

Cars Look the Same? Blame Federal Rules

By DEE-ANN DURBIN
AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — When Jim Mattison was growing up in the early 1950s, he remembers visiting Detroit car dealerships with his family each fall to check out the new models. By the time he was in kindergarten, he could name any car's make and model just by looking at the hubcaps.

"At 60 miles an hour and 60 feet away, you could identify a Chrysler from a Ford from a DeSoto," said Mattison, who spent his career in the auto industry and now runs a Pontiac archive.

These days, even Mattison has trouble telling one brand from another. Government regulations, increased competition and profit-squeezed carmakers have filled the streets with bland look-alikes. With the cost of developing a new car easily climbing to \$1 billion, automakers are loathe to take risks.

Having trouble distinguishing a Civic from a Sentra, or even a Kia from a Mercedes? Here are some of the reasons why:

- Government regulations. Seat belts, air bags and crash-test standards have all left their mark on vehicle design. And as automakers sell more cars globally, they also have to consider European and Asian regulations. Pedestrian protection standards in Europe, for example, require that cars be made to hit the upper and lower body at the same time, so a victim is more likely to bounce onto the hood. That forces designers to include tall, chunky bumpers, like those on the new Volkswagen Jetta and Ford Focus.

"You can have different tail lights and headlights, but you don't have the level of flexibility that somebody might really like to have on a pure design standpoint, and you certainly have less of it than you had in the past," said David Cole, chairman of the Center for Automotive Research in Ann Arbor.

- Fuel economy. Government fuel economy standards are rising, and so are consumers' expectations for fuel efficiency.

Thirty miles per gallon was impressive a decade ago; now automakers are routinely making small cars that get 40 mpg or higher.

As the emphasis on fuel economy grows, so does the focus on aerodynamics. The 2013 versions of the Ford Escape and Nissan Pathfinder both ditched their boxy, wind-resistant rooflines for ones that sweep back and flow with the air. Car companies are also building vehicles closer to the ground, changing grilles and tweaking side mirrors to save a

New technology under the hood, such as electrification, could radically change designs, since designers won't have to make room for cumbersome gas engines.

few-tenths of a gallon.

"There's only one good way through the wind. You can't have a wide variety of shapes and have them be aerodynamically correct," said Jack Nead, editorial director of *Kelley Blue Book*.

- Insular design world. Designers go to the same auto shows, read the same design magazines and, for the most part, attend a handful of schools. Popular designs are quickly copied. Chrysler's retro PT Cruiser was followed a few years later by the Chevrolet HHR. The boxy Nissan Cube and Kia Soul channel the Scion xB.

"It's really a very conservative profession," said Imre Molnar, dean of Detroit's Center for Creative Studies, a design school.

- Cost. Automakers have to sell enough vehicles to offset the costs of developing and producing them. After a string of tough years — from General Motors' and Chrysler's government bailouts during the recession to Toyota's and Honda's troubles after last year's earthquake in Japan — car

companies don't want to invest in something that might flop.

Still, distinctive design — even if it's polarizing — can pay dividends. Ed Welburn, vice president for global design at GM, says the angular styling of Cadillac's new sedans got a sharply divided reaction in consumer focus groups a decade ago. But GM embraced it anyway, knowing it would stand out. Sales took off.

Risky design also put Hyundai on the map with the 2011 Sonata, a four-door sedan that looks more like a two-door coupe and has an instantly recognizable crease swooping along its side. Phillip Zak, Hyundai's chief U.S. designer at the time, who has since gone to GM, says unique designs benefit car companies since customers are more emotionally attached to distinctive cars and will spend more on options like leather seats.

But risky designs can backfire, too. GM killed the Chevrolet SSR, a retro-styled convertible pickup, after only three years because of poor sales. Sales of the Nissan Juke, an odd little crossover with a bulbous nose, have been anemic so far this year.

So are we condemned to a future of cookie-cutter cars? Probably not. There are changes afoot that point to more differentiated design in the future.

Design studio advances, such as computerized modeling, have cut the cost and time it takes to develop new cars. At the same time, the market is fragmenting into more categories — small, midsize and large SUVs, for example — which gives automakers room to experiment because they're not depending on one model for blockbuster sales.

New technology under the hood, such as electrification, could radically change designs, since designers won't have to make room for cumbersome gas engines.

But the biggest change, experts say, is that the quality of cars has gotten so good that design is one of the only ways a car company can distinguish itself.

"Car companies are being challenged to do interesting designs, and more of them," Molnar said.

And The DEALS CONTINUE

Please Call for Details.

Selling New Chevys, Buicks and GMCs at the ABSOLUTE LOWEST PRICE POSSIBLE!

'12 CHEVROLET TRAVERSE LS



MSRP \$30,485
Preferred Price \$29,490

Plus taxes, lic. fees & doc fees. Must be 800+ credit score
\$826 Due at signing, includes lic. transfer. No security deposit required.
GM employee pricing and must have Non GM lease in household.

24 MONTH 10K/Per Yr. **\$107⁰⁰** Per Month

'13 CHEVROLET SILVERADO 4WD EXT Cab LS



MSRP \$34,770
Preferred Price \$32,910

Plus taxes, lic fees and doc fee.
\$879 due at signing, includes lic transfer. No security deposit required.
GM employee pricing and must have Non GM lease in household.

24 MONTH 10K/Per Yr. **\$216⁰⁰** Per Month



CALL BRUCE LITVIN - 24/7 & 365 - 40 YEARS OF QUALITY SERVICE

CELL # 1-586-405-5175
blitvin@lunghamer.com

1-888-665-5438

Joe Lunghamer

CHEVY Drive Beautiful BUICK WE ARE PROFESSIONAL GRADE

475 SUMMIT DRIVE • 248-292-2502 • 5825 HIGHLAND RD. (M59) • WATERFORD

www.wallyedgar.com · www.wallyedgar.com · www.wallyedgar.com · www.wallyedgar.com

Be treated with the respect you deserve. TOP DOLLAR FOR YOUR TRADE and the Best Deal PERIOD!!

Wally Edgar Chevrolet Employee #10 Chevy Runs Deep



1-248-724-1073

• Open Saturday 9:30-3
Fax: 248-391-0189
Cell: 248-821-8026
Email: jchaiser@wallyedgar.com

Sales Hours:
Mon. - Thur. 8:00 am - 8:00 pm
Fri. 8:00 am - 6:00 pm
Sat. 9:30 am - 3:00 pm • Sun. Closed
CHEVY DEALER CODE 44085



WANT TO DEAL WITH A STRAIGHT FORWARD HONEST DEALER ? TRY THESE REAL NUMBERS !

LEASE A 2012 TRAVERSE LS FWD FOR 24 MONTHS WITH APPROVED CREDIT, WITH 10K MILES PER YEAR FOR \$291.15 PER MONTH TAX INCLUDED WITH \$1590.59 DUE AT DELIVERY

THE AMOUNT DUE AT DELIVERY INCLUDES EVERYTHING EXCEPT A NEW PLATE. IF YOU NEED ONE. NO SECURITY DEPOSIT IS REQUIRED

ELIGIBLE FOR THE GM EMPLOYEE DISCOUNT - SAVE \$66.89 PER MONTH
HAVE A NON GM LEASED VEHICLE - SAVE \$89.18 PER MONTH
HAVE S-TIER AND 800 OR ABOVE CREDIT SCORE - SAVE \$42.74 PER MONTH
MILITARY EXPERIENCE - SAVE \$33.44 PER MONTH
YES ! YOU CAN COMBINE THESE ADDITIONAL DISCOUNTS

DON'T LOOK FOR THE SMALL PRINT THERE IS NONE EXPIRES 10/31/12

Located right off I-75 on M-24, 2 minutes N. of the Palace of Auburn Hills

1-866-906-0279

Wally Edgar Chevrolet

Make us your Michigan P.E.P. Car Connection

www.wallyedgar.com · www.wallyedgar.com · www.wallyedgar.com · www.wallyedgar.com

We guarantee the lowest price or it's free!

HUGE INVENTORY REDUCTION SALE!!!
buff whelan chevrolet
586-274-0396

OVER 1,000 New Chevrolets in Stock!
WE GUARANTEE THE LOWEST PRICES OR IT'S FREE!

2013 MALIBU LS

Stk.#20474
Power Locks • Power Windows • Power Mirrors
Cruise • Tilt • Keyless Entry • Aluminum Wheels & More...
NO SECURITY OR GM DISCOUNT REQUIRED
24 Mos./10,000 Miles

\$209* + Tax w/\$0 Down

2013 Silverado LT Ext Cab 4x4

Stk.#20750
All Star Edition
NO SECURITY DEPOSIT REQUIRED
24 Mos./10,000 Miles

\$239* + Tax w/\$0 Down

2012 TRAVERSE LS FWD

Stk.#13467
Power Locks • Power Windows • Power Mirrors
Keyless Entry • Bluetooth • Onstar • XM Radio & More...
NO SECURITY DEPOSIT REQUIRED
24 Mos./10,000 Miles

\$137* + Tax w/\$0 Down

See dealer for details. All payments are based on GM Employee pricing except where otherwise noted. 2012 Traverse lease payments require 800+ credit score. All payments assume you have a NON-GM lease in the household, otherwise payments will be slightly higher. First payment, security deposit (unless otherwise noted) tax, title, and plate due at signing. Offer expires 10/31/2012.

Free shuttle service to home, office or shopping.

buff whelan chevrolet
WHERE THE DEALS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE, EVERY DAY SINCE 1970!
Van Dyke • South of 18 Mile • Sterling Heights

Jeff Caul
586-274-0396
PEP QUOTES BY PHONE OR EMAIL:
JEFF CAUL AT JCAUL@BUFFWHELAN.COM

CONVENIENT HOURS:
Mon. & Thurs. 8:30 am - 9 pm
Tues., Wed., Fri. 8:30 am - 6:30 pm

Chevy Runs Deep

We guarantee the lowest price or it's free!

We guarantee the lowest price or it's free!