

SHOW AN

2008 SEMA show report

By Ken Brubaker *Photography: Ken Brubaker*

Everyone wondered how the tough economic conditions would affect the 2008 Specialty Equipment Market Association show in Las Vegas. This is a show that normally draws more than 2,000 automotive-related exhibitors and more than 2,000 vehicles. As the date drew near, even we began wondering if the SEMA Show, as it's affectionately known, would retain its status as the preeminent automotive show. Rumors and speculation ran rampant in the industry. It was like some people were expecting tumbleweeds to blow down empty aisles of the normally packed Las Vegas Convention Center. Little did they know.

It turned out that the 2008 show was still the mother of all automotive enthusiast shows and the place to be for those in the industry. It was still challenging to navigate the thick crowds at peak times; the Las Vegas monorail was still like a cattle car in the mornings and afternoons; and our feet still hurt at the end of the day. SEMA says that there were more than 2,000,000 square feet of exhibits and more than 100,000 industry leaders from more than 100 countries, and 50,000 domestic and international buyers in attendance. Additionally, they say that there were more than 2,000 newly introduced parts, tools, and components in the New Products Showcase. We'll show you some of those next month.

This month we offer a glimpse of SEMA, including a look at some of the noteworthy four-wheel-drive vehicles. The SEMA show always draws a mind-boggling collection of unique vehicles, and this year was no exception. Some were real-world, some were refreshing, and some were, well, examples of customization run amok. One thing's for sure; there was something for everyone.



What The?!

If we gave an award for best SEMA display, we'd probably trot it right on over to Daystar for its upside-down JK Wrangler Unlimited. Trent McGee, Daystar's Director of Marketing, says, "Displaying a Jeep upside-down at SEMA is something I've wanted to do for years, but it took a CEO (Mark Turner) that was crazy enough to believe in the idea to make it happen. If you're a manufacturer of suspension components, why would you make your customers kneel down and crawl under a vehicle to see your products installed?" Flipping a vehicle without damaging it isn't easy, and the guys at Daystar had to build a "crazy contraption" to do the actual flipping. Then they had to build an internal structure and truss system to support to Jeep while inverted. They actually flipped the truck at Daystar headquarters in Phoenix and transported it upside-down to Las Vegas. "The CB chatter and the looks from fellow motorists were priceless," McGee notes. The JK definitely gathered a lot of attention at SEMA too.



ID TELL

▼ Fine F-150

The folks at Skyjacker displayed this '09 F-150 SuperCab FX4 equipped with its new 6-inch suspension system. Other mods to this handsome rig included a trick BASF paint job, BFG Mud-Terrain tires, BMF wheels, a Corsa exhaust, AAC headlamps and taillights, a Precision grille, and WeatherTech floor mats.



Time Traveler

Cool doesn't even begin to describe this Tacoma Truck Retro in the Toyota booth. If it looks like an '80s Toyota pickup, well good, because that's the idea. It has a four-cylinder engine mated to a four-speed transmission; Land Cruiser solid front axle, transfer case and rear axle; custom tubular bumpers and rollbar; custom grille; Cream Pearl paint with retro stripes; American Racing AR-23 wheels; BFG All-Terrain KO tires; and a brown interior with Recaro fabric.



◀ ARB's H3

ARB has a number of products available for the Hummer H3, and most of them were on this H3 Alpha in its booth. The list includes a Bull Bar, rear bumper, Touring rack cage, rooftop tent, and air locking rear differential. The rig also sported an ARB Freezer Fridge, ARB recovery gear, a number of IPF lights, a Warn XD9000 winch, Walker Evans Racing wheels, BFG All-Terrain tires, and a TruckVault locking drawer system.

Tool Kit

Ford displayed this awesome '09 F-150 DeWalt Heavy Duty Contractor concept. Among other things, it has a Superlift leveling kit, Mickey Thompson Baja Radial MTZ tires, a Ramsey Patriot 9500 winch, a custom ladder rack with rotating work lights and custom toolbox, two 3,000-watt power inverters with front- and rear-mounted 110V power outlets, a DeWalt dual-port onboard battery charger, a DeWalt heavy-duty air compressor with custom-mounted rear hose reel outlet and front outlet, Ford Work Solutions Tool Link RFID inventory management system, customized onboard tool storage under the back row seat, and DeWalt yellow exterior paint.





◀ Bugged Out

Looking like fun waiting to happen was this incredible Overkill Engineering-built buggy owned by Brent and Shaunda Goegebuer. Brent is the assistant director of retail marketing, new products, and outside events at 4-Wheel Parts Wholesalers. This outstanding rig sports all the latest and greatest trail-proven tech like an injected Chevy 383ci stroker motor, a 700R4 trans, an Atlas II transfer case, ARB-locked Overkill Engineering Atomic Axles with CTM U-joints and Currie centers, a dual inverted four-link rear suspension with Fox shocks and air bumps, a wishbone four-link front suspension with Fox shocks and air bumps, 22x10 Pro Comp wheels with Overkill Engineering 45-bolt beadlocks, and 41-inch Interco IROK tires.

▼ When Flat Paint And Camo Collide

We were stunned at the number of vehicles at this year's SEMA show that were slathered in flat paint. This rig at the Mickey Thompson booth took flat a step further by incorporating camo. The truck was built by X-Treme Toyz and its list of mods includes products and/or services by aFe, Amp Research, CR Laurence, EGR, Fabtech, Line-X, Mag-Hytec, Mickey Thompson, MM Auto Arts, PIAA, Precision, Roadwire, and Roll-n-Lock.



▲ Painfully Cool

The folks at Warn displayed this immaculate '47 Willys CJ-2A. It was totally restored in 1998 and has some classic Warn products like free-wheeling hubs and a Bellevue electric winch with operating controls mounted inside the vehicle. This winch was the predecessor to the 8274, which is currently in production.



Raptor Slayer?

This Tacoma Access Cab's wide fenders and bed-sides and revised grille and bumper give a hint as to the thorough mods that have been infused into this incredible pickup truck. It was at the Toyota booth, and it's called the TRD Tacoma Off Road Project. It features a supercharged and intercooled 4.0L engine and custom long-travel front and rear suspension with titanium springs and Bilstein shocks. The rear brakes are mounted inboard, and the rig rolls on BFG Baja tires mounted to TRD forged-aluminum wheels. More than just a pretty face, this rig boasts 13 inches of front suspension travel and 14 inches of rear suspension travel.



► **Looks Like Fun**

We have a lot of love for Subaru. Heck, we have a lot of love for this cool Subaru. It's an '09 Forester they call the Mountain Rescue Vehicle, and it was built for the National Ski Patrol. It has a turbocharged and intercooled Subaru Boxer 2.5L engine, a custom Air Lift adjustable suspension, 30-inch Yokohama Geolandar MTS tires, a Warn 9.5ti Thermometric winch, DeeZee skidplating and grilleguard, and gobs of Bushwacker products.



Bulletproof For Real

The word "bulletproof" gets thrown around a lot in the off-highway world, but this vehicle, the fully-armored Knight XV made by Conquest Vehicles, Inc., is really bulletproof. For only \$295,000, you can sit in the luxurious interior and point and laugh at people as they shoot at you. The truck is built using ballistic-hardened steel and up to 2.5-inch-thick glass. The truck is based on an F-350 commercial platform chassis, so parts are readily available no matter where you wander. The rig rolls on Mickey Thompson Baja Radial MTZ tires with ballistic run-flats. Standard equipment includes night vision and rear op camera systems.



▲ **Piece Of The Puzzle**

One of the most obvious features of this diesel-powered '08 F-250 is its jigsaw-puzzle-themed vinyl wrap, but there's more. Way more. A partial list of mods includes a 12-inch Bulletproof suspension with Fox remote-reservoir coilover shocks; T-Bilt steering and front winch bumper; a Warn winch; Hannemann front fenders and rear bed-sides; an ORU Defender roof rack; Baja Designs lights; 40-inch Toyo tires; and KMC wheels.

► SEMA is always good for a few "star" sightings. This year we watched *Diners, Drive-ins and Dives* host Guy Fieri whip up some chow at the Denbeste Motorsports booth.



▲ **Super Silverado**

This massive Silverado was front and center in the lobby of the North Hall. It was built by the folks at Bigfoot 4x4 and it featured a truly mind-boggling number of mods, including a nitrous-injected biodiesel-burning Duramax with FASS fuel system and Jaz fuel tanks; Dana 80 axles; a four-link coilover suspension; 24x16 custom wheels; 51-inch Firestone tires; prunner-style front fenders and rear bed-sides; smokin' cool flat paint job; and front and rear Warn winches.



Rockin' Ranger

The folks over at MB-Motorsports had their awesome Ranger-bodied race truck on display. This machine looks like it's ready to pounce. This amazing truck has a coilover suspension that generates 19 inches of wheel travel up front and 24 inches out back. Up front it uses Bilstein bypass shocks, while in the rear it uses the incredible Bilstein Black Hawk 9300 Series shocks. It's powered by a bored, stroked, balanced, and blueprinted 4.0L V-6. A couple of weeks after SEMA, this rig won Class 6 at the 2008 Tecate SCORE Baja 1000.



Another Silverado

Lund International always has over-the-top rigs at the show, and this year was no exception. This Silverado had 16 different Lund products installed as well as products from Skyjacker, Mickey Thompson, Stealth Dump Trucks, Roadwire, McGard, and Rockford Fosgate. The paint is House of Kolor Tangerine with flame airbrushing by Wicked Ways Custom Cycle. Yep, that's ~~Line-X~~ along the bottom and on the grille and bumpers.



▲ Built Like A Tank

The folks over at Icon displayed a New School FJ43 Long Wheelbase. If you're not familiar with these rigs, they're handmade by Icon and utterly incredible. This specific vehicle has a long list of features including a 550hp fuel-injected LS2 V-8, a 4L65E transmission, a 3.5:1 Atlas II transfer case, Dynatrac axles, a coilover suspension, 37-inch BFG M-T tires, 20-inch MOZ wheels, flat paint, Recaro power vented and heated front seats, an Alpine audio system, a Garmin navigation system, a satellite link, and an iPod link.

◀ Our Plan

We'd dechrome it, paint it flat black and drive it to work.

Clean 'n' Simple

This Grand Cherokee was at the Chrysler booth, and it's an example of a clean, well-equipped SUV that can pound pavement or trail. It has a 4-inch Superlift suspension; Mopar rock rails, a cargo basket, sill guards and slush mats; an ARB front bumper; and a Warn winch. **FW**



▷ RC cars are hot property nowadays, and this fact was illustrated by Traxxas. A first-time exhibitor at SEMA, Traxxas drew massive crowds to its booth. These are the guys who offer a slew of electric and Nitro RC vehicles, including the exocaged Summit RC truck (right) that has remote front and rear locking differentials, a high/low transmission with 70:1 super low-range, waterproof electronics, a long-travel suspension, and beadlock-style wheels.

