

## GM Concepts Off to the Vegas SEMA Show

by Jim Stickford

The 2013 Specialty Equipment Marketing Association (SEMA) show in Las Vegas begins on Nov. 5, and GM is ready with some exciting concepts and products to show the world.

Jim Campbell, vice president of Performance Vehicles and Motorsports at GM, said for years Chevy was known for vehicles that could be customized in the aftermarket. But over time the brand got away from that.

In the past few years GM and Chevy have made efforts to get back into the aftermarket in a big way, Campbell said. That's what makes the annual SEMA show in Las Vegas so important.

"This year there will be about 2,400 vendors at SEMA," Campbell said. "There will also be about 60,000 buyers there as well. They're making purchasing decisions for what they're going to stock, so it's very important for GM and Chevy to be there to show what we can do. Our mission to showcase Chevy as the brand of choice for people who want to personalize their vehicles, improve performance and enhance capability."

Campbell said Chevy will show a variety of customized vehicles at the show, from the compact Sonic, to the muscle car Camaro to the sporty Corvette to the Silverado.

Chevy previewed to the media on Oct. 25 some of the cars that are going to SEMA.

One of the vehicles was a Chevrolet Performance Sonic RS concept car. This vehicle, Campbell said, draws on the legacy of Chevy's high-performance vehicles, but reimagined for a new generation.

The concept RS Sonic features engine performance upgrades as well as improvements to the suspension, brakes and appearance. These changes and the parts to make them possible were all developed by Chevrolet performance engineers and designed to be installed by Chevy dealers.

That last part is very important, said Sandor M. Pizar, director - Strategy & Planning Performance Vehicles & Motorsports.

By using Chevy-designed parts and having them installed by GM dealers, drivers don't void the warranty, Pizar said. And, frankly, no one knows Chevy cars like Chevy engineers.

Another vehicle that will be on display at the show is the Ricky Carmichael All-Activity Sonic concept car, Campbell said. This vehicle was developed with American Motorcycle Association champion Ricky Carmichael. It has a new performance package that includes a 1.4L turbo stage kit with high-flow exhaust, a Chevrolet performance suspension kit with lowered ride height, a Chevrolet performance brake package with Wilwood front calipers and an 18-inch wheel-and-tire package featuring custom gloss black with green lip.

There will also be a Spark EV Tech Performance concept car at the show. The idea behind that vehicle, Pizar said, is to show the public that high performance is possible even with green vehicles.

It comes with a new power-delivery algorithm that enhances acceleration and stronger axles to support that greater power. There is even a military-style flip-up activation switch on the shifter just for fun.

Other concept vehicles include an "Urban Cool" Impala, a Malibu LTZ and a Personalization Cruze Diesel concept car, Campbell said. All these vehicles were designed to show people what can be done with Chevy's aftermarket kits and parts.

They also act of a kind of test-marketing, Campbell said. If the reaction to certain concepts is strong enough, it's possible for them to go into production within a year.

"We're very excited about launching the concept Camaro Z/28 exhaust and induction kits," Pizar said. "We'll gauge the pub-



2013 SEMA Chevrolet All-Activity Sonic concept car

lic's reaction and see what the next step will be."

"Our parts are designed by the same engineers who design our cars," Campbell said. "These parts are tested by the same staff

that tests our vehicles. If you buy aftermarket parts and try to fit them to your Chevy, it doesn't always work because they don't know our cars and our parts as well as we do."

## GM, Honda Share Research on Fuel Cells

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patents filed between 2002 and 2012.

The company is currently building a new Fuel Cell Development Laboratory in Pontiac, where the majority of the atomaker's future fuel cell development work will take place, Flores said.

And in July, GM and Honda announced a long-term, definitive master agreement to co-develop a next-generation fuel cell system and hydrogen storage technologies, aiming for the 2020 time frame. In September, GM and the U.S. Army Tank Automotive Research, Development & Engineering Center (TARDEC) said they are expanding their co-development of hydrogen fuel cell technology.

The reason for collaboration is simple, Flores said. It comes down to cost. Developing a practical hydrogen fuel cell is expensive. Both GM and Honda are

leaders in the field, and by sharing their research, both companies can save money while being able to push ahead with their research. "We believe hydrogen fuel cell technology holds tremendous potential to one day help reduce our dependence on petroleum," said Charlie Freese, executive director of GM's Global Fuel Cell Engineering activities. "The resilience of our test fleet and new research partnerships are helping us reach this goal."

Flores said that Honda has a stated goal of having a hydrogen-powered vehicle for sale in the commercial marketplace by

2015. GM's stated goal is a little more modest, Flores said. The company wants to have a viable hydrogen-fuel cell system ready for the marketplace by 2020, he said.

By teaming up with Honda, it is hoped that the two companies will be able to reduce the cost of such a system to the point where it's affordable to the average consumer.

"There are two big problems standing in the way of hydrogen-fuel technology," Flores said. "One is the cost of the technology and the second is infrastructure."

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