

From Minis to maxis, the Auto Show has it all

BY RUCH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

The press has been salivating for a week and now it's time for the public to get in on the excitement of the 2003 North American International Auto Show.

The annual display of motor mangle runs 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday through Jan. 19 and 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Jan. 20 at the Cobo Center in downtown Detroit. Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$6 for seniors 65 and older and free for children 12 years and under.

From a rainbow of Hummers aggressively angled above the floor to a garden of Mini Coopers trumpeting that small is in, this year's auto show offers something for everybody in a stylish package.

This is Detroit's moment in the sun. Media from every corner of the world has descended on the city over the past week to get the latest from the automobile industry. If Detroit-based automakers have to share air and print time with world automakers, their city is still the focal point. The Detroit Auto Show, which dates from 1907, became the North

American International Auto Show in 1988 and has been expanding and attracting more attention every year since.

Last year 760,000 visitors attended the auto show. This year's spectacular blend of concept vehicles, new introductory vehicles and display showmanship is expected to draw the same response.

The show is colorful and well designed, from the General Motors ducky on the northwest side to the German corner of automakers on the southeast.

MINI STAR

The star of this year's show defies all the daze of modern design and high performance. Auto journalists at the show chose the Mini Cooper as the automobile of the year. The tiny capital C "cute" car has become a cult best seller this year. It is an update of Europe's longtime best selling automobile which had been discontinued. Now it's back and setting trends.

The British Mini's display, next to parent German company BMW, is an interactive fun spot. In addition to many colorfully decorated Minis, with Union Jack and American flag painted



Chrysler Group CEO Wolfgang Bernhard rides a Dodge Tomahawk concept vehicle during its unveiling at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit.

roofs, the exhibit features pinball machines, a simulated two-person auto race and a design your own center.

BMW's own display includes the wide variety of the company's products including bicycles, motorcycles, sleek sports cars and utility vehicles and a stylish lounge.

This year's truck of the year was the Volvo XC 90, called an

environmentally friendly SUV.

COOL WHEELS

Cool is exemplified by DaimlerChrysler's Dodge Tomahawk concept vehicle. Is it a car or is it a motorcycle?

DC public relations describes it this way: "The Viper-powered Dodge Tomahawk concept vehicle shatters all the barriers of conventional thinking about personal transportation. This four-wheeled, single-passenger vehicle is a sleek, rolling sculpture that combines art-deco styling with extreme engineering."

"The 500-horsepower Viper V-10 engine powering the dual rear wheels gives this radical vehicle a potential top speed of nearly 400 miles per hour - for anyone who wants to test it."

Ford is displaying everything from the British speed demons, Jaguar and Aston Martin and their own newly hip T-Birds to some socially conscious concept vehicles as part of the launch of their 100th anniversary.

The Model U concept car is powered by a hydrogen internal combustion engine equipped with a hybrid electric transmission. The company literature says the car "offers SUV driving excitement that is affordable but can grow with a customer's lifestyle and aspirations." It can be personalized in many ways and uses "green" recycled materials for construction.

Despite the talk about "green" and fuel efficiency, a lot of attention at the General Motors end of the building will be on two vehicles not noted for their gas saving. The Hummer

H2s are dynamically displayed on risers in a variety of bright candy colors. A luxuriant 16-cylinder, 1000-horsepower Cadillac car was drawing oohs and aahs from the auto press.

"The Cadillac Sixteen proportions were crafted with great attention to detail and homage to classic design," said Brian Smith, the Cadillac Sixteen's exterior designer. "The Cadillac Sixteen evokes an era when luxury cars were hand-built."

On the green side GM is introducing a hybrid truck which will be available as an option on all their pickup trucks. The future of auto design is represented in a couple downstairs displays. The Center for Creative Studies has several student designed models on display. Several students offer their variations on brand automobiles.

In addition Kyle Watson offers a one-of-a-kind bicycle with a low-rider profile. Arm Shin presents a "hybrid" boat with outboard motors and sails, a conversation pit and sleek styling.

Kelo University in Japan presents an electric vehicle with 186 mile range and a top speed of 193.3 miles and hour.

City employees wish Lauhoff a happy retirement

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

City employees bid Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff farewell Jan. 3 with a backdrop of fake cacti made of cardboard with an inflated cactus balloon attached to a floor stand.

"I didn't know they had blown-up cactus," Lauhoff said when he entered the Farmington City Council chambers.

Lauhoff, 51, heads Jan. 16 to Surprise, Ariz. A roast will be held tonight at the Farmington Hills Manor on Orchard Lake Road.

Friday's gathering might have been a small preview of the

community-wide gathering, with reflections on Lauhoff's career and a little good-natured humor.

Mayor Jim Mitchell recalled a number of accomplishments over the past 10 years, among them a local road and sidewalk program that provided for regular infrastructure maintenance.

"Get rid of special assessments and people are real happy," Mitchell said.

Much appreciated renovations to the public safety portion of the city campus were completed without borrowing money, he added, commenting, "That is remarkable."

Along with seeing through the renovation of the historic

Farmington Civic Theatre, Lauhoff's final endeavor was the sewer relining project which saved the city a lot of money. Mitchell noted the city was just finishing up a sewer separation project when Lauhoff's tenure started.

"We started out with sewers and ended up with sewers," Mitchell said.

"You're career is in the gutter now," someone in the audience joked.

Mitchell pointed out that Lauhoff also worked hard on the Main Street Grant, which will provide technical assistance to the city.

He presented Lauhoff with a traditional clock and the famous Farmington afghan

which features a variety of city landmarks.

"That's for those cold nights in Arizona," Mitchell said.

Special presentations came from the public safety and public services departments.

"There were a lot of years in the public safety department - 18 - more than city manager," Lauhoff said.

City employees gave Lauhoff a Russell Cobane duck painting to add to his collection.

"This is something they should give when you become a city manager because when you become a city manager you have to duck," quipped Bill

Richards, Farmington assistant city manager.

A video program showed photos of Lauhoff's time with the city, accompanied by the songs *Places to Remember* and *The Times of Your Life*.

Lauhoff, accompanied by wife Vicki, daughters Denise and Cindy, and grandson Drew, was touched by the sentimentality.

"That brought back so many memories," Lauhoff said. "You forget as time goes on how many things actually happened and the things you've been involved in. What we've achieved here in the last 10

years was because everybody worked together. Everybody has the same goal, to do the best we can for the community."

He and Vicki will spend summers in Grand Rapids.

Lauhoff read a card he received from his assistant Joanne Fournier which outlined "the new daily planner."

It suggested "coffee at 8 a.m., donuts at 10 a.m., nap at 11 a.m., lunch at noon, nap at 2 p.m., snack at 3 p.m. and stare out the window between 4-5 p.m."

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