

Red Packard 120 Meets Show-Goers at the Gate

Story and photos by Jennifer Knightstep

Don Sommer, founder of the Meadow Brook Concours d'Elégance, and current Cars R Stars Board Member, knows a thing or two about classic car shows.

He's the proud owner of several meticulously restored vehicles himself, including the elegant 1930 Packard Phaeton (four-door convertible) he brought to this year's Car R Stars show at the historic Packard Proving Grounds in Shelby Township.

This year's show, titled, "When 'Life's a Drag' is Good," featured more than 200 classic cars, one-of-a-kind mods, and of course, a slew of famous 1950s and 1960s drag cars, for which the show was named.

In a release before the show, Sommer asserted that fans of drag cars wouldn't want to miss it, and he was right – the drag car alley featured some of the hottest classic drag cars, and attracted a lot of attention, catching the eye, and the ear, of Adrian Lewis and Jeffery Taylor of Pontiac.

"They revved the engines and we had to come see," said Lewis of the loudest drag car "contest."

One by one, the drag cars revved their engines, and though there was no clear winner, Lewis and Taylor had a definite preference for the 1949 Packard Flintstone Flyer Gasser.

If Lewis was able to pick a show favorite, it was surprising it wasn't his own car, a

tricked-out 1982 Chevy Camaro Z28.

"I had to be here today," he said. "I'm a line worker at Lake Orion, so these shows are important to me. I love being at the Packard Proving Grounds. It has a lot of history, a lot of meaning."

Show-goers would agree, most stopping, awe-struck, at the first Packard they saw when they entered the gates, a brilliant red Packard One-Twenty, nicknamed "Junior."

A bottleneck of sorts developed as spectators young and old snapped photos of Junior. The younger fans used smart phones, but the old-timers preferred to use retro-styled cameras, seemingly keeping with the history of the locale.

Among the youngsters admiring the cars was five-year-old Michael Butcher of Shelby Township, attending the show with his dad Chris.

"We come to these shows to



A showgoer and his camera at the Packard Proving Grounds in Shelby Township.

dream and drool," said the elder Butcher, giving his son a boost to more closely examine a hand-built 1929 Mercedes.

Michael was enthralled, excited about the chrome and incredibly detailed grill.

As for Chris, he'd prefer something with a little more muscle, "something like a Challenger or a Charger," he explained, heading for a row of Ford, Dodge, and Chevy muscle cars.

Among them was a maroon 1969 Mustang Mach 1, on display for the very first time. Its owner, Shane Sluka, wasn't able to attend the show, but cajoled his mother, Serena, into bringing his car to the show in his stead.

"He just didn't get back from service in Iraq in time," said Sluka, "but he really wanted his car to make the show. He hasn't even seen it himself yet; we just bought it for him, sight unseen, in South Carolina."

The venue itself was another star of the show, and most show-goers couldn't resist posing with the life-sized Packard hood ornament. A few, in fact, gave her a hug on their way out the gates, hoping she'd keep their place until next year's show.

"I can't wait to see what the show is all about next year," said one fan, already eager, counting the days til next summer.

Today, only 14 of the original 300 acres of the 20th century Packard Proving Grounds remains extant, but what a lovely and interesting 14 acres it remains.

It's surrounded by suburbia, of course, but the big Packard water tower and all

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Adrian Lewis of Pontiac with his tricked-out 1982 Camaro Z28. "This is what summer is all about," said Lewis.

1,900 Staffers in 10 Countries, GM Design Thrives

Story and photos by Gerald Scott

All hail GM Design, which is 85 years "young," not old, this very month.

And as GM Design acknowledges its 85th birthday in June, the 1,900 men and women in GM's 10 global design centers are focused on the future, united in their vision to entice consumers to fall in love and see GM vehicles as they do: as art that moves you.

"Our global team is united around its passion for designing vehicles that make an emotional connection with customers," said Ed Welburn, GM vice president, Global Design.

"What was true 85 years ago is still true today: a designer's role is to create a beautifully executed exterior to draw you in, and an interior environment that invites you into a relationship that develops and grows."



The core of GM's 20th century auto design history is stored at the GM Heritage Center. Pictured is the Firebird III concept car.

Welburn, the sixth such design chief in GM's overall 104-year history – and the first to have global vehicle design leadership responsibilities – also served as honorary chairman of the 25th annual EyesOn Design car show in Grosse Pointe Shores on Sunday, June 17, Father's Day.

Meanwhile, GM retiree

Steve Pasteiner had some interesting observations about GM Design and its ongoing impact these days.

Pasteiner was at GM Design 1966-1989 working for the likes of GM Design chiefs Bill Mitchell, Irv Rybicki and Chuck Jordan.

"It seems like the ghost of Harley Earl is still in the hall-



The 2012 Hot Rod Power Tour cruisers check out a lineup of classic GM cars at the GM Heritage Center in Sterling Heights.

ways of the GM Tech Center, or at least of GM Design," Pasteiner said of GM's original design chief, the famous Earl.

Pasteiner influenced a num-

ber of car designs during his mainstream career, including the 1970-71 Buick GS-X, the

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Arts, Beats & Eats on 15-Year Roll

by Gerald Scott

Hard to believe because it's still so fresh, but the annual Ford Arts, Beats & Eats festival is already marking some major milestones in the big event's ongoing history.

First, the 2012 AB&E will mark the 15th anniversary of the function – dating back to when it first originated in downtown Pontiac, and also this year, the overall event will cross the impressive \$3.5 million marker for money raised for charities.

Organizers of the 2012 Arts, Beats & Eats got together last week at the Pronto restaurant in Royal Oak to announce a series of happenings surrounding the upcoming show.

Ford continues to be the major event sponsor.

Bob MacKenzie, chairman, Southeast Michigan Ford Dealers, and Mike O'Brien, De-

troit Regional Sales manager for Ford Motor Co., each spoke on behalf of the Dearborn automaker at the Royal Oak gathering.

"On behalf of the Southeast Michigan Ford Dealers, we're

again excited to partner with Ford Division and Ford regional marketing, in supporting this outstanding festival," MacKenzie said.

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Ford Arts, Beats & Eats event director Jon Witz tries to keep pace with Zumba dance instructor Sara Hoffman in Royal Oak.

Emerging Viper Legacy Graces Cafe

by Gerald Scott

There's good news to report on several fronts regarding the 2013 SRT Viper (formerly the Dodge Viper).

First and foremost, Chrysler has recently installed the "Viper Cafe" at the Walter P. Chrysler Museum, replacing the older Walt's Garage display that had been there in place for quite some time now.

The new Viper Cafe gives fans of the "snake car" a new rallying point, so to speak, from which to keep the Viper going past its 20-year mark.

Viper debuted, as a Dodge concept, at the 1989 Detroit auto show and in just three years it was a 1992 model year production car.

This year, of course, marks the 20th anniversary of the Viper as a marque.

Over time, Viper has migrated from Dodge cars to SRT



In addition to a 2013 SRT Viper car display, a related mural covers the wall of the new Viper Cafe at the Chrysler Museum.

(Street and Racing Technology) branding.

The 2013 Viper made its debut at the New York Auto Show in April and it was there that Ralph Gilles reflected on the car's ongoing rebirth, its long legacy and more.

U.S. Big 3 and Canadian Auto Okay Planning Of 2nd Bridge

The Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Assn. (CVMA) and the American Automotive Policy Council (AAPC) commends the participants who put together the plan to build a second bridge between Detroit and Windsor, Ont.

Those auto lobby groups said that last Friday's announcement about a second Detroit bridge means that the Detroit-Windsor international gateway will expand, with benefits extending to both the U.S. and Canada.

CVMA President Mark Nantais said, "We have long supported additional international infrastructure capacity in the Windsor - Detroit gateway because it is a critical trade corridor that supports automotive manufacturing and jobs in both Canada and the United States."

AAPC President Matt Blunt added that "The scale of trade in automotive products between the United States and Canada is unequalled anywhere else in the world and the seamless nature of the auto manufacturing industry that straddles our border, requires the necessary infrastructure that this bridge represents."

With the highly integrated automotive industry between Canada and the U.S., automotive trade is worth roughly \$100 billion annually, with the majority of production parts and finished vehicles flowing through the Windsor-Detroit gateway.

"As a result, the New International Trade Crossing will help make the region more attractive for future jobs and economic growth," said Nantais.

And Blunt added that "the new crossing will help boost the competitiveness of the North American automotive industry and add 8,000 permanent jobs, according to an independent economic study just completed by the Center for Automotive Research."

Nantais also noted that "this new crossing will finish a much-needed, uninterrupted link between Ontario's 400-series highways, the future Windsor-Essex Parkway and Michigan's interstates and provides an option that we believe is necessary in such a critical trade corridor."

Added Nantais, "We are hopeful that both governments will proceed toward final design and construction without delay."

Meanwhile, Chrysler said that engines made in Trenton or stampings from Warren or Sterling Heights cross the U.S. - Canadian border in Detroit daily for use at Chrysler assembly plants in Ontario.