

Stingray, Grand Cherokee, Fiesta ST Earn Esquire's Praise

Detroit's automakers did well in the *Esquire* 2013 Car Awards.

The magazine recently released its list of eight "cars of the year" broken down by category. Each Detroit OEM had a vehicle on the list.

GM's 2014 Corvette Stingray was named the winner of *Esquire's* "Automotive Event of the Year" category. In his description of the car, article author Sam Smith wrote, "Like its perennial rival, the Porsche 911, Detroit's only real sports car has followed the same blueprint for decades: V8 up front, drive wheels in the back, a snout that conjures up cruise missiles and submarines. This one, the 2014 model, is all-new for only the seventh time in the car's 60-year history. And it's the single biggest deal in cars this year."

"Corvettes used to be blunt hammers - questionable interior and build quality, big power that took a firm hand to keep on the road. Body panels were first fiberglass and then composite plastic, and the cars always smelled vaguely of glue."

Smith went on to write that the new Stingray is different. It's better made, he wrote, and "for the first time ever, nothing about the Corvette is disappointing. Call this cultivated evolution. A V8 is still under the hood, which is good, because Corvettes are really just an

excuse to put Michigan grunt in a nimble package."

Corvette spokesman Monte Doran said *Esquire's* acknowledgment of the 2014 Stingray is an honor for a couple of reasons.

"Corvette's been around for 60 years," Doran said. "That the Stingray has been recognized as the 'Car Event of the Year' shows the relevance of the car to American culture."

Second, the Stingray was designed to set the performance bar for the modern driver. This recognition, Doran said, shows that the Stingray is on the right track and doing what it has been designed to do.

Chrysler's Jeep Grand Cherokee won the magazine's "Sport Utility of the Year" award. Author David Granger, in his analysis of the vehicle for *Esquire*, stated that while the Grand Cherokee wasn't redesigned, only refreshed, "the most surprising and rewarding vehicle I drove this year was the Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT, which, in the era of super-utes (Porsche, Audi, BMW, Mercedes, etc.) tends to get overlooked."

Granger went on to write that the sound of the ignition was "the sweetest-sounding, most reasonably priced engine note of our time. The car is (tough), both in performance and appearance. The twin scoops on the hood are

evil and subtle at the same time."

He concluded by writing that the Grand Cherokee, including its diesel version, that it's part of an impressive lineup with a lot of range. "And it's American," Granger wrote.

Ford's 2014 Fiesta ST also made *Esquire's* list. Author Justin Berkowitz, when writing about the Fiesta ST, stated that "Ford had actually been listening to American car enthusiasts when it announced not only that it would introduce the Fiesta ST here, but also that it would be virtually identical to its European counterpart. This was a paean for those of us who have spent the past couple decades hoping Ford would offer us the seriously fun cars it sells in countries where small doesn't equate to lousy."

Berkowitz praised the car's power and handling, writing that it is "unmatched" by any other

subcompact because most of those vehicles are "pitched at the All-I-Need-Is-Some Basic-Transportation commuter class."

The Fiesta ST has more power than either the Mini Cooper S or the Fiat Abarth, Berkowitz wrote, while being more practical as well. It comes with a usable back seat and a hatchback configuration.

"We're thrilled with the enthusiastic response from media on Fiesta ST; they recognize that it competes in a class of one with its unique combination of performance, fuel efficiency and price," said Jayson Demchak, Ford's Performance Communications manager.

"Focus ST is bringing a whole new customer to Ford and we expect Fiesta ST to continue that trend."

"It's great for enthusiasts and it's a great ambassador for the Ford brand."

GM Credit Card Offers 5 Percent Toward New Car

General Motors, along with Capital One and Master Card, is introducing a new GM Card that offers consumers 5 percent earnings toward a new Chevrolet, Buick, GMC or Cadillac on their first \$5,000 worth of net card purchases annually and an unlimited 2 percent on all other purchases.

The card has no annual fee, no limit on rewards consumers can accumulate, and the rewards don't expire. New card recipients will enjoy a 0 percent introductory APR on purchases for the first 12 months. After that period expires, the card's interest rate rises to 11.9 percent.

And, holders may even select the look of the card. It comes with the choice of Chevrolet, Cadillac and Buick designs.

Schaeffler Receives GM Quality Award

Schaeffler Group North America out of Troy was recently awarded a General Motors Supplier Quality Excellence Award for demonstrating some of the highest levels of quality performance.

The award went to two of the company's plants in South Carolina.

"We are honored that General Motors has recognized our efforts in developing quality products and technologies to support our customers," said Barry Vukoder, director of Quality at Schaeffler.

"This further demonstrates our dedication to customer satisfaction, which is fundamental to how we operate."

GM's Supplier Quality Excellence Award is focused on improving collaboration with suppliers, said Schaeffler

spokesperson Richard Neilson. Winning suppliers met more than 12 quality criteria during a 12-month period that ended on June 30.

This is the second year GM is honoring suppliers who are making noteworthy contributions to GM's goal of providing the best overall customer experience in the automotive industry, said Grace Lieblein, vice president, GM's Global Purchasing and Supply Chain.

"Schaeffler helped play a critical role in GM's success in 2013 through their dedication and commitment to consistently exceeding our expectations by being innovative, delivering high-quality products and services on time and by creating outstanding value," said Lieblein.

The plants receiving the award

are Plant 3 in Fort Mill, S.C., which supplies thrust bearings, and Plant 2 in Cheraw, S.C., that produces hydraulic lash adjusters for the automaker.

Schaeffler, with its product brands INA, LuK and FAG, is a provider of rolling bearing and plain bearing solutions and of linear and direct drive technology. The company also is a renowned supplier to the automotive industry of high-precision products and systems for engines, transmissions, and chassis applications, Neilson said.

With 180 locations in more than 50 countries, Schaeffler has a worldwide network of manufacturing locations, research and development facilities, sales companies, engineering offices, and training centers, said Neilson.

Ford Sees Major Growth Ahead in Its China Market

It's a good problem for Ford to have - not having enough supply to meet demand in the Chinese market.

So, to meet exploding demand, the automaker is going to build new facilities.

Ford China's sales soared with 647,849 wholesale units sold in the first three quarters, an increase of 51 percent compared with the same period last year, said spokesman Jake Dylak.

In September alone, Ford China's sales increased by 61 percent - 96,111 wholesale units sold, compared with 59,570 sold in September last year.

"Ford's strong sales demonstrate our continued progress on our aggressive China growth strategy," said John Lawler, chairman and CEO for Ford China.

"By refreshing our product lineup, expanding our dealer network, and growing our team and production capacity, Ford will continue to deliver a safe, high-quality, fuel-efficient, and connected driving experience to our Chinese customers."

The all-new Ford Mondeo - launched at the end of August - had its first full sales month in September, selling 9,676 wholesale units.

The Focus nameplate also continued to do well in September, with 37,271 wholesale units sold, up 11 percent compared with September 2012. Ford's full portfolio of SUVs - the Ford EcoSport, Ford Kuga, Ford Edge and Ford Explorer - was also in high demand. The Ford EcoSport sold 7,664 wholesale units in September while the Ford Kuga sold 10,365 wholesale units.

Ford's imported passenger cars - the Ford Focus ST, Ford Fiesta ST, Ford Edge and Ford Explorer - sold 16,405 wholesale units in the first three quarters, up 254 percent compared with the same period last year. In September, imported car sales were up 234 percent.

Sales at Ford's passenger car joint venture at China Changan Ford Automobile were up 69 percent in the first three quarters with 466,248 wholesale units sold. September sales reached 72,231 wholesale vehicles, up 66 percent from September 2012.

Ford's commercial vehicle investment in China Jiangling Motors Corporation (JMC) also delivered great sales in the first three quarters, with 165,196 wholesale vehicles sold, an increase of 12 percent. September sales alone were up 41 percent with 21,874 wholesale units sold.

The Ford Transit performed particularly well, with 49,055 wholesale vehicles sold in the first three quarters, a jump of 20 percent from a year earlier.

This success is no accident, Dylak said. Dave Schoch, president of Ford Asia Pacific, has created a plan to grow the Ford brand in Asia and the company is sticking to that plan.

"We're implementing our One Ford plan," Dylak said. "And it's paying off in Asia. This is a big region and we're working hard to increase production to meet demand."

"In the first quarter of 2012, Ford's market share in Asia was 2.5 percent. We expect that, by the end of 2013, the company's market share will be 5 percent. That's pretty good, doubling market share in just two years."

The Dearborn automaker has 14 vehicle assembly and powertrain plants in China right now, but it's working on getting that number up to 25 by 2015, Dylak said. This increase in production capacity is just to meet growing demand in China.

This growth is the result of Ford's Asia Pacific strategy, Dylak said. The idea is to have "one Ford, one region." The plan, he said, is to build the Ford brand by establishing a core product portfolio, adding that this core should have five platforms that account for 97 percent of Ford's sales volume in Asia by mid-decade.

And, Dylak said, Ford should be able to fully leverage its global product portfolio and improve the "brand experience" by expanding dealer networks, training dealer personnel and implementing global standards for the Ford brand experience.

The business model Ford has developed to implement this strategy calls for manufacturing the vehicles where they are going to be sold, Dylak said.

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