

Dodge Brand Leads the Way To Chrysler's Soaring Sales

Chrysler Group on Feb. 1 reported U.S. January sales of 117,731 units, a 16 percent increase compared with sales in January 2012 (101,149 units), and the group's best January sales since 2008.

The Chrysler, Dodge, Ram Truck and FIAT brands each posted year-over-year sales gains in January compared with the same month last year. The Dodge brand's 37 percent increase was the largest sales gain of any Chrysler Group brand in January. Chrysler Group extended its streak in January to 34 consecutive months of year-over-year sales gains.

"It's been a good week for the Chrysler Group. On Wednesday, we announced full-year 2012 profits of \$1.7 billion and followed that today with our January sales, up 16 percent, marking our 34th consecutive month of year-over-year sales growth," said Reid Bigland, head of U.S. Sales. "Entering 2013, our product portfolio has never been stronger with our new Ram truck picking up both the 2013 *Motor Trend* and the North American 'Truck of the Year' awards, and the introduction of our new 30 mpg highway Jeep Grand Cherokee equipped with our new EcoDiesel engine."

Jeep Brand Regains Strength Across Country, Globe

by Jim Stickford

Chrysler has made a great comeback in the last four years, and Jeep has played a big role in the company's growth.

And leading the way for Jeep's brand success has been the 2012 Grand Cherokee, said Mike Manley, president and CEO, Jeep Brand.

"In the old days when we introduced a new model, that would be it for six years," Manley said. "We would just let them die a slow death over that six years on the dealers' showroom floors."

But the new Chrysler is doing things differently. They worked hard to improve the 2014 model, which is coming only two years after the introduction of the brand-new 2012 model that kicked off Jeep's comeback.

"We have continued to innovate," Manley said.

Jeep has a strong relationship with its customers, Manley said. Which is why the company broadcast the unveiling of the 2014 Grand Cherokee live via Facebook.

He noted Jeep has almost three million Facebook friends and that one way they've been able to produce vehicles that are popular with fans of the Jeep brand is because Jeep listens to what customers want and works hard to make those desires a reality.

"Programs like this work for Jeep," Manley said. "It drives our product development. When people are passionate about pushing limits when driving your vehicles, you have a great responsibility."

Sales numbers have shown that Jeep's brand has regained strength across the country and across the globe. Only three years ago, Jeep SUV sales dropped to fifth place in the U.S. But in 2011, sales rose 44 percent. They rose by 13 percent in 2012 in the U.S. and 19 percent worldwide.

In 2012, Jeep sold more than 600,000 vehicles worldwide and is again the top SUV brand in the United States, Manley said.

The 2014 Grand Cherokee has such features as a new 3.0-liter

The all-new Dodge Dart continued on its upward sales trend with a 17 percent month-over-month increase in January, the compact car's best monthly sales performance since it was launched in June last year. In addition, the Dodge Journey full-size crossover recorded its best sales month ever in January.

Five Chrysler Group vehicles recorded their best January sales. Setting a sales record for the month of January were the Fiat 500, the Dodge Avenger and Chrysler 200 mid-size sedans, the Dodge Challenger muscle car, and the Jeep Patriot compact SUV. Sales of the Ram pickup truck, the volume leader in January, were up 14 percent compared with the same month a year ago.

Chrysler Group finished the month with an 87-days supply of inventory (411,349 units). U.S. industry sales figures for January are projected at an estimated 15.5 million units Seasonally Adjusted Annual Rate (SAAR).

Fiat 500 sales were up 31 percent last month, a sales record for the month of January. It was the 11th consecutive month in which the Fiat 500 has set a sales record, including an all-time sales record in September last year.

EcoDiesel V6 engine that delivers best-in-class 30 mpg, driving range of more than 730 miles and best-in-class towing capability of 7,400 pounds.

There is also a new eight-speed automatic transmission that boosts fuel efficiency across all powertrains while improving Grand Cherokee's 4x4 performance with a lower crawl ratio.

Manley said it's also more luxurious than ever. It's built with world-class craftsmanship while also coming with more than 60 advanced safety and security features.

Technology hasn't been ignored either, Manley said. There are an array of advanced user-friendly technology features including new 8.4-inch touchscreen display, 7-inch customer configurable multiview cluster display, Uconnect Access and cloud-based voice texting.

Ralph Gilles, president and CEO - SRT brand, was at the auto show to talk about the new 2014 Grand Cherokee SRT. He said the vehicle will feature such enhancements as an all-new, fully electronic eight-speed automatic transmission that delivers improved fuel economy, significantly improved towing capacity, and hardware and software revisions that are meant to further heighten Grand Cherokee SRT's fun-to-drive factor.

Gilles said Jeep didn't ignore how the vehicle looks on the outside either. Gilles called the SRT sports styling even more aggressive than the previous model. Design enhancements for 2014 include a new signature LED character lamp treatment, a brawnier grille, a new, one-touch liftgate and a new rear spoiler.

Inside, Grand Cherokee SRT customers are treated to a new 8.4-inch touchscreen that displays a wealth of SRT-exclusive Performance Pages data.

A new launch control button is situated behind the new T-handle shifter on the center console, and a redesigned SRT-exclusive three-spoke, heated steering wheel with more ergonomically efficient paddle shifters, features a host of comfort, convenience and connectivity controls.

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