



Seattle Post-Intelligencer

# WHEELS

SECTION G

## GENERAL MOTORS

### Crossover trio proving popular:

General Motors Corp. is struggling to halt declining U.S. sales, but it has a bright spot in the three large crossover vehicles it launched in the past year. The Buick Enclave, GMC Acadia and Saturn Outlook each have three rows of seats and look like big sport utility vehicles, but they are lighter, have a smoother ride and get better gas mileage than SUVs. More important, the crossovers are doing something few other Detroit vehicles can achieve these days – they are pulling drivers from imports such as Toyota and Honda.

## MERCURY

### Ford product may be on last legs:

With little new product in the pipeline, Mercury faces extinction in a few years, industry analysts predict and many dealers fear. Mark Fields, Ford Motor Co.'s president of the Americas, insists Mercury "has a place" in the company's Way Forward recovery program. He concedes, however, that within Lincoln Mercury, Ford is focusing on "the Lincoln piece of the business." Mercury sold 180,848 vehicles last year in the United States – fewer than eight vehicles a month per franchise and its lowest total since 1960.

## INSIDE THIS SECTION

With the slogan "Happy is Good," you can't go wrong at the Puyallup Fair, which opens Friday.



All gas is created equal, but then...

TOM AND RAY MAGLIOZZI

## CAR TALK



**Dear Tom and Ray:** My husband and I are in a heated debate about the quality of gas. My less-than-informed husband insists that gas from quick-stop type of gas stations is a lesser quality than that of the big oil companies. My supposition is that there are only a few oil-refinery companies in our country and that "all gas is created equal." We agree that there is a difference among octane. Could you let us know which is best to put in my car, and then I can put my husband back in his place! – Anne

**Ray:** It's not that simple, Anne. All gasoline sold in the United States meets Environmental Protection Agency requirements. So the short answer is, you can put anything into your car from Chevron down to Panther Squat, and it'll run fine.

**Tom:** The only difference between gasolines is in the contents of the "additive package" they use. The stuff you buy at Fred's Gas & Herring comes from the same holding tank as the stuff at Chevron, Shell or Texaco. But some brands use an additive package that does a better job of keeping your valves and your electronic throttle clean.

**Ray:** Back in 2004, several big carmakers – GM, Honda, Toyota and others – were unhappy with the detergent performance of gasoline, because they were finding deposits inside their beautiful engines. So they got together and created some new gasoline standards that are tougher than the federal standards. They called the gasoline that meets these higher standards "Top Tier" gas.

**Tom:** The companies that voluntarily agreed to sell only Top Tier gas in the U.S. are: QuikTrip, Chevron, Conoco, 76, Phillips, Shell, Entec, MFA Oil, Kwik Trip/Kwik Star, Somerset, Aloha Petroleum and Texaco.

**Ray:** So you won't find Joe's Gas and Step Stool Emporium on that list, but you will find a mix of major brands and smaller "no-brand" gasoline distributors. You'll also notice the absence of some very major brands, such as Exxon, Mobil, BP, Gulf, Amoco, Sunoco, Hess and others.

**Tom:** Does it matter? It depends. Honda, BMW, Audi, VW, Toyota and GM think it does. But if you use the gas with fewer detergents and end up with carbon buildup after 100,000 miles, you can often get rid of it with a few cans of engine cleaner. You might even be able to get rid of it by using Top Tier fuel for 10,000 or 20,000 miles. So it's rarely an irreversible problem.

**Ray:** But if you drive a high-end car, or you want to be sure you never get any buildup on your fuel injectors or valves, you have to use Top Tier gasoline at least most of the time.

**Tom:** One other thing to keep in mind; the list of Top Tier providers might change. To see the latest list of Top Tier gasolines, go to their Web site, [toptiergas.com](http://toptiergas.com).

**Ray:** And as for your husband, I'm not sure why you want to put him in his place, Anne. My wife is always trying to get me out of my place – which is in front of the TV. Asleep.

Write to Car Talk, c/o the Seattle P-I, P.O. Box 1909, Seattle, 98111. "Car Talk" is heard at 9 a.m. Saturdays on KUOW radio, 94.9 FM, and at 11 a.m. Saturdays on KPLU radio, 88.5 FM. The "Car Talk" Web site is [cartalk.com](http://cartalk.com).

# Magic at Monterey



COURTESY ITALDESIGN

The hand-built Giugiaro Mustang concept car features a supercharged 4.6-liter V-8.

BY EVAN McMULLEN  
Special to the P-I

The rich are indeed different from you and me.

Yeah, they have more money. But if this year's Monterey weekend is an indication, they also have a lot more fun.

Despite growing national concern about subprime mortgage rates, hedge fund positions, and a fluctuating stock market, this year's Pebble Beach/Monterey Historics weekend featured a surge of cars, class, and cash that shattered sales and auction records.

Highlights included multiple Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance wins for Pacific Northwest collectors, a bold new Concorso Italiano by local producers Jack and Leslie Wadsworth, and, for me, a harrowing test drive of the new Ford Mustang concept car designed by Italdesign Giugiaro Spa's Fabrizio Giugiaro, son of legendary designer Giorgetto Giugiaro.

## The concours

Now in its 57th year, the Pebble Beach concours has emerged as the world's showcase, this year drawing from 12 countries and 30 states. Only the finest and most important cars grace the 18th fairway of the sweeping Pebble Beach Golf Links.

This year's Best in Show winner was a 1935 Duesenberg SJ Special, perhaps better known by its nickname "The Mormon Meteor," owned by Harry Yeaggy of Cincinnati.

As in the past, Pacific Northwest collectors occupied a disproportionate share of the world stage. David B. Smith of Mercer Island took first in class in the European Classic Open class with his stunning 1938 Alfa Romeo 6C 2300B Touring Superleggera Coupe (which competed against many cars of much greater value) and George F. Wingard of Eugene, Ore., took top honors in Class R (10-liter engine displacement or greater) with an immaculate 1911 Fiat S74 race car.

Wayne Herstad of Tacoma earned second-place honors for a remarkable 1923 Locomobile Model 48 Sportif.

## Turin Mustang, unshrouded

Fabrizio Giugiaro commanded a special place at Pebble Beach this year, arriving amid considerable buzz with his long-awaited Mustang concept, which was first previewed there in 2005 and officially introduced at the Los Angeles Auto Show in 2006. Hailed as the "Ford Mustang of the Future,"



COURTESY FELIX ROSS

The 2007 Best in Show winner at Pebble Beach was a 1935 Duesenberg SJ Special known as "The Mormon Meteor."

## KIRKLAND CONCOURS SUNDAY

On Sunday, the fifth annual Kirkland Concours will offer an exhibition of many elegant collector cars. The theme is "French Curves," celebrating France's elegant automobiles from the 1920s to just after World War II. An assortment of other collector cars also will be shown, including British sports cars, American racers and Porsches.

The event, which has raised more than a half-million dollars in its first four years, again will be held at Carillon Point. The event, sponsored by Phil Smart, opens at 10 a.m. For information and tickets: Kirkland Chamber of Commerce, 425-822-7066. Online: [kirklandconcours.com](http://kirklandconcours.com)

the stylish concept car is beautiful to the eyes, exciting in design and a memorable – almost surreal – experience to drive. An honorary judge as well as exhibitor, Giugiaro was on hand to share his creation with all takers.

Soft-spoken, articulate and intensely passionate, Fabrizio guided us around the supercharged 4.6 liter V-8 prototype, which features electric scissor doors that open vertically; a single, curved glass panel (special UVA crystal) that serves as an all-in-one windshield, roof, and rear window; and camera monitors that replace the standard rear-view mirrors.

Surrounded by quietly buzzing crowd of Armani-clad onlookers, Fabrizio spoke with the quiet intensity and candor of an artist. There are still many changes he'd like to incorporate.

For instance, he wondered aloud about the placement of the dashboard camera screens. Reconfiguring them would be helpful, as their placement is not particularly instinctive or intuitive to the driver's eye.

For the newbie, the driving experience can be disorienting, an exciting but demanding symphony of fishbowl visibility (nearly as many outward sight angles as a Jetsons bubble car), crazy single-finger starting and stopping ignition switches, and a racing clutch.

The opulent interior features a gleaming space age dash and controls. Carbon fiber doors flip up away from the driver's

seat in a Countach, gullwing-reminiscent style.

Fabrizio wanted us to experience the car in action.

Minutes later, we were screeching down 17 Mile Drive in a greater-than-posted-speeds test drive that produced more than a few raised eyebrows and impromptu paparazzi-style snapping frenzies. If you think this car is exhilarating and demanding from a stationary driver's seat, you've got to experience it moving – coordinating between controls, cameras, and unobstructed peripheral whiz of passing colors.

The one-of-a-kind car handles with more precision than most production cars. It's no surprise that it benefits from more than 60,000 hours of labor. Hopefully, Ford will move it into production: Giugiaro and Italdesign have produced the most elegant and exciting rendition of the legendary pony car to date.

It is precisely the kind of thing you expect to find at Pebble Beach.

## Quail Lodge

Once again, Michael Kadorie and the Peninsula Group produced a luxurious private concours designed to cater to Monterey's A-list.

This year, the lawn featured a spectacular collection of Ferrari 250 Pininfarina Series One Cabriolets, as well as perhaps the world's greatest display of Cunningham automobiles – exquisite cars developed, built and

or raced by the famous American sportsman Briggs Cunningham.

Participants were shuttled to the Laguna Seca Raceway by helicopter, placed behind the wheels of a Maserati Quattroporte and Lexus LS 600h L and SC, and feted with salmon fresh from Monterey Bay.

## Laguna Seca

Now in its 34th year, the Rolex Monterey Historics at Laguna Seca was one again exhilarating. The staff have made parking easier than going to Costco in Kirkland and used the racetrack layout to allow spectators to mingle some of the most historically significant sports and race cars of all time.

This year's feature, early Indy 500 roadsters, was no exception, and, as always, the paddocks were full of vintage Ferraris, Aston Martins, Bugattis, Bentleys and Alfa Romeos.

Dozens of cars from Washington state made it onto the grid. Local businesspeople and philanthropists represented included, among many others, John Shirley, John Goodman, John McCaw, Mike Malone, Bill Cotter, David Brigham, Greg Whitten, and Tom and Susan Armstrong.

Tacoma racing legend Pete Lovely, who took the first win at the track in 1957, was on hand as the Legend of Laguna Seca honoree. Before accepting the honor at dinner, Lovely took the checkered flag in his 1959 Lotus 11 for the 1955-1960 sports racing cars under 2500cc class.

One of the many highlights was the Race of Legends, featuring multiple laps by legendary greats such as Al and Bobby Unser, Emerson Fittipaldi, Parnelli Jones, Johnny Rutherford, Derek Bell and others. All cars were brand new and identically equipped Scion tC sport coupes.

This was the perhaps the most spirited race of the weekend, with Bobby and Al Unser constantly taunting each other throughout, overreached corners and multiple tussles in the dirt, and, in the final lap, a radical smash-em-up between Jones and Rutherford the left Rutherford's car inoperable and pushed Jones to fourth place. Bell squeaked by Rahal for the checkered flag, with Fittipaldi third.

This was real, raw, no-holds-barred racing – not often seen at Monterey, as many historic cars are either under-capable or over-valuable for competition of this kind.

Evan McMullen is proprietor of Cosmopolitan Motors in Seattle.

## MONTEREY AUCTION HIGHLIGHTS

This year's record-setting Monterey Weekend auction sales topped \$135 million.

### Gooding and Co: \$61 million

A 1931 Blower Bentley from the E. Anne Klein estate brought \$4.51 million, followed by a 1959 Ferrari 250 GT LWB California Spyder, formerly owned and restored by David Smith of Medina, in close second at \$4.45 million.

### RM Auction: \$46 million

Top sellers were a 1959 Ferrari California Spyder that was a former Le Mans competitor and a 1935 Duesenberg Model SJ Town Car built for candy heiress Ethel Mars. An impressive 92 percent of all consigned cars sold, with nine selling in excess of \$1 million.

### Russo and Steele: \$10 million plus

A 1973 Lamborghini Miura P400 SV was hammered at \$962,500. Also: A 1954 Mercedes-Benz 300 SL, \$764,500; a 1965 Shelby GT350R, \$660,000; and an early 1976 Lamborghini Countach LP400, \$533,500. Former Barrett-Jackson GM Drew Alcazar has truly found his niche.

### Bonham's: \$9 million

The world's oldest Cadillac, a 1903 Runabout, went for \$337,000, as well as a 1907 Packard 30 Runabout for \$403,000 and a 1931 Rolls-Royce Phantom Convertible Coupe for \$403,000.

### Christie's: \$8.2 million

An ex-Steve McQueen 1963 Ferrari 250 GT/Lusso Berlinetta drew gasps and \$2.31 million – about twice its presale estimate.

### Kruse International: less than \$1 million

Associated with the locally produced Concorso Italiano, Kruse's annual representation sale is traditionally less remarkable for its gross sales than its wide variety of accessible and desirable consignments.

## Seattle couple push Concorso Italiano into high gear

Twenty-two years ago, the Concorso Italiano was little more than a sideshow gathering of hard-core Maserati enthusiasts.

Today, thanks to the efforts of the Seattle husband-and-wife producing team of Jack and Leslie Wadsworth, the Concorso has emerged as an essential highlight of the Pebble Beach/

Monterey weekend.

Located on the sweeping grounds of the prestigious Bayonet Black Horse Golf Course, the Concorso is a verdant and expansive table for a grand banquet of world-class Italian automobiles, art, wines, fashion, cuisine, and celebrity attendees.

This year's Concorso Italiano celebrated 60 years of Ferrari,

50 years of the Ferrari 250 GT and the Maserati 3500, as well as 35 years of the Lamborghini Countach.

Against a backdrop of opera, classical music and high fashion, the Concorso featured many new cars and supercars in addition to perennial favorites, such as a Lamborghini Miura SV and the very first Countach,

flown in from Italy just for this show.

As in years past, this year's Concorso Italiano served as a key meeting point for the Northwest's collectors, judges, and consignors.

This year's exhibitors include David Bingham of Bellevue's Park Place Limited (both a Lamborghini and an Aston Mar-

tin) and Mike McCauley of Seattle (an Alfa Romeo GTV). A representative pre-event roster of exhibited cars is available on the event's Web site.

For information and tickets, visit the Concorso Italiano web site at [concorso.com](http://concorso.com) or call 425-742-0632 for details.

– Evan McMullen