

Concept Trucks Make Their Mark on the North American International Auto Show



DETROIT SHUFFLE

By Todd Kaho

Not too many years ago, witnessing the debut of the latest automotive sheetmetal meant a trip overseas to one of the big "international" auto shows. Thanks to a concerted effort by the powers that be in Motown, the emphasis has shifted to include the Detroit Auto Show, or more accurately, the North American International Auto Show. Detroit is once again a must-attend show, with both domestic and foreign manufacturers previewing their latest prototypes and concept vehicles inside Cobo Hall. And once again, trucks took center stage.

Chrysler chose Detroit for the international debut of its long-awaited fullsize Ram pickup by dropping the truck from the ceiling onto a breakaway scale mockup hiding beneath a car cover. GMC, not to be upstaged, suspended a Jimmy from the roof to re-enact its much-talked-about "Hang" bungee-jump commercial. While the latest production vehicles were the subject of conversation, Detroit's hallmark has become the premiere of the latest concept vehicles, many of which are trucks.

RANGER JUKEBOX

Ford, perhaps the most prolific builder of sporty concept trucks, didn't disappoint the crowds in Detroit. Its latest is a wild roadster-style '93 Ranger. With a chest-pounding 2500-watt stereo system that features a Ford JBL head unit and CD changer, the truck is aptly named Jukebox. With the top gone, the smoked, wraparound windshield blends into a clamshell cover to protect the bed-mounted speakers. Adding to the jukebox feel are a series of neon lights (including the wing-mounted red stop lamp) that pulsate with the music. The dancing bed is activated by a three-axis hydraulic mechanism that can be operated by remote control. Ford utilized several key aftermarket companies including Bell Tech, which supplied the special components to slam the front 4 inches and the rear 5 inches. Unique custom-cut BFGoodrich concept tires are mounted on 17-inch Boyd billet wheels. The Jukebox's slick wraparound body-cladding treatment is highlighted with a generous dose of pearl over the ice blue metallic paint.



INDY 500 OFFICIAL TRUCK

Look for a new Camaro to pace the field around the Indy 500 this year and specially painted fullsize Chevy pickups to provide race support at the Brickyard. Chevy is the official truck at this year's 500 and is providing race officials and track crews with enough pickups to keep the greatest spectacle in motor racing running smoothly. The limited-edition trucks are painted with a cool graphics treatment that matches the pace Camaro.

OFFICIAL INDYCAR TYPHOON

Another official truck could be seen in the GMC display, a white Typhoon that serves the IndyCar circuit. GMC General Manager Roy S. Roberts promised in a presentation to the media to expect "more products like the Typhoon that are going to reflect increasing distinctiveness of the GMC Truck brand." With the introduction of the all-new-for-'94 Sonoma compact just a few months off, sport truck enthusiasts have a lot to look forward to.

GMC SANTA FE

Based on a fullsize extended-cab pickup, GMC's Santa Fe concept truck is said to combine "the spirit of the American West" with advanced engineering and luxury accommodations. Once you get past the wild pearl copper paint, the Santa Fe shows a number of unique styling cues. The front fascia has a bold look with a driving light integrated in the bumper. A lower cladding blends into a full-length step down the side of the truck. The flared bed features a unique taillight treatment and a rigid tonneau cover. The Santa Fe's wheel and tire combination is really different—Goodyear P295/50R-20 Extended Mobility Tire (EMT) rubber is mounted on huge 20x10-inch alloy wheels. The EMTs are designed with special deflation supports in the sidewalls to provide "run-flat" operation when you lose air pressure. The inside of the Santa Fe is trimmed leather and features a hands-free cellular phone and a remote CD changer. Detroit was the Santa Fe's world debut, so watch for it at your local auto show in the coming year.

HANG TIME IN DETROIT

Talk about elaborate auto show displays—GMC suspended a Jimmy from the ceiling of Cobo Hall to recreate its popular "Hang" TV commercial. In the commercial, a four-door Jimmy is dropped off a bridge to become the world's first bungee-jumping truck. The video crew utilized the factory GMC platform hitch to attach the truck to the giant rubber band. The record 700-foot bungee jump was used to relate the Jimmy's stout frame to GMC's "Strength of Experience" theme.

ASC OPEN-AIR FLARE

Ever wonder how a SuperCab version of Ford's all-new Splash Flareside Ranger would look? The folks at ASC have beaten Ford to the punch with this super-slick Ranger Open-Air Flare that features a wraparound rear glass treatment with a venting rear backlight. Fresh air is also supplied by an oversized ASC spoiler sunroof. The Flareside bed features a wood floor with stainless-steel runners. The lower body is complemented with a ground-effects package that includes front and rear fascias. The smooth bodywork is coated with High Voltage Electric Blue Pearl paint. The truck has been lowered and sports 17-inch ATEV aluminum wheels and Goodyear performance rubber.

