

Detroit Auto Scene®

NEWSPAPER OF THE BIG 3 AUTO INDUSTRY

VOL. 81 NO. 35

"FIRST IN THE HEART OF DETROIT SINCE 1933" NEW CENTER NEWS

SEPTEMBER 9, 2013

Chrysler Minivan Turns 30; 13 Million Sold

by Jim Stickford

The minivan has been a part of the American driving experience for a while now and it's hard to believe that there was a time when it was a brand-new segment of the market.

The first Chrysler Group minivan rolled off the Windsor Assembly line on Nov. 2, 1983, sparking a new segment of people movers that rose in popularity very quickly, transporting millions of moms, dads and kids, and becoming part of their families.

Having sold more than 13 million minivans since first introducing the segment in 1983, and creating 78 minivan segment firsts, such as class-exclusive Stow 'n Go seating and a segment-first Blu-ray rear-seat entertainment system, the Chrysler Town & Country and Dodge Grand Caravan are celebrating their heritage with 30th Anniversary Editions available this fall, said company spokesman Patrick Haspen.

"The Chrysler Group is well-known as the creator of the minivan, and these 30th Anniversary Editions are the perfect way to celebrate their leadership and longevity in the marketplace," said Ben Winter, vice president of Vehicle Engineering.



Five generations of the minivan: from left, 2002 Chrysler Grand Voyager, 1996 Chrysler Town and Country, 1994 Dodge Caravan, 1984 Plymouth Voyager and 2009 Dodge Grand Caravan 25th Anniversary Edition.

"As the minivan segment and innovation leader, it's important that we continue to offer tremendous content and value, setting us apart from the rest of the segment."

John McElroy, host of the web site Autoline and WWJ radio commentator, said the minivan was a transformational vehicle.

"Consumers had been saying

that they wanted something like the minivan for years," McElroy said. "But it took a company like Chrysler, which had just come off financial difficulties in 1980 and 1981 to have the guts to actually make the first one."

McElroy said the minivan was the brainchild of Hal Sperlich, who had the idea while he was working at Ford.

But, McElroy said, Sperlich was fired and ended up at Chrysler about a year before Lee Iacocca was fired from Ford and went to Chrysler. So when Iacocca arrived at the company, the idea of the minivan was again floated. This time it was accepted.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Special Mustang Stars in Movie, Heart Benefit

A movie star will make its Michigan debut at Henry Ford Health Systems' "Get Your Heart Racing" Pit Party benefit dinner and auction at Eastern Market's Shed 3 on Friday, Sept. 13.

The new star's name is Mustang, Ford Mustang, and it will star along with Aaron Paul, Dominic Cooper and Michael Keaton in DreamWorks' upcoming "Need for Speed," a highly anticipated action film adaptation of the popular Electronic Arts' video game series of the same name.

The hero car, a unique Mustang, is being shipped directly from the studio in Los Angeles to make a grand appearance at the annual "Get Your Heart Racing" Pit Party. It was designed in conjunction with Ford Studio and EA/DreamWorks and features a custom-designed wide body, unique 22-inch alloy wheels and beefed-up air intakes to feed the supercharged engine under its twin-nostril hood.

"Previewing this one-of-a-kind movie star car adds to the excitement and is a great example of the cooperation we get from our lead sponsor, Ford Motor Company, and from other spon-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

August Yields Flourishing Auto Sales

GM Up 15 Percent, Cadillac Retail Best Since 1989

General Motors dealers delivered 275,847 vehicles in the United States in August, up 15 percent compared with a year ago. Retail sales increased 22 percent while fleet sales were down 8 percent.

Total and retail deliveries increased by double-digits at all GM brands. In total, Cadillac was up 38 percent, Buick was up 37 percent, GMC was up 14 percent and Chevrolet was up 10 percent. Deliveries to retail customers were up 38 percent at Cadillac, 22 percent at Chevrolet, 16 percent at GMC and 24 percent at Buick. Buick's retail sales were up for the 16th month in a row, and it was the brand's best August since 2003. Cadillac's retail sales were the brand's best August since 1989.

"The second half of 2013 is off to a very solid start for GM and our model-year changeover and new product launches are going smoothly," said Kurt McNeil, vice president, U.S. Sales Operations. "We have a lot of momentum and we feel good about the direction of the U.S. economy as we prepare to launch even more new products, including all-new heavy-duty pickups and large SUVs for Chevrolet and GMC, a completely redesigned Cadillac CTS and the Chevrolet Corvette Stingray."

GM's sales last month were the highest of 2013 and the best since September 2008, when the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Ford Retail Sales Up 20 Percent – Best Since 2006

Ford Motor Company's August U.S. retail sales grew 20 percent – with total sales up 12 percent – for the best monthly retail performance since 2006.

With inventories remaining tight in several key segments, Ford's retail sales gains were broad-based. Car sales were up 15 percent, utilities up 16 percent and trucks up 30 percent. Ford continued to see strong growth in the coastal regions.

"Producing more Fusions at Flat Rock Assembly with its 1,400 new workers is a welcome opportunity, as Fusion showed great strength in August," said Ken Czubay, Ford vice president, U.S. Marketing, Sales and Service. "Small cars and hybrids continue to outpace the market in the coastal regions of the U.S., with Ford brand retail small car sales growing at more than three times the rate of the U.S. small car industry."

Fusion had its best-ever August sales with 24,653 vehicles sold. Strongest growth for Fusion continues to be in the Western region of the country, with retail sales up 63 percent.

Ford's overall small car sales – including Fiesta, Focus and C-MAX hybrids – were up 30 percent, with combined sales of 30,148 vehicles. C-MAX hybrids contributed 44 percent of Ford's small car growth in August. Fiesta sales increased 61 percent, for the best August Fiesta sales ever.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Chrysler Reports 12 Percent Rise In U.S. Sales

Chrysler reported U.S. sales of 165,552 units, a 12 percent increase compared with sales in August 2012 (148,472 units), and the group's best August sales since 2007.

The Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, Ram Truck and Fiat brands each posted year-over-year sales gains in August compared with the same month a year ago. The Ram Truck brand's 29 percent increase was the largest sales gain of any Chrysler Group brand during the month. Chrysler Group extended its streak of year-over-year sales gains to 41 consecutive months in August.

"Last month, we achieved our strongest retail sales in the past 60 months," said Reid Bigland, head of U.S. Sales. "All aspects of our business continue to improve as evidenced by our streak of 41 consecutive months of year-over-year sales gains."

Chrysler had six models that set sales records in August. The Dodge Journey mid-size crossover, with its 12 percent increase, had its best sales month ever. In addition, the Dodge Challenger, Dodge Dart, Jeep Wrangler, Jeep Compass, and Jeep Patriot each recorded their best sales for the month of August.

Chrysler finished the month with a 62 days supply of inventory (364,641 units).

Ram Truck brand sales were up 29 percent, the brand's best August sales since 2007. August

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



2013 Chevrolet Cruze



2013 Chrysler 300



2013 Ford Fiesta

Contact us at news@detroitautoscene.com