation the cars sure did.

The concepts were the Tru 140S and the Code 130R and as soon as they debuted, they set the auto-blogsphere on fire with speculation about whether such mod-looking cars might actually be built.

Tru 140S was designed by Nick David and the Code 130R was designed by Joe Baker, both working out of California for General Motors on the



2012 Chevrolet Corvette ZR1.

and chassis balance.

"To break a three-minute lap on the four-mile Grand Course is an incredible accomplishment for any car."

GM says the Corvette ZR1 is the most powerful vehicle Chevrolet has ever produced, with a supercharged, 6.2L, LS9 V8 delivering 638 horsepower and 604 pound-feet of torque.

Of all mass-production com-

panies, Chevrolet says it's the leader in carbon fiber use, with the lightweight material used for structural components on the ZR1, like the front fenders, hood, roof, front splitter, rocker panels and floor pans.

All told, Big 3 vehicles were 82 percent of sports car sales.

So, if you think Detroit's cars of yesteryear weren't well-loved, think again.

consumer research project.

The sleek cars were more than just "hot concepts" for Chevy, they were part of an overall study of the next power generation of buyers, one that GM and all of the other automakers are eager to communicate and interact with.

In so many words, exit baby boomers and enter the Millennial dragon – the 0- to 30-year-old group of 80 million people who will be the consumer market's next big block of retail purchasers.

The day after the cars' debut, we caught up with Clay Dean, who is executive director, GM Advanced Global Design / Cadillac Brand director, and he helped put the Chev-

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PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

Lead Designer Nick David, foreground, and the Tru 140S Chevy concept car. David and colleague Joe Baker (not pictured) designed their respective concept cars in California, but the final display vehicles were actually built at GM Design in Warren.



This Chrysler Town & Country minivan has been adapted for side-entry wheelchair access. The ramp is installed by The Braun Co. Chrysler is donating an accessible minivan to charity as part of National Mobility Awareness Month in May.

Chrysler Gives Town & Country Minivan to 'Mobility' Charity

AUBURN HILLS – Chrysler Group LLC is donating a 2012 Chrysler Town & Country minivan as part of National Mobility Awareness Month to be celebrated in May.

Chrysler Group made the announcement last week during the 21st National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association (NMEDA) Conference in Phoenix recently.

The Town & Country Touring model, to be customized by The Braun Co., one of the largest manufacturers of wheelchair-accessible vans, ramps and wheelchair lifts, will be donated to NMEDA for use in a promotion during National Mobility Awareness Month in May.

The Town & Country has been named a Top Safety Pick by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety for 2012. In addition to receiving top scores in rollover tests, the minivan achieved Good ratings in the areas of frontal, side and rear crash protection.

For 2012, the Town & Country offers more than 40 standard or available safety features. Front seat mounted airbags, three-row side curtain air bags, driver-side knee blocker air bag and all-speed

traction control are among the standard safety features.

"Chrysler Group is delighted to be participating in the awareness month activities and promotion," said Reid Bigland, Chrysler Group LLC's Head of U.S. Sales.

"More than 18 million people in the U.S. and Canada have mobility issues. Chrysler Group has a continuing commitment in raising awareness of mobility solutions available to caregivers and people with disabilities."

The National Mobility Awareness Month promotion will invite "Local Heroes" with disabilities to share their challenges and success stories on how they overcome mobility issues and lead an active lifestyle. The promotion is designed to raise awareness of mobility transportation options available for caregivers and people with disabilities.

NMEDA will give away the Town & Country wheelchair accessible minivan, and two additional wheelchair accessible vehicles, to the winners on a national television show.

"Local Heroes" will submit their stories on the website MobilityAwarenessMonth.com where visitors can vote for their favorite hero.

Volt Manager, MCC Combine to Host Viewing of 'Revenge of Electric Car'

by Gerald Scott
News Dept.

If the range of questions asked by the public following a recent showing of the movie "Revenge of the Electric Car" is any indication, the automakers still have a long way to go in educating the public about EVs, hybrids, plug-in cars and the like.

It seems that Chevrolet recently co-sponsored a viewing of "Revenge" at Macomb Community College's Warren campus together with MCC and it was a full house at the K building auditorium to see the documentary movie.

John B. Hughes, Marketing Manager – Volt was on hand from Chevrolet to discuss the various issues raised in the movie with the audience following the public viewing.

A persistent question that follows the EV industry is whether the introduction of thousands or perhaps millions of plug-in EVs will result in a corresponding rise in air pollution from electric utilities charged with providing the juice at the garage wall.

Answering that very question, Hughes said, "We've been working with an industry wide association called the EDTA (Electric Drive Transportation Association)... auto manufacturers, major utilities are all members of it, and we're working through different ways on how the grid can accommodate electric vehicles as we move forward.

"Right now, what happens on the grid, for the most part... (society) is using more electricity – laptops, cell phones always plugged in, flat screens, we use a lot more electricity but we haven't had many 'brownouts' because the grid has been updated locally (across the country) as we need it.

"Over time, as there are more electric vehicles, the grid will be updated and have the capacity to support that."

Just the fact that a GM manager would be moderating a public discussion of plug-in electric vehicles, around a showing of "Revenge of the Electric Car," shows how GM has become much more aware of shaping public opinion on the topic, following the first movie in the series, titled "Who Killed the Electric Car," a 2006 documentary that studied the launch and recall of the GM EV1 electric car, an earlier vehicle from the 1990s.

GM took a lot of public relations heat surrounding the scrapping of the EV1 program, so the automaker has been much more thoughtful since the rollout of the Chevrolet Volt in late 2010 as a 2011 model year plug-in, extended-range vehicle.

"On the Volt: You can plug into 120V using the same (household outlet) you use for a refrigerator, or a hair dryer or a toaster oven, and that will charge the car in about 8 to 10 hours," Hughes pointed out.

"You also can plug in a vehicle like the Volt, or a (Nissan) Leaf, to 240V, which is the plug you use for a clothes dryer or stove. It doesn't really change the dynamics a whole lot.

"Say if everybody on your street had a Volt and plugged them in at the same time, that might cause some demands on the load, but hopefully over time that local load would be increased to give you the capacity."

It's Chevrolet's John Hughes' job to continue to educate the public on all of this, one "Revenge" EV car documentary movie showing at a time.



PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

John Hughes, left, Chevy Marketing Manager - Volt, talks to a visitor prior to a showing of the "Revenge of the Electric Car" movie at Macomb College in Warren. A sellout crowd for the local viewing suggests that interest in EVs remains high across the board.