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Tucker Torpedo Still Fascinates the Auto Industry

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Much of the public image of Tucker and his one-off car comes from the 1988 George Lucas movie, "Tucker: The Man and His Dream," which painted a portrait of Tucker as a revolutionary maverick that the auto industry didn't understand and was afraid of, so everyone from Congress to the Big Three tried to put him out of business.

Adds McElroy, "A lot of people do not understand how difficult it is to get into the automotive industry. That's why we've seen so few start-ups in the last half-century. Even in Japan, for example, it was very difficult for Honda to get started.

"When you look back at the history of the auto industry, it's literally littered with car companies that thought they could break into the business but were never able to pull it off."

Although Tucker was born in Capac and raised in Lincoln

Park, he was always the outsider as far as the domestic auto industry went.

He hired the famed stylist Alex Tremulis - who made his name earlier with Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg - to design the unique Tucker Torpedo, later called the Tucker 48, so the car is nothing if not a startling looker even today, but Tucker never had the financial backing or industrial might to put it into mass production.

"Tucker had great sales savvy, but he didn't have the business or manufacturing background to pull it off," McElroy observed.

"The whole myth arises that GM, Ford and Chrysler drove him out of business... well of course they did! But it wasn't through subterfuge or buying off suppliers or anything like that.

"Tucker was a guy who'd dazzle potential investors with this great-looking car that could drive, with the promise

that he could tool this up and get it into mass production.

"I'm not going to call it a 'Ponzi scheme,' but what he was trying to do was literally live from hand to mouth. He would roll these things out there, get people to give him money and then go to the next stage. He would've had to have ramped it up a hundred-fold, but he was never able to do that."

Still, both the car and the man continue to fascinate over six decades later. Tucker died rather young at the age of 53, back in 1956, his dream unfulfilled, but the post-war Detroit auto environment was incredibly Darwinian - if hallowed legacy nameplates like Packard, Hudson, Studebaker and Nash all went by the wayside in that era, what hope was there for the outcast and his dream?

Tucker used the massive, post-war Dodge B-29 aircraft engine plant in Chicago as his

base of operations, but perhaps those 51 cars were somewhat lost inside of a defunct 4-million-square-foot defense plant.

The movie over-romanticized Tucker and his legacy, but the movie also helped drive up latter-day prices for the remaining Tucker cars.

"That was certainly Tucker's point of view - that the world was out to get him. The history of the industry, anywhere in the world, there have been hundreds upon hundreds of car companies that tried to get started, but went belly-up very shortly."

And yet, 65 years later, the Tucker is still talked about and somebody just paid \$3 million for one at auction. Imagine that.

Too bad Tucker never had as much as \$3 million in the bank back in 1948 - only then, perhaps, his car might've actually succeeded in the marketplace after all.

Motor Muster at The Ford

This Father's Day weekend, let dad take a ride down memory lane with more than 700 vintage cars from the 1930s to the early 1970s during the 2012 Motor Muster at Greenfield Village in Dearborn, June 16-17.

With special extended hours on Saturday until 9

p.m., there's even more time to check out the classic cars, vintage trucks, bicycles and even fire engines by the gaslamp light.

Celebrate 100 years of Chevrolet cars as you stroll through the Village's 80-acre campus. See The Henry Ford web site for more details.

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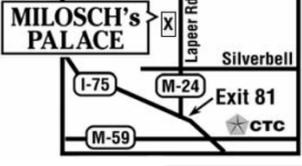
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SCAN ME

Chrysler Presents Awards for Quality

DETROIT - Chrysler Group LLC recognized its top-performing suppliers during the automaker's 2012 Annual Strategy Meeting and Supplier Awards Ceremony held last week at the Fox Theatre in Detroit.

Approximately 1,400 global supplier executives attended the ceremony to review Chrysler Group and Fiat S.p.A. purchasing activities, strategy and expectations, while also taking time to celebrate successes from the 2011 calendar year. The event focused on technology innovations achieved through collaboration.

"This is a chance to thank our suppliers for putting their faith in us and to celebrate the strengthened partnership that has allowed us to achieve this extraordinary turnaround," said Sergio Marchionne, Chrysler Group chairman and CEO.

"Thanks to our suppliers, we have revitalized our product lineup, substantially improved quality, grown sales and market share, and returned to profitability, all at remarkable speed."

Top executives from Chrysler Group and Fiat S.p.A. also were in attendance. Presentations were delivered by Scott Kunselman, senior vice president of Purchasing and Supplier Quality, Chrysler Group; Reid Bigland, Dodge

Brand president and CEO, head of U.S. Sales, Chrysler Group and CEO of Chrysler Canada; and Vilmar Fistarol, head of Group Purchasing, Fiat S.p.A.

"We want the most innovative, best-performing suppliers on the Chrysler team," said Kunselman, host for the ceremony.

"The suppliers we are honoring today have exhibited the kind of partnership that we will need to make the great cars and trucks that our customers have come to expect.

"Our success depends on a supply base that is motivated, capable and ready to meet our future needs."

The 2012 Chrysler Group Supplier of the Year award recipients are:

- AK Steel Corp.: Metallic
- Dong Yang: Powertrain
- TRICO: Electrical
- Ultra Ltd.: Chemical
- TRICO Products: Mopar
- Century Plastics: Quality
- ZF: Innovation
- McCann: Services
- Walbridge: Capital
- Union Pacific: Logistics
- Cummins: Sustainability
- JCI: Diversity Development

Award recipients were determined based on an evaluation of each company's External Balanced Scorecard performance in 2011 - a rating system that evaluates supplier performance in areas such as

quality, delivery, cost, warranty and partnership - and input from Chrysler Group senior leadership.

For the first time, suppliers were able to nominate themselves to receive consideration for the Sustainability and Diversity Supplier Development award categories.

Chrysler Group's Purchasing and Supplier Quality organization has had a renewed focus on supplier relations since 2009.

Activities such as monthly supplier town hall forums, focused supplier advisory councils and surveys of the supply base have helped the automaker foster more positive, mutually beneficial supplier relationships.

Chrysler has also instituted programs for encouraging supplier innovation, finding opportunities for cost reduction, and has executed more than 100 improvements to processes to help suppliers work with the company more effectively.

According to the annual Planning Perspectives survey, Chrysler has improved working relations with suppliers by 53 percent since 2009.

Chrysler regularly schedules its Supplier Award Ceremony at the Fox Theater in Detroit as a way to support the central city as well as to further impress all of its gathered guests at the show.

Custom Jeep Contest Focuses on Hoops

AUBURN HILLS - The Jeep brand has kicked off "Power by Design," an online contest that enables consumers to create and customize their very own 2012 Jeep Wrangler using a variety of USA Basketball design cues.

Participants can visit www.jeep.com/usab to enter and begin to customize the Jeep Wrangler of their dreams for a chance to win the vehicle they customized along with a trip to Washington, D.C., where they will see their vehicle on display and have an opportunity to attend a USA Basketball exhibition game.

"The Jeep brand is excited to offer one lucky winner a trip to attend an amazing event and also a Jeep Wrangler that is truly one-of-a-kind," said Mike Manley, president and CEO - Jeep Brand, Chrysler Group LLC.

"Power by Design gives consumers an opportunity to be original, creative and a part of the Jeep brand's unique partnership with USA Basketball.

"This contest is another great way for customers to connect with the Jeep brand as they show us how they would customize their Wrangler."

To enter, participants can configure a USA Basketball-themed Jeep Wrangler and submit one entry online to earn contest admission.

Participants will be able to select wheel and tire packages, add decals and color options to their vehicle that they will be able to share with their friends and followers on Facebook and Twitter.

"Power by Design" also features "Key to Power," a basketball free-throw shooting game that will enable visitors to unlock additional vehicle features to enhance their customization.

The contest launched on May 25 and will run through Wednesday, June 20. A winner will be randomly selected at the end of June.

Last month, the Jeep brand formed a global partnership with USA Basketball to sup-

port the men's and women's national teams as the Jeep Wrangler was named the "Official Vehicle of USA Basketball."

For more information and to view the contest rules, visit www.jeep.com/usab.

Magazine, Website Say Durango Is Among the 'Best Family Cars'

AUBURN HILLS - The Dodge Durango regularly gets overshadowed by its sister car, the Jeep Grand Cherokee, but the Durango seems to be coming into its own all the same, in a manner of speaking.

That's because, most recently, Edmunds.com and Parents magazine have selected the 2012 Dodge Durango among the "Best Family Cars of 2012."

This marks the 10th industry award for the 2012 Dodge Durango, including "Top Safety Pick" by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) and "Full-size SUV of Texas" by the Texas Auto Writers Association (TAWA).

"We are honored that Edmunds.com and Parents have featured the Dodge Durango on this exclusive list," said Reid Bigland, president and CEO - Dodge Brand.

"Dodge is committed to providing quality products to our customers that are safe, innovative and family-friendly, while doing so with passionate styling that sets us apart."

For the fifth consecutive year, experts from both Parents and Edmunds.com scrutinized hundreds of vehicles focusing on safety and reliability as top priorities when deciding which cars would earn a spot on the "Best Family Cars" list.

Each vehicle was also judged on performance, inte-



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rior, exterior and family-friendly features. Organizers also consulted parents who own and drive these vehicles every day.

"Modern and functional, the 2012 Dodge Durango has been designed with style and family-style versatility in mind," said Scott Oldham, Edmunds.com editor-in-chief.

"The seven-passenger Durango packs a high-quality interior, the latest high-tech gadgets, a fuel-efficient drivetrain and a fun-to-drive demeanor."

The "Best Family Cars of 2012" feature appears in the July issue of Parents on newsstands June 12.