

SHIFT COLORADO



PIKES PEAK INTERNATIONAL RACEWAY

FALL BASH

Oct. 10-11

Trunk or Treat - Costume Contest - Music - Food
Vendors - Track Sprints - Open Lapping - Open Drift
Burnouts - Off The Street Drags - Summer of Smoke
& MORE!

TICKETS AT PPIR.COM

SHIFT|COLORADO

Publisher - Steve Clark

Editor-In-Chief - Jake Laino

Deputy Editors - Brendan Garst, Marty Kier, Chris Colten

Editors - Chris Colten, Dustin Craft, Jake Laino, Kelvin Lal, Scott Rauhen

Designers - Brendan Garst, Marty Kier, Jake Laino

Cover Photo

- Chris Colten (@Coltenphoto)

Writers & Contributors:

- Brendan Garst
- Chris Colten
- Danielle Badler
- Dustin Craft
- Jake Laino
- Jason Brandt
- Josh Bagwell
- Josh Miers
- Kelvin Lal
- Kevin McGraw
- Kiel Taylor
- Marty Kier
- Nate Hughes
- Rick Abitol
- Pikes Peak International Raceway
- Scott Minshall
- Shannon Smith
- Seth Miers
- Shannon Smith
- Eugene Wang
- Steve Clark
- Seth Miers
- Josh Miers

Photography & Contributors:

- Brandon Day
- Brendan Garst
- Chris Colten
- Chris Coleman
- David Roscowff
- Eddie Park
- Jake Laino
- Jesus Mora
- John Dyste
- Kevin McGraw
- Kiel Taylor
- Marty Kier
- Nate Hughes
- Parker Scott
- Pikes Peak International Raceway
- Scott Minshall
- Shannon Smith
- Steve Clark

Guest Artist

- Jesus Mora (@jesusmora_Media)



Photo: John Dyste

King of the Road

What a summer it's been. Over the past few months, we've racked up miles all over Colorado chasing stories, cars, and the people who make this scene what it is. We kicked things off at the Rocky Mountain Driving Experience, sampling new models on some of our favorite mountain roads. Then it was straight into race mode, first with Acura's run up Pikes Peak the day before the big event, and of course the Hill Climb itself.

We didn't stop there. Lands End Hill Climb on the western slope reminded us how raw grassroots racing can be,

while a night at I-76 Speedway gave us a taste of dirt-oval chaos. To balance it out, we suited up for the Morgan Adams Foundation gala and its weekend of events at Centennial Airport; cars, jets, and a good cause all in one place. In between, we got seat time in Acura's newest entry-level model and snuck in a surprise review with help from our friends at Emich.

Issue 13 is packed with all of it and much more. Thanks for riding along, see you at the next stop.

Jake Laino: Editor In Chief 🚩

STANDARD FEATURES



Photo: Brendan Garst

Morgan Adams

Cars, Planes, Generosity

SHIFT showed up big at the Morgan Adams weekend. capturing rare cars, private jets, and generous vibes—all in support of a great cause.

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Photos: Brendan Garst

FALL BASH

SPOOKY FUN AT PPIR OCT 10-11



PIKES PEAK INTERNATIONAL RACEWAY

Story & Photography: Pikes Peak International Raceway

This October, Pikes Peak International Raceway is turning up the heat with its highly anticipated Fall Bash, taking place October 10th and 11th. Set against the rolling backdrop of southern Colorado, this annual event is more than just a celebration of speed, it's an electrifying collision of speed, style, and fall fun. Whether you're a seasoned driver, a devoted car enthusiast, or simply in search of a high-energy way to spend a fall weekend, Fall Bash promises two jam-packed days of action, entertainment, and a strong dose of spooky thrills!

At its core, Fall Bash is an automotive lover's dream! The track at PPIR will roar to life with a lineup of motorsports events designed to engage both drivers

and spectators. The schedule includes Open Lapping, Track Sprints, Off The Street Drags, Open Drift sessions, Circle Drags, and an all-out tire smoking Burnout showcase in "The Ring."

For those competing in the Summer of Smoke Championship Round, this weekend marks the thrilling conclusion of a season-long journey. Competitors will have a chance to win a minimum of \$500 in three of their classes: Team Tandem, Tailgate, and Open Class. Only one individual will be crowned the "King of the Ring" during this final round. Prestige Coatings and Detailing Supplies will be donating a prize package for the crowned "King of the Ring"!

Friday kicks off with afternoon and

evening drifting sessions, and Saturday shifts into high gear with racing events roaring from morning through to the late-night hours. Whether you're behind the wheel or in the stands, the infectious atmosphere is impossible to resist!

Fall Bash isn't just about what happens on the track. It's also a visual and cultural celebration of car culture, Halloween spirit, and community. The event's family-friendly centerpiece is the Trunk-or-Treat, where kids in costume collect candy from creatively decorated vehicles. It's the perfect blend of Halloween tradition and automotive flair. Participants can go all out with themed car setups, and there's even a competition for the best displays.



Categories include Spookiest Ride, Creepiest Crawler, Sugar Rush, Character Car-isma, and Best Trunk-or-Treat.

Meanwhile, the Trunk-or-Treat Car Show invites enthusiasts to showcase their vehicles across a range of competitive categories, from Best Domestic and Best Import to the humorous Worst in Show. A fan favorite is the People's Choice Award, determined by online voting ahead of the event. All car show participants who register before October 1st will be automatically entered and voting runs from October 3rd to October 10th.

New to this year's lineup is Mini Motor Mash, an event designed especially for kids aged 12 and under. Young participants are invited to decorate their ride of choice, be it a Power Wheels car, scooter, or bicycle, and bring it out for a spin on the drag strip and a few laps in The Ring. This event offers a safe, inclusive way for kids to experience the thrill of motorsports. They'll also have the chance to display their decked-out creations in the Trunk-or-Treat Car Show, giving them a platform to share their creativity and showmanship with the crowd.

Of course, it wouldn't be a proper Halloween bash without costumes! The Costume Contest, held Saturday at 4 PM



inside the Shop Party Bar, welcomes participants of all ages. Categories include age groups under 12, 12-18, and 18+, plus a special prize for Best Group Costume. Whether spooky, silly, or jaw-droppingly elaborate, costumes are a big part of the weekend's energy and style.

In between track sessions and contests, attendees can unwind by the fire pits, test their aim in a game of cornhole or water pong, explore the glowing Neon Maze, or browse through a curated selection of vendors. Hungry? A fleet of food trucks will be on site, serving up everything from classic comfort food to seasonal treats. The Shop Party Bar will be pouring both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages throughout the event.

The weekend's schedule is packed from open to close. On Friday, gates open at 11 AM, with drift sessions and bar service extending into the evening. Saturday ramps up even earlier, with gates opening at 8 AM and motorsports events continuing until 10 PM. With so many overlapping activities, it's the kind of event where no two experiences are the same and where there's always something new around the corner.

Whether you're there to race, show off your ride, dress up in costume, or just enjoy the festive chaos, Fall Bash at



Pikes Peak International Raceway offers an unforgettable

experience! It's a weekend where speed meets spirit, where neon lights dance off custom rides, and where families and fans come together to celebrate everything they love about cars, community, and Halloween.

For more details, registration info, and real-time updates, be sure to follow Pikes Peak International Raceway on Facebook and Instagram or visit their website at www.PPIR.com. Tickets are already moving fast! Don't miss your chance to be part of this unique blend of motorsports and mayhem! 🎃



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Sponsored Content Notice: This article was an editorial article sponsored by Pikes Peak International Raceway. We work together with host organizations to highlight interesting car related events in advance of them coming out!





THE
MORGAN
ADAMS

CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE 2025



It's no secret, we have an incredible array of car events here in Colorado. It's easy to say that we are spoiled for choice, with options for the car enthusiast with an empty schedule and a full gas tank every single weekend, year round. Some of our events are so overwhelmingly good, so transcendental in nature, they command the attention of a full weekend. This is the case with the Morgan Adams show, a Friday, Saturday, and Sunday affair held just before Labor Day



weekend, featuring multiple events with some of the finest vehicles Colorado and the surrounding states have to offer. There's this intoxicating energy when you show up to the Morgan Adams Weekend. This year, from August 22 to 24, the three-day stretch felt like a carefully curated daydream, stitched together by winding roads, skyward grace, and elegant events.

The Morgan Adams weekend is hosted by The Morgan Adams Foundation. Plainly put, The



Morgan Adams Foundation funds kids' cancer research. The Foundation raises awareness of, and educates communities about, the need for pediatric and young adult specific cancer treatments along with funding research, encouraging new treatments and collaborative care, and assisting children and families fighting cancer. The foundation was launched by Co-Founder and Executive Director Joan Slaughter after her own experiences with her daughter, Morgan Adams.



Morgan was a normal, healthy 5-year old girl when she was diagnosed with a glioblastoma multiforme brain tumor in December 1997. She battled her cancer for 11 months before she succumbed to the disease. In 2003, the Morgan Adams Concours d'Elegance was founded as an aircraft and automobile extravaganza as a way to raise funds for the foundation's mission, which has supported countless children and their families, and provided funding for new and innovative ideas that will improve cancer treatment effectiveness, overall outcomes, survival rates and quality of life while minimizing the devastating side effects current treatments have on children.

To say the show was started and

perpetuated with a noble mission understatement. The public appears to agree, as the show has grown into a bigger spectacle year over year since its founding, to now a full weekend of events; I find it analogous to the "Pebble Beach" or "Amelia Island" of the Rockies.

The events kicked off on Friday with a choose your own adventure situation, with participants having the choice between taking a drive up Pikes Peak, led by Broadmoor Pikes Peak International Hillclimb legends like Robb Holland and David Donner, followed by a museum tour at Colorado Springs' Penrose Museum which houses a major exhibit on the PPIHC, and lunch.

SHIFT staffer Chris joined the

Friday Tour d'Elegance, which began with a tour of a local collector's garage, followed by a daylong tour route through some of the best driving roads and scenery Colorado has to offer, led by Erik Bergman. Erik is a Colorado resident, noted collector, esteemed driver of vintage vehicles, and importantly, part of the vehicle selection committee for the Concours. Erik knows a thing or two about touring in vintage automobiles, and set up a gorgeous Friday drive for attendees.

Friday evening offered "Whiskey & Watches" with Bonhams watch expert Nate Borgelt curating stories about rare and vintage watches, accompanied by Stranahan's Whiskey pours in their fabulous tasting room. Cars and watches go together





famously, and this event encouraged lingering conversations on time—not in hours but in moments shared.

Saturday morning offers a Ladies' Tea and Treasures event hosted by Bonhams at the Four Seasons in Downtown Denver, bringing together handbags, curated culinary creations and tea pairings, and late-morning laughter. Tea and treasures offers an elegant event catered to the ladies in attendance, which remains aligned with the weekend's dual pulse of beauty and cause.

As night fell Saturday, the Concours d'Elegance at Centennial Airport changed the tempo again. On the apron of KAPA (the ICAO code for Centennial), the hangar doors of Signature Aviation's facilities slid open, and the organizers stacked the space with rare motorcycles, warbirds, and other historically significant aircraft, along with a mind boggling array of vintage and modern luxury and sportscars.

The event has serious pull when it comes to the vehicles that come on the scene. We caught up with Erik, "Our vehicle selection committee worked hard this year to put together a new and diverse field of vehicles. From timeless classics to modern exotics the lineup showed off the true beauty of automotive history. A favorite highlight was Jerome Reinan's 1929 Stutz Model M, first owned by Titanic survivors Norman and Bertha Chambers. Nicknamed Stephano, the car still has its



original leather seats and paint—the very same that carried the Chambers through war-torn France as they fled the German army in 1940. It's a living piece of history that sure attracted a big crowd. The committee has enjoyed working through new features and celebrations – this year we focused on the 90th anniversary of Jaguar, and we were thrilled to showcase more than 25 examples of that beautiful marque. Overall, we think this year is a wonderful success and thank all of our owners for allowing us to showcase their fantastic vehicles."

Several vehicles caught our eye this year, enough that we lingered long enough to speak to their owners. From Dustin Craft; "One of the least imposing vehicles of the event, the 1949 Fiat 500 B Topolino of Steven

Sherman will fit in a 6 ½ by 3 ½ ft parking space yet still possesses a truly outsized presence. As a young man with Countach dreams, Steven's first car was still sporty, just on a Fiat X1/9 budget; many more Fiats would follow, along with a passion for the marque. That road would eventually lead to the Topolino, Italy's peoples' car, with 2 bucket seats directly in the middle of the car for perfect 50/50 weight distribution and a curb weight that would make Colin Chapman drool with delight. Built to be practical for everyday people, yet able to satisfy spirited Italian drivers on challenging mountain roads, the original Fiat 500 was an exercise in creating a truly balanced yet basic car. While it may have been hidden behind the literal trunk on a Stutz or Duesenberg, we hope you didn't miss this "miniature big car" and all the charm, attention, and

smiles it brought to the tarmac.

From easy to overlook to impossible to miss, the 1958 Ghia Crown Imperial Limo was likely the largest automobile on the show field. An expansive field of Mariana Trench black paint, lined with miles of hand formed chrome plated brass trim polished to perfection, this graceful behemoth arrived courtesy of the aspirations of Imperial (Chrysler), the pen of Virgil Exner, the craftsmanship of Carrozzeria Ghia, and the countless hours of work and open checkbook of owner and restorer David Fitzgerald. A former Dodge dealer (Dodge and Imperial were both under the Chrysler banner), lifelong car enthusiast and collector, David has previously built cars like Dodge Hemi Daytonas, Cadillac El Dorado Biarritz, and other blue-chip classics, but he wanted to build one car to the ultimate



level possible. The car selected was this one of a hundred or so largely hand built masterpieces modified by Ghia in Italy from partially finished Imperials into one of the showpiece halo cars of their time. Fashionable and exclusive enough for JFK and Jackie O in the middle of last century, but still turning heads at Morgan Adams, this limo exuded class, cool, and comfort.

Another head turner was Mike

Cryer's 2021 Mercedes AMG GT Black Series. This is the ultimate performance version of the AMG GT and it looks, sounds, and acts the part. From the scoops, vents, canards, and massive double-level wing (which has reinforcements down through the rear hatch to the chassis) to the fantastic Magma Beam Orange paint, the AMG GT Black Series pulls no punches in the looks department and grabbed plenty

of eyeball time from our team and nearly everyone passing by. Beyond the radical looks, the 720 horsepower, 4.0 liter, twin turbo V8 jumps to life with a sound that is just as compelling and attention grabbing as the exterior. An extremely limited model with about 1,700 made globally, this AMG GT Black Series was acquired after the original allocation holder had to pass which allowed the car to end up



in Mike's hands. The car gets used and enjoyed by Mike and his son, whether cruising around town or taking the AMG home to the track, where in 2021 it was the Nürburgring production car lap time record holder. Whether lapping the Ring, serving as the Formula 1 safety car, or cruising around Colorado, the AMG GT Black Series is the pinnacle of the AMG GT line and a truly amazing car to experience and enjoy."

The aircraft of course, are equally if not more attention grabbing. Past fan favorites, like the Aero-Vodochody L-39 Albatros, the 1942 Douglas DC-3 (featured on our cover!) as well as wonderful new aircraft, like a gorgeous vintage Bell 47 Helicopter that would have more of a role to play on Sunday. Traditionally, Gulfstream has shown their business jets at the gala, and this year was no

different, with a prototype G700 on offer, the cabin open to give attendees a glimpse into what a test aircraft looks like. The Gulfstream crew was on hand to answer questions, guide tours, and even hand pilot-bears to beaming kids attending the show. I love planes on the ground, but the show has a longstanding tradition of putting them in the air, with two aerial demonstrations on deck for 2025. The crowd was treated to a show of aerobatic psychopathy by an expertly flown Pitts Biplane, followed by a series of flybys by a brace of North American Aviation P-51 Mustangs during the golden hour, the early stages of the sunset of the evening making the perfect backdrop to see some vintage aviation heroes doing what they were meant to do.

Of course, what is a Gala without

food and drink? The concours is dotted with a who's who of Denver culinary experiences, with names like Ocean Prime, Oyster Bae, Gaetano's, The Bindery and more featuring their signature dishes dotted throughout the show. With 21 food providers on the scene, it was hard to wander more than a few steps without finding something delicious served with a smile. Additionally, 8 beverage providers kept the participants well lubricated for the social affair, featuring purveyors such as Stranahans, Arta Tequila, and Spring44 Distilling serving cocktails, and open bars on hand for beer and soft drinks.

A silent auction headlined the space behind the hangar turned auditorium, with our own Editor Jake bidding on a "SHIFT Happens" neon sign that struck his fancy for some reason. The



evening moved into full swing to the soundtrack of a live band, and as the sun set, the program began, with awards for those exhibiting (this is a judged concours event, with awards for best in class among numerous categories). After the awards, including my favorite kid's choice award given by the Morgan Adams ambassador kids, Joan took the stage to discuss the foundation and its achievements, and thank attendees for their support, before kicking off the live auction, another huge portion of the evening which raises critical funds for the foundation. I'd say "auction items ranged from..." here, but there was just no auction item that wasn't wildly attractive to develop a range. Once in a lifetime trips, concerts, and experiences headlined the auction, and the field was more than happy to raise their placards for the cause.

We caught up with Joan, who told us "We had a record-breaking year all around! The most sponsors, most attendees, and most importantly, the most funds raised for research in 22 years! This event is so critical to our funding pipeline overall and given that things are a bit tumultuous on the Federal research funding



front these days, supporting this work for cures for kids matters more than ever!" In our discussion with Joan, she mentioned the foundation had netted just about \$1.5 Million from the combined weekend events this year, a truly massive number, and one that carries a weight to go with its size. The Foundation has grown in years past into having a regional footprint, and touching the lives of families not only in Colorado but in the surrounding mountain States. Additionally, the work the foundation supports can be both at the national or international level, underscoring the importance of the funds raised. Most importantly of all, net proceeds of the event go directly into helping kids and teens with Cancer.

From there, the night continued with attendees mingling among the cars taking in the sights

against Denver's twilight hours. Our own Dustin Craft was a kid in a candy store, meeting attendees and enjoying countless stories behind the cars and bikes on display. Covering the gala is a tough job, but someone's got to do it, after all.

Capping off the gala is another Morgan Adams tradition; an air-launched fireworks show from a jet powered sailplane that loops over the airport, offering a dazzling fireworks display to put an exclamation point on an already over the top night.

Now for many, this is where Saturday night ends, but it's our duty to mention the our friends at the First Dibs Podcast, Live from Porsche Colorado Springs, who host a heroic afterparty, complete with Gin and Tonics, Doordashed McDonalds, and appearances rumored to include David Donner, and even the



Morgan Adams organizers themselves.

By Sunday, the mood was softer and sunnier. The Denver Polo Club in Sedalia, CO, hosted the Sunday Soirée; cars, coffee, and conversations under clear blue skies in a gorgeous setting. A hot breakfast buffet was available, as

was coffee and my personal favorite, fresh baked pretzels from a local bakery. Many of the cars from the gala attended the Soirée as well as some new ones; the RD Extreme 911, a roadworthy portal-axled homage to Porsche's EDITH Project cars, was a smash hit. The brilliant

part about the Soirée is it offers a much more affordable way to see the cars from the Gala, and even show your own car among them, as a show spot only runs \$50. The Soirée is still quite the spectacle; Joan arrived in the Bell 47 Helicopter I mentioned earlier.

On the Soirée, Joan mentioned



“This year, the extra events surrounding the Saturday night main “Morgan Adams Concours” really added some fantastic new elements for people to enjoy. We want to build a weekend that encompasses everything about the passions we all share – and make it full of mini “happenings” that everyone can enjoy, participate in and support. By rounding out the events and creating more ways for enthusiasts to get together and share what they love, we’re hoping to really elevate the entire event portfolio. In particular, the Sunday Soirée – what a setting – with the Polo exhibition happening in the background, and the beautiful fields - not only was it a vibrant celebration, it also opened gave us the opportunity to spend the morning with a broader community of enthusiasts and supporters. By creating more



opportunities for people to engage in different ways – from the Driving tour (where people routinely comment that they’ve been taken on roads “they’ve never been on before” to a “Whiskey and Watches” event with Bonhams and UBS through to the Soiree, we are ensuring that the mission of raising critical funds for pediatric cancer research is something everyone can be a part of.”

By midday Sunday, my time at the Gala and the Soirée had caught up with me, and I headed home from Sedalia. As I cruised home, I enjoyed a lingering quiet reflection; three days where elegance meets intent. Where every polished hubcap and block-numbered auction paddle helps turn the pages on a new story for kids battling cancer with their families. I’m already planning what I’ll bring to the Soirée next year. 🍷



- 🏠 Morgan Adams Concours
- f morganadamscourcs
- 📷 morganadamscourcs



MAKING FRIENDS WHEREVER WE GO

EUGENE WANG'S

2019 PORSCHE 911 CARRERA T

Intro: *Jake Laino*

Story: *Eugene Wang*

Photography: *Scott Minshall*

It's no surprise that we often draw attention when we are out on a photoshoot. With anywhere from 3 to 8 people wielding cameras, additional staff members walking around the scene in support, and photographers hanging out of moving vehicles, we tend to look pretty conspicuous. Most people take a second look as they drive by, trying to figure out just what it is that we are up to; while the more curious folks might stop by and drum up a conversation. We are always happy to chat about SHIFT and always encourage onlookers to chat us up.

This is exactly how we met Eugene Wang, new friend of the magazine, and the new

owner of one of this issue's featured cars. We were up in Pine, CO on our big photoshoot for this issue, shooting 2 of our press vehicles. We were staged at a scenic overlook waiting for our cars to drive by when a beautiful black 991.2 911 Carrera T ripped by. I looked at Marty and said "man, I really wish I had my camera ready when that car passed". Almost as soon as I finished my sentence, the Porsche pulled into the overlook parking lot and Eugene got out. He walked up and asked what we were shooting for. After we mentioned SHIFT, he told us he was a fan of our work. We began chatting about his Carrera T.

It turns out that he had just purchased it from our good friends at Porsche Colorado Springs after hearing about it on the First Dibs Podcast.

Seeing an opportunity too good to pass up, I asked Eugene if we could feature his 911 in our upcoming issue; he happily agreed to join us on the road for some rolling photography. Eugene was kind enough to humor us; I'll let him take it from here!

I can't remember a time growing up when I wasn't obsessed with cars, trucks, motorcycles, and basically anything with a motor and wheels.

From an early age, I can vividly remember playing with all my Hot Wheels on my rug, depicting a small city to drive around on my hands and knees, eventually graduating to assembling Revell model cars, and progressing to playing Grand Turismo 3 on PlayStation 2 with all my friends, until that special day that I obtained my driver's license.

Fast forward a couple of decades, and the toys only continue to get bigger and more expensive. Like many self-diagnosed Porschephiles, I have lusted after any generation Porsche GT3, with aspirations of daily-driving my track car to work down I-25, running to the





grocery store, and occasionally enjoying a track day at High Plains Raceway.

After many late-night texts, calls, and prodding from a friend who currently daily drives a 991.2 GT3 Touring and has previously owned a 991.2 Carrera T, I started to seriously consider the T as an option earlier this year. He sang such high praises and waxed poetic about a car that I admittedly knew very little about prior to meeting this now friend. As is the case when any car nut decides to go car shopping, I made a list of my must haves, nice to haves, and no goes. I proceeded to scour AutoTrader, Car Gurus, and Bring A Trailer daily to make sure I did not miss any potential vehicles. Every night was spent rewatching old YouTube videos about the 991.2 Carrera T just to reaffirm that I was making the correct decision.

Four months into my vehicle search, I got a text from the aforementioned friend that I needed to listen to the latest episode of First Dibs, From Inside Porsche Colorado Springs. They just acquired a Carrera T! I quickly reached out to John Dyste to set up a time to look at the vehicle and have my first drive. John, being a fellow car enthusiast, allowed me to take the vehicle for a spin through the canyons, instead of sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic on I-25. From the second I awkwardly fell into the Carbon Bucket seats, felt the two-centimeter



shorter manual shifter, and the smaller Race-Tex steering wheel, I knew I was in trouble, because I had just mentally bought a car. The rainy, spirited test drive only sealed the deal.

The toughest part was the two-week wait between driving the car and officially taking delivery of the Carrera T. I had seen the vehicle before it had even made it through the service department and detail. In the afternoon, I took delivery, and I cleared my afternoon schedule to take the long way home and really enjoy the vehicle on its maiden voyage. In my short twenty days of ownership, I have enjoyed just over one thousand miles of canyon driving, with some fun drives and a track day planned for the remainder of this driving season, and many more miles to come in the future!

So, if you happen to spot us out in the wild, cameras dangling from windows, tripods tucked into ditches, or a half-dozen of us standing around looking suspiciously like we're plotting a heist, don't hesitate to swing by. We're always happy to pause, chat about cars, swap stories, and share a laugh. SHIFT has always been as much about the people as the machines. Who knows? A quick conversation at a scenic overlook or a roadside pull-off might lead to your car, your story, and your passion being showcased in a future issue. Just ask Eugene! 🏁



DEALER'S CHOICE ON THE LOT, OFF THE CUFF



Featuring

EMICH
AUTOMOTIVE



Story: Jake Laino Photography: Brandon Day, Scott Minshall, Shannon Smith

At SHIFT, we love surprises; In fact, we love them so much we decided to build an entire story around one. The idea was simple: ask our

friends at Emich Automotive to lend us a car for the weekend, but with a twist. We asked them not to tell us what it would be until the

moment we showed up. No requirements, no hints, no restrictions. It could be something quirky from the back of their



pre-owned lot, something they thought was genuinely cool, or even a car they figured would get a laugh out of a group of car nerds like us.

To our delight, Emich was all-in. “We love the idea! We’ll pick something out as a team,” they told us. That kicked off two weeks of borderline obsessive inventory-stalking on Emich’s website, as we tried (and failed) to guess what might be waiting for us when the time came. The fun of it was that Emich operates three dealerships across three brands, and maintains a deep bench of pre-owned vehicles; so the possibilities were endless.

Finally, the big day came. I rolled up to Emich Volkswagen, buzzing with anticipation, and after a quick chat with the sales manager, he handed me the keys to our mystery car.

Drumroll please... a 2025 Volkswagen Tiguan. As VW’s best-selling U.S. model for the past seven years, it wasn’t the wackiest surprise we could’ve imagined, but it was a chance to see how one of the most important crossovers on the market has evolved into its third generation.

The new Tiguan is available in two separate R-Line packages; SE R-Line Black (starting at \$36,205), which features a bespoke sculpted front fascia, color matched lower door cladding, gloss black accent trim at the wheel opening moldings and side mirror caps, trim specific wheel options and an optional gloss black roof panel. Slated just above the R-Line Black is the SEL R-Line (Starting at \$40,505), the range topping flagship Tiguan. The SEL gets all the same stylistic enhancements

as the R-Line Black but adds additional tech and luxury options as standard; including a premium Harmon Kardon sound system, a ClimaCoat® heated and insulated windshield, Varenna leather seats, a larger 15” touch screen among many other premium options.

I walked out to the lot to find the sleek-looking SE R-Line Black, finished in Avocado Green with a gloss black roof. Avocado Green, a fresh color option for the 2025 lineup, looks fantastic on the exterior of the compact crossover SUV, deep and aggressive with a subtle metallic flare that makes it pop in the sunlight. Having looked through all the available color options, it’s easily the one I’d take home if I were shopping for a Tiguan. The R-Line styling sharpens things further; the



Tiguan R-Line manages to look genuinely distinctive and stylish.

Climbing inside, I was greeted with a refined, minimalist design. The two tone Crystal Gray V-Tex® leatherette seats are neutral, stylish and comfortable. The two tone theme continues on just about every surface except the headliner which is a deep black. The two tone trim on the dash and door trim panels is intersected by customizable LED mood lighting giving the otherwise subtle interior a pop of color.

Glancing at the dash and console, the first thing you’ll notice is the near-complete absence of buttons and dials; a modern design trend that almost every automotive journalist loves to gripe about, myself included. That said, Volkswagen’s latest MIB4 infotainment system proved to be more intuitive than most. While I’ll never be a fan of relying on a touchscreen for something as basic as climate control, this setup at least makes the process quicker and more straightforward than many competing systems I’ve tested. Overall, the interior is stylish, functional and comfortable; just what you want in a compact crossover.

Under the hood, every 2025 Tiguan is powered by the same 2.0-liter turbocharged four-cylinder, producing a reasonable 201 horsepower. Power is routed through an 8-speed torque-converter automatic, which is mechanically similar to the outgoing unit but recalibrated to feel a bit more modern. As before, front-wheel drive is standard on most trims, with 4MOTION all-wheel drive available as an option (our SE R-Line was equipped with 4MOTION).

This transmission prioritizes smoothness and long-term reliability over lightning-quick shifts, which makes perfect sense in a family-focused crossover. The payoff is a refined, easygoing character around town, with just enough snap in low-speed acceleration to keep it from feeling sluggish. Out on the highway, it becomes clear that VW tuned the combo more





for efficiency than excitement; and that's fine, because 99% of buyers aren't looking for Autobahn thrills on the daily commute.

One quirk that became apparent to me was that VW had removed the ability to manually select gears. At first, that bugged me, but the Tiguan's Sport mode is clever enough to hold gears under hard acceleration and braking, mimicking what most drivers would do anyway. It's not enthusiast-grade, but for the segment, it's a smart compromise.

Every time I climb behind the wheel of a modern crossover, I walk away a little surprised, in a good way. Maybe it's because I grew up in the era of the Chrysler Pacifica and the first-gen Nissan Murano, both of which were painfully uninspiring to drive, that I still half-expect these things to be rolling appliances. But the truth is, this segment has evolved dramatically, and the latest Tiguan is proof of just how far things have come.

Don't get me wrong, the Tiguan isn't pretending to be a sports car, but it's genuinely fun to drive. The 2.0-liter turbo has enough punch to feel lively around town, and the electronic

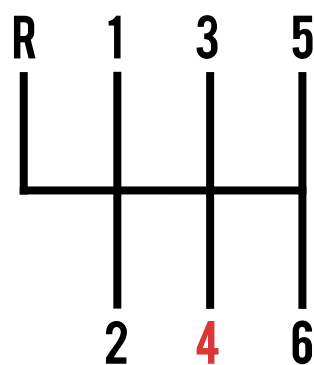
power steering is quick, precise, and far more communicative than you'd expect from a family hauler. Get the road to twist a little, and the Tiguan actually feels composed and engaging, something that would've been unthinkable from a vehicle in this segment not all that long ago.

Switch it into Sport mode and the dynamics sharpen even further. The steering weights up nicely, and the 8-speed automatic suddenly feels like it's paying attention. It'll hold gears longer when you're on the throttle and downshift decisively as soon as you lean on the brakes. It's a clever calibration that makes up for the lack of manual gear selection, almost like the Tiguan is telling you: "Don't worry about the details, I've got this. You just enjoy the drive." And really, that sums up the whole character of the car. The Tiguan isn't about raw performance, it's about confidence and polish, giving you just enough driver engagement to keep it interesting without ever losing sight of its mission as a comfortable, family-friendly crossover.

If you're in the market for something that can carve through a twisty canyon road with as much ease as it can haul the family to Costco, the

2025 Tiguan deserves a serious look. I'd highly recommend swinging by Emich VW to check out their latest lineup, they've got an impressive selection and a team that genuinely loves cars and takes pride in matching the right vehicle to the right driver. Huge thanks to Emich Dealerships for working with us and making our Dealer's Choice adventure possible!

In keeping with our new, completely subjective first-through-sixth-gear rating scale, the 2025 Tiguan SE R-Line Black slots confidently into 4th gear. What keeps it from climbing into 5th? Two things: the absence of manually selectable gears and the frustrating lack of real buttons and knobs. Beyond that, the Tiguan proves itself to be a sharp, capable little crossover that blends style with everyday usability. 🚩



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On ward and Upward

Foreward: *Brendan Garst* Title Photo: *Chris Colten*



2025

Early mornings. Screaming motors. Insomnia. Elation. Heartbreak. Triumph. Setbacks. Ingenuity. The Broadmoor Pikes Peak International Hill Climb, Brought to you by Gran Turismo (PPIHC, for short), now entering its 102nd running can't best be summed up. There are too many ranges of feelings, emotions, and experiences this race evokes, and you can easily find yourself bouncing between the two extremes of any given factor in a number of seconds.

The SHIFT Colorado team spent our third year on the mountain, shadowing our friends Dan and Trevor Aweida, David Hackl and Matus Huska through the entire experience, from the pre-race preparation to their cars, to track testing, tire testing sessions, practice week, fan-fest, and race day itself, June 22, 2025.

FOREWARD TO UPWARD

As we push into our fourth year here at SHIFT, I'm sure it won't surprise you to see that we're covering the Broadmoor Pikes Peak International Hill Climb, Brought to you by Gran Turismo. There's a reason for that; Bar none, it is my personal favorite automotive event that exists in Colorado.

Nothing combines the sheer highs, lows, triumphs, tribulations, and displays of raw willpower like driving in the Hillclimb. I know this from having built relationships with several drivers over the years, and following them on their push to the Peak. From Dan and Trevor Aweida's recovery from the Marshall Fire to the finish line in the 2022 running a few short months after losing their cars, Matus Huska overcoming the heartbreak of a DNF rookie year to finish strong in 2024, to the steady persistence of David Hackl's annual assault on the hill in a car older than I am, the drivers are exemplars of sticktuitiveness. They get it done.

In transitioning from Spectator & Crew Member to media coordinator for SHIFT as we have learned to cover the race, I have to acknowledge seeing our own team adapt and overcome to make our coverage each year. 1:30AM Mornings, braving extreme weather, high altitude, and fatigue to capture the event through the lens or on the page, I see that same tenacity and drive.

Pikes Peak is a test, and during this issue each year, both us and our drivers are all in it together. Chris has written about his experiences covering every practice event of race week, and Jake has covered his first time on the hill to watch the race. We've added a bit of press car flare, between the Acura Integra Type S junket that sent Jake and Kelvin up the same stretch of road that would become a racetrack less than a day later, as well as our Kia Carnival Press Loan, what became our home away from home and SHIFT headquarters on race day. We've captured much of what it was like to be there this year as an anthology of shorter stories.

The Hill Climb is Colorado's oldest race, running consistently since 1916, and each year we count our blessings to get to document just a little bit of what it's like to be a part of the moment. We offer our sincerest thanks to Lisa Haight, PPIHC's media coordinator extraordinaire, and our drivers Dan and Trevor Aweida, David Hackl, Matus Huska, Troy Casteel, their families and their sponsors for letting us experience a slice of their world. 🏁



GETTING BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

One of the intimidating things about Pikes Peak is the money side of things. Prepping a car and running the race can be an expensive endeavor, and like anyone else, the teams we followed needed all the help we could get.

Wanting to acknowledge our inner ad executives, we built and orchestrated a sponsorship push for our teams with our SHIFT and Colorado Cars and Coffee Audiences. We built a sponsorship packet using our photography, worked with the drivers to develop rates, and even got our drivers involved. Yes, we did invite them all to Red Robin to color in Vector drawings of their cars made by new at the time staffer Josh Bagwell so we'd know where prospective sponsors could place stickers. We didn't find it patronizing at all; We had a lot of fun, drew some pictures and knew where we could place some stickers.

With our scientific placemats schematics in hand, we went to the internet, and boy did alot of people respond. Thanks to our sponsors Lincoln Fire Protection, Waterwerks Motorsports, Simply Clean Detail Studio, Brand Buddy LLC (now Campaign Companion), and even daddy Steve at Colorado Cars and Coffee, we raised over \$2,700 to help our teams offset their expenses in their campaign on the mountain in 2025. While it's a drop in the bucket compared to the total cost to run the race, it was critical support for our teams, and we can't wait to run it again next year! If you have interest in sponsoring a team, or are a Colorado based Pikes Peak driver who would like to jump on our effort, drop us a line at team@shiftcoloradomagazine.com 🏁

THANK YOU SO MUCH TO THE 2025 SPONSORS!!!!



TIRE TESTING

MAY 31-JUNE 1

Tire Testing refers to paid optional practice sessions, which offer competitors their first chance to test their cars on the mountain. Teams have often spent the first half of the year (and beyond) preparing, and Tire Tests allow them the first real-world experience they can get with their cars on the Pikes Peak Highway. Jake Laino shares his experience on embedding with the competitors for Tire Testing during the 2025 event.

Foreward and Story: *Brendan Garst* Title Photo: *Chris Coleman*
Photography: *Brendan Garst, Chris Coleman*

BRENDAN GARST, EDITOR ON TIRE TESTING

Tire testing weekends are weekends roughly a month out from the race, and the first real interaction with the race we have each year. These days are lower key, generally run in two sections, with the intent to test your car live on the hill.

For me, its probably my favorite car show of the year. Teams are generally taking it a bit easier, focusing on learning the new intricacies of the hill that have developed over the year. Pikes peak is subject to tremendous temperature fluctuations, wild weather, rock slides, and more, and the persistent condition of the Pikes Peak Highway is that of change as the City of Colorado Springs attempts to maintain and manage the roadway.

You get your first experience of the season waking up at the ungodly hours required to watch, which is great practice for race week, and joining the assembly of racers and crew at the foot of the mountain at 3:30 AM.

Once you've had your coffee, woken up and start to wander, you get your first look at the field for the year. I often hear about new competitors from discussions among the competitors, and its always fun to see the competitor list show up in the metal and paint.

This is a time where you see competitors and teams sorting themselves out; finding and tweaking items on the cars and working them to the point they won't be issues when the pressure mounts during race week.



You get your first sunrises, which on Pikes Peak are impossible to beat, and the tremendous morning golden hours that follow them. As motors start, the drivers meeting commences, and you remember why you love doing this, even if you may have been cursing yourself on the way to the hill.

Tire Testing runs much like practice; competitors rush to their lot, offload

their cars and set them up, and attend a drivers meeting. The goal is to have the first car off by dawn, and once the green flag drops, cars roar up their section.

This was our first time seeing Romain Dumas' new ride for the year, the Ford Super Mustang Mach E, another wild winged creation resembling a pedestrian street car from the mad scientists at Ford.

Equally wild is an encore appearance of Shaun Bassett's wild Datsun 240Z build that started as an \$1,100 car off Craigslist.

Tire testing is a footnote; the appetizer that gets you hungry for the rest of what June has to offer. I'll let my friends take it away on the rest of the experience for 2025!



PRACTICE

JUNE 17-20

Practice week; a flurry of activity descends on the mountain on early hours. Having officially passed technical inspection on Monday, the competitors launch an early morning campaign to get as many runs in as possible before the mountain opens for regular uphill traffic. Editor Chris Colten gives his perspective on practice.

Foreward: *Brendan Garst* Story: *Chris Colten* Title Photo: *Scott Minshall*
Photography: *Brendan Garst, Chris Colten, Scott Minshall, Shannon Smith*



CHRIS COLTEN, EDITOR ON PRACTICE

This year I was afforded the opportunity to attend the entire practice week for the Broadmoor Pikes Peak International Hillclimb, brought to you by Gran Turismo (“PPIHC” for short). Each morning was a similar format: Wake up at an ungodly early hour, pour myself an entire pot of coffee, drive some mountain roads in the pitch darkness, and rendezvous with the rest of the SHIFT team. We’d cram into whichever press car Brendan was driving that day before making our way up the mountain.

Each morning the vibe in the pits could only be described as electric. There was an anticipation which hung in the air that could not be ignored. Team members bustling about - both drivers and technicians alike preparing their cars. Some checking data logs, others checking torque specs. Engines rumbled to life; with exhausts loud and unrestricted and race cams just the right amount of choppy, the symphony of car sounds was sublime.

The field of competitors was highly diverse in both make and model as well as size of team and level of support. It’s one of the things that makes this race so special - it’s a classic David and Goliath story. Seasoned locals battling it out on the mountain with giant manufacturer-backed teams makes for some truly spectacular and very diverse racing.

Tuesday morning was my first opportunity to put my eyes on the pack. I roamed through the Glen Cove paddock, the middle section of three practice sectors, and took in the sights, smells, and sounds. My favorite vehicle of the morning was Derek Rowe’s



mid-engined Audi Group S Prototype replica, which I learned was predominantly built using dimensions from a scanned toy car. Under its rear clamshell was an impeccable engine bay, a glorious sounding inline five motor, and a large turbo. As the sun began to emerge, all drivers were summoned for the morning briefing, covering track conditions and the nuances of the day. With the meeting concluded, there was nothing left to do but drive. Racers lined up, the green flag dropped, and one by one the drivers began their runs.



During practice days, the pack runs up its assigned sector one by one until noone is left at the start line ready to run. The pack is stewarded back down the hill, turned around, and left to do the same until about 7:45 AM, at which point we'd have been on the mountain for about 4 hours, and needed to clear the mountain to make way for the general public to head up the hill.

Wednesday was our day at Devil's Playground, the closest practice sector to the top of Pikes Peak and well above treeline. We had anticipated the worst weather possible, as this is what we had experienced last year. Thankfully there were no opportunities to wear my shiny new high-vis poncho. The sunrise over the seemingly endless vista from +13,000 feet was glorious. Yesterday's morning sequence repeated - unload, driver's meeting, and go.

On Thursday we spent our dawn hours at the starting line for qualifying. Like practice, but with higher stakes as bottom end times are used to jockey for position for race day. Starting position for Sunday was critical, as conditions famously change rapidly throughout the day.

Friday was the final but optional round of practice. Our group chose to run again at Glen Cove. Arriving in the pits, it immediately became apparent that many drivers were feeling confident enough to skip racecar activities for the morning. As a result, the teams that did show up were afforded the chance to take significantly more passes at the middle section of mountain road.

Practice sessions hit just a bit different than race day. You get to spend a lot more time enjoying the cars, and watching them take multiple runs up any given sector. It was a great week. It was an exhausting week. I can't wait to do it again.



THE CLIMB BEFORE THE CLIMB JUNE 21



Story & Photography: Jake Laino



A RUN UP AMERICAS MOUNTAIN IN ACURA'S NEW INTEGRA TYPE S

Every so often, an opportunity comes along that you simply can't pass up. You drop everything, reshuffle your weekend, and maybe even leave a friend hanging (sorry, Brendan). This June, one of those chances landed in my lap, and I wasn't about to say "no".

It started on a slow Friday at work when my phone lit up with a random number. Normally I'd let it ring, but boredom got the better of me. On the other end was Jake Berg, Acura USA's PR rep and a new friend I'd met at the Rocky Mountain Driving Experience earlier in the summer. After a quick catch-up, Jake got to the point: Acura had brought a fleet of 2025 Integra Type S's to Colorado Springs for a pre-Pikes Peak International Hill Climb drive, and he needed another driver to fill out the lineup. The plan? Run the cars up to the summit, then wrap the day with a visit to the Hill Climb Museum at the Broadmoor. Without hesitation, I said yes. When someone offers you the keys to a performance car on America's Mountain, you take

them.

The next morning, I rolled into the Mining Exchange Hotel to meet Kelvin, Jake, and the rest of the Acura crew. Parked out front were five Integra Type S's dressed in striking black-and-gold liveries; the same ones I'd seen on Acura's pace and safety cars at events like the Long Beach Grand Prix. Over breakfast, we went over the route and the day's plan before pairing up and heading to the

cars. Kelvin and I grabbed one of the middle cars and pointed ourselves up U.S. 24 toward Pikes Peak.

The drive was everything I'd hoped for. The 2.0-liter turbo VTEC loves to sing high in the rev range, and the short, crisp shifter made every gear change a treat. Rolling five deep in identical gold cars drew plenty of stares, but we kept things civilized on the way to the toll gate. The ranger there made sure to remind us: "Race day is tomorrow,

keep it under the limit today." Fair enough. We cruised up at a steady 35 mph, soaking in the alpine views and swapping between second and third gear just for the joy of it.

At the summit, we did what everyone does: We grabbed the world-famous Pikes Peak donuts (pro tip: cinnamon is the move). Back at the cars, we found ourselves surrounded by curious onlookers who assumed these were the actual race entries. Not quite, but the fleet had done its job: Acura

was making its presence felt ahead of the big event.

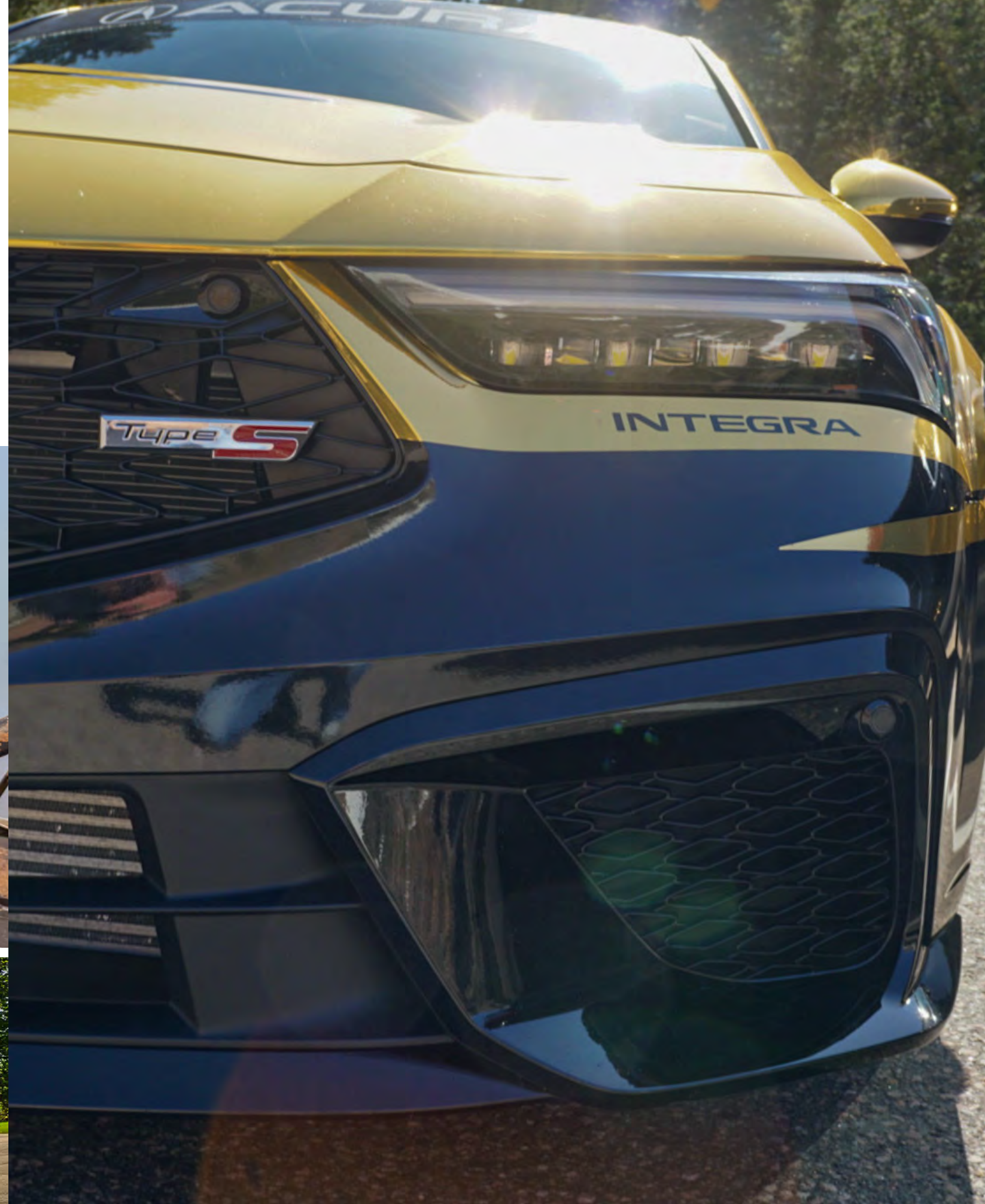
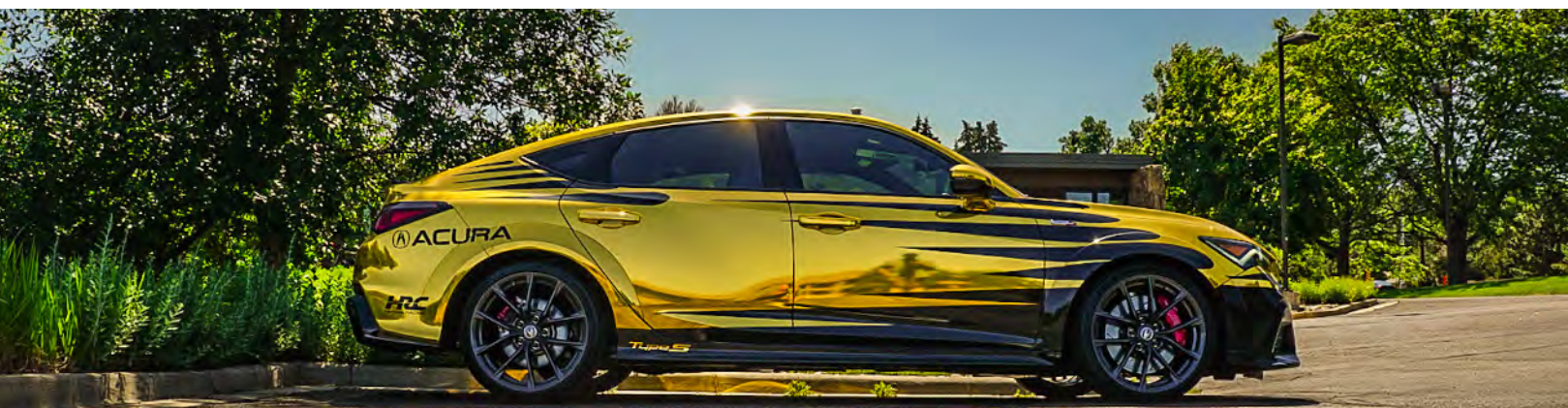
On the descent, spirited driving was off the table, so Jake cooked up a little challenge: Who could keep their brake temps the lowest by the Glen Cove checkpoint, where a ranger scanned rotors with a laser thermometer. I relied on engine braking in first gear, and while I didn't take the win, third place still earned me a commemorative Pikes Peak fridge magnet. Not a bad consolation prize.





Lunch was at the Golden Bee, a proper English pub transplanted brick-by-brick to Colorado Springs in the 1960's. Between the hearty food, friendly staff, and the quirky tradition of having sticky bee patches tossed onto your shirt, it was the perfect stop before our final destination: The Penrose Heritage Museum. Inside, the Hill Climb Experience delivers a crash course in Pikes Peak history, from vintage racecars and iconic trophies to a timeline of safety innovations. It was the ideal way to gear up for race day.

Looking back, the day was everything Acura intended it to be: Part drive, part spectacle, and full proof of how much this brand cares about motorsport heritage. For me, it was also a reminder: When someone asks if you want to drive a great car on one of the most historic roads in America, you say yes, and deal with the canceled plans later. 🏁



RACE DAY

JUNE 22



Story: Jake Laino

Photography: Chris Coleman, Chris Colten

Thirteen years in Colorado, and one item has stubbornly stayed on my Rocky Mountain bucket list: the Broadmoor Pikes Peak International Hill Climb, brought to you by Gran

Turismo. Sure, I got a taste of it last year, tagging along for one of the tire test practice days where I could soak in the cars and the course up close. But the real prize: the adrenaline of

race day itself, had always eluded me. This year, though, the stars finally aligned. With a wide-open June calendar and some incredible friends, I not only made it to race day, but even

camped overnight on "The Mountain," spending time with the teams we came to support and getting the full Pikes Peak experience.

I woke up in the back of our

surprisingly cozy Kia Carnival press loaner, the van we'd requested specifically for Pikes Peak weekend because of its size and versatility as a "race day shuttle." Turns out, it also

makes a fantastic overnight camper, thanks to those fully reclining captain's chairs.

The alarm clock that morning wasn't my phone, but the sound of bustling



crowds and cold-starting race cars echoing through the crisp alpine air. Stepping out of the van, I was greeted by the smell of sizzling bacon mixed with high-octane fuel. At the grill was our friend, master mechanic, and self-proclaimed "Breakfast King," Troy Casteel.

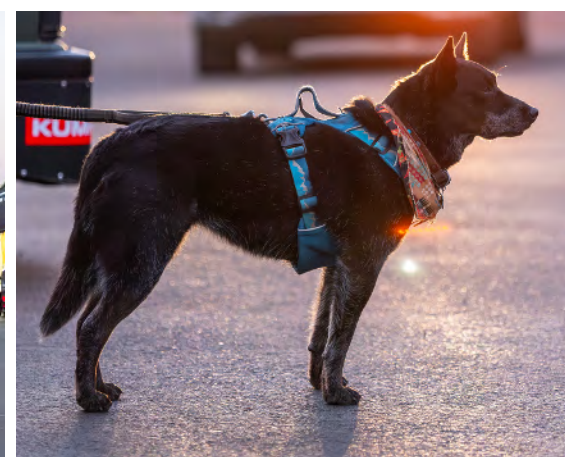
Armed with one of Troy's legendary breakfast burritos and my camera, I wandered into the pits. One of the

coolest things about Pikes Peak is how open it feels; some teams work in private crew-only areas, but many wrench right in front of the fans. Spectators get to see the behind-the-scenes chaos up close, something you rarely get at a world-class motorsport event.

I had a little extra time to wander, too, since organizers were monitoring high winds at the summit. Rumors floated around of porta-potties literally taking

flight and 80-mph gusts, which had everyone wondering if we'd see a full course run. About an hour later, the loudspeaker made it official: the 2025 Hill Climb would be shortened, with the finish line moved down to Glen Cove.

With the course set, I had to figure out where to spectate. I started at the launch area to catch some early runs. The start line always draws a crowd, but never so much that you can't get a clear view. Car





after car lined up, waited for the green flag, and then, bang! A flash of tire smoke, the roar of an engine (or the eerie wail of an EV siren), and they were gone.

After a while, I hiked up the course to find a better vantage point. Most of the obvious spots were already packed, but the further I climbed, the more things thinned out. Eventually, I reached the end of the designated spectator zone. It was perfect: a wide view, a stump to drop my bag on, and even a Red Bull rep handing out free caffeine. I posted up next to a couple of young fans, and we spent the morning swapping thoughts on our favorite cars, pausing every time

the distant growl of an approaching racer cut through the conversation.

By the time the field was halfway through, my camera battery was on its last legs. I started heading back down the hill for a fresh one when I heard my name being shouted. Off to the side was our buddy John Dyste, who had set up a proper hillclimb headquarters for his family. Coolers full of drinks, chairs, and

prime viewing. He waved me over, and honestly, I didn't need much convincing.

I ditched the camera, sank into a chair, and spent the rest of the race the best way possible, surrounded by friends, sharing laughs, sipping cold drinks, and soaking in the spectacle. Sometimes, the real magic of Pikes Peak isn't just in the cars, it's in the company. 🏁





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NEXT YEAR!

The Western Slope Roundup



Story & Photography: *Nate Hughes*

Between attending events, organizing, and hosting my own events, it has been a busy summer for me over here on the Western Slope. From desert racing to time trials, and plenty of shows, you'll get the gist of what the car scene is like here, and I still won't come close to covering everything that happens on the Western Slope.

Let's start with the first of the events that happened in early April this year; The Red Rock Rackers time trials. This event is put on by Mark from Ronin Realty at the Grand Junction Motor Speedway, a .9 mile go-kart track, except the Red Rock Racers aren't in go-karts, they're in full-size cars trying to put down the fastest lap time. There are multiple groups, so whether you're starting out or

have a full-fledged race car, there'll be a competitive group for you. Since there are a couple of Teslas that have been ripping around the track and setting lap records for everyone to try and beat, the Red Rock Racers are even developing an electric group as well.. Now, the Red Rock Racers have 6 events spread throughout the year. For the first two Red Rock Racers events, Mark was willing



to work with the organization that I've founded with my partner Deven, called Colorado Automotive Society, to run a cars and coffee event right alongside the RRR. We called it Caffeine & Octane; these two events were our first organized events, both with varying success. For the first RRR/C&O, we had about 20 or so cars come out but had communication issues the food truck. Overall, still a success. For the second event we had about 7 or so cars come out and the food truck was there this time around which was great because I was hungry and the breakfast burrito I got was delicious. The plan is for CAS to run another C&O next year with the season opener of RRR and to turn it into one of our staple events.

After the first RRR/C&O, there was the Second running of the BOR Junction Jam 200 mid-April. This was a desert race that starts next to the Grand Junction Motor Speedway, then disappears into the BLM and book cliffs behind the airport for a total of 6 or 4 laps depending on the vehicle's class. This is a race that I'd love to see other sections of instead of solely the start/finish line, but nonetheless, there's still plenty of action to see. If you're coming to this race, I would recommend being in a vehicle that has some ground clearance to get to the spectating areas due to ice and plenty of water. While you're not far from the city as the crow flies, it's still a slow 15 minutes away from the closest

convenience store. If you love some proper desert racing like the Baja 1000 or King of the Hammers, this is the event for you, just closer to home and with less of a crowd to deal with.

Moving into June, Colorado Automotive Society hosted the second Black Canyon Touring, which was another success in my books. We had around 15 cars meet us at the starting point in Delta. We were going in reverse of the previous year's route, ending at the Rose Bowl for an after-party. With more new faces than returning ones, everyone had a great time checking out the views at our two stopping points along the canyon. The first stop was at the Hermits Rest Vista at the top of the canyon, and the second was in the canyon below the Morrow Point Dam, where you can see an exhibit of the Rio Grande train system that used to run alongside the river in the Black Canyon. At each of our stops, we did a little trivia to compete for a little goodie bag that we put together, though I learned that I should maybe make the questions a little easier so people could actually guess the answers. While we didn't have an included lunch this time around, depending on the length of the next cruise that CAS/myself plan for the community, it is something that I would like to potentially bring back. The trivia questions were the following: What year did the first NASCAR race take place? & What was the first production car to feature a V8 engine? Answers at the end



of the article. Next up is the Black Canyon Classics Car Show, which is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, car shows on the Western Slope. With 200+ cars making their way to Montrose to cover Cerise Park's lawn with mainly classics, though some newer cars are starting to fill in some of the ranks. By far one of the coolest things about this event is that it often attracts some pre-war to early 50s cars or tractors, with most of the attending vehicles being from the 60s-90s. The night before the big show at the park, they shut down a couple of blocks of Main Street for viewing the cars. Which is just an awesome way to see all the cars and talk with the owners. It is definitely THE show on the western slope if you enjoy classic cars and trucks. I am very interested in seeing how this show develops in the upcoming years, with the unfortunate fact that its members are starting to pass away from old age. I hope they'll be able to keep the club alive and pass it on to the next generations of car enthusiasts.

Then, we have the Colorado Automotive Society Auto Show, which follows shortly after the Black Canyon Classic Car Show. We partnered up with LFMG Music Academy for this car show as a fundraiser for the academy. The car show that we organized was an indoor selective showcase of the 44 best vehicles that we could gather, with a focus on showing the variety of enthusiast vehicles here on the western



slope. We had a Grenadier that just got back from racing in the baja 1000 along with their wicked sprinter van, a McLaren with some sick one-off wheels designed by the owner, a series 2 Shelby, a rock crawling Jeep that makes Moab it's playground, to resto modded classics from local shops and just about everything in-between from exotics to VIPs to daily drivers.. We plan on doing another show of this style next year, either at the same venue or at the bigger county event center. One thing we need to do better, though, is get more media coverage since I didn't get the chance to take any photos during the event, and the few cameras that were there were recording video or only taking photos of their car before walking around. This is definitely an event that

you'll want to keep your eye on, as we plan on growing this to be one of the biggest and prestigious events of the highest caliber here on the Western Slope and in the state.

Next up is a double whammy in the middle of July, both the Delta Street Rodders and the GJ County fair demo derby. This is the first year that I've attended the Delta Street Rodders car show, and it did not disappoint. It has a similar ethos to the Black Canyon Classics car show for having a focus on classics and older vehicles, but here I saw way more hot-rodded/fully custom vehicles than at Black Canyon Classics, plus some newer cars too. I didn't stick around long at the show as I had to head back to Montrose



before making my way up to Grand Junction for the evening, but I did at least one lap around all of the cars, which were about 100, and the best part there

were plenty of shade trees compared to the soccer fields of the Black Canyon Classics. There were a couple of cars that I had to come back to: a Dodge van

truck, a Jeep FC, and a custom Jeep with a hand-built camper trailer.

Now, for the demo derby that took place that same evening as the Delta Street Rodders Car Show, I've always wanted to go to one for as long as I can remember. They always looked like a hoot, a good time, and way too much fun, and boy, I was almost not wrong. It was a blast to watch the top truck challenge that they did, with my only complaint being that I wish more trucks had completed the qualifying run, so there would be more than 3 or so head-to-head races by the end of the night. It's always fun watching some moto freestyle jumps happen. For the actual demo derby, it was so much fun watching the cars ram into each other, albeit a decent bit softer than I've always envisioned it actually being like. Overall, it was a really fun experience and I thoroughly enjoyed it, though I wished I had gotten a beer or two to really elevate the viewing experience.

Bear in mind, these are the events that I personally went to; there are plenty more shows and events. This year, there



SHIFT|COLORADO

was a motorcycle show happening at Horsefly in Montrose at the same time as the Black Canyon Classics Car Show, I know that there's a car show hosted annually at Zack's BBQ in Hotchkiss, there was a motocross race happening at the same time as the Lands End Hill Climb, and plenty of smaller car shows and poker runs. One of my goals next year is to go to a couple of motorcycle-related events since there are plenty of those events on this side of the state. I know of a motorcycle rally that happens in Durango annually that's supposed to be a pretty big shindig. I just need to make the trip over Red Mountain Pass. The trivia questions from the Black Canyon Touring event and the answers: What year did the first NASCAR race take place? 1948 & What was the first production car to feature a V8 engine? 1915 Cadillac Model 51. 🏁



2025



Toyota 4Runner

Trailhunter

Story: *Brendan Garst* Photography: *Brendan Garst, Jake Laino*

Some cars beg for paved roads. Others, like the one we have for you today, beg for you to get lost. **The 2025 Toyota 4Runner Trailhunter is the strongest model in the 4Runner lineup when it comes to feeling like it has been designed not just to survive the wilderness but to embrace it.** It was hard to miss in my parking lot when it got delivered to us; with an aggressive stance and all

manner of off-road forward accessories, it commanded attention over even other more standard optioned 4Runner brethren living the life of commuting. I first got behind the wheel at sunset, the golden-hour light cutting across the hood's sharp creases as I started to drive the truck home. **Moments later, a howl filled the cabin—not from the tires or the exhaust, but induction noise from**

the snorkel bolted proudly along the passenger A-pillar. It's loud enough to turn heads on a quiet road, a reminder that Toyota didn't engineer this truck to blend in.

This is not a sticker package. The Trailhunter marks a new chapter for Toyota: a true overland forward rig built by the factory with help from names that adventure junkies already trust. ARB provided the roof rack, Old





Man Emu tuned the suspension, and RIGID's LED lighting system is integrated so seamlessly it Toyota may as well have equipped it in-house. It's a factory parts collaboration with names on the spec sheet coming from aftermarket catalogs enthusiasts have been drooling over for years.

The outgoing fifth-gen 4Runner earned its cult following through its undeniable utility and legendary reliability, but it was also a platform long due for an update, with its underpinnings dating from 2009. Stepping into this sixth-gen Trailhunter is like finding out your favorite old

flannel got tailored, stitched with kevlar, and learned to wail along with its grunge music favorite tunes.

Exterior

The first impression of the Trailhunter is exuded confidence. This isn't an SUV trying to masquerade as capable with cladding and badges; this is a purpose-built tool with upright sheetmetal and a stance that screams capability in an overt way. The 2025 redesign rides on Toyota's TNGA-F body-on-frame platform, the same bones as the new Tacoma, Tundra, and Land Cruiser, and that architectural

upgrade shows in its posture.

It sits taller, wider, and more poised than the outgoing 4Runner. The Trailhunter's 33-inch Toyo Open Country A/T tires are perfectly proportioned to its squared-off fenders, and the high-clearance front bumper looks like it was styled by someone who's actually kissed a rock or two at Moab. Bronze "TOYOTA" script stretches proudly across the grille in their blocky vintage font, flanked by integrated RIGID fog lights and a flush-mounted 20-inch LED light bar. ARB's modular roof rack towers over the cabin, its powder-coated rails

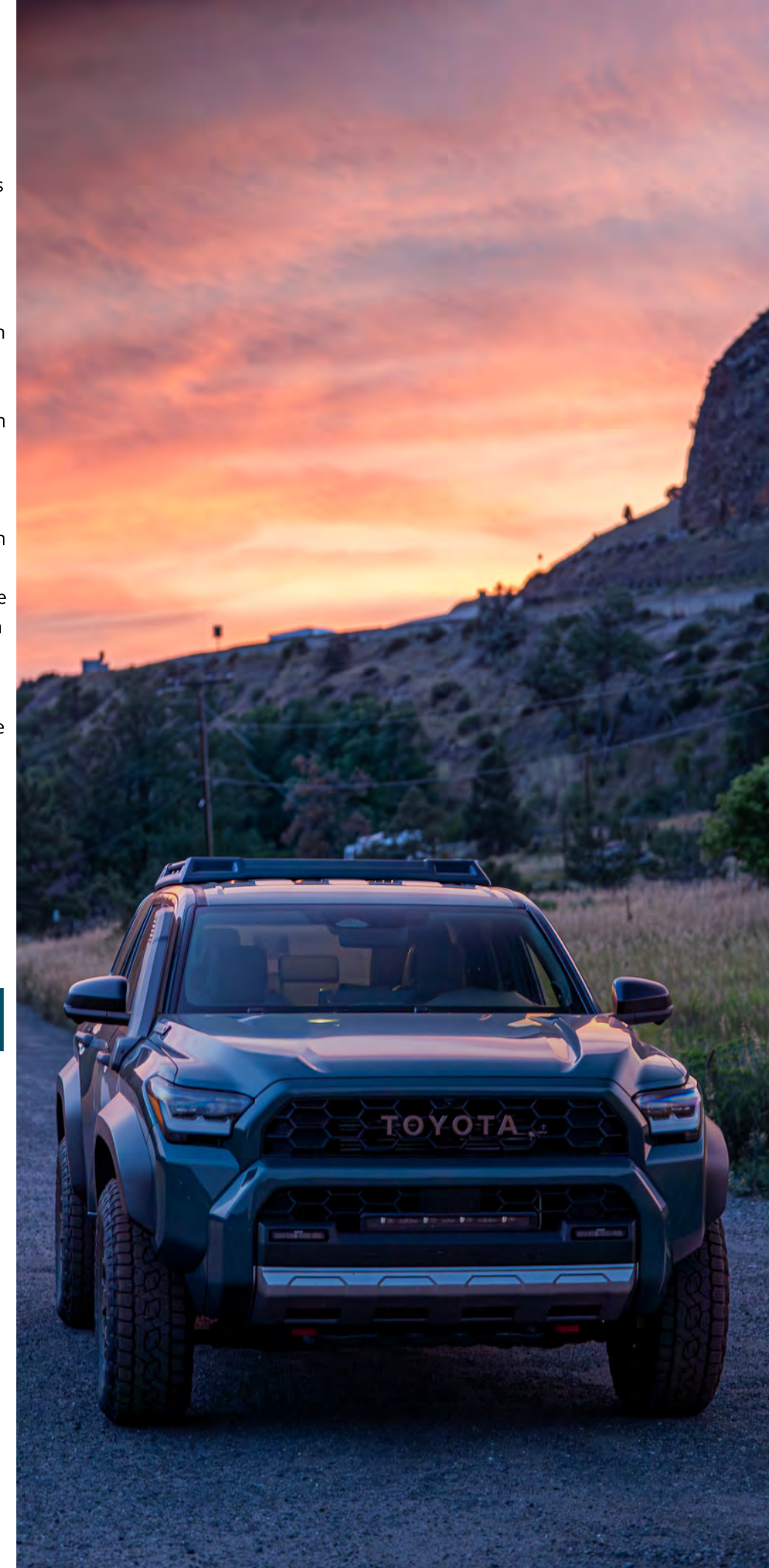
promising a home for rooftop tents and recovery boards without the squeaks and rattles of an aftermarket setup.

Walk around the back and you see Toyota's attention to practical details: a slimmer rear bumper improves departure angle, steel rock rails guard the sides, and skid plates form a literal suit of armor beneath. There's no hiding this truck's purpose. Even the snorkel—technically a high-mount intake designed to keep dust out of the filter rather than keeping it breathing when you choose to ford a river, becomes a styling statement, and not a subtle one. Roll down the windows, put your foot down, and you'll hear the howl of induction noise and the chatter of the diverter valve as clearly as if it had been piped in over the speakers. The Trailhunter isn't subtle when it comes to the noises associated with its breathing exercises.

Nor has all of this added utility come at the cost of the 6th generation 4Runner's handsome looks; our test truck was finished in Everest Green over Bronze wheels, which tie in with the truck's other bronze accents throughout. The look is aggressive, but it is pulled off well, and the SHIFT staff universally loved the color scheme on our test truck.

Interior

Inside, Toyota has finally given 4Runner owners what they've been begging for: a cabin that feels modern, functional, and tough without being spartan. Gone is the mishmash of chunky plastic and outdated infotainment that soldiered on in the 5th gen; in its place is a driver-focused cockpit with a 12.3-inch fully digital gauge cluster and an available 14-inch center touchscreen that's crisp, fast, and refreshingly intuitive. Toyota kept big knobs and buttons for HVAC and drive modes, a decision that earns a standing ovation from anyone who might want to adjust their temperatures while wearing





gloves or bouncing down a trail.

The SofTex-trimmed seats are heated, ventilated, and more supportive than before, making long hauls comfortable even when you're covered in trail dust. Storage solutions abound with deep center console bins, wide door pockets, and clever underfloor cargo compartments ensure every recovery strap, tire gauge, and trail snack has a home. Of course, the iconic power rear glass remains, a 4Runner trademark that continues to make loading gear or letting your dog hang his head out the back a breeze.

The interior looks surprisingly grown up; the mineral black upholstery is accented with a vibrant pop of orange piping, which highlights other interior features like the prominent TOYOTA emblem in the middle of the passenger's dash. It's a black interior, but without being boring about it.

Toyota also embraced tech without turning the Trailhunter into a gadget circus. Wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are standard, while the Digital Key option lets you use your phone as a fob. Toyota Safety Sense 3.0 comes on every Trailhunter, adding adaptive cruise, lane keeping assist,

and pedestrian detection—nice to have driver assists on the highway stints between trails. It's an interior that feels like it's designed for people who camp and crawl rocks but also have to drive their rig to work on Monday.

Price & Trim

The Trailhunter is the crown jewel of the 4Runner lineup, a top-spec adventure rig that sits above the familiar TRD Off-Road and parallel with the TRD Pro trim, with each costing roughly. \$67,400 before destination



charges. It's not cheap, but what you get is remarkable when you factor in the parts Toyota has integrated from the aftermarket. A 2,400-watt inverter is built in, with AC outlets in both the cabin and cargo area for running camp fridges or charging drone batteries. The ARB rack and bumpers are not cosmetic—they're structural and designed to carry heavy loads over years of abuse. Old Man Emu's forged monotube dampers with rear piggyback reservoirs are tuned specifically for overlanding, giving the Trailhunter articulation and ride control you'd otherwise have to spend thousands upgrading over a more standard trim.

Choosing between the Trailhunter and the TRD Pro gets a bit more convoluted, but

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ultimately comes down to application. The TRD Pro is meant more for high-speed desert running, akin to the first Ford Raptor, with a specially valved Fox Suspension for doing just that, while the Trailhunter was built for overlanding; slower, more methodical drives with more articulation, travel, and damping. It also, to an extent, comes down to the aesthetics of the

truck, as both have minor appearance tweaks.

Drivetrain

Beneath the squared-off hood lies Toyota's i-FORCE MAX hybrid system, a powertrain that feels like a clear upgrade to the outgoing 4.0-liter V6. A 2.4-liter turbocharged four-cylinder

pairs with an electric motor integrated into the eight-speed automatic transmission, delivering 326 horsepower and a stump-pulling 465 pound-feet of torque. If you've spent time in a fifth-gen 4Runner, this is a revelation. No more sluggish uphill climbs or downshifts that sound like the engine is begging for mercy; now you have torque on tap, immediately.

Experience

The TNGA-F frame gives Toyota room to modernize the suspension. Up front are double wishbones; out back is a multi-link setup that trades some of the old model's live-axle harshness for control and flex. A part-time 4WD system with a two-speed transfer case, locking rear differential, and push-button stabilizer bar disconnect puts serious tools at your fingertips. Multi-Terrain Select and Crawl Control return, tuned to work seamlessly with the hybrid system. Toyota quotes up to 6,000 pounds of towing capacity, enough to haul a pop-up camper or UTV without breaking a sweat.

This is where the Trailhunter has to justify every inch of its spec sheet. On the highway, it feels like a completely different 4Runner. The TNGA-F bones and Old Man Emu dampers smooth

out rough patches, and despite the knobby 33s, cabin noise is surprisingly well-controlled—except, of course, for the snorkel, which turns full-throttle acceleration into a soundtrack of whooshes and whistles that can never fully be defeated; love it or hate it, you're going to have induction noise on your Trailhunter.

Passing power is immediate thanks to that electric torque fill, and the steering feels tighter and more precise than before. The soft suspension can definitely make itself known around town; the nose dips on acceleration and while the body roll is well kept in check by the trick suspension geography, you'll still notice it from time to time on street driving excursions.

Get off the pavement, and the truck transforms. The suspension soaks up washboard surfaces without punishing

the occupants, and articulation over obstacles is leagues ahead of the outgoing platform. Where the old 4Runner felt like a billy goat - sturdy and surefooted but clumsy at times, this one feels more like a mountain lion: agile, powerful, and confident. That high-mounted intake earns its keep, too, breathing clean air above the dust kicked up by the wheels.

Especially in Colorado, where the 4Runner may as well be embroidered into the state flag, the Trailhunter will cost you one thing in addition to its price tag; anonymity. Everywhere we went in the thing, people were coming up and asking us questions about it. I used it for a trip to a remote junkyard to haul home a differential for my Audi, and came out to an entourage of folks hanging out, snapping pictures, and asking questions. We took it to a local dirt track to spectate the races, and were swarmed by people asking





about its efficacy as a tow vehicle. As Jake and I were filming some of our short videos about the truck in one of Denver's many wonderful public parks, we had to cut for "Hey, is that the new 4Runner!?" coming from a young gal walking her dog in the evening hours. Everyone wants to get a look at this thing, and we didn't shy away from showing it off.

Everything about the Trailhunter feels engineered, not bolted on. The RIGID light bar illuminates night trails like daylight, while the ARB rack never groans under load. The Trailhunter rides and drives like Toyota built the overlanding rig you've been dreaming about in your garage, only with every component validated, tested, and certified to the same standards as a Camry's cupholder.

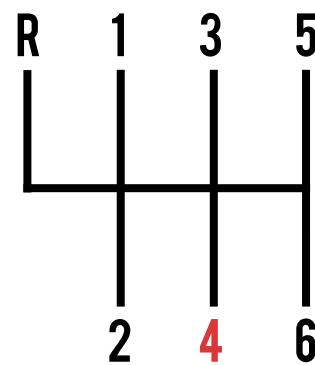
The 4Runner Trailhunter isn't just another off-road trim; it's a bold statement from Toyota. They've watched a generation of enthusiasts

buy base 4Runners and sink time and money into building overlanding rigs with the same brands Toyota is now partnering with. The result is a truck that's expedition-ready the moment you sign the paperwork. It's tough, modern, and deeply satisfying to drive—an SUV that bridges nostalgia for the bulletproof 4Runners of old with technology that finally makes it competitive in 2025.

To me, the 4Runner Trailhunter is a tough one to rate. While offroading and overlanding are things I appreciate, they are not disciplines I tend to gravitate toward. The grown-up side of me would tend to err towards the 4Runner TRD Pro, but I see how the Trailhunter is a love letter to the kid in any car enthusiast who has ever off-roaded a matchbox car in their sandbox. While it's not going to be everyone's first choice, for the people the Trailhunter appeals to, this thing is a slam dunk, and for that reason, I found the Trailhunter to sit as

a solid 4 on our newly introduced SHIFT Score.

If you love the 4Runner nameplate because of its reputation for reliability, the Trailhunter honors that legacy. If you love it because it's a blank canvas for adventure, the Trailhunter just did all your homework for you. And if you love it because you want a factory snorkel that sounds like a jet spooling next to your ear, well... Toyota absolutely nailed that, too. 🏆



🏠 The 2025 Toyota 4Runner Trailhunter



2025



Acura ADX

A-Spec

Story: Kelvin Lal

Photography: Brandon Day, Scott Minshall, Shannon Smith

The luxury subcompact crossover class is one of the fastest growing market segments in the current automotive landscape. This category has a straightforward appeal to buyers, as it provides vehicles that are practical and easy to live with, but offer all the luxury features you would expect from larger flagship models.

Nearly every premium manufacturer has a contender in this class, except

Acura. Thankfully, with the new ADX, Acura has resolved this absence within their range. Based on the Honda HR-V platform, this is Acura's answer to a luxury subcompact crossover and is slated as the brand's entry level model.

This platform is a robust start, as the HR-V offers a spacious interior, comfortable ride, and legendary Honda reliability. Just rebadging a solid Honda offering, however, won't be

enough to prove the ADX's worth in the space. The ADX is going toe to toe against long standing market mainstays like the BMW X1 and the Audi Q3, two crossovers that have set the standard in their class.

The question then becomes, how does the ADX stack up against this class's titans? Acura is the new kid on the block, but has their offering come to compete?





Exterior

The ADX takes the HR-V's low slung SUV shape and elevates the styling with Acura's signature design language. Up front, an aggressive spindle grill, LED headlights and foglights, and a chin spoiler stand out in our A-spec Advanced trim. One of the most interesting aspects of the styling with the ADX are the body lines on the hood, which contour around the sides to a central point down the panel.

The Shark Grey 19 inch 5-spoke wheels included in the A-Spec package add to the Acura's aggressive stance. The rear end includes a sloped hatch that can give the ADX a coupe look similar to its

rival Lexus UX. The taillights match the headlamp's sharp styling and add to the general vibe the compact is pitching. Lastly, the A-spec trim gets a set of dual chrome exhaust tips which add a sporty flair to the rear.

The A-Spec package includes some additional desirable paints to match those darker wheels, such as a deep Adriatic Sea Blue and a striking Milano Red. Our tester came with an Urban Grey Pearl that slightly changes as the sunlight hits it throughout the day.

Overall, the ADX looks much sleeker compared to its rivals. The sharp lines and sloped rear give the ADX more of a coupe feel. Coupled up with the wheels and modern paint options, this compact

is carving out its own niche in the segment, as it avoids the upright silhouette of rivals like the Q3.

Interior

The interior on the new ADX feels incredibly well built, and in our tester's case, makes an eye-catching statement. Our ADX featured a bright red interior leather that is a vibrant option for the two A-spec trims. The red interior provides nice contrast to the Urban Grey Pearl exterior. This configuration may be hit or miss for some, but an all black option is available as well as a bright white leather option called "Orchid" which offers a unique touch to the ADX by adding deep blue accents



throughout the interior.

The seats stand out as some of the most comfortable and well crafted seats in the segment. They offer a plush lounge backing when you want to relax, and the bolstered sides keep you in place when you want to have fun. All trims come standard with 12-way power adjustable seats, as well as 4-way lumbar support. As mentioned, the two A-spec trims come standard with heated and ventilated seats. The ventilation being especially noteworthy as it genuinely cools you down rather than just blowing air across your back.

In front of you is a standard Acura 3

speoke leather wrapped steering wheel with a plenty of onboard controls, and some of the most ergonomic metal paddle shifters that flank the sides of the wheel - a strange inclusion for a car equipped with a CVT (we'll talk about that later). Behind the wheel you have Acura's latest 10.2 inch Digital Instrument Cluster. This cluster is configurable, as you can change areas to show music and other general information. The color scheme changes with the drive mode as well, however, it does not offer some options such as a map view within the cluster offered by competitors. The view can change further when you enable Auto Cruise

control and Lane Keep Assist, helping you utilize the safety system to its maximum potential.

Next to the gauge cluster is the infotainment screen that sits atop the center dashboard. This 9 inch touchscreen is smaller than most rivals; but in the general styling of the dash, feels appropriately sized and prevents the screen from taking over. This system includes wireless Apple Carplay and Android Auto as well as Google built in on our A-Spec Advanced trim, which is a unique and desirable feature. Acura's latest infotainment system is also simple to use, utilizing a large menu



with an easy to navigate interface, coupled with a touchscreen that is smartphone fast to interact with.

Thankfully, the ADX avoids the all-too-common mistake of burying climate controls in the infotainment screen. Instead, it keeps a dedicated set of controls neatly positioned just below. This section highlights the build quality and refinement of the ADX, as each climate control offers a satisfying click and is made of metal or high quality plastics. The air vents above have the same qualities as well as the gear control below. The control center next to the gear lever follows this with a drive mode selector. Small touches like this add to the overall premium feel of the entire cabin. This high build quality echoes throughout with soft touch leather on the upper dash panel, metal film trim and an alcantara headliner.

One of the best features that is standard on all ADX trims are the aforementioned safety suit, branded as ACURAWATCH. These features include the Adaptive Cruise Control, Collision Mitigation Braking, Lane Departure Warning, and more. One of the most impressive features in this array was the Lane Keep Assist. Most vehicles bounce you back in fourth in the lane constantly trying to compute what is true center, but Acura's system keeps you in and has some further advanced capabilities that make the ADX as close to a self-driving car as can be on the highway.

The interior is one of the best places to be in this segment, as it blends a combo of luxury, comfort, and sportier styling in one. Other than the slightly undersized infotainment screen and a rather minimalist gauge cluster, the ADX gives more expensive competitors a run for their money.

Price & Trim

The ADX starts at a competitive \$37,000, severely undercutting most of its main European competitors. The ADX's closest rival is the Lexus UX, but at \$38,305 the ADX undercuts the Lexus by over a grand. The sales leaders in this segment, the BMW X1 and Audi Q3, are both over \$41,000. The ADX's price proposition is incredibly enticing, and leaves plenty of room in prospective buyers' budgets for some optional extras like the premium A-Spec packages.

The next step up is ADX A-Spec. This trim upgrades you to an ADX sport appearance package, adding Microswede inserts within the seats and interior trim, a panoramic sunroof, and ventilated seats which



neither the BMW X1 or Audi Q3 offer at any trim. At a \$40,000 starting price, this trim would be my pick as the sweet spot in the lineup.

At the top of the ADX lineup is the A-Spec with Advanced package trim; the same trim package that our test vehicle came with. The Advanced Package brings to the table a stellar 15 speaker Bang & Olufsen sound system, heated steering wheel, and a leather trimmed interior. This package's highlight is Google built in, which is an assistant that can make hands free calls, change cabin controls, navigation via Google Maps, and even features Google play. This trim offers the pinnacle experience for the ADX, however, with a starting price of \$44,000, this package inches much closer to its European rivals.

The ADX has the most impressive price and value proposition in this segment, with all trims coming with a strong set of features. The ventilated seats were the most pleasant surprise here and deserve a second nod, as this premium feature has rarely been equipped in the sub \$40,000 market.

Drivetrain

Acura starts the ADX off on the HRV platform as I mentioned earlier, and keeps the HRV's CVT transmission. This



is a unique inclusion, as the ADX is one of the only non-hybrid vehicles in this class that utilizes a CVT. The main downside to this unit is a sluggish reaction time when you put your foot in it. For example, if you were to overtake at highway speeds and mash the accelerator, there is roughly a second reaction time for the transmission to register the change and get you moving. This doesn't seem like a lot, but it is noticeably slow in the modern day of dual clutch transmissions. Still, under everyday driving conditions, it is one of the smoothest and quietest transmissions in the segment, as it gently delivers power when setting off from a set of lights and is unnoticeable at highway speeds.

The engine in the ADX was given a nice upgrade over its platform sibling. Instead of the naturally aspirated 2.0 liter unit found in the HRV making 158 horsepower, the ADX gets the 1.5 liter turbo from the Acura Integra, that is the

sole engine available across all trims. It is slightly detuned compared to the Integra, yet it still pumps out a healthy 190 horsepower at 6000 RPM. This engine has little to no turbo lag and is eager to rev close to the redline. One of our favorite parts of this was its performance at altitude. At 8000 feet above sea level, the ADX still had plenty of power available thanks to its turbo. It's important to note that the power figure is on the lower end for the luxury subcompact crossover segment, as the ADX is one of the only luxury crossovers that has a power figure under 200. Still, it has one of the lightest curb weights in the segment, at around 3600 pounds, and not only does this help the engine keep up and provide an impressive power to weight ratio, it helps the ADX become one of the best handling subcompact crossovers available today.

Handling is a big statement in the new ADX. It features a lightweight aluminum subframe and a MacPherson strut front





suspension setup to provide a dynamic drive and confidence inspiring road feel. This, coupled with the ADX's lower stance, promotes one of the most grounded and precise handling subcompact crossovers in the luxury segment. It's eager to turn into an apex and stays stable throughout. Fully independent suspension ensures a smooth and comfortable ride as well. All in all, the ADX boasts one of the best handling and most comfortable rides in its class.

Overall, the ADX's powertrain makes it a very solid contender, and the handling and suspension take it to the next level. With an EPA combined fuel economy of 27 MPG, you won't break the bank at the gas station either. It does have a smaller fuel capacity at 14 gallons, but can still seek out a 370 mile driving range under most driving conditions.

Experience

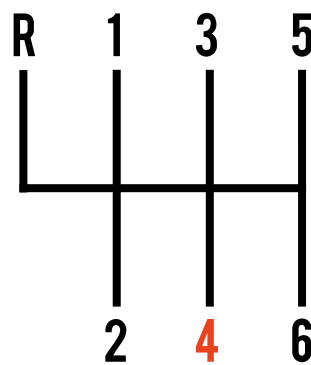
On a day to day basis, the ADX is one of the easiest vehicles to live with. Getting in the ADX for your commute to work is an easy affair that doesn't fall into a trap of being complicated for the sake of complication. The climate control has physical buttons that can be set in an instance rather than navigating touch screen menus, the gear lever is a traditional PRNDL gear lever rather than a toggle switch that you have to touch in the right way to move forward or

back, and the interior layout is user friendly and inclusive. The drive to work is equally as simple, with small blind spots and a comfortable driving position. When you want to have some excitement on your drive, the ADX's handling delivers in spades. This, paired with its excellent value and plentiful options make it a great entry into the Acura Brand, but what about the greater subcompact luxury class?

Generally, the luxury subcompact crossover segment features an array of different entries that can all be closely compared. The ADX feels as if it is attempting to carve its own niche in this muddled segment, and in many ways it does. It's a simple and easy to drive subcompact that prioritizes a driving experience without going too far. The clear testament to this is the fact that the ADX is one of the lightest luxury subcompacts on sale today, promoting an eager drive without even adding complexity. Overall, the ADX boasts one of the most unique propositions in the segment. As a vehicle that is one of the easiest to use and live with, most comfortable and fun to drive with a great exterior to top it off. All of that bundled up with the aggressively affordable starting price makes the ADX a clear contender in its class.

Now lets continue our SHIFT Colorado scoring system and give the ADX a score out of 6 gears. Introduced in the last issue, this is a new

transmission-based SHIFT scoring system; a ground breaking and revolutionary scale that relies on nothing but our subjective overall opinion of the car on a scale from first gear to sixth. First gear being microwave cup noodles, and 6th being a butter poached Lobster Risotto with a celery root puree and miso glazed carrots. All that but you know... made out of cars. The 2025 Acura ADX earns a solid fourth gear. The simplicity and ease of use of the ADX are a nice deviation from some of the crazy overcomplicated options coming out today, and the handling and aggressive look inside and out provide a charm and character that everyone will enjoy. The CVT transmission and smaller displacement engine keep it out of fifth gear for me, but apart from those details, this ADX is one of the best value additions to the luxury subcompact crossover class. 🚗



The 2025 Acura ADX



SECOND OPINION



Story: **Brandon Day**

Photography: **Brandon Day, Scott Minshall**



The 2025 Acura ADX A-Spec feels like a car built for drivers who want a more stylish and premium evolution of the Honda HR-V. From the outside, it carries Acura's modern design language with a sharp grille and sporty stance. But where it really surprised me was inside, where everyday usability meets just enough flair to make you smile.

Step into the A-Spec, and the first thing that hits you is the red and black interior. It's bold but balanced — the kind of design that feels special without being over the top. The mix of leather and Alcantara-like inserts gives the seats a premium touch, while the red stitching ties the look together. I've sat in plenty of crossovers where the interior felt like an afterthought; Not here.

The seats themselves deserve some spotlight. Supportive bolsters, adjustable lumbar, and long-drive comfort made this a place I didn't mind spending hours in. My wife and I drove it to dinner one night, and while it was easy to carry on a conversation, we both noticed road noise from the rear of the vehicle. It wasn't overwhelming, but it did stand out against an otherwise refined cabin



that feels premium. My son loved it too — between the oversized sunroof and red interior, he gave it the ultimate eight-year-old stamp of approval. His booster sat well with plenty of room between him and the front passenger.

I'm a fan of real buttons and dials, and Acura gets this balance right. Climate control dials, heated and ventilated seat buttons, and even a dedicated heated steering wheel switch are all right where you want them. No menu diving, no distractions.

The infotainment system is intuitive, with wireless CarPlay and Android Auto. I did run into a disconnect issue with my iPhone, but to be fair, I've seen the same quirk in my personal truck. Outside of that, the system worked well. The Bang & Olufsen sound system stood out too, not just for the audio quality but for the small design touches like tweeters designed with the Acura logo. It's the kind of detail that elevates the whole interior experience.

Power comes from a 197-hp turbocharged four-cylinder paired with a CVT and all-wheel drive; an optional

extra that our test vehicle was equipped with. The output trails some rivals, however, the setup feels skewed more toward efficiency than outright performance. In city traffic, the ADX felt smooth and responsive. On the highway, it cruised confidently, though that rear road noise was more noticeable on longer stretches. Drivers chasing quick launches will find the motor and CVT pairing underwhelming.

I spent most of my time in Comfort mode, where the suspension felt composed without being harsh. Switch it into Sport, and the throttle sharpens just enough to remind you that Acura still cares about the driving experience. The small steering wheel, wrapped in perforated leather with red stitching, adds to the sporty feel. It's not a car that begs to be pushed hard, but it's one you'll enjoy driving daily.

Fuel economy during my time with it, it averaged around 24 mpg, climbing closer to 28 mpg on longer highway stretches. That's right in line with expectations for this segment, yielding respectable efficiency.

A crossover has to handle daily life, and the ADX does. Cargo space in the back swallowed my camera gear, a Pelican case and backpack, without complaint. The hatch opens wide for easy loading of larger cargo. Cupholders, charging ports, and storage cubbies are all logically placed. About the only quirk I noticed was the gear selector slightly intruding on the passenger's reach for the cupholder. A small detail, but worth mentioning.

In a world full of compact luxury crossovers trying to outdo each other, the Acura ADX A-Spec quietly succeeds by focusing on the things that actually make life easier and more enjoyable. For me, that matters more than horsepower numbers or spec-sheet bragging rights. Still, Acura missed an opportunity here, the 2.0-liter turbo would have rounded this car out and truly justified the price. It's the one ingredient missing from an otherwise well-balanced recipe, and the kind of move that could have turned a solid daily driver into a true standout. 🚩



The 2025 Acura ADX





On Moving Forward After A Bad Accident.

Story and Photography: Brendan Garst

“Well, shit.” I thought as I rolled away from the guardrail I had just hit at freeway speeds. It was May 7th, at 3:30AM, and I had gone out to grab some breakfast in my 911. I had an early morning SEC filing at work on my horizon, an unfortunate externality in my day job as a eun of the mill accountant. The plan had been to snag some bacon and eggs from car-forward diner Great Scott’s, switch back into my daily driver EV9, and head in properly fuelled for my day of

regulatory intrigue.

I can now tell you, through the benefit of hindsight and the magic of weather.com that Arvada received over half an inch of precipitation that morning, precipitation which pooled in the middle of I-70 and conspired to send my car and I careening towards the guard rail. I even recall silently noting to myself that the conditions were terrible as I entered the freeway, and started making my way eastbound

with hot breakfast on my mind. That all changed in an instant.

Even travelling under the speed limit, everything happened in a split second. I hit a large body of standing water between the Sheridan onramp and the Federal offramp. I remember the spray of water up over the windshield, but with an uncomfortable feeling, which turned out to be feeling the seat yawing under me. The windshield wipers took their next swipe, and all I



could see in front of me was perpendicularly oriented guardrail, coming in hot.

The next few seconds don’t exist in my memory banks. I know I countersteered from the fact that the car glanced off the rail instead of wadding into it head-on. I know I audibly shouted obscenities as the realization came to my mind that I was going to make contact with the barrier. I vaguely remember the feeling of yaw in the pit of my stomach stopping as the jolt of impact tore through the car; the sheet of water I could see getting thrown to the passenger side from the impact, and that brings us to the beginning of the article. The feeling of defeat. The feeling of learning what it’s like to have run out of talent and ruined a car that cost more than I’d have ever expected to afford. The feeling of trading a plate of comfort food for breakfast for an odyssey of

unknowns on needing to explore and repair that car; the feeling summarized by the thought “Well, shit.”

This article is a few things that may seem unrelated, but let me explain how they’re all tied together. It’s a chance to own up that I am not a perfect driver; even folks who work in automotive media can and do make mistakes. It’s a chance to discuss the importance of being properly insured. A chance to talk about gathering yourself together and get the car fixed, and in my case, the chance to turn a negative into a positive, and to turn the absence of a car into a string of experiences in other press cars.

Getting back on my feet...

The time immediately after an accident is the worst, in my book, but it’s also the most important time to get back in the saddle and get in control of

your situation. I regained my situational awareness, made sure I still had all of my fingers and toes, got my car to safety, and went to work in my daily. Luckily, I still made it in time for my filing, and once those go out I generally have a little bit of slack time.

I immediately called my insurance agent, and friend of the magazine Dave Lowry, to explore my coverages, the process and what I’d need to know. Dave is a pro; there is not a situation he hasn’t dealt with, and in my situation he brought a grounding, matter of fact presence that focused me on moving forward and not dwelling on the damage I’d just done to the car. Luckily it had been in good enough shape to drive home and the airbags hadn’t deployed, but in my post hit state, that was all that I knew.

Dave assisted me in filing a claim report, and filled me in on the process





with Hagerty, collector car insurance that my 911 carried at the time of the hit. Once I was done speaking with Dave, it was time to figure out how to get moving forward.

Getting the car fixed...

Assuming you're lucky enough after an accident to still viably have a car, this is the next place to focus. After confirming my coverage, I reached out to my friend John Dyste at Porsche Colorado Springs, to find out what his recommendation would be to get my as-yet undetermined damage corrected. I was expecting to catch a raft of shit from John, a characteristically charismatic cynic with a strong wit.




Instead, I got support. John gave me the number for Colorado Springs' body shop, and offered to meet me to go visit it together the following day. John put me in touch with Felipe from Eurocars West, who set an

appointment to see the car the day after the accident. I tried my best to put it out of my mind, but I have a tendency to obsess on things. The situation with the car ran through my mind all day.

I finally got home and got a look at it, and things were not good. Both my front and rear fender on the passenger side had taken deformative damage, as had both wheels. There was damage on both bumpers, I had broken a headlight, chipped a taillight, and the front turn signal was dangling pathetically out of the home it previously occupied. It was a sorry sight.

The following morning, I limped the car to Colorado Springs, where true to his word John met me with a Coffee and rode over to Eurocars with me, where I met with Felipe Saavedra, the shop Manager. Felipe was one of the absolute high points of the process,

straightforward, communicative and always looking to be helpful. I think he could tell I still felt a bit sore about the experience, and was an unexpected mix of comforting and humorous about the situation, a talent no doubt earned over decades of interacting with people who just harmed their car in a collision. Felipe wrote an estimate and got me on my way; another real surprise in the situation was he just told me to leave my car. Generally, high line body shops have waits that can stretch into months; Felipe got my car right in, and as I rode the Bustang back to Denver, I was already getting text messages with pictures of the car's damaged panels removed. 🚧

-  [The Lowry Allstate Agency](#)
-  [Eurocars West Collision](#)
-  [Bustang](#)



How can I make the best of this?

Story and Photography: **Brendan Garst**

At this point, my car's repairs were in flight, and all I had left to do was nurse my ego and wait to get it back. The problem was body repairs don't generally come with a service loaner like service visits to a dealership might, and I had a big need for a practical adult car over the coming months, with Pikes Peak on the Horizon, among several other driving intensive events. I had my trusty EV9, which I continue to love, but with the amount of driving I had in the pipeline, internal combustion would make life much easier.

This is the point where I decided to make some lemonade out of the lemons I'd been served for breakfast that morning. I had an appointment to pick up our Ford Maverick Lobo from our friends at Automotive Media Solutions, a press fleet manager in Denver that supplies roughly half of SHIFT's press vehicles, as soon as the

Bustang got me back to Denver. What if I lived the life of a true autojourno, and took a new loan each week to replace my car?

SHIFT is a hobbyist magazine, we don't hold out to be anything but, but the idea of playing like the big boys had a certain appeal. I called David, our contact with AMS, and asked what may have not been snapped up on the schedule yet, and arranged several cars after the Maverick to review in a back-to-back shootout.

Shorter form than our normal reviews, but more individually focused; truly an experience like a reviewer at a car publication might do.

With that, I found myself experiencing the 2025 Range Rover Velar SE Dynamic, the 2025 Infiniti QX80 Autograph, the 2025 Mini Countryman SE All4, the 2025 GMC Yukon AT4X, and and the splinter of the one true cross for us weirdos at SHIFT, the 2025 Kia Carnival SX Prestige (we get bizarrely excited about vans).



2025 Range Rover Velar SE 2.0 Dynamic



The Range Rover Velar is the mid-sized compromise for brand-conscious consumers who wanted a Range Rover option a bit bigger than an Evoque, but a bit smaller than a full-sized Rover. Range Rover simplified the Velar lineup for 2025, and the Dynamic SE lands in the middle—the spec most buyers will see on lots and the one that makes the core case for this two-row, all-wheel-drive SUV. The choice it asks you to make is straightforward: the standard P250 powertrain, a 2.0-liter turbo four rated at 247 hp and 269 lb-ft, or the optional P400 mild-hybrid inline-six at roughly 395 hp and 406 lb-ft. Both use an eight-speed automatic and permanent AWD. The four-cylinder in our P250 tester gets the Velar moving with no drama and meets commuting and highway-merge needs. Manufacturer 0–60 mph claims tell the story—about 7.1 seconds for the P250.

Efficiency is predictable for a mid-size, AWD luxury SUV. The P250 sits around 22 city, 26 highway, and 23 mpg

combined. Capability scales with the powertrain. Properly equipped, P250 versions list a towing figure a touch above 5,200 lb, while P400 models publish a max closer to 5,500 lb. That covers a pair of snowmobiles, a small track car on an open trailer, or a compact boat without pushing the platform beyond its design. The chassis presents as tuned for daily use first: our tester had the dynamic handling package option with adaptive damping and larger brakes in this trim. The adaptive setup improves body control over broken surfaces and reduces secondary motions at speed. Steering effort is light and consistent; the SUV tracks well on the highway and stays composed in quick transitions.

Interior tech consolidates to a single 11.4-inch curved-glass touchscreen that handles climate, media, navigation, vehicle settings, and app integration. Wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are standard, as is a wireless phone charger. The interface is clean, and consolidating everything

to the screen complements the minimalist interior; the only acclimation is remembering where seat heating/ventilation and drive-mode adjustments live in the menu structure. A configurable driver display sits ahead of the wheel, and the standard Meridian audio system is already strong; the multi-speaker 3D Surround upgrade exists for those who want more output and staging.

The driver-assistance set for 2025 includes forward automatic emergency braking, blind-spot monitoring with rear cross-traffic, lane-keeping, adaptive cruise with lane-centering, parking sensors, and a surround-view camera system. A head-up display and automated parking appear in option bundles. After initial setup—lane-centering sensitivity, following distance, and speed offset—these systems behave as expected and reduce workload on long interstate runs. The driver assists do tend to make a lot of noises, and the lane centering in the Velar was at times pretty aggressive at correcting



my lane positioning. Factors to consider if you like your assists to be more passive.

Practicality is in line with the Velar's footprint. There's seating for five and a 40/20/40 split rear bench. Luggage space measures about 30.9 cubic feet behind the second row and 62.7 with the seats folded. The load floor is flat, the aperture is wide, and the power tailgate is standard. That means two large checked rollers and a pair of carry-ons fit under the cover without creative packing, or a full Costco haul with the seats down.

Comfort options are structured logically. Dynamic SE includes 14-way power front seats with heat and driver memory; ventilation and massage join via the cold climate package, another box checked on our tester. Cabin Air Purification Plus adds particulate filtering and CO₂ monitoring, and Active Road Noise Cancellation can be

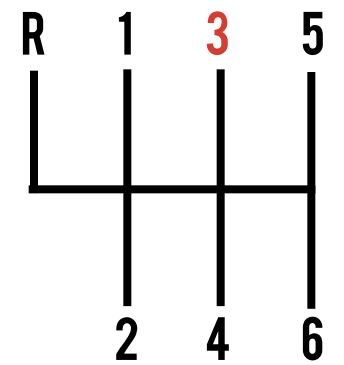
paired with certain audio and roof configurations. None of these features are novelty items; they target long-trip fatigue and consistent cabin conditions rather than outright spectacle.

A P250 Dynamic SE starts around the mid-\$60ks (about \$64,975 before destination at the time of writing). Check common convenience and appearance boxes and you land in the low-to-mid \$70ks, our tester stickered at \$76,110 when all was said and done. Opting for the P400 adds roughly \$7K before the adaptive hardware and wheel/tire packages that often accompany the six, so many stocked builds sit in the mid-\$70ks.

The Dynamic SE P250, then, is the realistic Velar most buyers will choose with current infotainment, a full ADAS suite, and usable cargo space. The four-cylinder is sufficient and efficient enough; the only consistent drawbacks show up on the invoice; options move

the transaction price quickly and straight-line performance with the P250 is behind the curve of other competitors in the luxury compact crossover space.

SHIFT score: 3/6. The Velar offers strengths in tech, and everyday utility; a svelte compact crossover with a polarizing interior (I want my buttons back), stiff pricing, modest acceleration, and the constant bongs of the driver's assist suite hold it short of a higher mark. 🚩



2025 Infiniti QX80 Autograph



The 2025 QX80 Autograph 4WD is Infiniti's flagship spec. Power comes from a 3.5-liter twin-turbo V6 rated at 450 hp and 516 lb-ft, paired to a 9-speed automatic. The switch from the old V8 is about torque and drivability more, sacrificing the V8 theatrics. With the new gearbox's shorter low gears, it moves this full-size three-row with less effort and better response. EPA estimates land at 15 city, 19 highway and 17 mpg combined for 4WD models, and tow rating holds at 8,500 lb. The 0-60 mph run is dispatched in the low-6-second range, which feels absurd in something this large.

Electronic Air Suspension lowers at speed for aero and stability and raises for off-pavement, while airing out when parked for easy ingress/egress. Dynamic Digital Suspension uses electronically controlled dampers to keep fore-aft pitch and side-to-side roll in check. In practice, the combination takes the edge off big undulations and settles the truck faster after quick transitions, while the access height

makes passenger loading and cargo duty simpler.

The Autograph's cabin centers on two 14.3-inch displays that can work in "Ultra Wide View" for the camera modes. The Klipsch Reference Premiere system (24 speakers, 1,200 watts) is integrated deeply, with headrest speakers that can route nav prompts or calls directly into just the Driver's ears, useful when the second row is streaming something else. Personalized ambient lighting (64 colors), and the overall interface sticks to clear tiles and large touch targets rather than novelty gestures. Fit and finish is exquisite, the only downside is the cabin can overwhelm with just how many buttons and screens there are.

Assistance tech is complete and, crucially for a vehicle this size, camera capability is broad. "Front Wide View" gives a 170-degree perspective for blind garage exits; "Invisible Hood View" stitches camera feeds to project what's directly under the nose; a 3D Around View Monitor adds preset

exterior perspectives; and the Smart Rearview Mirror remains a worthwhile default for night and rain. ProPILOT Assist 2.1 is standard on Autograph, bringing hands-free driving on compatible mapped roads with lane-change support. The baseline safety stack includes forward emergency braking with pedestrian detection, blind-spot intervention, and trailer-oriented features like sway control and blind-spot coverage. All of this works together to ease driving workload and make tight spaces less stressful. I truly felt less stressed than in other cars wafting around in my QX80.

Space and seat logic track with the Category. The Autograph comes standard with second-row captain's chairs that add heating, ventilation, and massage, plus a rear console touchscreen so row-two passengers can handle their own climate and seating adjustments; the third row is power-folding and, notably, heated on this trim. Cargo volume is improved over the previous generation and now



measures 22.0 cu ft behind the third row, 59.0 cu ft with the third row folded, and 101.0 cu ft with both rear rows down. The flatter load floor and hands-free power liftgate make tasks more efficient.

There are also small touches that land well in everyday use. "Biometric Cooling" uses a headliner-mounted infrared sensor to detect a warm second-row passenger and direct cool air automatically—handy right after sports practice or mid-summer trailheads. The available in-car cabin camera lets you check the second row on the center screen while parked or confirm you didn't leave a bag behind via the app. Trailer hookups benefit from a special zoom in the rear camera, and there are eight USB-C ports spread through the cabin so power anxiety doesn't become a family debate.

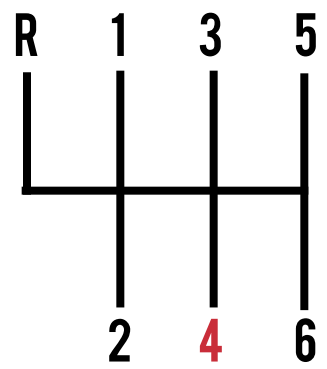
Pricing reality: Infiniti lists the Autograph 4WD at \$110,595 MSRP before destination; real-world stickers we've seen typically land in the \$112-116K range depending on paint, tow hardware, wheels/tires, and protection packages. Our tester landed

at a stout \$114,865 sticker, squarely in six-figure territory, but it's also the spec where the tech, cameras, audio, and second-row features are fully turned on, and where ProPILOT Assist 2.1 is included rather than optional.

The 2025 QX80 Autograph 4WD reads as a coherent set of solutions to the old truck's pain points. More torque at lower rpm and a smarter transmission help with grades and trailering. Air suspension plus adaptive damping address ride quality and access. The camera suite, head-up display, and hands-free assist reduce fatigue in town and on the interstate. The trade-offs are predictable: fuel economy remains firmly in full-size SUV territory, and the jump from the Sensory to the Autograph spec is stout if you don't specifically need the second-row massaging chairs, in-car camera, and two-tone exterior. Buyers shopping for the towing capacity, carrying capacity, or just those who want the richest set of features, cameras and audio, the feature coverage and execution justify choosing the Autograph.

SHIFT score (1-6): 4/6. The powertrain

and chassis updates do the work, the camera/assist stack is genuinely useful at this size, and the second-row experience is strong. We drove the QX80 up Pikes Peak for tire testing, seating six comfortably and blasting Insane Clown Posse (John Dyste is full of surprises.) The pricing is the major rub, as the price point of our Coullis Red tester puts it punching square at some of the higher trim Escalades, the highest trim of Yukon, and above the highest Tahoe or Suburban. Nissan's platform mate Armada offers much of the QX's dance card with a better value proposition. Still, the QX is a comfortable very well appointed family business missile, something that made me look forward to driving it during my short week with it. 🚗



The 2025 Infiniti QX80

2025 MINI Countryman SE ALL4



The 2025 MINI Countryman SE ALL4 reads like a straightforward EV: dual-motor all-wheel drive, a 64.7-kWh battery, and a factory claim of up to 212 miles on the EPA cycle. DC fast-charging tops out at 130 kW with a 10–80% window quoted at roughly half an hour. The 10-80 charge represents how long you'll realistically linger on a charging stop during a road trip. Like I said, standard EV stuff. What I loved about the Countryman SE is that it manages to find character in the space, something EVs have struggled with as they find their footing in the US Market.

Output is 308 hp, 364 lb-ft, with ALL4 all wheel drive traction. MINI's own 0–60 mph guidance lands near the mid-5-second mark. Like most EVs, the acceleration is snappy and enjoyable, especially in “Go Kart Mode”, one of the “Experiences” that mini has mapped to the car that governs its interior look and feel as well as performance. The MINI begs you to mat it again and again, it even gives

you the sound of a little thunder clap when the throttle tips in at 100%. You don't have to plan merges or passes, even at altitude, and the AWD system keeps it tidy.

The larger body compared with the previous generation pays off in packaging. You get seating for five and a cargo area that's simple to use: right around 25 cubic feet behind the second row and about 56 cubic feet with the rear seats folded. That's enough for a full grocery run under the cover or travel camera cases and lighting with the bench down. The load floor is flat, and the aperture doesn't pinch near the liftgate strut, making the space more useable.

Interface and software are very much one of the headlines of the Countryman SE. The central, round 9.4-inch OLED “MINI Interaction Unit” carries climate, nav, media, and vehicle functions, and it runs MINI Operating System 9. Wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are baked in. If you like deeper customization, MINI's

“Experience Modes” let you pin useful tiles and tweak the display theme without burying basics behind novelty menus. Experiences as mentioned above can also sharpen or dull the performance characteristics of the vehicle depending on your mood.

Driver assistance coverage is current for 2025 with an option sheet that reaches beyond the usual radar cruise and lane keeping. Parking Assistant Plus adds the stitched surround-view camera set with a back-up assistant and 3D remote views; there's an interior camera for quick checks via the app; and a more advanced Driving Assistant Professional bundle layers in additional highway capability. The key takeaway is workload reduction in tight spaces and predictable behavior on the interstate once you set the following distance and speed offsets to your liking.

Charging is straightforward at home and on the road. On Level 2, plan roughly an overnight session for a full charge; on a healthy public DC plug,

the car's 130 kW ceiling can deliver that 10–80% in the ~30-minute window when the station can supply it. This is a lower charging speed than other EVs are capable of, as some level 3 fast chargers feed at up to 350kW. Practically, this means the difference between roughly a 15 minute 10-80% charge versus the 30 mins the Countryman SE already achieves.

Pricing for the SE ALL4 lands in the mid-\$40Ks before destination, with common builds nudging higher depending on wheels, audio, and driver-assist packages. Our tester landed at \$51,145 before rebates and incentives. This pricing positions it squarely among compact premium crossovers while keeping enough headroom for winter wheels/tires or a home Level 2 install without tipping the invoice into another segment.

On the road, the SE's character is defined less by theatrics and more by consistency. The powertrain has the headroom to handle grades and full cabins; the braking and regen are easy to modulate without hunting through menus; and the steering stays steady on center so highway miles don't feel busy. Cabin noise is minimal and spec'ing the Harman Kardon system (part of the \$3,200 Iconic package) helps mask coarse-surface tire hum, and the cameras and parking tech take the stress out of parking garages and tight trailhead lots. The only practical planning remains range: 212 miles is fine for mixed urban/suburban duty and quick mountain runs with a mid-stop charge; on winter days with HVAC load and snow tires, expect to manage to a slightly more conservative working number and lean on that

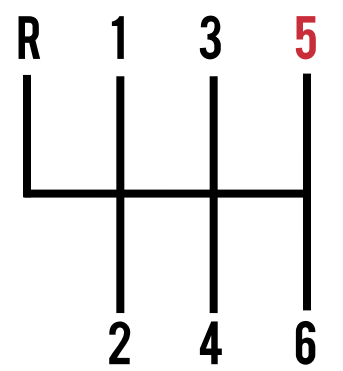
🏠 The 2025 MINI Countryman SE ALL4

30-minute fast-charge capability. One thing I noticed in my time with it, the Countryman SE seemed very conservative on that 212 number. Freeway drives were very efficient; I recall driving from Arvada to Castle Rock for Dave Lowry's Castle Rock Cars and Coffee one morning without losing any range whatsoever, a 40 mile drive. Chalk it up to MINI Magic I suppose.

The Countryman SE ALL4 is a fun, compact AWD EV that's easy to live with, simple to charge, and fully modern on software. The trade-offs are clear; range that's adequate rather than headline-grabbing and pricing that climbs with options, but the fundamentals (charging time, usable cargo space, lane-keeping and camera coverage, and a clean phone-first infotainment stack) are in place. If your use case is a daily commute with weekend miles and a few longer trips where a 30-minute stop is acceptable, the spec makes sense. As an owner of an EV with a larger battery, I didnt find the minor decline in range to be a thorn in my side, and the fun and

funky Vescin Dark Petrol interior was a fun place to sit.

SHIFT score (1–6): 5/6 While the pricing is a bit higher than I'd like to see, I can't argue with the smiles per non-gallon this thing provides. It's a fun forward EV, something uncommon in the class. Gokart handling and that MINI essence is maintained while leaving its ICE Architecture behind, and to be honest, I just enjoyed this thing a great deal. Do yourself a favor and give the Countryman SE a try the next time you visit your MINI Dealer! 🚗





2025 GMC YUKON AT4 ULTIMATE

The pitch is straightforward: full-size, three-row SUV with the hardware and software to commute during the week, tow on weekends, and handle light-to-moderate trails without aftermarket parts. The GMC Yukon AT4 Ultimate builds on the AT4 with a standard 6.2-liter V8, 10-speed automatic transmission, Super Cruise, four-corner Air Ride Adaptive Suspension, a front skid plate, and 20-inch all-terrain tires. The Yukon AT4 Ultimate is the GMC full size SUV that packs almost everything GM has to offer into one aggressive package.

With the 6.2 V8, AT4/AT4 Ultimate configurations are rated up to 8,200 lb

when properly equipped; that keeps small boats, pairs of snowmobiles or jetskis, and open-trailer track toys squarely in scope. If you're configuring for trailering, Yukon's camera and trailer tech are useful; Transparent Trailer View, jackknife alert, and Blind Zone Steering Assist calibrated for trailer length reduce workload during hookups and lane changes. The 6.2 remains thirsty, returning 14 city and 18 highway for a combined 16mpg.

The AT4 Ultimate gets a high-approach-angle front fascia, underbody protection, and all-terrain tires from the factory. The truck is outfitted with air ride which can give

up to 2" of extra margin when you need it, while also dropping for aero and access. The goal here isn't rock-park heroics; it's confident access for you and your toys to campsites, trailheads, winter lots, and rutted forest roads in a quiet, well-equipped cabin.

Cabin tech is current and logically laid out. You get the huge configurable cluster and central touchscreen UI, Super Cruise with a three-year plan on the AT4 Ultimate, a large heads-up display, and the usual driver-assist stack (AEB with pedestrian detection, lane-keeping, blind-zone, surround-view, etc.). This trim also

brings 16-way front seats with massage and an 18-speaker Bose Performance Series setup; a small 8-inch rear climate touchscreen and second-row executive seating with head-restraint speakers are available. The Night Vision option is a real add on dark rural routes; it flags heat signatures in the HUD/cluster so you're not relying only on headlamp throw if you live where deer may be part of your daily reality. Optional second-row executive seating adds power adjustment, heat/vent/massage, and those Bose headrest drivers. The rear seat infotainment is fast, bright, and nice to use; I got a kick out of reading issue 12 of SHIFT in the back of the AT4 Ultimate.

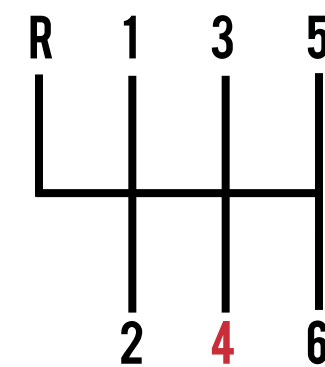
The Yukon AT4 Ultimate's base MSRP starts at \$95,300, and a handful of minor options pushed the price of our tester to \$102,280. That's the premium you pay to get all of the toys in the

GMC arsenal out of the toolbox to create a full off-road and luxury loadout from the factory.

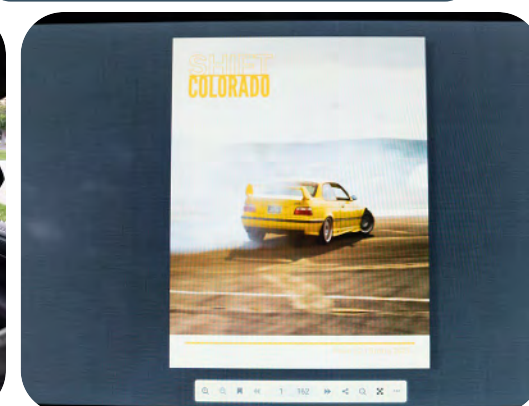
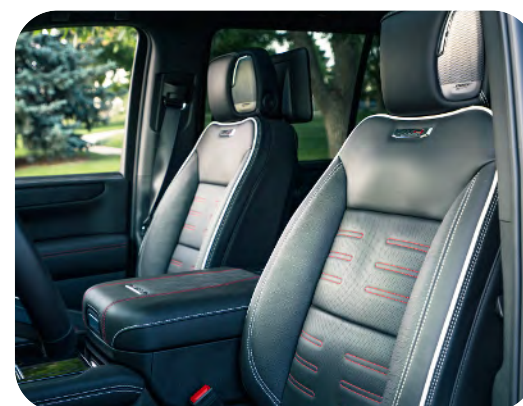
The AT4 Ultimate makes a coherent case as the Yukon spec for Colorado-style multi-use. Family hauling, winter driving, a legit tow rating, and trail access, all delivered without giving up on a high level of Luxury. The trade-offs are predictable: fuel economy remains squarely "full-size SUV," and crossing into the six figure range puts the AT4 Ultimate playing on the same field as the Escalade, a tough comparison to live up to in the full size SUV space and undoubtedly a deciding factor for some shoppers. If your duty cycle includes towing into the hills, unpaved access roads, and long interstate runs, the feature coverage is aligned with the mission.

SHIFT score (1-6): 4/6. The Yukon AT4 Ultimate offers a strong balance of

capability, tech, and luxury, it just comes with a price tag both at the lot and on your gas bill. It faces fierce competition in the segment both from competitors within GM, for example a fully loaded Tahoe, or as noted above, we're in Escalade territory, as well as competitors like the Range Rover Sport, the Expedition platinum and even the Porsche Cayenne. The AT4 Ultimate is a strong package, but it reminds you you have to pay to play. 🚗



The 2025 GMC Yukon AT4 Ultimate



2025 Kia Carnival SX Prestige



As I alluded to, we may have a screw loose, but SHIFT loves vans, and we were elated when Kia cleared us to take the recently refreshed Carnival out during Pikes Peak International Hill Climb's Race Week.

Kia's 2025 refresh turns the Carnival SX Prestige into an upmarket contender. Two powertrains are available, ours was outfitted with the carryover 3.5-liter V6 (287 hp, 260 lb-ft) with an 8-speed automatic, but a new 1.6-liter turbo-hybrid (242 hp, 271 lb-ft) with a 6-speed is also available. The difficult pill to swallow, especially in Colorado, is the fact that it's front-drive only. The V6 is EPA-rated at 18 City, 26 Highway, for 21 mpg combined with a 3,500-lb tow rating.

Pricing is transparent and aligns with

the trim walk. For 2025, Kia lists the SX Prestige at \$50,600 before destination which buys the full design update featuring the new lighting/grille and the tech jump to Kia's Connected Car Navigation Cockpit (ccNC) operating system with over-the-air updates. Trims EX and up add the curved 12.3-inch cluster plus 12.3-inch infotainment on one panoramic panel; the SX Prestige also supports Digital Key 2.0 and can be optioned with an 11-12-inch head-up display.

Our love for vans is based on how much cabin execution favors daily use, and the Carnival pulled through in spades. Cargo volume is 40.2 cu ft behind the third row, thanks to a sunken floor. With the third row folded that more than doubles to 86.9 cu ft,

and 145.1 cu ft with all rows folded. Dual power sliding doors are standard, and the in-cabin camera/intercom/Quiet Mode features (primarily for kids but in our case, unruly hooliganistic auto journalists attending the Hillclimb) allow you to rule authoritatively from the driver's seat. Wireless Apple CarPlay/Android Auto are on board, and six USB-C ports are spread through all three rows, with additional household-style outlets on our tester. We also had the optional dual-screen rear entertainment system (14.6-inch Android-TV-based screens), on which Karaoke rapidly became a polarizing favorite or least favorite feature, depending on if our weary team was amped from the racing or trying to sleep.

Second-row configuration is the SX Prestige differentiator. You can keep the eight-passenger Slide-Flex setup, or spec the SX Prestige Seat Package to add power VIP Lounge captains chairs with wing-out headrests, leg rests, and heat/ventilation, which our tester was equipped with. The lounge seats still offer configuration flexibility while also effectively converting to beds. As the Carnival was our home away from home on Pikes Peak, this feature got a lot of use by folks grabbing a high altitude early morning nap.

Driver assistance is modern and well-covered. Forward Collision-Avoidance now expands to junction-crossing and lane-change scenarios on SX and above; Highway Driving Assist (with lane-change assist on mapped highways) is standard from SX up, and Navigation-based Smart Cruise Control handles speed setting without added busywork in traffic. The surround-view and blind-spot view monitors plus Parking Distance Warning on multiple sides make parking structures and school pickup

lanes less stressful. On the road, the V6 feels simple and stout, even when loaded or merging uphill. The chassis is tuned for family duty first, and wind and road noise are managed well for long interstate legs. If you live where winters are real, budget for dedicated snow tires. The lack of AWD hit us close to home on the practice day we went to Devil's Playground, a post alpine nightmare that had received storm activity before we went, glazing the parking lot in glare ice. A parking lot that slopes down to a drop into a steep valley in the rocky landscape. There was certainly some pucker factor trying to navigate the van into its parking spot that day, without sending Kia's press van and half our staff skidding off the side of the mountain. I suspect this is an edge case, but Colorado buyers used to AWD don't have the option here.

Kia's industry leading warranty at 5-year/60,000-mile basic and 10-year/100,000-mile powertrain

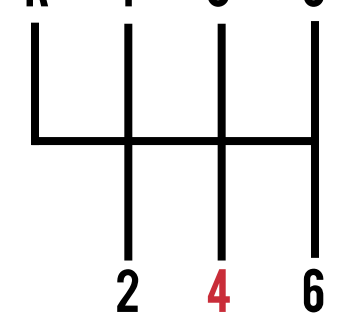
coverage is as present here as it is across their lineup, and still offers fantastic value on the long term ownership front.

The SX Prestige is the Carnival at full strength—current software and displays, broad assistance and accident avoidance coverage with Highway Driving Assist, and family-first packaging. The only real watch-outs are FWD-only availability and the trade-off in second-row flexibility if you opt for the VIP lounge chairs. Our Carnival as optioned rang in at \$55,255, punching among the ranks of higher trim Honda Odyssey and Toyota Sienna competition.

SHIFT score (1-6) 4/6. For a rolling living room you could easily live in, down by the river, at the top of a mountain, or otherwise, the Carnival offers a ton of value and features for the price. If only AWD was on the table, I think Kia would have a strong seller on their hands, thoughts mentioned to me while discussing the Carnival with a



🏠 The 2025 GMC Yukon AT4 Ultimate



Jesus Mora

@jesusmora_media

Oftentimes, real talent is sitting right under our noses. When it came time to select a featured photographer for Issue 13, we decided to look a little closer to home than usual. Our choice was Jesus Mora, @jesusmora_media, an admin for our parent group, Colorado Cars & Coffee.

If you've spent any time scrolling the group, chances are you've already seen his work. Jesus has a knack for placing cars in their perfect setting ; whether it's a classic framed by mountain light, a modern performance car against the city, or a clean shot that makes you stop scrolling and just stare. His photography captures not just the metal, but the atmosphere that makes each machine feel alive.

Intro: *Jake Laino* Story: *Jesus Mora* Photography: *Jesus Mora*



SHIFT: What got you started in photography? What was the draw to automotive as a subject, and when did you know you wanted to get serious about it?


Jesus: Having friends who enjoyed photography and feeling a bit left out with my phone photos, I began my photography journey in May 2021. With a long-standing interest in the field, I purchased a Canon Rebel T100 to get started. Since I was already attending car meets on Sundays, I thought it would be an excellent opportunity to practice. Although I was initially frustrated, I eventually grasped the fundamentals and began receiving compliments. That's when I realized I could pursue this further; so I persevered, and here we are now.



SHIFT: Let's start off with who you are and what you do; tell us about yourself!

Jesus: My name is Jesus, and I work in the flooring industry, specializing in the sale of sanding equipment for hardwood floors. I am twenty-nine years old and have spent most of my life in Colorado. My interest in cars began in my childhood. My father always maintained his trucks, and my older brother's friends had some impressive JDM cars during that time. Additionally, I grew up watching movies and shows such as Fast & the Furious, Mischief, and the Speed channel, which significantly influenced my passion for the car scene.





SHIFT: One thing I've noticed while looking through your work are backgrounds that are as interesting as the subjects themselves. What role does location play in your shoots; do you plan around the car to find a specific location that fits that particular vehicle?

JESUS: Indeed, I have gained considerable knowledge from fellow photographers. In fact, most of the photoshoots I have participated in were invitations from friends, and we would collaboratively brainstorm ideas to achieve the best results. Consequently, my learning has been an ongoing process, and I believe that selecting a location that enhances the car's visual appeal can significantly improve the final outcome.

SHIFT: Looking at your Instagram, there is a wide variety of cars. Do you have a favorite scene within the automotive space to work with?

JESUS: While I do not have a particular favorite scene, I approach each shoot as a challenge and strive to perform to the best of my ability. I must admit, however, that capturing race cars in action is incredibly enjoyable.

SHIFT: Outside of the automotive space, are there any subjects you like working with?

Jesus: I find great enjoyment in street photography. In fact, I initially learned how to operate a camera by watching street photography videos and subsequently applying those techniques to capturing images of cars. There is a certain therapeutic quality to freely exploring, entering a specific mental state, and capturing photographs.



SHIFT: What is your ideal two-car garage?

Jesus: As a devoted enthusiast of Volkswagen automobiles, I particularly appreciate the distinctive sound of the VR6 engine. The prospect of owning a Mk3 generation Golf or Jetta equipped with a VR6 engine is something I find quite appealing. Their simplicity, exceptional sound, and potential for tasteful modifications are all very attractive qualities. Furthermore, the opportunity to drive a McLaren F1 would be an absolute delight. I have always admired the design of the F1 and would relish the chance to experience its pure, analog driving characteristics.

SHIFT: What is your favorite car-based event in Colorado?

Jesus: Slush Motorsports Festival holds a special place in my heart. It offers a diverse range of experiences all in one location. It evokes a certain feeling reminiscent of the race wars depicted in the original Fast and the Furious film. A fulfilling day at the track, shared with friends, is truly a wonderful experience.



SHIFT: Colorado has an amazing photography community; Any advice you'd offer to folks who are just starting out in photography?

Jesus: Persevere in your efforts. The more you practice, the more your skills will improve. Furthermore, avoid attempting to emulate others. Each individual possesses a unique perspective, and the more you refine your own, the more successful you will become. Additionally, it would be wise to avoid using AI, as a genuine photographer can easily discern it.



SHIFT: Anyone you'd like to shoutout, or mentors you'd like to thank?

Jesus: I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who has collaborated with me on shoots in the past; your contributions are deeply appreciated. I am also very thankful to my primary photographer friends, @ev.films.auto and @fotozenmedia, for their consistent guidance and advice. This entire experience has truly motivated me to strive for improvement, and I am very grateful. 🙌



@jesusmora_media

CARS OF THE SHIFT STAFF



Growing up, spirited driving was something that always sparked my interest. I was always watching Fast and furious, Kanjo racers in Tokyo, and anything else that involved fast cars. So when searching for a car, I needed something that could support that urge to enjoy the drive as well as daily duty. That's where I feel the Honda Civic Si shines.

When I heard some dealerships had received the 2025 Si I was super excited, especially being that I was in the market for a new car. When I went to the dealer and sat in the car for the first time, I fell in love right away; The test drive just added to it. It has a responsive throttle, handling that feels like you're on rails,

and in my opinion one of the best feeling gearboxes in any modern car. Along with all of this I have all the new tech from CarPlay, a Bose sound system and the modern safety features like adaptive cruise control. The car covers everything you need from driving your heart out in canyons to trying to go across Denver in rush hour traffic.

From the outside, the car has a sleek, modern design that turns heads for all the right reasons. But once you settle in behind the wheel, a few flaws start to show. The biggest gripe for me is the engine's tendency to chase torque; it leaves you constantly reaching for power during normal driving. Pair that with a

rev-hang that feels less refined than the rest of the package, and the experience doesn't quite match the car's sharp exterior.

I do find it lacking in low-end torque, especially in the lower RPMs. Watching track videos where drivers talk about being slammed back into their seats makes me realize, that's exactly the kind of punch this car needs to truly come alive. If Honda were to add 30+ torque/horsepower I feel this car would

KIEL TAYLOR'S 2025 HONDA CIVIC SI

Story: Kiel Taylor Photography: Scott Minshall, Shannon Smith





perfectly live up to the dream. As far as the rev hang goes, if daily driving is all you're doing with this car it's not too noticeable to the average driver. But if spirited driving is your thing then it's much more noticeable. The car doesn't like to be shifted fast and when downshifting the rpm's look like molasses falling. For those being my two biggest pet peeves for the car, everything else makes up for it and makes it a car worth buying.

All in all, the car is amazing, and knowing that I'm getting 30 mpg along

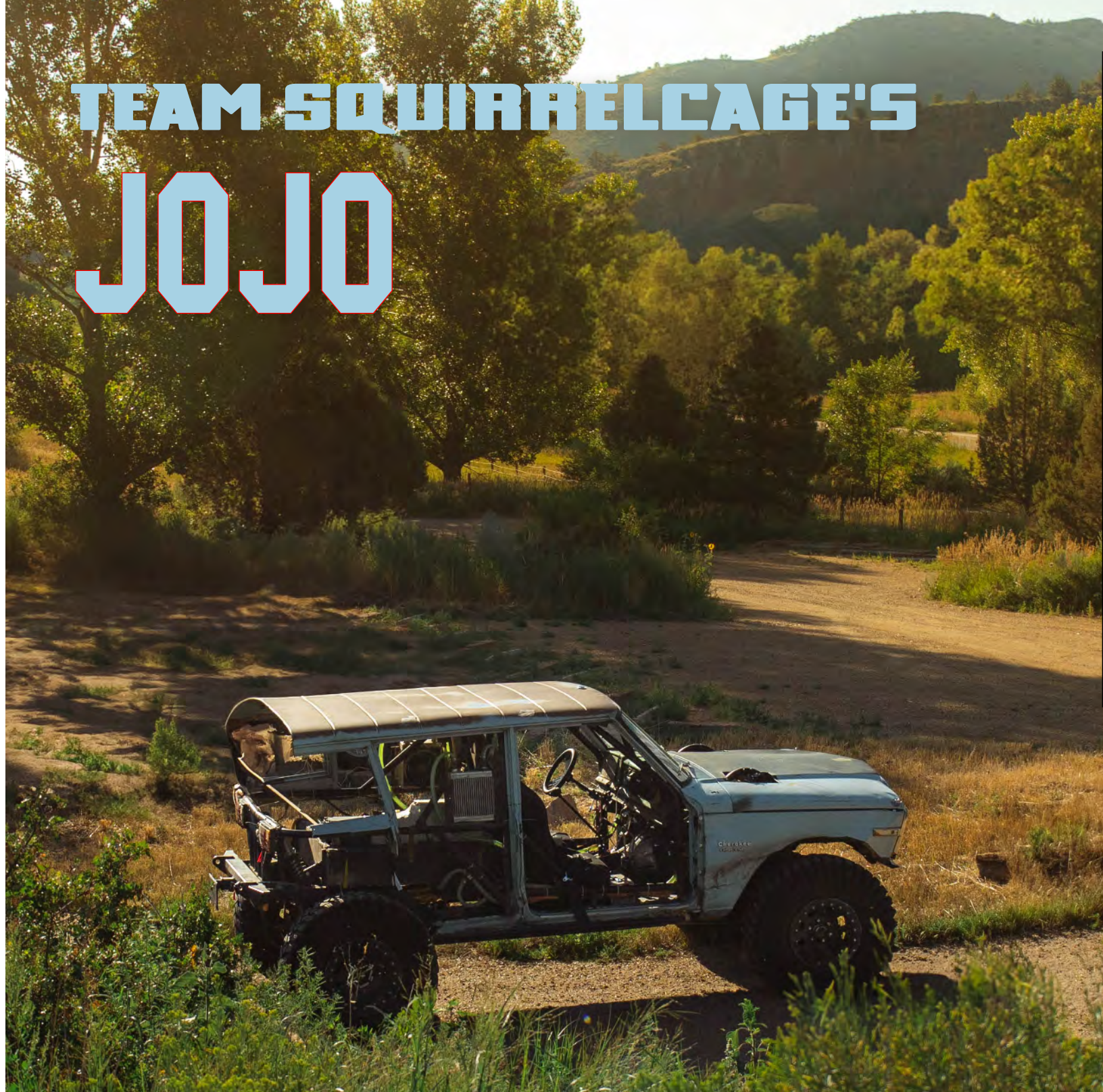
with all the daily driving features I want; all while being able to take it and drive it hard is an amazing feeling. 🚗

 [@kt.media.303](#)

Editors Note: Kiel has always just sort of been here. While I can't fully pinpoint when he joined (somewhere in Issue 8), I can always count on Kiel for a laugh on the trips he joins us for, and love watching his photography talent grow, and his work with the UNKNWN Car Club take off. I constantly have to remind myself this dude is 19, and I know he's destined for great things.



TEAM SQUIRRELCAGE'S JOJO



THE FIRST EV TO COMPLETE THE RUBICON TRAIL

Story: Seth & Josh Miers

Photography: Shannon Smith, Kiel Taylor, Brendan Garst

Marty Intro: Not gonna lie... I never thought that going to a friend's recurring LAN party would end up connecting me with an electric rock crawler of truly epic proportions. But. Here we are. We linked up with Seth and Josh Miers in Lyons, Colorado, on a drop-dead gorgeous Saturday to hear about their 1979 Jeep Cherokee that has been entirely built by them, no fancy shmancy shops here, which I greatly respect. These two brothers have a clear passion for off-roading and tackling problems that they have no idea about. The goal of this project? To conquer the Rubicon trail, be the first EV to do it, and get it all put together and finished before Josh turned 40. They are a true pleasure to hang with and hear their story:

At the beginning of 2020, right when the lockdown started, the Miers brothers decided to take on a project that would change their lives. While most people were confined in their home offices, the Miers brothers also looked towards the garage. The Miers brothers work full time as engineers (RF and FPGA) at Xilinx and



Ball aerospace, and this new project would quickly become their second full time job. As they are electrical engineers

that naturally drove the choice for the power plant....

A fully electric rock crawling rig.



They started with a 1979 Jeep Cherokee. It was a good platform to start with and came with some 4 wheel drive staples; A Dana 20 transfer case, a T15 transmission, and Dana 44 axles. The entire vehicle was stripped down to two 4 foot sections of the frame, from front body mount, to middle body mount. The rest of the frame was rebuilt, including a new undercarriage for the transmission and transfer case. Some of this was due to rust and the rest was to accommodate a front and rear triangulated 4 link suspension.

The Miers brothers started by rebuilding the Dana 20 transfer case. A 3:1 low range kit along with the advanced adaptors heavy duty tail housing was used. "The weak tail housing simply had to go!" – Josh Miers. The electric motor would have quite a bit of low end torque, however to get it into a better efficiency range at slightly higher rpms the 3:1 gear set was chosen. After seeing trail failures on other Dana 20s with the output shaft, that weak link had to be fixed. With the Dana 20 transfer case torn apart, they decided to rebuild the T15 transmission as well. Fortunately, it is only a 3 speed transmission, so the disassembly, cleanup, gear replacement, and reassembly was relatively straightforward.

Shortly after, they cleaned up and re-built the Dana 44 axles. The Miers brothers decided that 4.56:1 gears and Eaton Detroit lockers were the way to go. Again the 4:56 gears were to get a better crawl ratio and to help the motor operate in a better efficiency band.

"We wanted to beef the axles up as much as possible as we anticipated that the end curb weight would be around 3500 lbs and we wanted some axles that could take the abuse." – The Miers Brothers

To this end they added chromoly axles, CTM U-Joint, as well as big hubs and bearings. To support high steer and a full Hydro-steer kit they upgraded to the Reid racking knuckles with high steer arms. Then to top it all off they added warn locking hubs.

"We wanted a rig that had full hydraulic steering" This was mainly to support the triangulated 4 link suspension that they were doing in the front, but ended up causing the brothers a lot of headache over the year. How do you drive a hydraulic pump of an electric drive train, especially when the motor is not spinning all the time? "We scratched our head on this question for months looking for a standalone hydraulic pump that ran off 400 volts. We thought we found one that was designed for heavy machinery, however it was way too much in cost and it did not offer recharge options." In the end they chose to drive the pump with a belt drive driven by a stand alone 400 volt servo motor, the drive unit for the servo was modified to support charging. "We believe we are also the first to do a full hydro-steer on an electric car."

The leaf spring suspension was entirely cut away and replaced with a Barnes custom 4-link kit. The axles were supported by 18" coil overs to support a large travel range. They explored options such as Fox and King, but due to cost and delivery time they wound up going with FOA coil overs. "I am glad we did because those things worked. Awesome!!" – Seth Miers

Most of the body was cut away due to rust, and much of the original frame was replaced during roll-cage assembly. To make



clearance room they moved the transmission up a few inches and back 7 inches. This made the bottom clean enough to attack some of the most difficult terrain. They also added rock sliders that are welded to the original frame rails and also serve to support the roll cage. It turned out that when the motor was moved back and the batteries crept forward it started to constrain leg and seat room. "This didn't wind up being too big a problem, but it had us worried for a little while." – Josh Miers

The plan was to use the motor and inverter from a Transit Connect all-electric bus. The Transit Connect was developed as a collaboration between Azure Dynamics and Ford Motor Company, but due to financial difficulties, Azure filed for bankruptcy protection in March 2012. All production of the Transit Connect was stopped and most of their product was liquidated in auctions. The Miers brothers were the happy recipients of a liquid cooled DMOC 645 inverter. While it was

intended to be paired with a lower power 1PV5135, they paired it with the 1PV5138 in hopes to get a little more torque out of the setup. Unfortunately, this ended up being more difficult to tune than the 1PV5135 would have been. Then they had to machine a custom coupler between the motor shaft and the bellhousing / transmission input. The plan was to attach the flywheel directly to the motor then have the clutch interface to the transmission as normal.

Most electric vehicles don't use a transmission, but the Miers brothers did. They decided that it would be the easiest way to get the gear reduction they wanted, and the best way to always operate in the highest efficiency region of the motor so that they could conserve power on the trail.

The higher the voltage, the more performance the Miers brothers could get out of the motor/inverter setup, so they aimed for 400 volts nominal, as opposed

to the 350 volts nominal that most electric conversions run. After obtaining power curves from Siemens and adjusting it for their own setup, they found that their motor would provide 175 HP and 405 ft-lbs at the shaft. Due to their 120kW power needs, most batteries simply wouldn't cut it, and the best solution was to empty their pockets on 14 Tesla Smart Batteries. These batteries use 18650 cells and came out of a crashed Mercedes Benz B Class. However, these same batteries are also used in the Tesla Smart Wall. The batteries are thermally controlled (heated and cooled) and the Miers brothers had to build a custom battery box that included a Battery Management System (BMS), a battery heater, a pre-charge circuit, a DC-DC converter to run the 12 volt systems, an on board 6.6kW charger, and many safety peripherals. A custom VCU was built to control the battery box, throttle, inverter, safety systems, and dash.

The battery box was then mounted just

SHIFT|COLORADO

behind the driver and passenger seat. Unfortunately, the battery box was larger than they had expected and they had to re-fabricate much rear of the roll cage and coil over mounts.

Once the vehicle was showing promise in late September of 2020, they decided on a deadline of June 19th. They were set to run the Rubicon trail, come rain or snow. Their rig, AKA Jojo, was going to complete the trail no matter what.

All big projects come with some major hardships. The Miers had their fair share; from having to re-build the shock hoops several times to having to fab up an entirely custom power-steering solution to support the planned full hydraulic steering equipped on the rig, to creating a custom coupler between the motor and the bell housing.

With the work the Miers brothers had put in already, they needed a team name and logo. They settled on Team Squirrel Cage and designed their logo based off this name. They quickly adopted their friends into the team, and couldn't have done it without them.

They wound up with many lessons learned, a good 4x4 platform that needs a little tuning, and a list of good companies (and Bad) from a consumer standpoint. "Some companies were very helpful and we felt like we got what we paid for, and

have a whole list to recommend to other 4x4ers." – Josh Miers

Team Squirrel Cage:

Josh Miers, Seth Miers, Zach Miers, Irene Chiang, Robert Urban, Sterling Debner, Annessa Debner, Topher Pollard, Colin Downs, Walker Hunsicker, Derek Reese, Eric Trumpler, Kaleigh Fisher, Patrick Wagner, and Luke Sankey

TLDR;

A 1979 Jeep Cherokee, fully electric, rock crawler conversion. For the main electric drive it was built with a Siemens 1PV5138 Motor, a DMOC645 inverter, and 14x 48

volt tesla smart batteries. It has full hydraulic steering with a 7HP electric servo motor, and a custom-built servo drive for charging purposes. The frame was rebuilt to support a full front and rear 4-link suspension, new transmission and motor locations, and to support a custom roll cage and rock sliders. The Dana 20 transfer case was rebuilt with a 3:1 low range kit, and the T15 3 speed was completely disassembled and rebuilt. Both Dana 44 axles were rebuilt with 4.56:1 gears and Eaton Detroit lockers. Chromoly axles, CTM U-joints, as well as big hubs and bears were also added to support the full hydro steering kit. The

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front axle has Warn locking hubs and Reid racking knuckles with high steer arms.

They started the Rubicon on the morning of June 20th and finished the rubicon on the afternoon of June 22nd. They had to do a half charge off of a generator the night of the 21st.

Marty Closer: So there you have it - the full ins and outs of how this build went and what was accomplished. You can see

why the SHIFT team was hyped on checking this out and getting to know Team Squirrel Cage. I think my favorite thing about this wonderful EV is that it made sounds... sounds that were slightly unnerving, even animatronic-like. You could tell that this beast has soul and lots of passion behind it, and I will always be bullish on these types of projects and the teams that decide to take on something unique and challenging. We look forward

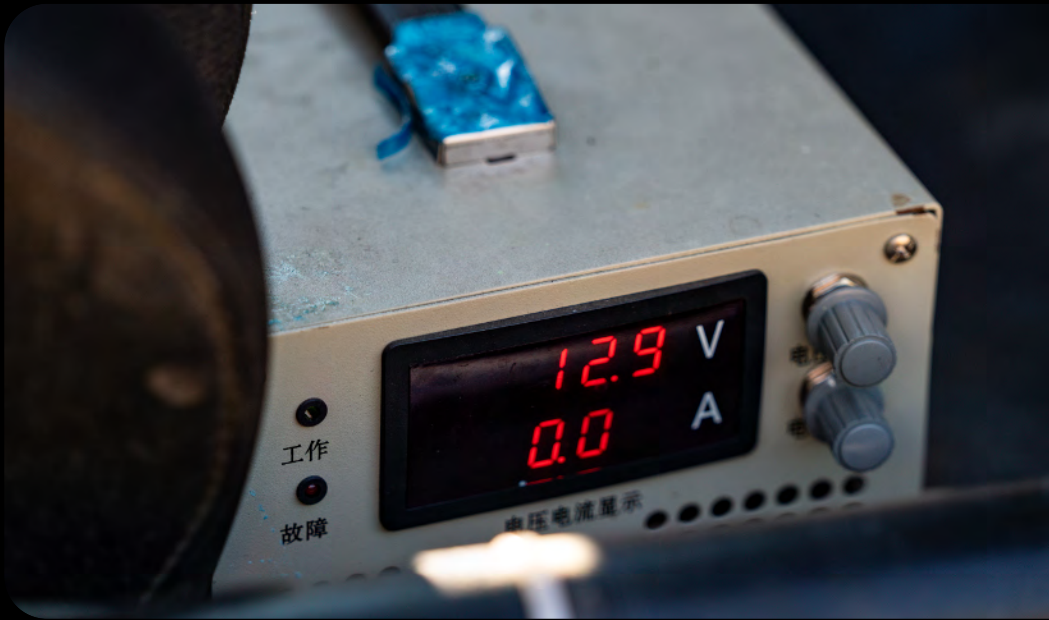
to seeing how this project continues and would love to catch it on the trail! 🌲



@team_squirrel_cage



FULL VIDEO



OWN COLOR

PROJECT PATINA



Story and Photography: Scott Minshall

First thing's first: No, I am not going to paint it. As a patina car owner myself, I get this question constantly. I also get demands that I keep it just how it is or that it would look better with some clearcoat. We all have opinions

and like what we like; nothing is right or wrong. Patina cars, love them or hate them, possess a lot of character and a rich backstory of all the life they've lived; That's what draws them to enthusiasts. A patina car inspires wonder

about its past, enduring the elements and awaiting rescue. My car has blemishes and even some hail damage that adds to its character, which I personally love. Whether a vehicle lived in a barn for 30 years, was forgotten

in a field, or it's been driven daily since new, these cars draw special attention. Original faded paint, scratches, signs of distress, and bare metal all fall under the "patina look" category. Some patina is naturally occurring, and

some is manufactured or accelerated. We'll get into that later. We are here to shed some light on why this is a popular look and why it's misunderstood by some folks. Car enthusiasts and non-car enthusiasts have a

high appreciation for the patina look, while others think it's lazy or see it as unfinished. Just because it's patina'd doesn't mean it's a piece of crap. A popular saying goes, "It's that way only once".

"No, I am not going to paint it."



Original paint and patina cars are still out there, and there is a deep love for them.

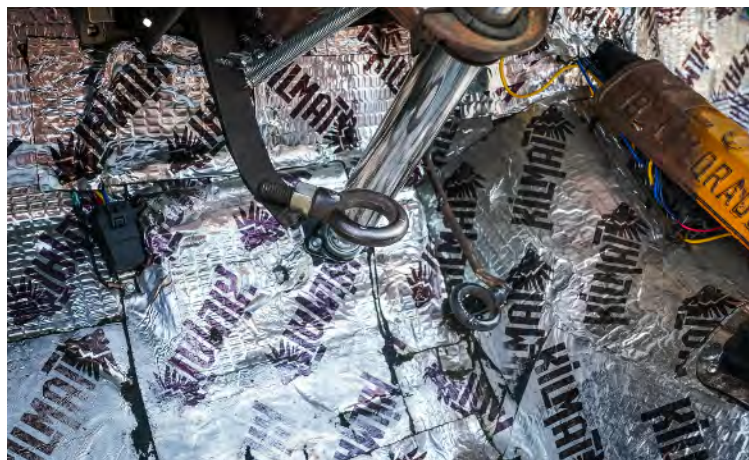
Let's get into a few trends when it comes to patina cars. Vehicles of a certain era have only single-stage paint, and with clear coat only becoming a standard in the 1980s, the finish on some of these vehicles just hasn't stood the test of time, and start naturally fading. These cars possess an obvious authenticity only Mother Nature can produce. Others have been forced into a patina state with the help of abrasives or customization.

Manufactured patina can be done masterfully, or not so much so. Some rides have had full restorations with the exception of the body and paint; we're talking engine, suspension, brakes - all the goods. Then the original body placed right back on top of a custom chassis without being touched, prolonging the life of a perfectly distressed gem.

There are custom patina paint jobs that accentuate the distress that already exists; those can be real trick and are like

pieces of art. Then you have forced patina with abrasive marks that cover most of the vehicle. I'm not here to judge, but like I said earlier, some are done better than others. So, whether patina is from neglect, outdated finishing techniques, or some other force, it is a part of car culture and we are here to celebrate it! Welcome to Project Patina, where we will explore some unique cars with some incredible stories.

Our inaugural patina ride belongs to Justin Gurule. A 1958 Twin Turbo Chevy Apache. This well-crafted classic was built by Danny Omasta in North Carolina in 2018. The truck has a custom rear chassis based off of a 2010 Camaro with independent suspension and GM G-body tubular-based front suspension equipped with coilovers. The powerplant is a 4.8L LS-based engine with an iron block, aluminum heads, and the main attraction; dual 66mm turbos mounted in the headlight sockets with an intercooler front and center. This high-powered package is mated with a 4L80e trans and a Circle D torque converter to deliver some dialed-in performance.



Justin bought the Apache truck from a friend who acquired it from Danny; a gift to himself for his 45th birthday (with his wife's permission, of course). He has always been into patina trucks, and when he saw the Apache being built online, it immediately caught his eye. He admires Danny's work along with his artistic vision and sees the twin-turbo Apache as a rolling piece of art. He likes the attention it draws because it's so different, stating, "It draws attention like an ice cream truck."

His thoughts on patina are similar to others I've talked to: "not everyone can afford a shiny paint job, but buying a \$500 truck and dropping \$20k in performance parts is more attainable." I agree, keeping the exterior original is appreciated and a bit more fun. He also mentions that keeping the patina condition can go for a pretty penny from the right enthusiast. While Justin gets asked often if he wants to sell the Apache, he sees owning a piece of Danny's art as important to him and wants to hold onto it for the time being.

"It's hard to find a rust bucket anymore that hasn't been touched. Everyone wants to pull these trucks out of hibernation, spend that \$20k on parts rather than paint, and just keep the originality in place."



Justin says his wife doesn't care to ride in the truck because it's fast, loud, and doesn't like the smell of gasoline, but he loves it because it is rough and rowdy. "It's an all eyes on me feeling when I drive it!" Justin recounts as he revels in the attention it gets. He had to learn to drive it, especially with the custom pedals, twin turbos, and low seat. The new bling-gauges and a powerful engine are not something you see every day. The Apache has the perfect blend of old and new and is something that really balances the truck.

It's wild to think this truck is manufactured patina; well, at least partially. It was already



in a state of distress when Danny Omasta started the build, but he accentuated the rough edges and added his own touches. It was done very well and with intention. Justin said as much of the original truck was kept intact as possible, including some of the giant rust holes in the bedside. After the walk-around tour of the Apache, he took me for a spin. I understand why Justin loves his truck so much, and I think people enjoyed seeing the Apache out in the wild based on all the waves and head nods. Justin's Apache truck is a patina monster through and through.

Thanks to enthusiasts like Justin for being good stewards of patina rides like this one and extending their life. Whether they have just been pulled from their slumber or had some professional attention like the Apache, these cars are special to someone. 🇺🇸



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Oktoberfest at Quattrofest 2025

Story: **Brendan Garst** Photography: **Chris Colten**,

There are some events that mark off your calendar every year; events which mark the passage of time beyond the time honored 8-10 holidays celebrated by your employer of choice. For me, one of these events has been driver David Hackl's Oktoberfest, a party he has been throwing since at least 2013 when I received my first invite to join a friend and head out to David's.

I remember going out to find a party that had much beyond just a middle aged man unironically wearing lederhosen (it had that too), but being shocked to find David's A2 Quattro tribute Pikes Peak car headlining the event from his driveway, and the sheer number of Audi devotees the event attracted, with people coming together from across the State and even Country to eat pretzels, drink beer, and celebrate Audi's motorsports background.

Fast forward more than 10 years, and a lot has happened. As I have ticked off the years one Oktoberfest at a time, David has become a friend, someone I work with to support every year at the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb (Brought to you by Gran Turismo). David has continued to drive, with

2025's running being his 12th year on the mountain. Time has certainly flown.

David, who we'll refer to as Hackl from this point as his friends and family do, reached out to me to let me know that this year, his Oktoberfest was going to be a bit different. Hackl had been tapped to host the revival of a long-overdue Audi show. "UrQ 25", had been a gathering of Audi's UrQuattro community that last took place in 2008, the 25th Anniversary of the car's release in North America, and a group of UrQuattro enthusiasts was aiming to host "Quattrofest" its spiritual successor at David's mountain home in Grand Lake.

As the owner of 2 UrQuattros, and as a friend of Hackl's (in that order), I was compelled to join the event. As the day of the event drew near, Hackl called me with an important favor. David is very particular indeed about the pretzels he serves at his events. Hackl will only serve pretzels from Wimberger's Old World Bakery and Delicatessen located in Colorado Springs, a mere 3-4 hours from Grand Lake. As Hackl would be hosting a drive for the attendees of

Quattrofest that morning, he would be indisposed to go pick up the pretzels needed to support his party. As someone in need of an angle for the story, I offered to pick up and deliver the pretzels to Quattrofest in my fleet of UrQuattros, subtly dragging Jake into the affair with words like "fun vintage car mountain drive" and "beer". What could go wrong?

Firstly, My black UrQuattro had been a bit of "another person's project" at one point, and once I had obtained it, I had stored it on my lift for a few years. It needed to be gone over to support its roadworthiness. After getting it down and taking it for a cruise around the block, it became apparent that the fuel system had suffered over its years in the air as it dumped fuel directly from the pump to the ground from a burst line. No problem, a quick line fix had the car up and running dry in no time, and I topped off the oil, differential fluid, and coolant in this and my white car, getting both cars prepped for the run from Arvada to

Grand Lake. Luckily, My white UrQuattro had been my own, much more recent project, and it needed very little beyond a fluid check to head up the mountain.

The morning of Quattrofest came, and I woke up early to fireball down to Wimberger's to pick up the goods. Hackl had ordered the pretzels ahead of time and assured me I'd frictionlessly walk in, obtain the carb-heavy salted treats, and breeze out on my way. While he was correct about the first part, he apparently had not noticed that he had ordered pretzel buns from the bakery instead of pretzels. Puzzled, my attempts to contact David were blocked by the fact that several hours to the Northwest, he was leading a convoy of vintage Audis on a scenic tour of the Continental Divide. Pretzel buns would have to do for Oktoberfest.

I hurried back to Arvada and continued to make sure things looked good on the cars for the trip. Jake arrived, and we loaded them with photo gear, extra coolant, fire

extinguishers, and oil. We took them for a quick wash before confidently launching the cars onto I-70 for the trip to come. For a while, what a trip it was. With me in my white car and Jake in my black car, we soared up I-70, making quick work of Idaho Springs, despite scattered rainstorms undoing our carwash. It wasn't until our turn off for US40 at Empire that Jake began to notice the car was chewing through gas and starting to smell.

We pulled off and surveyed the situation; the fuel line I had replaced was doing just fine, but the next line in the series had burst at the fuel filter, and the car was again dumping fuel at an alarming rate. We had pulled over in the lot of SELFSPONSORED Snow and Dirt, who were sympathetic to our situation and agreed to let us leave the car in the lot, next to the dumpster, so we could continue on our quest to bring David his "pretzels." Jake and I consolidated into the white UrQuattro, and soldiered on together.

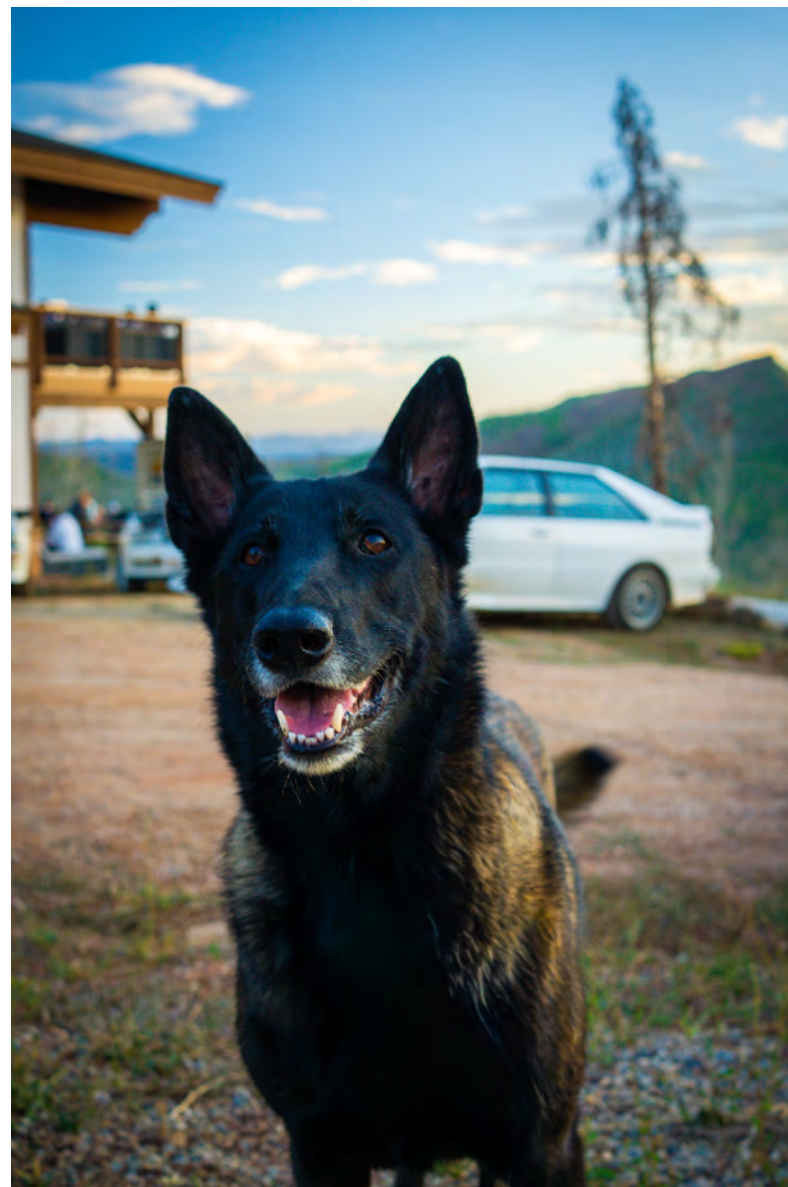




The drive to Grand Lake is breathtaking, to say the least, through some of Colorado's best backroads. Up Berthoud Pass, the rain gave way to some next level rainbows, as we cruised down the other side and through Winter Park. With another hour of driving with a solid 5 cylinder soundtrack, we arrived at Hack's home, a German inspired "berghutte" built after losing his original home on the property in the Granby fire in 2022.

As we climbed the steep mountain driveway, the scene unfolded into an impressive display of Audi and Porsche Icons dotting the property. A cadre of 7 UrQuattros stood to the side of the house, including Hack's Pikes Peak car. Several 4000's, 5000's, big body wagons like the 200 20-valve Avant and more dotted other parts of the property. For the vintage Audi aficionado, this was heaven.

While we had been through a lot to make it happen, we were



successful in delivering our precious cargo, and the party was bestowed with its pretzel rolls. Everyone laughed off the misunderstanding, and to their credit, Wimberger's pretzel rolls were just as good as if they had been knotted as intended. With our mission complete, we grabbed some plates and dug into a bounty of Bratwurst, potato salad and other German staples.

We also got to meeting some of the other folks who had made the pilgrimage for Quattrofest. Rudy, the owner of a very similar white 1983 car who had made the trek from California, and Sean, an owner who had come up from Nevada. Others, like Alex from Seattle and Scott from Chicago, had flown in to join the event even if they hadn't brought their car. The event had drawn in owners from around the country, but one of the wonderful things about the old Audi scene is everyone already for the most part knew who each other were; this was just the first time many of us had met in person.

David hosted a truly wonderful evening, and Jake and I enjoyed connecting with Audi fanatics well into the night, until we bid the group adieu to drive down and return home and figure out the situation with the black car. While I had done some work and we had both attempted to make getting both cars to the gathering a reality, and leaving a car behind was a bummer, we both agreed that it was a very worthwhile pretzel run. 🏁



2025



Lexus GX550

Overtrail+

Story: Kelvin Lal

Photography: Kevin McGraw, Shannon Smith

Luxury off-road SUVs can be quite divisive. There are only a handful of vehicles that slot into this class. To the average off-road enthusiast, they're either a waste of money or a pavement princess. The latter seems to be the blunt reality for this segment. If you spend nearly six figures on an SUV, why would you attempt to take it on the trail? The segment has been stigmatized to status symbol for

upper-middle-class moms, who use it to portray themselves as trailblazers to everyone in the Trader Joe's parking lot. When was the last time you saw a Range Rover or G-class covered in mud or on the trail?

The previous-generation Lexus GX460 was Lexus's entry-level vehicle in this segment. It shared a chassis with the 4Runner, a clear-cut traditional off-road SUV. However, it had a heavier

V8 that didn't quite make as much horsepower or torque as you'd expect to warrant the upgrade. What was worse for the GX460 was that it was caught in the middle of Lexus's "giant spindle grille" phase, which eroded the GX's off-road chops by trading approach angle for a more elegant front fascia. The previous generation then seamlessly transitioned into the hallmark luxury SUV category.





Thankfully, our 2025 Lexus GX550 Overtrail+ brings the GX name back to the pure-bred luxury off-road name it deserves.

Exterior

The new GX550 shares its platform with the new Land Cruiser, which has been a hit, looks-wise. These twins share a silhouette that can easily be described as boxy, invoking a classic SUV squared silhouette that is making a comeback in this segment. The GX550 and Land Cruiser are both based on Toyota's TNGA F platform architecture, also shared with the

4Runner, Tundra and Sequoia. You know... things that all find their way off road from time to time. The lineage is a great item on the GX's off-road resume.

The exterior also boasts a 26-inch approach angle, crucial when the road stops. The GX is very similar to its Toyota brother, with the same curves around the wheel arches and hood. Lexus has given the GX some tasteful additions to differentiate it further; Tri-beam LED headlights are standard, along with an LED lightbar in the back. Our higher-end off-road trim, the Overtrail+, features a few additional

desirable features that define its off-road-ready look. The 18 inch all black wheels wrapped in 33-inch all-terrain tires are a perfect pairing with the dual-tone tan color, featuring Lexus's new Earth base and a Black roof. Lastly, our particular GX had a factory-installed off-road roof rack, a 1500 dollar option that completes the look.

Overall, this SUV is a step back to its roots compared to the previous generation. It feels like Lexus focused less on having the GX compete with someone cross-shopping an X5 and more on someone who wanted a nicer



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SUV that was purpose-built to go off road.

Interior

The interior of the new GX takes the utilitarian look from the Land Cruiser and elevates it to a new height; it may be one of the finest Lexus interiors to date. Lexus vehicles have always had stellar build quality, and the GX is no exception, with an immaculate fit and finish, paired with premium materials.

The soft-touch material is present throughout most common areas in the cabin, and the seats are beautifully stitched with a nice Alcantara accent for the Overtrail. Our tester featured a nice massaging seat extra, which ensured a comfortable drive. Surprisingly, the ventilated seats are standard across all trims and will properly cool you down rather than blowing somewhat chilled air on you. A third row seat is available on most trims of the GX, providing seating for up to seven.

The 14-inch infotainment display is easily within reach and intuitive, featuring Lexus's updated multimedia system. This new system is as fast as a smartphone to the touch, and is beautifully clear. Wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto come as standard for the new GX. Lexus thankfully kept a few common physical buttons, such as a very unique physical climate control within the infotainment screen. The bulk of the climate control is still managed within the screen; however, it is always accessible at the bottom of the screen.

Digital gauge clusters have taken over all Lexus products, and this is no different. The cluster is incredibly intuitive and customizable, with the ability to show as much or as little information as you desire. You could



even add a turbo gauge and G-meter to your cluster! The six drive modes change the gauge cluster colors as well, which is a nice touch. The steering wheel is a traditional Lexus trispoke affair with paddle shifters and a solid leather wrap. The heads-up display was very helpful, although we found taller drivers may find it trickier to see on the sloped windshield.

The main center console area continues the quality with a premium leather shifter and a tasteful drive selector switch. Our Overtrail+ featured a coolbox, which was a nice addition if it suits your needs. We found it cooled a room-temperature can of soda to cold in just a 30-minute drive. Lastly, our trim featured a Mark Levinson 21 speaker, a 1,800-watt surround sound system that is one of the better units in the industry as of

now, and any enthusiast will tell you, a good sound system is pivotal for a fun off-road adventure.

Overall, the interior mashes Lexus's build quality with the purpose-built off-road SUV the GX aims to be. The dashboard is at a 90-degree angle to the floor as it should be in an off-road SUV, yet all the important buttons and dials are easily within reach. You can tell when a manufacturer thinks of the little things for their consumer, like beefy controls that can be operated with gloves if the GX was caught in a snow storm, or the cool box and standard ventilated seats for roaming through the desert. The GX's interior shines, nothing flashy or technologically exuberant, but the perfect place to be in any situation.

The price for the GX is pretty

Price & Trim

straightforward, higher than the Toyota Land Cruiser, but not in the atmosphere of the big brother LX. It ranges from an MSRP of \$66,185 for the base model Premium, all the way to \$81,295 for the top of the line Overtrail+ we have here. The confusing part is the trim notation Lexus has used for the new GX. Like previous generations, you only get one powertrain, so you only have to worry about the GX550, and you get a starting Premium trim, a Luxury with more comfort features, and the off-road oriented Overtrail. However, the confusing part is that every trip has a "+" model, which gives you a handful of desirable features on top of your existing trim.



These trims can get confusing, but it does ensure a wide array of models available for the features desired, and there is plenty to like throughout the price range. The Premium is a great proposition at its starting price, especially when comparing to a higher range Land Cruiser, as you are getting plenty of standard features and the more powerful V6. The Luxury and Luxury+ is your go to for the most high-end GX, but the Overtrail and Overtrail+ trim we have here is the enthusiast sweet spot. It is the only trim to feature Lexus's amazing Electronic Kinetic Dynamic Suspension System, which ensures an incredibly balanced and stable ride.

The midsize luxury off-road SUV market has gotten diabolically pricy, most likely due to a certain boxy Mercedes product. However, the GX is in line in price with its most straightforward competitor, the Land Rover Defender. Our Overtrail+ with destination and dealer add-ons is \$84,575, which is a hefty proposition. Frankly, at this price, drivers may have trouble taking it on a tight trail and not breaking a sweat.

The 2025 Lexus GX is powered by a

Summer 2025





Drivetrain

3.4-liter twin-turbo V6 making 349 horsepower and 479 lb/ft of torque. This is more than the previous generation's V8 and the Land Cruiser's four-cylinder hybrid, and slightly under the Land Cruiser's V6 options figures. I'm not concerned you'd notice, this engine is a spectacular unit, delivering instant power eagerly through the rev range. Turbo lag is noticeable before 4,000 RPM, but in everyday use, it is a perfect pairing to the GX. The most impressive aspect of this engine is its acceleration at highway speeds, as you can easily accelerate and overtake a

semi, which is not a common feature of large SUVs.

This engine's performance is amplified by the 10-speed automatic, which may seem excessive, but is more practical and smoother than expected.

Downshifts are instant, and although it was a little indecisive on our mountain run, you can easily take control thanks to the paddle shifters on the steering wheel. The unsettling surprise is the fuel economy with this powertrain unit, as the EPA estimates 15 mpg city and 21 highway. This is my biggest disappointment with the GX, as the main appeal for a downsized engine is fuel economy, yet the city economy is

the same as the outgoing GX460, though highway mileage has improved from 19. Still, this powertrain is eager to be pushed, which is proven by the class-leading towing capacity of 9096 pounds.

The Electronic Kinetic Dynamic Suspension System (E-KDSS) is one of the most advanced off-roading systems on the market today, as it manages the size and weight of the GX to near perfection both on and off-road. Previously, the hydraulic KDSS system in Toyota products gave you the ability to use traditional sway bars on the road and offered greater wheel travel for off-road purposes with

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an interconnected system between the rear and front axles. This new electronic system will give you solid on-road handling and even better off-road performance, as it ensures both axles operate individually from each other, preventing any interference while traveling off-road. The on-road performance is just as good, as the suspension combats the SUV's massive inertia generated in corners with ease, and keeps you planted throughout. Not the best argument for the anti-pavement princess SUV we pointed out initially, but you can't blame Lexus for figuring out creative ways to make the GX easier to live with.

Lastly, this Overtrail+ has the off-road chops to back up its talk. It comes with a full-time 4WD system with Torsen limited-slip differentials and front and rear drive locking. It comes with 265/70R18 all-terrain tires and a solid metal skid plate underneath. One of the most impressive parts of this is the surprisingly small 19.7 ft turning circle. Additionally, those bumps on the hood are perfect for visualizing where your two front wheels are while driving, a necessity on a narrow trail. There are other small features, such as hill descent control and a panoramic view monitor to see objects around you, but overall, the GX packs a punch when the going gets tough.





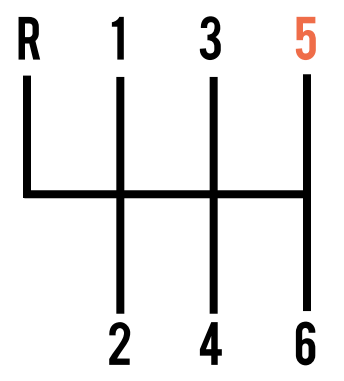
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Craft drives a modified GX460 on trails regularly, and the great thing is, there are a lot of Dustins in Lexus/Toyota's fandom. When you look at one passing by on the highway, you'll know that the redesigned GX is something special, and capable of taking you anywhere you want to go.

This is a great opportunity to continue with our SHIFT Colorado scoring system. As introduced last issue, this is a new transmission-based SHIFT scoring system; a highly scientific evaluation method that relies on

nothing but our subjective overall opinion of the car from first gear to sixth. First gear being comparable to dinner with some attractive woman, and sixth gear being dinner with Ken Miles, Jeremy Clarkson and Lewis Hamilton at a michelin star restaurant. The 2025 Lexus GX550 Overtrail+ earns a solid 5 gears for me. This truck embodies a luxury SUV that you can go mudding in while getting a massage. Flaws such as poor fuel economy and a slightly underpowered engine for the price prevent it from a

6th gear rating. But still, this is a special SUV, and a must-try if you are in the market. 🏆



Experience

Now that we've broken down this truck to its nuts and bolts, the question remains: what is it like to drive and live with? To put it simply, this GX feels like the essence of a Luxury off-road SUV, with the flair of a modern powertrain, and a classy Lexus touch. You won't get tired of climbing into this behemoth any day of the week. The comfortable and relaxed ride on your commute with the GX is easy, and the only downside you'll see every day is attempting to park in a tight parking garage or whenever you make a trip to the gas station.

On our trip up to Bailey to shoot the GX, it handled mountain roads with ease, and the power was instantaneous at the high mountain altitude. Switching into sport mode

helped out, with pumped-in engine audio and even whispers of a turbo spool. Through the corners, it feels anchored to the ground and ignores physics by minimizing body roll, assuring you in all three phases of a turn.

All in all, the 2025 GX550 is something that comes by now and then and softly redefines a segment. If we were to compare it to a similar Toyota product, it almost reminds me of the fifth-gen 4Runner. When it came out in 2009, most of its competitors had switched to a crossover body style. Yet it stuck to its guns with a body-on-frame architecture and a true off-road stance, and now it has carved its path in the mid-sized SUV segment. This reminds me a lot of the GX. Lexus did not have to retain the body-on-frame architecture, the aggressive approach angle, and the squared body lines,

moving away from the path the old GX460 was going down. They especially did not have to give us the Overtrail+ with all of its off-road accompaniments. Yet, we got a GX that redefines the outline of its segment and carves its name on its niche.

This technically slots in the luxury midsize SUV with the likes of the BMW X5 and the Audi Q7, yet these will easily fall under the stereotypes most luxury SUVs do. Will many GX550s spend nearly 100% of their lives on roads? Yes, I believe most GX550s spend their time flattening the pavement in Greenwood Village and occasionally need to handle a driveway with some leaves. The great thing about fans of the outgoing GX460 and I suspect the GX550 as well? Some of these trucks will find their way on spectacular adventures, and upfitted even further to do so. Our own Dustin



SECOND OPINION



Story: Marty Kier

Photography: Jake Laino, Shannon Smith

Plain and simple: The GX550 is probably one of my favorite SUVs that we have ever reviewed. We all know the new GX looks great. The squared-off design, dual-tone paint, and 33-inch tires give it the right stance and attitude. But what impressed me most was what you notice once you climb inside—this cabin isn't just "nice for an off-roader." It might be the most focused and intuitive Lexus interior to date.

For years, Lexus has struggled to balance traditional luxury with modern tech. Some of their recent interiors felt a little too eager to prove they were high-end—shiny surfaces, cluttered touchpads, and overly complicated menus. Not here. The GX Overtrail+ gets it right by keeping the layout simple, the touchpoints durable, and the functionality dialed in for people who don't want to think twice about what button does what.

The upright dashboard angle works beautifully. You sit tall and square, with big window openings and commanding visibility. Every control you actually need is placed within immediate reach—and not hidden behind three screens. The climate knobs are chunky and satisfying. The drive mode selector is tactile. Even the touchscreen, which is huge at 14 inches, manages to be responsive and thoughtfully integrated. It's not just slapped on

like an afterthought.

The materials also deserve some real credit. This is the first Lexus where I'd call the cabin tough. You've got soft-touch materials where you want them, but the Alcantara-like trim in the Overtrail+ feels rugged enough to handle dirt, sweat, and long hauls without looking worn down after a year. There's real bronze accenting across the dash that adds depth without being flashy. And those seats?

Massaging, ventilated, and actually bolstered enough to hold you in place. They're not just luxury for luxury's sake—they're supportive and useful.

Storage was another pleasant surprise. Lexus clearly spent time making the interior work as well as it looks. You've got deep door bins that can hold more than a water bottle, a two-level center console, and a wireless charging pad that actually works consistently. Even the

sunglasses holder is lined to keep your lenses from getting scratched.

I also appreciated the digital gauge cluster. It's customizable in a way that's actually useful. You can keep it minimal, go full telemetry, or throw in a G-meter and turbo gauge if you're in that kind of mood. The interface is snappy and the layout makes sense. I didn't find myself getting lost in submenus or needing a tutorial to figure it out.

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That said, there are still a few quirks. The driver attention warning felt overly sensitive—triggering alerts while I was actively looking at the road. Possibly a sunglasses issue, possibly just overzealous programming. The heads-up display also felt a little low for taller drivers, especially on inclines, where it sometimes disappeared behind the slope of the windshield.

What's interesting is how little this interior tries to chase German rivals. There's no light show. No haptic-feedback surfaces. No endless mood lighting options. It feels refreshingly analog in the best way—focused, usable, and comfortable without trying to be a tech-forward spaceship. That approach suits the GX better anyway.

This is a space you could easily spend hours in without fatigue, and more importantly, it's a space that feels purposeful. It's ready for muddy boots and trail maps, but still premium enough that you don't feel like you downgraded just to gain capability. It walks the line between utility and refinement better than anything else in the segment right now.

So while Kelvin covered most of the driving impressions and mechanical prowess, I'll just say this: the GX 550 Overtrail+ isn't just a return to form—it's a proper evolution. Lexus didn't just make it look boxy and call it a day. They made it feel right from the driver's seat, and that might matter more than anything when you're halfway up a trail—or halfway through a road trip. 🏠



 The 2025 Lexus GX550 Overtrail+

DRIVER'S THERAPY



COLORADO CONTENT CREATORS

Story: Nate Hughes Photography: Parker Scott, Nate Hughes

When I was fresh out of college, I was trying to figure out what kind of car scene the Western Slope of the Rocky Mountains had to offer. That's when I first started to hear about David and Driver's Therapy, mainly just because he had all of the cool cars that a person would really care for at the time: he had a Nissan R33 GTR, a Mazda FD RX7, and a McLaren MP4-12C. I first heard about David from my buddy Parker. Since then, I have seen David at a couple of different events on the Western Slope. I started to chat with and get to know him, and followed what new cars he had at any given time.

David's philosophy is to buy a car, then to create a video catalog of everything that a new owner would want or need to know about that car. When he's done, David sells that car and moves on to the next purchase. That's how

he's amassed such a huge repertoire of cars that he's owned and driven.

I recently had the chance to sit down with David to learn more about him, his philosophy with cars, and the content he creates. I am excited to share that with you guys today; without further ado, here's David!

SHIFT: Good morning, what is your name and the basic premise of your channel, Driver's Therapy?

David: My name is David Rosckowff, and the channel is mostly about cars, driving, and DIYs, so kind of a combination of all that.

SHIFT: So what inspired you to start Driver's Therapy?



David: I made a Honda S2000 buyer's guide video when I lived in Orlando, Florida, and it was just at a parking garage. And so that was, like, our first video. It was really janky because I had

a Canon Rebel, you know, we had very basic equipment, like for photography, videography. It was this setup that you could buy at Best Buy called, like the Creator creators package.

SHIFT: I remember going through your channel early on. There was definitely a lot of S2000 content, which is cool. I like those cars quite a bit.

David: Yeah, S2000's are cool. And you know, we tried everything, we were funny. We tried racing a lime scooter versus one of our cars, and I really enjoyed it. We'd try buying a product, a part, or a mod, and then testing it & making a video about it. We'd unbox it, tell people about it, and then show them how to install it. From my technical background, I really like that part. I was never very comfortable doing the Vlogs, or the day-to-day or entertainment stuff

SHIFT: Where did your technical background come from? Where did your love for cars stem from?

David: It started when I was in High School, and I was kind of getting bullied by these gang dudes. I'm from San Antonio, Texas, and where I was at there were some serious legitimate



gangs and these guys, they had it out for me, so they would look for me before school started. I tried to avoid them, but it was hard because of the school's schedule.

So, one day, I noticed that the automotive technology class was the earliest class that started in school,

and that meant that I could just totally avoid them. So I signed up for class with an instructor called Mr. Lopez, and it changed my life because this teacher ended up being like a father figure for me. It was a combination of trying to impress him, and getting praise from him that started my





interest in cars. Quickly I started to really like the stuff we were doing in the Automotive Tech class, and I was pretty good at it, so I stayed in that technology class for three and a half years.

Eventually, I became the shop foreman, which is the kid who helps the teacher, so essentially, like the teacher's aide. What sealed the deal was watching The Fast and The Furious for the first time in that classroom. It's one of my clearest memories watching Fast and Furious on this little TV screen in class, and it just all clicked for me. That's kind of how everything started, with the mechanics and stuff.

After high school, David bounced around different jobs, all while still tinkering with cars. He had a group of friends, and they would street race their Honda Civics and Preludes on the

Texas highways, David himself having a 1991 White Prelude Si.

SHIFT: How did you end up in the army, and what was your job

David: I was at a car wash with my CRX at the time, because I blew the motor on the Prelude. I was washing my car, and this guy looks over and he's in uniform, and he's, like, "Hey". I look up, and he says "You ever thought about joining the Army?" I said "No." and he disappeared. I get back to washing my car again, and he comes over and says "Are you sure?" I said, yes, and I'm like, "dude, what do you want?"

I'm almost done washing my car, and he pops over again and says "What if I talk to you about it? But what if I talk to you more about it over pizza." There was a Pizza Hut right next door to the car wash, and at the time, I was



working madly for Minimum wage. I was so broke, and I thought to myself, pizza sounds amazing. In my head, I was like, "I'll listen to this guy. I'd eat pizza". That meant everything.

He bought me pizza, and he tells me "just try to take the test". So I took the ASVAB, and he came back with my results, and he said I had pretty much aced the mechanical part of it, and I could work on all these types of jobs. The one that caught my eye was being an electrician, an avionics guy, and a weapons guy for the OH-58 Kiowa Helicopter.

We talked more about the schooling required to be an electrical avionics & weapon systems repair technician, and the intricacies of having every system on an electric circuit. We quickly ended up on the stereotype of enlisted Armed Forces

members getting a cool car or vehicle of some sort. At one point, David had 5 different cars at his apartment at the barracks: a Honda EG hatch that he turboed, a Mazda FC RX7 with a rattle can paint job, a Corvette he acquired from someone else in the barracks, an old Ford Torino, and his B16 Honda CRX from before he joined the Army. That was life for a while for David, working for the Army during the day and messing with cars during the night with the group of friends he made while enlisted.

SHIFT: Has your military avionics training helped with wrenching on your own vehicles?

David: I think it's become more relevant now, since cars are more computers than ever before and the way that manufacturers conduct themselves. As far as the way that they make their components, they keep things secret. Troubleshooting an electrical harness is a very in-depth thing which crossed over into cars, but the way that car manufacturers and DOD companies operate is similar. Cars have multiple ECUs, multiple boxes, and most of the time, we're not going to be opening the box and trying to repair the internals. We're just going to replace that ECU and swap it out for another one. An "Air Force swap" is what we called it when we swapped one module at a time with a new one to troubleshoot what had gone bad.

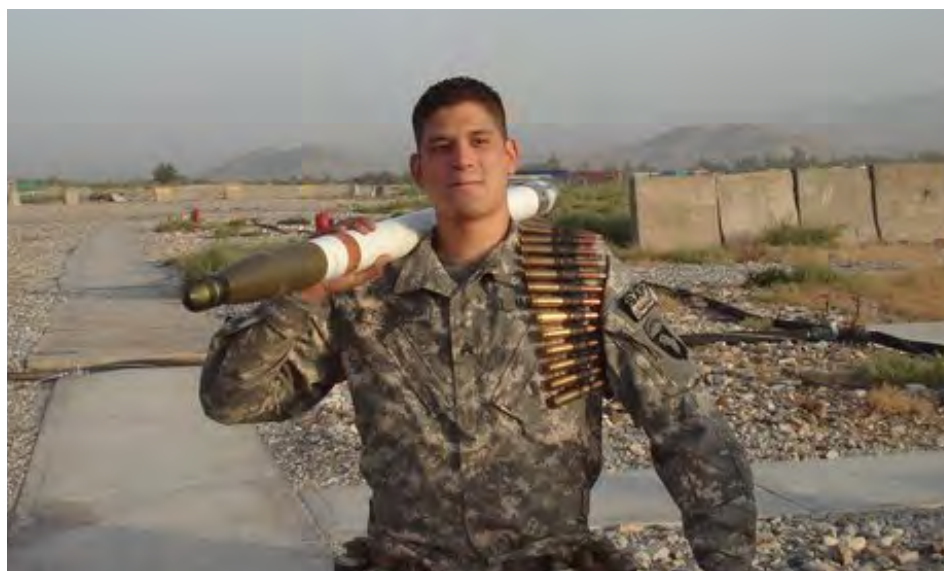
SHIFT: What was your racing career, and how did you get started?

David: So I went to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, which is a big

Aviation school in Daytona Beach, Florida, and the school is literally right next to the airport, and the airport is right next to the International Speedway. We walked to class, and you hear the race cars, and a lot of people don't know that the track is right there. It's world famous for IMSA, the Rolex 24, and the Daytona 500. My friend James and I would sneak into the racetrack, and we just saw everything under the sun. We attended the Porsche Races and Viper races, met celebrities, and did everything.

I wanted to get involved in it. I went to Skip Barber racing school and Sebring. And then, Elise and I started to race in SCCA Club racing, and it was just one of the best times of our lives. We just raced. We raced a 1991 Mazda Miata, which a lot of people know in the racing world that spec Miata is one of the best racing organizations out there. People take it so seriously, but at the same time, they're still very down-to-earth, which is mind-blowing. It's so expensive, even at that level.

At the time, like I was working for this guy named Henry Gilbert, and he ran a racing school, and he ran like. A driving school, and he ran HPD events. I was, the gas guy, and the mechanic. I did all kinds of stuff, and it was really crazy because I also worked at Ferrari as a service advisor, which was pretty cool for a bit I became



an HPD instructor as well. Non-Stop, it was just cars, cars, cars.

Racing was everything we did. We did it to the point that we had no money? We were just racing and sleeping in tents and shit. One of our fondest moments is Elise and went to Publix, bought a bucket of chicken, and we just ate it in our car in front of Sebring, and was dinner. Elise was a teacher, so we didn't have a ton of money, so we're just trying to make everything happen, and we did, but after two years, we were, like, "all right, well, we'll stop."



SHIFT: I want to talk about your ASE certification journey, since I've seen you posting about it, and I have a friend who is a mechanic and is on his journey to becoming a Master Technician.

David: ASE certifications and tests are one of those things that it's one of the only areas in the industry where people argue about it. If you're not going to see doctors argue about being board certified or accountants or lawyers or anything like that. But when it comes to mechanics in academia? There's a conflict because most people who work on cars are really good with their hands, and they usually don't like school. The ASE tests require you to actually go beyond being good with your hands and actually trying to put knowledge and data and studying together with your hands-on

experience to get a certification, and it's super awesome. It's opened a lot of doors.

SHIFT: What made you want to pursue ASE Certifications?

David: I want to challenge myself. To see if I could pass them because I did fail. I failed. I've taken probably 50 tests, and I failed about 12 times. I went back and retook them. Plus, being a veteran, the tests get reimbursed for me. I started with the A5 brake test, and then I passed it, became certified, and then I became a master technician after two years of taking them all.

In between, all of the testing I would make videos about them, and that blew up. It absolutely just went crazy. What I would do, and this is my strategy. I would go take the test, then

make a video about the test, but you can't make a video on what the questions are, you would get in trouble.

What I would do is I'd make a video telling people what areas they need to study, so I would build bridges to the answer, without telling my viewers how to get the answer. The messages I started getting were crazy, and I still get them. It's just like "I passed because of you. I passed, I passed", and it's just non-stop.

David's ASEs have paid dividends in more ways than one. In a way, they carried him all the way from the Western Slope out to Ed Bolian's doorstep in Georgia for an appearance on Vin Wiki the weekend we had initially scheduled our interview.



SHIFT: How has your ASE Certification opened doors for you?

David: So I sold my R33 Nissan GT-R on Cars and Bids, and when I was checking out, there was an option for "Do you want somebody to come inspect your car?" I said no, but I asked myself. "Who is doing these inspections?" And I say, well, I want to do these inspections. I emailed the company, which is called Lemon Squad, and said "Hey, I'm an ASE master certified technician, I've worked on all types of stuff. I've worked in race teams, I've been a service advisor. I did everything." And they responded yeah, we would love to have you on board, so I started doing a bunch of inspections. ou're not working on stuff

and getting paid for it. You're just there, inspecting people's work, which is like a dream come true.

I got that job, and I have to make content for YouTube. So, I made a video one day about my experience about being a Lemon Squad Inspector, and an executive at Lemon Squad said, "I love your video, and I think you would be great to represent us at VinWiki" so they paid for me to go out there.

So, we started off, he introduced me to Ed, and it was just me and him at his house. I showed up, at 9 am, and he's got a mega house, like an insane house. And then you know, we walk in, and he's got the Bugatti on one side. He's got this super cool car called a





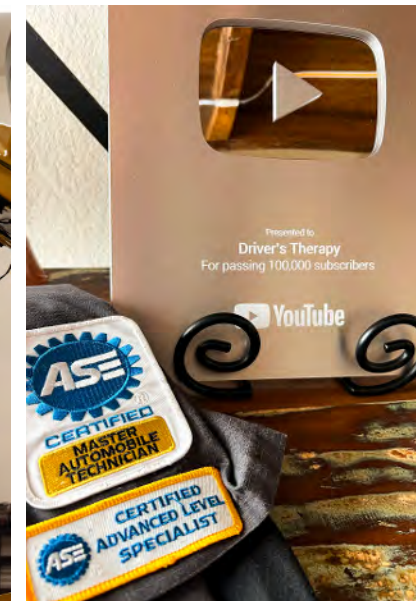
Spiker, and he has two Lamborghinis back there. And then, like, I didn't know this, but one was almost two million dollars because it's a manual. So he's talking to me, and the cool thing is I'm there on the courtesy of a Corporation that he works for, so I was there doing a job. Ed saw that I had YouTube stuff, and I was a master Tech.

Ed wanted to do a video on being a ASE Master Tech, and hit on Lemon Squad, and also wanted to hit on my YouTube channel, so we started doing

interviews. They're pretty intense at first, because I was like, I don't know this dude, you know?

We started inspecting these cars that he used for this channel, called Car Trek. I kind of felt bad. I haven't watched all those videos, but this is where the cool experience was. We took these cars out, and as a part of the job for Lemon Squad, he had to drive them for a part of the inspection. So, four of them were straight pieces of shit that he used to like for this channel to see if they can get this car

from point A to point B.hey just did all kinds of crazy shit with them. So we took this car out, and it was absolutely ridiculous, and we're just laughing because they were so beat shit. Then we had two serious cars that we had to sell. One was a Lamborghini Diablo that was from Japan, that used to belong to a Yakuza member. We took that for a drive. And then I got to drive the car that Ed used to break the Cannonball record, a Mercedes S550, and it had all of the Cannonball stuff on it.



SHIFT: What can people expect from your channel?

David: So, our main focus is now, and has been for a while, we'll buy a specific car. We'll take the Porsche GT4 as an example, and what we'll do is, we'll make all the videos that a new owner of a used Porsche GT4 would want. Things like how to do an oil change, how to replace your air filters, how to replace your battery, how to do certain modifications and more. We make all those videos with the purpose of making a library, and usually by the time we sell the car, we have about 40 to 50 videos. These videos are considered Evergreen, meaning that they never die because there's always going to be someone who's buying a used GT4 wanting to learn how to do an oil change or something like that. So we've done that now for almost 10 cars.

I think some of our libraries have 40 to 70 videos, which is really cool, because our messages never stop and our

comments never stop, and our video views slowly grow. Unlike a vlog channel, when we post a video, it does not get a lot of views right away, but then, over the duration of years. It just starts piling up because it's continuously cycling itself, and that's kind of what we've slowly transitioned into. Right now, we're working on the AMG to build up the library. Elise will do the technical stuff because she speaks better than I do, and she does better research. I'll do most of the mechanical stuff. So, like, she'll put out a video that'll be like 15 minutes long and explain really in-depth how the hybrid system works on the NSX. Where I'll make a video of how to replace the air filters and go through that process. So, we kind of combine our powers here and that's really been kick-ass.

David's ASE Master Certification has paid dividends in other ways. David has just started part-time teaching at Colorado Mesa University's Automotive Program in Grand



Junction, and has also started his own company called Sound Check Custom Car Purchase Guides, where the service that they'll create a custom report specific to the vehicle's year, make, and model's known issues, major maintenance considerations, and more that you would like to know.

I had an amazing day getting to know David and just talking shop about cars. I look forward to seeing him at future events along the Western Slope. I also want to thank David and his family for their hospitality and lunch and for taking me on a drive in his Mercedes AMG GT. It is on the short list of new cars that can be put on the pedestal of a dream car for me. 🚗

-  [Drivers Therapy](#)
-  [@driverstherapy](#)
-  [Drivers Therapy \(Youtube\)](#)



LAND'S END HILL CLIMB



Story: Nate Hughes, Marty Kier Photography: Nate Hughes

Note: What was once deemed the "Second Pikes Peak" and is recognized as the third oldest race in the nation. Lands End Hill Climb doesn't seem to have the same prestige as it once had. However, it still commands the same respect as the first racers sought to earn from the mountain over 100 years ago. The first Land's End Hill Climb took place in 1916 and quickly had the rug pulled out from it when the US entered "The Great War". Then there was a three-year streak of racing up the Grand Mesa once again from 1940-1942, ultimately coming to an indefinite end due to America's involvement in the Second World War. Eventually, a new generation decided to brave the stories of old and race up the mesa once again. Though the race had started once again, it was sporadic without a set schedule from the 1980s till 2001. Then, the Colorado Hill Climb Association, with the help of local families, turned it into a yearly event.

If dust being thrown up after a roaring engine hauls ass past you sounds like a good time to you, or if you would like to get a sense of the original hype behind racing up Pikes Peak before it was paved over, this event would be a perfect fit for you. I highly



suggest making a trip to see the Land's End Hill Climb. It is a great way to spend a weekend; then again, pretty much anywhere that has loud exhaust noises from race engines is a good time. But if you're looking for a more relaxed, grassroots, almost wild west racing experience, this hill climb, and any other hill climbs organized by the Colorado Hill Climb Association, for that matter, will have what you're looking for. Everyone is there to have a good time without any drama, so I implore you to come prepared for the day and with a good attitude. Having only spectated at Lands End, I can't speak to the environment at other CHCA events. But if they are anything like this one, I anticipate that you will have a stellar time. The way the event works for spectators is: If you want to watch from anywhere other than the pits or start line, you'll need to get to your spot before the race begins. Once racing starts, the road is closed to everyone except competitors until groups are sent back down from the finish. That only leaves a few small windows, about five minutes at a time, or a 20-minute lunch break. Because of that, planning





ahead is the best way to make the most of this hill climb, or any CHCA events for that matter. With that being said, this is likely the best way to thoroughly enjoy yourself at this event are 1) Arrive at the pits/ticketing area at least one hour before the race starts, so you have time to get your choice of a spectating area. 2) Have everything that you'll want for the day; that means

plenty of water and food, ways to cool yourself down or warm up, depending on the location/time of year. 3) Some friends or family to kill the time between groups/runs. 4) Stay out of the way of the competitors; I only say this since CHCA lets you choose pretty much anywhere along the course to spectate from, as long as you are obviously not on the course itself, that

includes your vehicle and person, no Group B type crowds please. This is my second year attending the Lands End Hill Climb, and what made this year even more fun than the previous was getting to meet a fellow SHIFT Colorado editor, Marty Kier, who made his way down to the Western Slope for this event. It was good to put



a face to a name in person outside of the computer screen during our weekly Zoom meetings. We got to talk about our preferences of the different types of cars, future plans that we want to accomplish, past articles and issues from the magazine, and all sorts of things pertaining to the race we were attending. From what cars we thought were the coolest, or which car got down to business the most, and talking about next year's race. It was enjoyable to have a fellow enthusiast to shoot the shit with and share photos that were just captured as we waited for the fun noises to come closer and round the bend into our view.

I absolutely love watching the old muscle cars and sprint-esk cars take different approaches to the same corner and seeing the difference of power between each vehicle in how much of a dust cloud they leave setting off to the next corner. And what is similarly enjoyable is seeing the approach and the ways that the quads and motorcycle racers have to move their body and shift their weight to retain as much speed as they can through the corners. It definitely makes for some fun images to study, and they are much different from the usual



sideways angle and dirt clouds that cars and trucks leave behind.

If you want to read some more of the history of the Land's End hill climb or see some vintage photos from past races, I suggest you check out the following articles online.

High Country Spotlight, "Lands End Hill Climb, Chariots Of Dust", goes more into the history with a few images.

Check out the historic images [here](#) and [here](#).

"Rediscovering Iconic Photos Of Well Renowned Colorado Photographer", written by Waylon Jordan, about his grandfather, Robert Grant, a Grand Junction local with many photos from the hill climb and other events throughout the state on [kekbfm.com](#).



@natehughesmedia

"Dirt, dust, and raw mechanical grit" - Marty Kier



After two consecutive years of experiencing the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb, I started craving something a bit more old-school: I'm talking about back when hill climbs meant dirt, dust, and raw mechanical grit. When I heard that SHIFT's own Nate Hughes was covering the Land's End Hill Climb in Grand Junction, a fully dirt course, I knew I had to check it out.

Being the fan of budget traveling that I am, I booked a room at a Motel 6 and rolled into town around 10 p.m. The clerk informed me there were no AC rooms left. I shrugged it off, figuring I could tough it out. But with no fan, a 90° night, and only an open, unscreened window for ventilation, I spent the night sweating and wondering if someone might crawl in. When morning came, I dragged myself

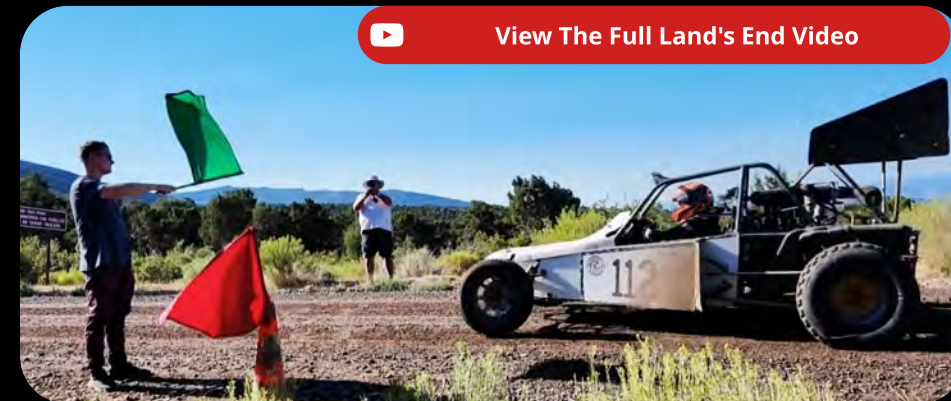
out of bed with bloodshot eyes and little energy; but race day anticipation made up for it.

The start line pulsed with raw excitement. I was met with a colorful lineup: classic stock cars, heavily modified OBS trucks, Subarus, Evos, and even a rally-prepped Porsche 911. I talked to a few teams who had been racing here for three generations. Land's End, Racing Officials told me, split from Pikes Peak in 1917 to run more than once a year. Many of the cars had fascinating history; some still had two bench seats so mechanics could ride along, making altitude adjustments on the climb. The oldest machines relied on gravity-fed carburetors and hand pumps to keep fuel flowing. That's the kind of mechanical ingenuity you don't see much anymore.

I got to drop the flag for a few cars: more thrilling than I expected. From my vantage point near the start, I could hear each car long before it appeared. The LS-swapped Camaro Miata I'd spotted earlier snarled up to the line on its mismatched tires. Subarus rolled in with that unmistakable boxer rumble. A Porsche 911 screamed past, followed by an Evo with a turbo blow-off sound any JDM fan could appreciate.

By midday, the heat was settling in, and lunch was calling my name. I found a food truck and ordered a walking taco with green chile, pure gold in edible form. Refueled, I hopped into my Silverado and made my way up the course to meet Nate at Bob's Knob. The drive up was surreal; hugging the right side of the dirt road to let race cars blast past, engines echoing off the canyon walls.

At Bob's Knob, the view stretched



[View The Full Land's End Video](#)

all the way to the Utah border. Nate and I spent the afternoon capturing photos and video from multiple angles. One of the best things about Land's End is how close you can get to the action. As long as you stay safe, avoid the outside of corners, and don't

impede drivers, you can pick your own perfect vantage point.

It was raw. It was dusty. It was pure motorsport history. Land's End Hill Climb isn't just a race, it's a time capsule, and I'll 1000% be back next year. 🍷



FUN FUNCTIONAL FANCY

THREE PERSPECTIVES ON ROCKY MOUNTAIN DRIVING EVENT

Story: **Brendan Garst, Jake Laino, Kelvin Lal**

Photography: **Brendan Garst, Jake Laino, Scott Minshall, Shannon Smith**

Every June, one of our favorite events rolls around; the Rocky Mountain Driving Event ("RMDE"), put on by the Rocky Mountain Automotive Press.

RMAP is Colorado's home grown Automotive press association, a group that we were turned onto and campaigned to join early on in the days of SHIFT. RMAP has been a

wonderful thing for us, getting us exposure to meet manufacturers, and attend events with folks who actually know what they're doing in this space, unlike us who kinda slipped behind someone with a badge before the door closed. We've learned a ton; RMAP is a very worthwhile pursuit for anyone with an automotive media or writing

project in the Rocky Mountain area. In addition to the networking, RMAP membership gets you access to three key events per year: The Colorado Auto Show, Denver's major manufacturer supported auto show, that we showed last issue, and Four By Fall, a guided tour in the latest SUVs in Denver's press fleet into the



mountains to enjoy that crisp autumnal air, which Marty wrote about a few issues back.

The big score though; RMAP's Highlight event, is The Rocky Mountain Driving Event. Manufacturers jump on the ticket to bring press vehicles here to our humble little region, and let the journalists of the region put them through their paces. Jake, Kelvin and Brendan were in attendance for this year's event, and thought our fun functional fancy template might be a good way to talk about what caught our eye this year.

Read on for Jake, Kelvin, Marty and Brendan's Fun, Functional, and Fancy choices from the 2025 Colorado Auto Show!



THE FUN



Jake: The WRX TS is definitely a driver's car. Its precise steering and taut suspension beg you to dive into every corner, and the manual gearbox reminds you why enthusiasts still fight to keep three pedals alive. Well bolstered bucket seats keep you planted when the pace picks up, while the 2.5 liter turbo boxer rewards you with just the right mix of punch and character. It's the kind of car that makes even a grocery run feel like a rally stage.

Beyond the handling and performance, the WRX TS brings a layer of maturity. Subaru tuned this trim for sharper dynamics without sacrificing comfort, meaning you can daily it without feeling punished. It's fun in the way a true sport sedan should be; engaging, involving, and capable of turning any mundane drive into a spirited adventure.

Kelvin: The new Subaru WRX TS is an additional package that fixes so many squabbles the regular WRX has, and in turn, creates a beautiful sports sedan. Brembo brakes ensure instant stopping power, summer tires and adjustable STI-tuned suspension help you carve up any apex, and the new Recaro bolstered seats keep you steady throughout.

A bump in power would be nice, but the new powertrain is still stellar for the price, and a 6 speed manual is a healthy and thankful addition. All this together makes the TS feel like the driver's car everyone wants a WRX to be, which makes this one of the best drivers WRXs out there, and frankly one of the best sports sedans under \$50k. Whether it's daily practicality you want from a traditional WRX, or an engaging and direct drive from a fun sedan we all know and love.

Brendan: Hi everyone, its me, Brendan. I'm back with the same opinion I had at the Colorado Auto Show; the Dodge Charger R/T Stage 1 IS INDEED a great time. Last time I just looked, this time I got to drive, and honestly, this thing gets a strange amount of negativity in the zeitgeist for how good this is as a fun, silly car. Stellantis brought a preproduction 4 door prototype for us to drive, and I knew it was one of my musts for the day. I very much enjoy the fratronic chambered exhaust. I know its fake. But when the car turns on and everyone in the lot thinks they just heard encroaching thunder, its getting attention. Of course the car is wicked fast. The interior is nice., the car is comfortable, sign me up, Stellantis!



THE FUNCTIONAL



Jake: Few vehicles wear the badge of functionality better than the Toyota 4Runner (I may be biased being the owner of a 1991 model year). With a cavernous cargo bay, upright seating position, and proven body-on-frame toughness, it has always been the do anything, go anywhere SUV. The TRD Off-Road trim takes that DNA a step further, pairing Toyota's clever crawl control and locking differentials with a new, more powerful motor that gives it the speed and confidence the old 4.0 liter V6 lacked. It's equally happy hauling a load of camping gear or clawing its way up a rutted trail.

What makes the new 4Runner so functional is that it bridges old-school dependability with just enough modern touches. Updated driver assists, smarter traction management, and a refreshed interior make it easier to live with for day to day tasks, while still keeping the rugged simplicity that buyers have always loved. In short: you can buy one as a family hauler and still trust it to be your ticket to the wilderness on the weekends.

Kelvin: When the old Toyota Land Cruiser was shrunk from its original size, the Lexus LX770h was the last remaining way someone in the US could buy this old truck. The new LX has a lot of weight to carry because of this label, and this new model does that with ease.

The new LX has an easy to use interior with a few helpful screens but nothing overbearing. The interior is a beautiful blend of premium Lexus material and a comfortable driving position. The old school body on frame chassis blended with the expansive Land Cruiser legacy gives you an excellent idea of why this is one of the most functional vehicles you can buy today.

Brendan: Ok, the Wagoneer S is functional, but this should really be "More Fun". I didn't see a single person get out of the new Stellantis compact SUV that wasn't grinning ear to ear. Kelvin laid fat 11's in it without trying, it has an impressive amount of E-Horses, 600 in fact, from the launch edition. In the same room as a vehicle with a McIntosh stereo. This thing is absurd in the best kind of way. Also you could probably fit golf clubs in it if that's your thing.





Jake: The GV70 3.5 is Genesis flexing its luxury muscle while taking big swings at its European rivals. On the outside, it's all flowing curves and bold design cues, while inside you're met with quilted leather, brushed aluminum accents, bold accent stitching and a layout that looks more boutique lounge than SUV. The 3.5 liter twin-turbo V6 doesn't just look the part, it hustles, with ample horsepower delivered seamlessly through an advanced AWD system. This is the kind of SUV that lets you arrive anywhere looking like you've made the right choice.

What makes the GV70 stand out in the fancy category is that it's not trying to copy anyone else. Genesis has carved its own identity, blending design, technology, and comfort into something that feels fresh in a segment full of recycled ideas. The infotainment system is intuitive, the ride is supple, and the cabin feels like a sanctuary after a long day. If fancy means pulling off luxury with style, substance, and confidence, the GV70 nails it.

Kelvin: This new Jeep Wagoneer S is one of the most interesting EVs on the market. This is Jeep's entry into the world of luxury electric SUVs and was the surprise of the day, boasting an incredibly enticing package of power, technology, and luxury.

The Wagoneer name is something Jeep is attempting to boast as a luxury staple, and the Wagoneer S shows this with a beautifully upholstered interior and surprising tech like a passenger screen, a place that makes you feel like you're in a computer. The 500 horsepower electric motor helps too, as this thing is blow your mind fast for a luxury SUV. Jeep's first attempt in the class was successful in a wild way, and that's why this is my fancy pick. I loved it. It's beautiful, sounds great, and is comfy. Plus, it's got a manual with a Toyota Camry engine which a lot of people like to hate on, but ease of service, reliability and parts availability is a massive win for me personally.

Brendan: Yeah... those were both solid.. but McLaren was there with the new Artura Spider, and I played nice enough in the sandbox that the car gods let me hop in and take it for a rip up Deer Creek Canyon. Its everything I like about driving a nice responsive car; shifts are surgical. The steering was laser guided. Of course there was fantastic noise from the engine. There were also Cyber tires, Pirrelli made units with embedded sensors that transmit tire data. The Artura was wild, and I'm asking for one from the tooth fairy. 🧚



@rmapmedia





JEEP

BREWBICON

Intro: Marty Kier Story: Rick Abitbol Photography: Brendan Garst, Shannon Smith, Marty Kier

I got introduced to Brewery Rickoli back in 2021 when my sister, Annie, got hired there and quickly became an assistant brewer. I then met Rick, the owner of Rickoli and found out that he absolutely loves off-roading as well as Jeep culture. He has his Jeep Rubicon, affectionately named the BREWBICON, and then two other Jeep Commanders. He uses his Jeeps to deliver Rickoli beer throughout the Denver Metro area and then challenges his builds on the trails with his wife, Jaqua, on the weekends.



We planned a trip into Rampart Range, a familiar, mellow off-road route that some of you may recognize from the first installment of SHIFT Into Lo from last fall. While not an extreme trail, it was a perfect spot to cover Rick's story:

I'm Rick Abitbol, owner and brewmaster at Brewery Rickoli in Wheat Ridge. As well as the guy behind the wheel of the Brewbicon, my 2017 two-door Jeep Rubicon. I bought it new from Medved, and it's been my daily driver and trail rig ever since. It's got about 85,000

miles on it now, and I'd say a good chunk of that has been spent off-road. And yes, it's a manual; as far as I'm concerned, a real Jeep should be.

My love for Jeeps started early. I read a book as a kid about someone who found an old Jeep in a barn and restored it. That stuck with me. My first vehicle was a VW bus, and I hated it. I used to look around and think, "Why can't I be driving something cool, like a Wrangler?" Years later, when I was stationed at Fort Huachuca in Arizona, I finally

made the switch. I traded that bus in for an old Wagoneer with an AMC 327 Vigilante motor. We took it all the way to the top of Aspen Mountain. It vapor-locked constantly, but that's where I realized how much I enjoyed getting to places most people couldn't reach.

Over time, I drove a few more Jeeps: a Grand Cherokee, then a YJ that we took over Mosquito Pass and Mount Antero with the kids in the back, hanging on and grinning the whole way. When the YJ finally gave out, I ended up talking with Johnny

" IT'S A MANUAL; AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, A REAL JEEP SHOULD BE."



Medved, who was a regular at the brewery. His wife had celiac, so they were big fans of our gluten-removed beer. He told me to swing by the dealership, and sure enough, got me a great deal on the Rubicon right before they sold the business.

I call it the Brewbicon, It's basically a mobile extension of the brewery at this point. I've upgraded almost everything on it; mostly out of necessity. When something breaks, I replace it with something better. I put in a Rough Country lift kit myself, swapped the factory bushings for polyurethane, and replaced the ball joints with chromoly DB8s. It has Poison Spyder Bombshell diff covers, one and a half inch wheel spacers,

high-clearance fenders, inner fender liners, and underglow LEDs that make trail work at night a lot easier. I also replaced the top with a Sunrider, which is much more convenient than the old Freedom Panels.

I'm running 37s now, which changed everything. Stuff I used to approach carefully, I'm able to just roll over now. The short wheelbase gives it a super tight turning radius, and it climbs like a mountain goat. I've seen four-door Jeeps and 4Runners have to straddle tricky spots, while this thing just walks right over.

I've taken the Brewbicon on over a hundred trails. Some of my favorites

are just outside Denver : Red Elephant Hill, Bill Moore Lake, Chinns Lake, Cascade Creek, and La Martine Road. It's amazing how quickly you can go from pavement to crawling over rocks. That's what I love about it. You're off the grid in twenty minutes.

Of course, we've had our fair share of sketchy moments. We once slipped off a trail between Eldora and Caribou. The passenger side wheels dropped off the edge, and we ended up resting on the axles. Luckily there was a tree in the right spot, and the winch did its job. On Red Cone, we got high-centered and bent a diff cover. That was the first time I actually used the winch, and a group of guys on ATVs pulled up and helped me hook it up. That's the kind of community off-roading attracts. People help each other out without hesitation.

I've pulled others out too. One time on Middle Saint Vrain, a Razor got stuck in a deep water crossing and couldn't get traction. We turned around, ran the winch line out, and gave them a tug. I've seen some



pretty capable rigs get stuck in places you wouldn't expect, It's all part of the fun.

I'm not big into the Jeep duck thing, but I've had a few left on the cowl. Once at King Soopers and another time someone handed one through my window at a stoplight. It's a small thing, but it feels good when someone recognizes your build. I'll still throw the wave too, especially out on a mountain road. In traffic, not so much; I'm too focused on not getting rear-ended.

When I'm not out wheeling, I'm brewing. We opened Brewery Rickoli in 2012, and our goal has always been to brew classic beer styles and make them accessible to more people. We use a special enzyme that breaks down gluten after fermentation, which doesn't change the flavor at all. It just makes the beer easier to enjoy if you have sensitivities. If I wouldn't drink it, we don't put it on tap.

The way I approach beer is the same way I approach this Jeep. I care about quality and I take pride in doing it right. The Brewbicon isn't flashy, but it's capable, reliable, and it gets me to places that remind me why I fell in love with off-roading in the first place.

And if you're ever rolling through Wheat Ridge, stop by Brewery Rickoli at 44th and Wadsworth. You'll probably see the Brewbicon out front, cooling off after a long day on the trail. Cheers! 🍷



I-76 Speedway



Colorado's Nostalgic Dirt-Track Gem

Story: *Brendan Garst* Photography: *Chris Colten,*



Local Speedways are the beating heart of our enthusiast scene in Colorado.

Where people get to actually bring out their toys and use them appropriately in anger. The local speedway is under threat from any of a number of predators in the ecosystem it exists in; noise complaints from existing homes, development, and the economic realities of running a capital intensive entertainment property are all real threats; with last year's closing of Bandimere proving that to be all-too-real.

That's why we were both surprised and excited when Ryan from the Cars and Coffee Newsletter team put us in touch with Mark Bolles, the Track Photographer for I-76 Speedway, a fantastic time capsule of a quarter-mile high-banked dirt oval race track located on the west side of Fort Morgan, Colorado. Mark invited us out to shoot an evening at the track, and it was impossible to say no.

We didn't fully know what to expect on our way out. We met at Jake's and piled into our Toyota 4Runner Trailhunter loan for the hour and a half jaunt out of Denver to Fort Morgan. We paced a severe looking storm that appeared to be following us. On arrival, it would have been tough to determine what decade we were in (in a fantastic way). I-76 Speedway is nostalgic racing at its finest. We parked next to a garage with a driveway just behind the grandstands where a team was prepping their stock car.

Tickets were available at a couple of booths around the track, and beyond one of them was the main pit, a sea of competitors in Modifieds, Sport Modifieds, Lightning Sprints, Stock and Hobby Stock Cars, as well as vintage machines from the Colorado Vintage Oval Racers crew (CVOR), and Mini Mods, smaller dirt oval machines that kids as

young as five years old take out on the track.

The atmosphere is jovial; folks are out enjoying a weekend night at the racetrack, driving whatever they may have brought, hanging out with their families and having a great time. As much as you hear impact wrenches and sockets spinning, you hear laughter and storytelling. You smell hamburgers and hotdogs on the grill. More than anything, you see smiles-people from both within and outside of the local community out to drive their cars, and enjoy their evening with like-minded folks.

All the while as we explored the pits, the track was being prepped. A large water truck dumped water onto the track surface, and all of the track's vehicles turned slow laps to pack the dirt. Tow trucks, push-rigs (bear in mind, several of





the race cars don't have starters!), and more circled the track tamping the surface down in anticipation of the evening.

We decided to grab some dinner and settle in to get our shots for the evening, selecting a grandstand on the North end of the track. Chris remarked on the quality of the hotdog we had all selected; a truly fantastic glizzy not to mention a decent deal as the full meal was under \$10.

The cars began to take off, led by the mini-mods. These are young racers getting a feel for car control as they bobbed and weaved around a shortened course. The cars look like mini Sprint Cars, built on go-kart chassis. You could already see the roots of racing talent and maybe even a touch of the red mist developing. It's heartwarming to know places like this exist that are fostering the next generation of racing drivers.



This was followed by the IMCA Racing classes: Modified, Sport Mod, Stock and Hobby Stock Cars, as well as laps by the 1200 Lightning Sprints. These are varying flavors of more traditional dirt racers that you'd expect at a banked oval track and they didn't disappoint. This is true close racing, sometimes with only inches separating drivers as they hooned around the course.

If you need help separating the IMCA classes, you wouldn't be alone. IMCA Modified and Sport Mod Cars have minimalist bodywork over a tube frame chassis, often just sheetmetal adorned with decals, sponsors, livery and numbers. The bodywork between the two is slightly different, but the bigger differentiation is mechanical; the Modified cars have more power and are generally more technically complex, while Sport Mods are more restrictively ruled on motors tires and suspension to create a more economic entry into the sport.

With Stock and Hobby Stock the formula generally involves starting with a medium bodied American market steel bodied car, stripping it, adding safety and racing bits, and turning laps. Similar to the Modified vs. Sport Modified classes, the distinction lies in the level of prep, with Hobby Stock offering a better balance of budget and complexity compared to Stock cars.

Lightning Sprints are what I grew up thinking of as a traditional dirt racer; short wheelbase cars with massive asymmetric wings on top for downforce and cornering dynamics to turn one direction. The 1200 class is typically





powered by up to 1200cc four cylinder four stroke motorcycle motors, like the Kawasaki ZX-12R's 1199cc mill, or liter bike motors like the Suzuki GSX-R or Yamaha R1 motors built up. In other words, there is plenty of power on tap for what is essentially a grown-up scale go-kart with aero. The Lightning Sprints scream, and watching them blast through corners countersteering with full opposite lock makes for a damned good time.

We spectated and snapped photos for as long as we possibly could; our schedules had us having to return to Denver just after the intermission. We did however stay to watch the "Fan Appreciation" portion of the evening. The competitors

parked their cars up and down the front straight of the track, and spectators were allowed down onto the track surface to meet the drivers, seek autographs and chat about the races. It's a level of access to competitors you'd be hard pressed to find at a major track, and one of the things that contributes to the magic of I-76 Speedway.

As we drove home in our Trailhunter, we shared stories from the evening, thrilled by what we'd just experienced. An evening which would continue well into the night for the rest of the Spectators at large as the racing continued well into the night. I-76 Speedway offers a fantastic experience; nostalgic but intimate as a

venue. The people are friendly, the action is local, and there is a true sense of community with the folks at the track. It's a great value at \$12 for a night of racing (kids are only \$5), and you could easily get away with an evening with concessions for under \$25. It's an unlikely throwback in the best way possible, and I'd argue exactly what a track should offer. With events through September and an upcoming winter series, I'd tell anyone to make the trek to Fort Morgan, and enjoy one of the best small track experiences in Colorado!

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- [!\[\]\(13ec31279fc445794f578a36deaed061_img.jpg\) I76speedway](#)
- [!\[\]\(3d509dc9ec8941056e32acacd88c8dab_img.jpg\) Mark Bolles @Norcolophoto](#)



WHAT IS 'LUXURY'?



Story: Jason Brandt Photography: Shannon Smith, Marty Kier

What is a Luxury Car? It begins with leather that burns your skin in July and freezes it in January. That's the contradiction of luxury: a thing nobody needs but everyone desires, made bearable only by more layers of technology. Cloth works just fine. It's quick to warm in the winter, forgiving in the summer, and lasts forever if you don't spill your coffee. Yet leather still reigns, because it isn't about need—it's about want. Luxury has always been this contradiction. A toy that pretends to be a necessity, an indulgence masquerading as refinement.

What I'm talking about here isn't what you aspire to when you win the



lottery,, but what you can have in your driveway, across the years, and across types. I loved this oddball cross-section of cars; they made me think beyond the obvious ideas of luxury.

The Century, 1997. Step into a 1997 Toyota Century and the word "luxury" takes on a completely different shade. This is not a car that brags. Chrome shines, the V-12 engine purrs, VHS for passengers, independent climate



control, and privacy curtains. It's quiet dignity that makes me feel like a visiting dignitary. Thick doors close with the hush of a library. The brake pedal is soft and forgiving, almost spongy in its politeness. Steering feels measured, a tight turn ratio as if to remind you it was built to navigate the city streets.

The side mirrors perch out on the hood like dragonfly eyes, and the interior is etched with kanji that remind me this machine was never built with its current home, America, in mind. It was built to take someone from some place to somewhere. Not to drive, but to be driven. Chauffeurs leaned on these mirrors to judge space in Tokyo alleyways while their employers, suited and serene, rode in the back.

Here, luxury is detachment. Not the digital detachment of modern cars with computers doing the driving for you, but something slower, ceremonial even. Every input is softened. It feels rear-wheel-driven, but not eager to show it off. Its V12 moves like a butler bowing, not a boxer lunging. And that's the key. Luxury in the Century is about grace, as well as feet-through-the-passenger-seat sleeping room excess.

The Mercedes, 2021. Skip forward to



the 2021 Mercedes C300 and luxury mutates again. This car has no interest in ceremony. The brakes bite hard, reminding you of Germany's obsession with the Autobahn and the need to stop from speeds most Americans dream were legal here. Seats adjust every which way—lumbar, bolster,

cushion length; like a control panel for posture. Brake hold assist lets you sit at a red light with the smug satisfaction of not holding your foot down.

Here, luxury is convenience stacked on top of performance. You can feel the engineers trying to hide the





compromises: a smaller sedan has to prove itself. So Mercedes packs in features, automated climate control, heated seats all around, and even warnings about locking the car when the sunroof is open. All standard features... but most of them are on a Hyundai too...

But it's also restless. Unlike the Century, the C300 is a daily driver. The lights cut sharp lines, the steering quickens, the stance dares you to treat it like a sports car. Luxury has grown impatient, and while the seats are clean and tidy, they are nothing to remark on. I would be happy to drive this car to work every day, but I also don't think I would ever recall the drive either. No, if you are going to buy a Merc, you need the top, the pinnacle, the over-priced elite Maybach. Yes, I know there's a bit of a price difference. But there's no comparison—they are leagues apart, even from the S-Class. If I wanted a trimmed daily, I would just get the Lexus. Because in this day and age, this isn't luxury, this is just tidy.

The GMC Sierra, 2023. Can a truck be boujee? Can the 2023 GMC Sierra 1500 SLT with a 5.3L EcoTec3 V8 be luxurious? Luxury in a truck doesn't look like leather-bound grace or Autobahn-ready technology – though some have that too. It looks like a heated steering wheel on a cold morning, and a tailgate that folds down with the touch of a button so you... well... I am not sure what this feature is for, really. But not up, because that's



extra. I think they may have added a power up tailgate in later years, but without it, I didn't find any use for power-lower alone (and this may become an issue if you have a topper).

Luxury in a truck is always halfway between indulgence and utility. You buy it for work but expect it to coddle you like a living room. Heated seats, cooled seats, endless charging ports. Yet when you hook up a trailer, you realize half the luxury is still locked behind upgrade packages you foolishly chose not to buy. A thousand dollars for the tow kit is a bargain, and not having it makes the truck feel incomplete.

This is where luxury turns away. Trucks have become family cars, commuter cars, and in my life – cross-country cruisers. I want a luxury truck—one that makes me feel guilty every time I get into it with my muddy boots. Thank you to Yoder Chevrolet for providing this vehicle. It was a great comparison among the other cars in



this list.

Bonus: The Genesis, 2025. The 2025 Genesis G80 sedan lives in another space entirely. Korea's answer to the question "what should modern luxury feel like?" is fascinating because it borrows from everywhere and adds its own quirks. The rear sunshade rises automatically, side shades fold up by hand. Front seats are heated and

cooled, rear seats heated. There's a bolster for under your legs, as if the car thought about that one ache you get on long drives. All fine. Some nice, some expected.

The ride floats, electronically controlled; it's smooth and handles daily driving with comfort. But...In an emergency lane change, that same detachment erodes your confidence.





The steering-by-wire system works, but you sense the insulation. It's not the soft grace of the Century, there's an odd, floating, unbalanced center of gravity that makes you want to yank the wheel back.

Interior storage is sparse, oddly so for a car this large. You begin to wonder if the designers were so focused on the experience of riding that they forgot the experience of living with it. All of the technology was this way – barely enough. And the cooling seats, it was 85 degrees out, and no, I never felt the


seats were cool – again, not enough. It competes at the feature level of the 2021 C300 Mercedes, and not much more – but for three times the price. Ok, yeah, I said price doesn't matter. But at about \$75,000 as tested, the G80 wasn't better than a slightly used 2021 midsize Merc. Luxury once meant excess. Leather when cloth worked. Wood trim when plastic was easier. A chauffeur when you could drive yourself. In the middle of the last century, luxury cars were rarities—Cadillacs, Mercedes, Bentleys—rolling symbols of wealth.


They separated the rich from everyone else with space, comfort, and features nobody else could justify. But the market shifted. Air conditioning, once the pinnacle of luxury, became standard. Power windows, once indulgent, became expected. Navigation screens, once futuristic, became mandatory. Each decade, luxury trickled down into normalcy. What was once indulgence became necessity, and luxury had to reinvent itself. I'm not sure it has yet... Now, to me, luxury is harder to pin


down. Is it the quiet softness of a Toyota Century, whispering down the road like a ghost of refinement? Is it the refined stupor of a Mercedes, giving you choice and control over every detail? Is it the big presence of a GMC Sierra, making working life easier with heated wheels and folding tailgates? Or is it the curated calm of a Genesis, stitching together borrowed ideas?

You know... just maybe... A luxury car isn't defined by leather seats, or by power, or by price. It's defined by contradiction. The things you can't justify (and and no, horsepower isn't one of them—at least not under 800 hp). Maybe that lower-only tailgate **is** luxurious...

PS - I Hate HUDs. I am not going to mention what vehicles had the HUDs I tested, but it doesn't matter because they all worked – and I hate it. Heads-up displays are supposed to be the future. They beam sharp little holograms of speed, nav arrows, and warnings onto your windshield like you're piloting an F-16. But here's the problem: you stop looking down the road and start staring at the nose of your car where the display is. It's like watching subtitles in a movie—you're reading instead of seeing. They're clever, yes. They're crisp, sure. But when I'm barreling down a highway I'd rather keep my eyes out where the deer and the brake lights live, not squinting at neon digits floating six inches in front of my face. 🐿️

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CIAO

Classic Italian Auto Owners

Story and Photos: Marty Kier



Sometimes, how I spend my weekends is subject to careful consideration; the concept of vintage Italian machinery carving Golden Gate Canyon on a crystal-clear Saturday—and restocking Arvada’s Community Table food bank—was an easy sell. When Tish Gance, President of the Rocky Mountain Fiat Lancia Club invited us to the inaugural CIAO Colorado Rally & Meetup, the RSVP was an instant “absolutamente,” even though neither fellow SHIFT staffer Mike Crofts nor I owned anything Italian and twenty-five years old. Our Plan B was Mike’s bright-red C5 Corvette. The Chevy drew laughs, then an affectionate

nickname—“Corvett-EH!”—delivered in the worst faux-Italian accent imaginable, but the all-inclusive CIAO rule (“if your model debuted before 2000, bring it”) meant we were welcome and among friends. I appreciated CIAO’s approach in particular, as I have found my taste in cars leaning more and more toward the vintage and unique, if not Italian.

We reached the Arvada staging lot before sunrise with SHIFT Colorado Magazine’s morale kit: dark-roast coffee, a tray of fruit, and carrot-cake cookies from a local baker. Mike also brought his eight-week-old

golden-retriever pup, Hariel, who collected more head pats than some dogs get in a year. As daylight broke, vintage Fiats arrived—led by Tish’s X1/9—followed by Eli’s Lancia Scorpion, followed by his family in a separate Fiat and a handful of additional Italian coupés that wore their patina with pride. An unexpected rumble announced a small contingent from the Pantera club. Nobody complained; variety is a core CIAO ingredient.

Tish and Eli explained the rally format which was essentially a time-speed-distance scavenger hunt.

Each team received a stapled packet of handwritten clues—turn onto a road named for something famous in San Francisco, choose left or right at a T-junction but keep heading north. Phones stayed in pockets; GPS would defeat the point. Hidden checkpoints judged whether you arrived early or late, and the perfect score was a cumulative zero. Driver skill mattered to hold speeds and distances as instructed, but navigator focus mattered more to keep the clues in order and the car moving in the right direction.

At 9:00 AM sharp we eased out of



SHIFT|COLORADO

Arvada with Hariel asleep in the hatch and my hands gripping the packet filled with clues on where we should go. Golden Gate Canyon Road kicked things off with some decreasing radius hairpins. Mike kept the Corvette polite with a steady throttle to match our target pace. The first checkpoint chimed on time, with a pair of Fiats in front of us. The view from the summit of the pass revealed a moving museum exhibit stretching down the canyon wall, each car a tribute to pre-2000 Italian design.

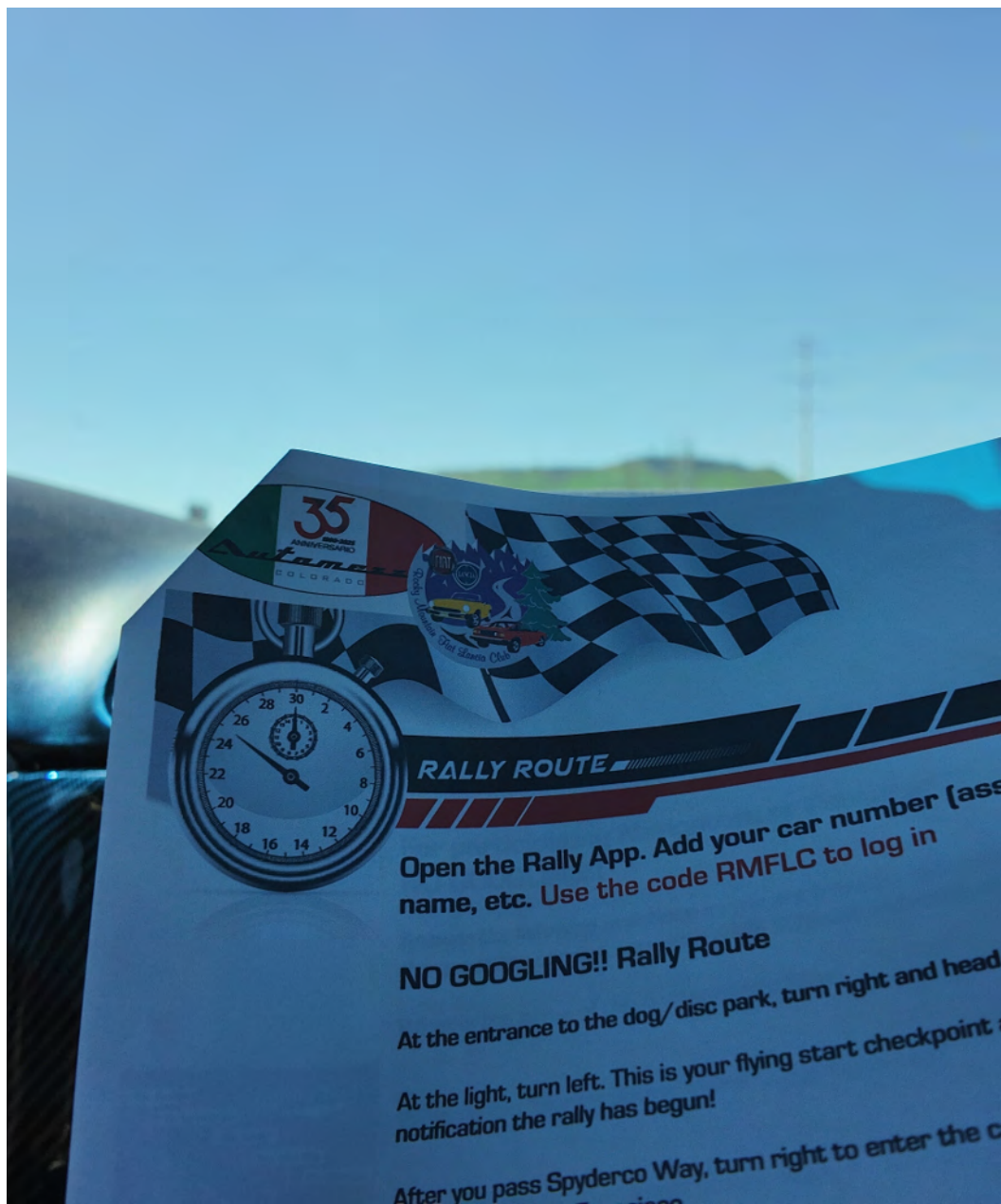


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The clues eventually bent the route West toward Nederland, then South into another canyon before funneling us back across Highway 93 and to the finish at Community Table. Every show entry donated toiletries or canned goods; on arrival, we popped the hatch, added our grocery bag to the growing pile, and grabbed Heidi's Deli sandwiches courtesy of Hagerty. After

many "Thank-Yous" from Community Table, as well as sponsors Hagerty, SHIFT, and Tish's own Apexd by Design—results were announced: a vintage Fiat in first which happened to be Eli's family, another Fiat in





second, and, to our surprise, Team Corvette-EH in third.

With the gimmick rally complete, the lot became an informal show. No velvet ropes—just owners swapping stories and smiles. CIAO felt different from the standard show because it celebrates cars with stories rather than spec sheets. Limiting entries to models introduced before 2000 filters out status-seeking hype machines and

highlights patina, owner ingenuity, and mechanical involvement (sympathy?). Paper clues and no-Google rules turn navigation into a team sport, forcing participants to read road signs and landscapes instead of relying on a voice prompt. Supporting Community Table vectored the enthusiasm into tangible community help.

As golden hour settled over the lot, engines warmed for departure.

Someone called across the rows, “Remember, it’s Cor-VET-teh—makes it sound exotic!” Mike laughed, Hariel barked agreement, and we guided the Chevy toward I-70. We’ll be back next year—maybe with something badge-born in Turin, maybe not. Either way, CIAO has earned a starring place on the calendar for anyone who values canyon roads, carburetors, and camaraderie that extends beyond the car show parking lot. 🚗



- [COMMUNITY TABLE](#)
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ROCKY MOUNTAIN MUSTANG ROUNDUP



Story & Photography: Shannon Smith

For a muscle-car enthusiast, a roving herd of over 300 Mustangs isn't just a dream — it's a symphony of exhaust notes, gleaming paint, and horsepower heaven. The Rocky Mountain Mustang Roundup is more than a car event — it's an annual pilgrimage for Ford loyalists, speed freaks, show car lovers, and weekend cruisers to gather and celebrate the legacy of America's most iconic pony car.

This two-day adventure is where clean builds meet twisty mountain roads, and where the rumble of V8s echoes through scenic canyons and charming towns. If you missed this year's Roundup, don't worry — I've got your recap and all the reasons

why you need to clear your schedule for next year. Things kick off fast and loud on Friday with the autocross competition — a fast-paced, tire-squealing showdown that pits driver skill against the clock. This isn't just a straight-line affair. It's a technical dance of throttle control and tight turns, with Mustangs of all generations hugging corners and kicking up rubber on a well-laid course outside of Colorado Springs' own Pikes Peak International Raceway. Whether you're racing or spectating, it's a shot of pure adrenaline to start the weekend.

After burning rubber, many attendees swap helmets for

sunglasses and hit the open road for a guided scenic drive through the breathtaking Colorado landscape. The route winds toward Canon City, where a pit stop becomes an impromptu photo shoot and lunch gathering. Dozens of Mustangs line up with the mountains in the background — a rolling postcard that captures everything this event is about. It's the kind of moment that makes the entire drive worth it, even before the next stretch of road begins.



As the day winds down, the herd makes its way into Cripple Creek, a historic mining town with old-west charm and modern-day hospitality. It's a Mustang invasion — and the locals love it. The evening continues with a laid-back BBQ social where friends old and new catch up, swap build stories, and talk shop. For those feeling lucky, the casinos offer a little extra entertainment, while others take in the mountain air and a rare moment to unwind beneath the stars. Whether you're snapping rollers down Main Street or throwing dice, it's an evening that perfectly balances horsepower and hospitality.

Saturday morning arrives early, but the energy is electric. Downtown streets begin to fill with some of the cleanest and meanest Mustangs the show has to offer. From freshly restored classics to widebody modern builds and everything in between, the show cars roll in one by one until the entire town feels like a living, breathing tribute to Ford's most beloved nameplate.

All day long, the crowd wanders through rows of cars, chatting with owners, snapping photos, and drawing inspiration. Food trucks serve up local flavor, from smoky hotdogs to street tacos, giving attendees fuel for a full day of walking, talking, and Mustang admiration. Even the kids get in on the action with Hot Wheels races!

The star attraction this year? Television host and car restoration expert Heather Storm, who made a special guest appearance. Fans gathered for autographs, photos, and stories from the garage and the road. Her down-to-earth vibe and deep love for all

things automotive fit right in with the Roundup's welcoming spirit.

As the sun starts to dip, the much-anticipated awards ceremony wraps things up. Trophies are handed out for the finest paint, best in show, and crowd favorites. But in truth, everyone drives away with something — whether it's a plaque, a new friend, or just a weekend full of memories.

The Rocky Mountain Mustang Roundup isn't just an event — it's a celebration of style, speed, and community. It's the sound of exhaust echoing off canyon walls, the sight of a sea of Mustangs cresting a mountain road, and the unmistakable feeling of being right where you belong. So if your calendar for next summer still has a few open weekends, pencil this one in — and start prepping your Pony car for the ride of a lifetime. 🏁

 Rocky Mountain Mustang Roundup

 rockymountainmustangroundup.org



I'm Not Obsessive, YOU'RE OBSESSIVE

Column by: *Danielle Badler*

It was F. Scott Fitzgerald who famously said, "The rich are different from you and me." And it was Ernest Hemingway who allegedly responded with, "Yes, Scott, they have more money."

I love that. The implication, to Hemingway, is that the rich are different because they can afford to be different, to indulge in whatever floats their boat or, in our case, drives them down the road. While the rest of us stand by the wayside and gape, or wax poetic about what we'd do if our lottery ticket hit the jackpot, or our business IPO led to a valuation with too many zeros to count.

Take the collector. The big-money spender who, after buying the yacht, the palatial abode and the Gulfstream jet, amasses a fleet of vehicles so big that one person could never possibly use them all, in many lifetimes.

I recently came across an on-line story in The Drive, about a car collection that was being liquidated in a month or two. What got me was the headline, which read, "Huge Auto Museum Is Shutting Down and Selling Off 295 Pristine Collector Cars." It was the Klairmont Collections Automotive Museum in Chicago.

Apparently, Larry Klairmont had amassed a small real estate empire (he passed in 2021) and applied his, shall we say, ample resources to what his widow says is "the largest collection on display anywhere in the Midwest."

That piqued my interest ... just what do you buy if you can afford 295 vehicles?

And my answer was a click away. Because The Drive listed each of them. All I can say is that, at the end of the road, Fitzgerald must be gasping, and Hemingway must be laughing hysterically.

I mean, 13 Vespa scooters. A DeLorean and a Bricklin. Two Corvairs. A VW Thing, a Beetle and a Karmann Ghia convertible. Two Messerschmitt cars, one a convertible. Three Goggomobils. Thirteen Jeeps in various configurations. Fourteen Rolls Royces, from the '20s to the '80s. A Zimmer Golden Spirt. Three 1941 Cadillacs. A 1948 Tucker replica.

Sorry, no Porsches. No Ferraris. Two BMWs, an Isetta from the '50s and a 1936 319 cabriolet. One Fiat, a 500 sport sedan from 1959.

Performance? You want performance? A Lamborghini Espada, a Citroen SM, a 1969 Camaro pace car, two Pontiac GTOs, a Dodge Super Bee ... it goes on and on ... and on. As the Church Lady might say, isn't this a bit ...eccentric?

My brother-in-law collects and sells rare books. A lot of first editions, a lot of sci fi. All lovingly hand-wrapped in plastic. I once asked my sister, what is the attraction in collecting books? Aren't they meant to be read? I mean, they're books, aren't they? Isn't that what they're for?

And she answered by saying, "you're not a collector. You'll never get it." Which I guess is true. I don't get collecting books that you don't read, and I don't get the point of assembling

one of the most eclectic and apparently self-indulgent car collections I've ever come across. Just like I don't get collecting sports memorabilia off the sweat of athletes. And that leads me to bring up one of my very own quotes. "The rich are weird. Because they can afford to be weird." Please cite me, if you ever use it.

How else do you explain the mania? Take Paul Allen, who co-founded Microsoft. He virtually cornered the market in collections. A billion-dollar art collection. His collection of first-gen tech and Titanic memorabilia, which brought in \$10 million at his death. He also co-founded the Allen Science Fiction Museum and the Museum of Pop Culture. And he died at 65 in 2018.

Which reminds me of the maxim that you can't take it with you. To which I would add a big "but" that, if you've got the resources, you sure can enjoy the ride ... in whatever form you desire, I guess.

Is this being obsessive? Who's asking? 🏁



 About Danielle

MR KIERIOSITY



SOME COMMENTS FROM SHIFT COLORADO'S CO EDITOR AND YOUTUBER: MARTY KIER



Story and Photography: *Marty Kier*

Hey there! Thanks for reading this issue of SHIFT Colorado Magazine. My name is Marty and I perform a variety of tasks for SHIFT such as designing articles, editing, website management, and blogging. **I also release YouTube videos every single Sunday on my channel @MrKieriosity.** Many of the videos show behind the scenes of SHIFT Colorado's great articles. Other videos just show me wrenching on cars or going to other car events in Colorado!

This time in Issue 13, **I was able to record quite a few behind the scenes style videos.** These articles take a TON of work and the SHIFT team is highly skilled. **If you want to see what it's like during our roller days where we get epic photos of the cars and people you see in SHIFT Colorado Magazine, I invite you to**



subscribe! I also release videos on the SHIFT Colorado Magazine's official YouTube channel, which I recommend you subscribe to as well to see plenty of photos and hear new story details that might not be mentioned in print! **Thanks so much for taking an interest and I hope to see you at upcoming events!** 🍷



Subscribe to Mr. Kieriosity on Youtube!



Subscribe to SHIFT Colorado on Youtube!

DOGLEG DREAMIN' SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISER – JOIN US!



Photography: *David Bennett*

We have had an incredible, generous offer from two of our sponsors towards the Colorado Cars & Coffee Automotive Program scholarship. We have one simple request from you to help us unlock this offer of \$6000. All we are asking you to do is go to their Facebook post, and comment a photo of your car. That comment unlocks ONE DOLLAR!

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So far C&C members have unlocked over \$500, and now we need your help to keep pushing!

You can learn more about our scholarship here, <https://coloradocarsandcoffee.com/scholarship/>

The Colorado Cars & Coffee Automotive Program Scholarship is for Colorado based automotive program students. This scholarship honors all of those who choose to pursue a career in the

automotive field. The scholarship benefit is a minimum of \$1000, directly paid by check to the school's cashier's office, applied to the student's account or tool allotment. This year, in 2025, we awarded 3 scholarships, totaling \$3000.

With the generous donation offer by David Bennett of Community West Mortgage LLC and Dae Han Jung of Daeluxe Realty, and with your help, we will be able to grow that benefit even greater for 2026.

Your help will take us there. Please hit that link, which goes right to our C&C Facebook group post, and comment a photo of your car.

One photo comment = ONE DOLLAR 🍷

Thank you,
Steve
Publisher, SHIFT Colorado
steve@shiftcoloradomagazine.com

**WHEN I WAS
GROWING UP, I
COULDN'T WAIT TO
BECOME AN
INSURANCE AGENT!**

WOW!



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