

DRIVE!

Your GLBT Automotive Magazine

Fall 2008



Dallas VOICE

Drive-in dreams —
Affordable style —
Top designs —
The future of hybrids —

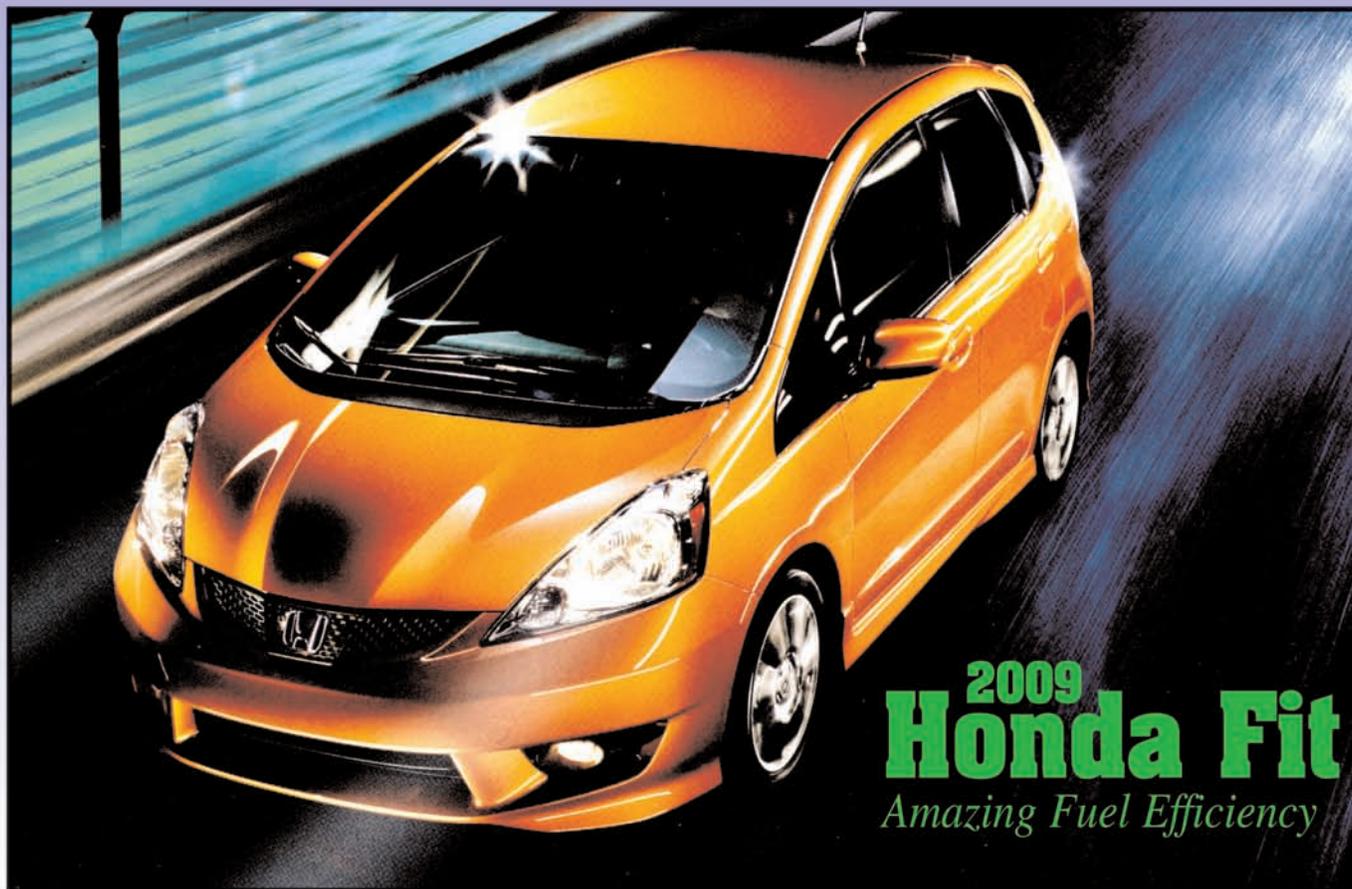


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Drive-in dreams

Can your car reflect your taste in movies? It can with one of these specialty looks

By Casey Williams



PHOTO COURTESY GENERAL MOTORS

The stunning new Corvette ZR-1, above, could practically outrun a sunbeam. For a more family-friendly ride, the Ford Flex, below, is ideal for the couple with kids.

Drive-ins were always about more than locking face and twitching about on the wide bench seat of a muscle car, pick-up or your mother's woodgrain wagon. They were as much a part of young love as club hopping and back room banging are today. Somewhere between sucking face and running for the refreshment stand, teenagers actually watched movies.

Drive-ins still have their fans in

Texas, but a gay moviegoer needs to show some style, matching his ride with the film *du jour*. A real fashion queen would accessorize her movie with a conveyance like these.

Horror flick: 2009 Chevrolet Corvette ZR-1

No horror flick gave me more nightmares than Spielberg's "Duel." In the 1971 telefilm, Dennis Weaver's nerdy character

drives a Plymouth Valiant and is chased through the mountains by a Peterbilt tanker that looks like it crossed over from hell to ravage unsuspecting motorists. No matter how fast the Valiant went, it couldn't outrun the hefty demon.

Ferrari, Porsche and Viper owners will live a rerun when they encounter the Corvette ZR-1.

Corvette engineers are never satisfied, so they supercharged the base Vette's V8 engine to produce 638 horses. Expect 0 to 60 runs in about 3.5 seconds and a top speed in excess of 200 mph. Those are numbers that put any previous Corvette into the next county's weeds and are plenty to outrun any lurking 18-wheelers. Still breathing? Scared? Me too!

For ultimate ZR-1 performance, excessive amounts of aluminum, magnesium and carbon fiber were integrated into its design. Wider carbon fiber front fenders and hood are beautiful and light. An air splitter and ZR1-specific spoiler with raised outboard sections prevent the front and rear from levitating.

In Corvette tradition, the ZR-1 is designed to be daily driveable. Magnetic Selective Ride Control provides a comfortable ride by checking the road surface 1,000



PHOTO COURTESY FORD MOTORS

times per second and making instantaneous adjustments. When put to the test, it stiffens up immediately and helps the Vette turn in over 1g of cornering grip. Carbon-ceramic drilled disc brakes dissipate heat like a blown radiator.

With impending fuel efficiency standards, cars like the ZR1 may become endangered species. Until then, we're in for an incredible adventure — a freakin' horror flick not only for passengers, but also for Lamborghini, Ferrari and Dodge. Ready for a duel?

Scare up \$104,820 for one to be yours.

Family comedy: 2009 Ford Flex

For families ready to hit their own Holiday Road, watching "National Lampoon's Vacation" is more of a horror flick than family comedy, but Chevy Chase and his entourage made it hysterical. In a starring role in it and the sequels were Ford "family trucksters."

If a Subaru Outback is the symbol of gaytopia, then the Ford Flex — with its mega Mini looks and corrugated bodysides to simulate woodgrain — could become its larger alter ego.

The Griswold clan would be envious of the Flex's DVD entertainment system, in-dash navigation and Sync, which was co-developed by Microsoft. By the magic of Bluetooth connectivity, cabin microphones and a button on the steering wheel, you can make phone calls, check e-mail, access music and conjure up directions ... all by voice command.

Three rows of fold-flat seats can carry up to seven cohorts, or open a mega rumpus room. When it comes to really steaming up the windows, you don't want to be bothered with leaving the vehicle for any reason. Sneaking in snacks is oh-so-risqué, so stuff the Flex's optional rear seat refrigerator with all you munch and sip. It can hold up to seven 12-ounce



PHOTO COURTESY GENERAL MOTORS

DEAD SEXY: The Pontiac Solstice, above, boasts the luscious curves of a steep mountainside road, and has the engine to make it up any hill in style. For rough-and-tumble cowboy types, the F-150, below, is macho reliability incarnate.

cans, four half-liter bottles or two 20-ounce bottles.

Instead of a squawky microphone, maybe future drive-in owners could broadcast high def sound through the in-car satellite receiver. If not, there's always the Flex's own entertainment system, which puts a drive-in in any drive-way — no need to hit the road.

Borrow \$28,995 to start your vacation.

Date movie: 2009 Pontiac Solstice Coupe

One of my favorite movies is "Under the Tuscan Sun" starring Diane Lane. Based on a book by author Frances Mayes, it is set in Cortona, Italy, where Lane's character buys a dilapidated farmhouse, then goes through the adventure of restoring it. In the end, she finds love. I, of course, imagined screaming through the Italian countryside in an Alfa Spider with my lovey at my side.

This was close to the movie playing in designers' minds when they created the Italianate Pontiac Solstice roadster that looked like it came from Maranello instead of Detroit. If only they could get enough luggage in the trunk, a couple of lovers ensconced in this tight cabin could make steam and rock its tight little suspension off its

low-profile tires. To make the moment last, Pontiac is introducing a Solstice Coupe.

As with the roadster, two powertrains will be available. Base models come with a 173-horsepower 2.4-liter four-cylinder engine while GXP editions step up to a turbocharged 2.0-liter four-cylinder that generates 260 horsepower. Keeping that in perspective, a 1990 Corvette generated 245 horsepower from a 5.7-liter V8. Expect scorching 0-to-60 mph runs to fall below 6 seconds for GXPs.

Nobody knows how to build a sports car like GM. Corvettes are comfortable, fast, solid and reliable. By leveraging all it learned

from the Solstice, and looking up to its big brother from Chevrolet, the Solstice Coupe touches all the right spots. Not only does it look hot, like a downsized Corvette, it opens up reasonable storage under the hatch and lets in the sunshine and starlight through a removable targa top. Ah, the romance.

This movie date starts under \$30,000.

Western: 2009 Ford F-150

On the silver screen, John Wayne played ruffians who could shoot straight and work hard. Off screen, after his job was done, he was debonair in shirts and tails. If

See **DRIVE-IN** on Page 14



PHOTO COURTESY FORD MOTORS

Strapped chaps

Don't let the financial crisis scare you away from buying one of these hot-yet-affordable transports

By Casey Williams



PHOTO COURTESY SCION

HEIR APPARENT: The compact but smoothly-powered Scion xB, above, is a fuel-conscious juggernaut.

If either by choice or the result of the recent financial crisis your bum is hanging in the wind, there is no need to fret. A boy has to get around, and peddling a mountain bike won't get him a chap to strap.

Buying a new car may seem like the ultimate thumping, but there are some hot, cute things that will make you look sexy without the proverbial draft.

Scion xB: Party for *homo domesticus*

Shaped like a streamlined '40s locomotive, the Scion xB puts a box around *homo domesticus* and party spontaneous. When launched in 2003, the first generation xB looked like the box a Volvo came in. Starkly different, it won raves on the street and at the loading dock. Rounded, enlarged and significantly refined, version 2.0 is even better.

Flared fenders, high window-lines and thick pillars hint at '30s street rod, looking less like a reject from the backroom of Target and

more like a mini-crossover. Many special effects and wheels can be added by the dealer for complete customization. Check out the ethereal interior lighting. All hail disco!

To gain command of this shipping container, one slides through wide-opening doors and into comfortable front captain's chairs or high rear bench. A center-mounted digital speedometer, flanked by auxiliary gauges, highlights a wide dashboard. XM Satellite Radio, thumpin' Pioneer speakers, CD player and iPod jack get the party started the moment you roll homo away from domesticus.

Turbo smooth power roils the front wheels via a 158-hp 2.4-liter four-cylinder engine and crisp five-speed manual tranny. There's nothing fancy in the xB's footwork, but it is perfectly competent on the dance floor. Vehicle Stability Control, four-wheel anti-lock disc brakes and traction control move you in all the right directions. Fuel economy is rated 22 city/28 highway.

Compact cars used to be for cheapsters and the poor. The xB would make almost anybody happy, even if it weren't the devious little box it once was.

An as-tested price of \$16,230 is like stealing.

2009 Honda Fit: Puggy and pretty

An experienced queen knows how to throw a convincing fit to get her way — I once threw one at the Volkswagen dealer to get \$2,000 off the price of my partner's Beetle.

It also took a few tantrums to convince Honda to emigrate the Fit from Europe and Japan, but they paid off. Breaking wind with pug nose cuteness usually reserved for Erasure's Andy Bell, the all-new edition is worth all the theatrics.

Exterior styling of the Fit is familiar, but takes on a more sculpted form. A domed hood, alloy wheels, elongated side window-line, rear spoiler and clear lens taillamps give the little car a

sporty and aggressive stance while keeping its large interior.

Fit drivers will flip for the quick-fold rear seats that open a large cargo space or go cushion up so bicycles can load sideways. Fit's slick interior also harbors a sportilicious three-spoke steering wheel, blue-lit gauges and an available in-dash navigation system with voice recognition. For a small, inexpensive car, the Fit's interior is stylishly designed, well made and fun to use.

Under the stubby hood is a 1.5-liter four-cylinder engine, connected to either a five-speed manual or paddle-shift five-speed automatic transmission that gets 28/35 mpg. Sixteen-inch wheels connect to a spirited suspension system for fun handling no matter where you find your thrills. Electronic stability programming, four-wheel anti-lock brakes and electronic brake force distribution are all available.

For \$14,550, you get a puggy and pretty compact that drives like a highly engineered sports car. The only fit you will have to throw is to get one — the line wraps around the proverbial corner.

Whether sedaning it or feeling sporty, the Suzuki SX4 delivers.



PHOTO COURTESY SUZUKI

Suzuki SX4: Versatility in the sack

If you're going to strap only one chap, you want him to be versatile in the sack. Pleasure should come from all places. Driving a compact car is not so erotic and sensual, but the experience shouldn't force fantasies to lighten your load. Suzuki's SX4 — sedan or five-door — could be the perfect aphrodisiac.

If the SX4 were a hooker, she would provide Park Avenue serv-

ice at dirty-whore prices. Five-door editions come standard with all-wheel-drive, stylish outerwear, neatly tailored innerwear and the reliability of a morning cock-a-doddle. Sedans diss AWD, but are sporty and energetic. They do everything, and on a budget.

Unique triangular A-pillars enable tall roofs and airy space. Just step right in, SUV style. Auto climate control, heated mirrors, CD/MP3 audio and height-adjustable driver's seat spoil. Alloy strips on the center dash look as much Hummer as Suzuki. XM Satellite Radio and Bluetooth

connectivity are available for a few Benjies more.

As a sedan or fully endowed, the SX4 packs a 143-hp four-cylinder punch. You'll want to stroke the five-speed manual transmission to wring as many ponies as possible from the baby block, but fuel economy ratings of 23/31 mpg city/highway conserve your paycheck.

Well-stocked, either model comes in under \$17,000, including a full tank of gas. Suzuki gives the thrill with a little bill. Best of all, they leave nothing but envy hanging in the wind. ■

A favorite in Europe, the Honda Fit now shows its versatility on this side of the Atlantic.



PHOTO COURTESY HONDA

Project driveway

What's in (and out)
in auto styling?
We pick Detroit's
top designs
for 2009

By Casey Williams

One more season of listening to Michael Kors and Nina Garcia snip nastily on "Project Runway" might be enough to make me murder Little Orphan Annie on the way to chopping up Grandma's underwear.

But similar to the design reality series — and its offspring — the same automakers that create divine designs can bomb with hideous rubbish.

So we put on our Heidi hat and took the liberty of choosing what you *should* like in automotive fashion. These are some of the best-executed automobiles of today, blending historic cues with modern edge-ism to excite drivers and voyeurs alike. (We also picked some less-than-terrific looks of years past; see sidebar on Page 11.)



PHOTO COURTESY SATURN

The Saturn Astra, above, turns the traditional 3-door wagon into a sleek road warrior; for eye-popping glamour, the Audi A5 Coupe, below, may be the loveliest machine on the Autobahn.

The beauty of these rides is, you win just by playing — and everyone else will know you realize what's in and what's out. *Auf wiedersehen!*

Audi A5 Coupe

Sporting the hottest body ever to come from Audi, the A5 Coupe stops traffic and causes irregular heartbeats. It has the presence of a Bentley, the per-

formance of a swift German sportscar and the looks of a Janice Dickinson model ... all with the highest quality materials known to Autobahn romps. Magnum would have traded his Ferrari in a half-blink for a ride like this.

Saturn Astra 3-Door

Saturn looked to General
Continued on Page 10



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Rene Lipp

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Motors' German studios for inspiration in coming up with the Astra. An arching windowline gives the impression of a tight coupe, drawing your eyes away from the longer roofline that takes the form of a small station wagon. Attention to detail can be seen in how the plastic under the taillamps lens has corrugation that echoes the body curves. As Tim Gunn might say, "Nice construction." They certainly figured out how to make it work.

Cadillac CTS SportWagon

Cadillac has not had fins like these since the 1950s — and back then, they were not so high or well-lit. Harley Earl didn't even come close with the '59 models in achieving this kind of sleek beauty.

A station wagon flashing high fin is astounding. Even better, the front has the same huge grille,



PHOTO COURTESY GENERAL MOTORS

Buick's stunning new Invicta concept car is an instant classic.

raked windshield, stacked headlamps and razor light tubes as the CTS sedan. You can tell it's a Cadillac from three miles behind.

Buick Invicta Concept

Stunning! Designed in China where Buick dominates the market, and coming early next year as the next LaCrosse, the Invicta

has classic sweep spear styling, toothy chrome grille, starship controls and ventiports on the hood surface. It is to Buick what the CTS is to Cadillac: Elegant,

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contemporary and classically inspired. Primo!

Dodge Ram

Created while Daimler still ran Chrysler, this Ram is as bold as ever, but sculpted to reduce drag. Its interior is like a Chrysler 300C's and dressed to the nines with leather, woodgrain and gadgets. Ram Box carves space in the bedsides for fishing and sports gear. If Mercedes built a truck, this would be it.

Rolls-Royce Phantom Coupe

Wafting by with the presence of a gentleman's yacht, the Rolls-Royce Phantom Coupe bears traditional outerwear with a formal roofline and outhouse-size Parthenon grille. Rear-hinged power doors open to the world's finest hides, slain timber, star twinkle roof lighting and any custom feature your dreams may bring. Ask and R-R craftsmen grant your wildest wish. Divine. ■

YOU'RE OUT!

These rides, from the same makers as those responsible for the iconic looks discussed, are, happily, no more.

Higgins' Audi 5000. If I remember, it went off a cliff during the final episode of "Magnum P.I." Plagued by false allegations of "sudden acceleration," and wearing dowdy German clothes, the 5000 was a good car, but was as exciting as your grandma's ruffles.

Saturn Ion. I once got fired for reviewing that car — hideous piece of cat litter. Stuff literally fell off of it and the design looked like somebody's possessed jigsaw puzzle. It was the Pontiac Aztek of compact cars and didn't drive any better. Plastic body panels were at least durable.

Ghostbusters ambulance. Memorable for hurling itself around corners in the pursuit of spirits, the wagon was better suited to hauling cold corpses than hot homos. It could really haul, but left its ass behind. Hard to believe it shared fins and grins with the gorgeous '59 Eldorado.

Buick LeSabre. My uncle and grandmother both own one. It's not pretty. Frump-a-dump styling shrouds what is otherwise an excellent and durable comfort womb. If only Buick designers had conjured classic styling, a few buyers younger than John McCain might have bit.

Dodge Lil' Red Truck. What the deuce was Dodge thinking when it built this beast in '79? Painted red like a fire truck with sportsides, wood bed inserts and Peterbilt exhaust stacks, the confused little thing was a pickup-semi trannie. Interesting, but creepy like a smoking Dracula.

Rolls-Royce Carmargue. Could it be the ugliest Rolls ever? This angular mess was designed by Italy's famed Pininfarina design house as a rarefied status symbol, but became the laughing post of the world's most revered automaker. Italian design or not, it was no Ferrari California.



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Plugging away

The new breed of hybrids could revolutionize the electric car — and do so with style to spare

By Casey Williams

If gas prices are making you feel like you're being charged up the arse to plug empty space in your tank, it might be time for a hybrid.

Before you stick your plug where it don't belong, though, here's a little science lesson. The Toyota Prius and all the rest of the hybrids available today are essentially gas-powered vehicles with batteries that provide extra power when needed. None of the hybrids from established automakers can currently be plugged in and run on battery power alone.

But that's all going to change. Get a shock out of these, and start saving up.

2010 Chevy Volt

Unveiled at the 2007 Detroit auto show, the Chevy Volt is the first production model developed by General Motors since the notorious EV1 that was engineered from the ground up as an electric car. Its lithium ion batteries — essentially scaled-up laptop batteries — can be plugged into household current for a range of about 40 miles. After that, a small gas engine cycles on and off to charge the batteries, extending range to about 300 miles. Think of the Volt as a pure electric car with a back-

up generator.

The cool part is that the back-up could someday be a diesel engine or hydrogen fuel cell, as in the Chevy Equinox test fleet currently being tested in Los Angeles, New York and D.C. Keep in mind: Electricity costs about one-sixth the price of gasoline.

Driving an electric car is pure ecstasy. Electric motors produce loads of torque instantly. Step on the joy pedal, and you feel a whoosh of acceleration with almost no noise. It's an absolute delight. The Volt's powertrain produces 150 horsepower and 273 lb.-ft. of torque, allowing the car to reach a top speed of 100 mph. The Volt is like a swift jet where all other cars are piston-driven cargo planes.

The blogosphere is ablaze with nasty-grams to GM because the original concept was a low-slung sedan with future Camaro looks, while actual production versions are as advanced as a Mars Lander, though taller and smoother to improve range-extending aerodynamics. A flush grille, sleek mirrors, ground hugging bodysides and integrated decklid spoiler greet and displace air with minimum turbulence.

If GM holds out, the Volt will arrive in

2010 and literally reinvent the automobile. It employs technology that has never before come together to give the benefits of a pure electric car without the limitations. Finally, an electric car with stamina.

Prices are expected to start around \$40,000.

2010 Toyota Prius and Honda Insight

Competing with GM are Honda and Toyota, which will launch two stunning hybrids of their own. At October's Paris auto show, Honda electrified audiences with its second-generation Insight.

Honda's hybrid offers the convenience of a five-door sedan and futuristic styling that conveys class-leading fuel economy and performance. Honda will not stop its technology display with the Insight. Soon after the Insight launches, it will introduce a sporty hybrid based on the CR-Z Concept, like a modern-day CRX, from the 2007 Tokyo Motor Show. Honda has also become the first automaker to offer a fuel cell-powered vehicle — the Clarity — that was designed from the start to run on hydrogen. It is being test marketed in California, mostly to high-profile Hollywood types like Jamie Lee Curtis.

Meanwhile, Toyota is preparing its third-generation Prius for debut at January's Detroit auto



PHOTO COURTESY GENERAL MOTORS

The already-advertised Chevy Volt, when it comes out, is expected to dispel all thoughts of electric cars as being weaklings under the hood.

show. Spy shots are circulating on the Web and show the car will offer additional features and improved mileage, but won't stray far from the current model's profile and utility. Once Toyota locks onto a formula for success, it bites like a bitch on a broom. Toyota is also developing a plug-in version of the Prius, which will likely give drivers as much as 20 miles of pure electric power. It is no Volt, but will be a much cheaper date for those of us not endowed with huge bank accounts.

Honda Insights will start under \$20,000; the new Prius will be under \$24,000. Expect plug-in versions of the Prius to reach \$30,000.

The entire catalogue

Sexy toys like the Chevy Volt, Honda Insight and Toyota Prius will stun drivers with their technology and are what most of us envision as hybrids. However, we've moved way beyond one flavor or

Honda's Insight provides futuristic styling and fuel efficiency.



PHOTO COURTESY HONDA

form. Like other "appliances," there are hybrids for every budget and desire.

There are mid-size sedans like the **Toyota Camry** (\$28,050), **Chevy Malibu** (\$26,225), **Saturn Aura** (\$26,685) and upcoming **Ford Fusion/Mercury Milan** hybrids.

Lexus has a limousine-sized **LS600h** (\$105,885) and sport sedan **GS430h** (\$56,400), as well as the **RX400h** crossover (\$42,080). Toyota sells a hybrid

version of the three-row **Highlander** crossover (\$35,445), which competes with the **Mercury Mariner** (\$29,750) **Ford Escape** (\$29,305), and **Saturn Vue** (\$28,625) hybrids. Saturn is developing a plug-in version of the Vue for 2011.

And how do we rectify full-size SUVs and pickups that can pull big trailers and get good fuel economy? General Motors, Daimler, Chrysler and BMW teamed to develop a two-mode hybrid system

that can optimize power for towing or for fuel economy. The system can be found in the **Chevy Tahoe** (\$51,405), **GMC Yukon** (\$50,945), **Cadillac Escalade** (\$72,865), **Chevy Silverado/GMC Sierra** (est. \$45,000), **Dodge Durango** (est. \$45,000), **Chrysler Aspen** (est. \$48,000) and upcoming editions of larger BMW and Mercedes models. Large hybrids will never achieve 50 mpg fuel economy, but

Continued on Next Page

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PHOTO COURTESY TOYOTA

The Toyota Prius has been the benchmark hybrid for years, and its third-generation version should continue to flex its muscle.

Continued from Previous Page

they get in-town fuel economy comparable to mid-size sedans.

If what you really want is a pure electric car, forget the GM EV1 – it's extinct. But the \$109,000 **Tesla Roadster**, based on the Lotus Elite, has found favor with wealthy Californians. Mini and Smart are launching electrics in Europe with plans to test market them in the U.S. Chrysler recently showed electric versions of the **Jeep Wrangler**, **Chrysler Town and**

Country mini-van and a Dodge sports car while announcing its intent to produce at least one. If a handcrafted exotic tempts you, the **Fisker Karma** plug-in hybrid is blow-me sexy and will sell for \$80,000.

We are chasing electrically powered transportation that will get its juice from coal, wind, solar, gasoline, diesel, hydrogen, ethanol and many nuclear power plants that will likely be built over the next couple of decades. Tug your plug; the age of the electric automobile is near. ■

DRIVE-IN

Continued from page 5

the Duke were alive today, he'd drive a Ford F-150, which can turn from ranch to spa just by opening the door.

If you need it for rough or tumble, they don't call the backs of trucks "beds" for nothing. Bicycles, mulch, dirt, kayaks and camping gear all fit. A full range of V8 engines offer enough power to haul heavy loads, pull big trailers or just impress cruisers with tire-smoking zeal. All-wheel-drive, electronic stability control, four-wheel anti-lock brakes and Trailer Sway Control make hauling those loads and persons a ton safer.

All of the popular models return, however, with the demise of the Lincoln MK LT, Ford is introducing a Platinum edition for trendier drivers. You'll know it by its big chrome eggcrate grille, 20-inch chrome alloy wheels and silver-faced dashboard. Tuxedo stitching on the seats, satin gloss rippled lacrosse ash woodgrain on the center dash, and power-deployable running boards elevate truck customers to a new plane. It is a Lincoln without the flashy badge.

Introduced in 1948, the Ford F-Series has sold more than 33 million units — more than twice the number of Model Ts. From generation to generation, the full-size trucks have served with the undying loyalty of a cowboy's pooch. Like Olivia Newton-John, the F-150 is looking great at 60. Circle the wagons and make heat; the F-150 is hard to beat.

Prices start at \$20,345, but top \$40,000 with all the fix-ins. ■

Holiday Gift Guide
* 2008

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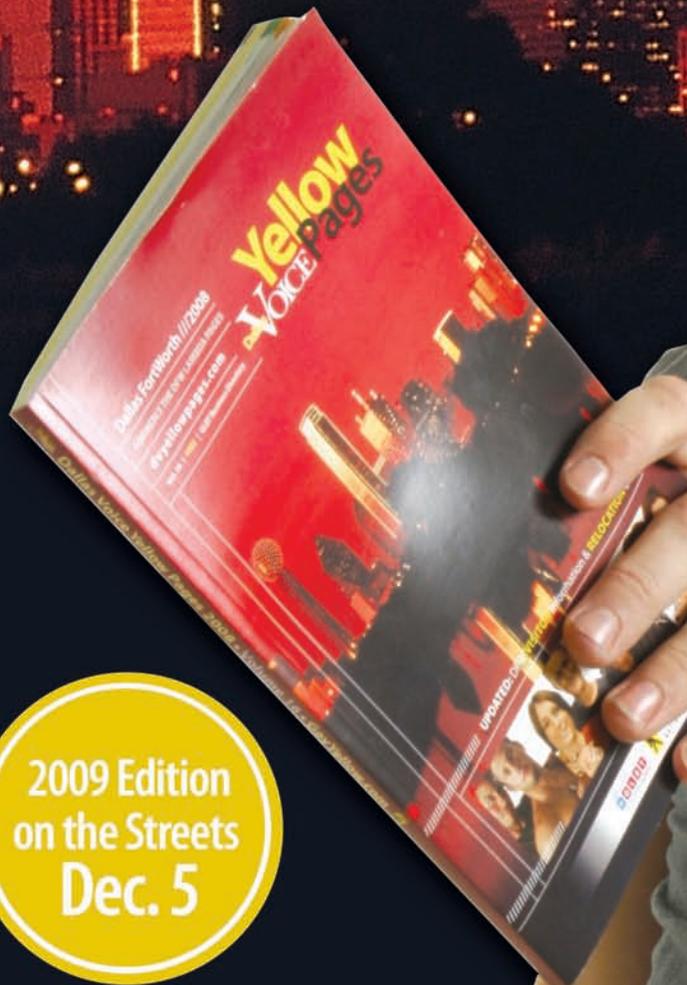
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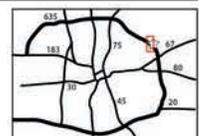


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