

# Tail Lights

Automotive History from  
a New Perspective

March-April 2012



## Another 2012 Model Year Redesign...

The Crittenden Automotive Library gets an updated look but keeps the same solid engineering under the hood!

Inside: Art, Retail, Presidential Elections, and the Pontiac Vibe



# Tail Lights

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Cover Car: An Aston Martin V8 Vantage

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## Detroit and the 2012 Presidential Election

**By Bill Crittenden**

The automotive industry bailout has already played a part in the 2012 Presidential Election as presumptive Republican nominee Mitt Romney had to defend what he wrote in an op-ed in 2008, published in The New York Times under the title “Let Detroit go Bankrupt,” during the run-up to the Michigan primary. You can read it at the NYT website at [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/19/opinion/19romney.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/19/opinion/19romney.html?_r=1)

Detroit, as a city and as a name, has come to represent the American automobile industry. While people refer to Ford, GM, and Chrysler collectively as “Detroit” their operations extend far beyond even Michigan’s borders. Ford and General Motors are worldwide operations with a lot of employees working at foreign factories that can’t vote in American elections, but there are plenty of factories in the United States, outside of Michigan, whose employees might sway the election one way or another.

Outside of the spotlight that Michigan’s ballot puts on the industry most identified with the state, the ripples if the automotive industry bailouts may still make waves in the 2012 election. Take, for instance, President Obama’s (and my own) home state of Illinois, just off the top of my head here. Would the Chrysler plant in Belvidere be in business today if it weren’t for the bailout? Illinois isn’t a “battleground” state, but there are automotive factories all over the country. Then there are suppliers whose employees are dependent upon one or the other major Detroit automakers to stay working. How about the dealerships? How many Pontiac and Saturn employees are still out of work or are working in menial jobs at lower incomes after the federal government pressured GM to cut some of their marques?

Americans are said to vote their pocketbooks, and how many pocketbooks are still feeling the effects, negative or positive, of the bailout?



The Crittenden Automotive Library  
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# The Crittenden Automotive Library Update

By **Bill Crittenden**  
Owner, The Crittenden Automotive Library

It's been an interesting couple of months here at The Crittenden Automotive Library. First off, we've completely reworked the look and feel of the site, going with a more colorful design and better navigation tools. There is now a navigation bar with graphic links to some of the most interesting sections of the site. The home page has been simplified but still contains links to even more sections of the site.

This step was taken as a further evolution of the Library from basement hobby to serious media resource. I prefer simple, classic designs, but one night someone had told me that it's too simple. I preferred this to the gaudy colors and flashy clutter a lot of other automotive sites prefer, and the Library looked a lot better than a lot of similar sites, but oversimplification had made it look like it was still a cheap hobby site. Since that's not where I want to go with it, so I had to compare my site to others outside the automotive realm. What does a professional media site have? A navigation bar, a little color, and graphics. The Library now has all three, as well as an updated look to the logo and top left corner of the site.

This is all part of an effort to transition from the randomness of pay-per-click ads and draw in stable sponsors that can help take the Library to an even greater level. What comes next? If I can get enough sponsorship this goes from something I do in my spare time to a full-time occupation, and if I can build what I have so far in my spare time, imagine what I could do if I put 50 more hours a week into it!

## Pontiac Vibe

The Pontiac Vibe was added as a featured vehicle. While not as historically interesting or as popular or as cool as the muscle cars that populate the list, I drive a 2003 Vibe, I love the car, and through GenVibe.com I've found a whole group of people who enjoy their Pontiac Vibes.

My car is a silver single-color all-wheel drive Vibe with a roof rack. I've taken out the front grille and added two big driving lights in its place. Most of the trim bits in the interior were taken out and painted orange a year ago, but now they will be painted a medium green...to match the wheels. The wheels were trashed from 154,000 miles of



northern Illinois road salt, and I ground off the corrosion and painted them green. Inspired by something I saw online from Tjin Edition, where wheels are painted a wild color on a plain color car, it looks like a real-life version of the Library logo! While it's not SEMA Show perfect, it's better than what was there before and it's part of a rally car look, and rally cars get beat up. The carpet, which has been through a toddler and a lost dog that threw up in the back while we were trying to find its owner, is coming out.

"Powered by Toyota" appears just in front of the door mirrors, and "associate sponsor" spots include stickers from NOS Energy Drink (10 NOS Reward Points gets you a whole pack of stickers) and Cub Scout/Tiger Scout logos since one of my "co-drivers" as listed on the window is a Tiger Scout. The rear windows, which will have the text redone in a nicer font, include a British flag next to the name Crittenden for me (I've never even been to Britain but Crittenden is an English name) and an American flag with the name Walczak for my wife (Heidi Walczak) and our 7-year old son (Eli Walczak). Then it's going to get "The Crittenden Automotive Library" and "CarsAndRacingStuff.com" across the side between the wheel wells.

Mechanically, I'm reversing 9 years and 154,000 miles of hard commuting and sadly, some neglect based on a very low budget. Once that's done it's still going to stay pretty much stock as its intended role in my garage is as a fuel-efficient daily driver. I'm mostly going to drive this little bit of advertising around town but I hope to find a nice twisty dirt road near me to get it really dirty at relatively high speed as often as possible. I live near a cruise night that pulls in over 100 cars a night every Monday, and while I'm not going to park it front and center in the show next to Chevilles and Shelby Mustangs I can at least tuck it in a back corner and not have to walk four blocks to get to and from the lot!

Continued on page 4...



# Stock Car Racing

The Stock Car Racing project continues for the summer. I've narrowed the gap in NAS-CAR top-level driver histories to 1984-2008, and all of the season pages from 1975-2012 are online and at least started. Once the driver histories are done I'll have all of the races in a large file that I can use my computer's find and replace functions to edit links into and then I'll divide that out into individual results pages and upload them to the site. Just as a change of pace and a sample of what's to come once the big NAS-CAR series are online, I added the 2009 NASCAR Corona Series to the site. The Corona Series, now known as the Toyota Series, is NASCAR's stock car series down in Mexico. Similar to some regional series up here, they run cars with the sponsors across the sides and numbers on the back between the rear wheel and the rear bumper.

## Reports

I've been uploading a bunch of NHTSA Special Crash Investigation reports to The Internet Archive. The government has a habit of moving things around on their websites and losing things every so often, and the Internet Archive offers permanent archival without burdening my own server as well as direct linking, which is something I can't do with the Special Crash Investigations, which are buried behind a search program.

Soon, hopefully in the background while I process stock car stats, the Library will include over a million pages in books and reports thanks to the assistance of The Internet Archive and their servers.

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## Vibe Vehicle Model

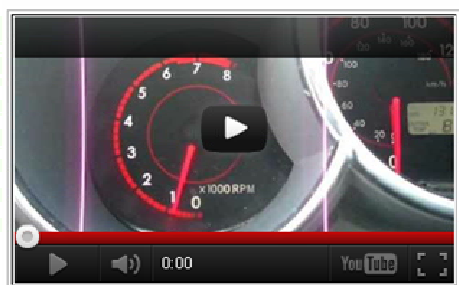
A station wagon produced by Pontiac. New for the 2003 model year, redesigned for the 2009 model year. GT

The Vibe was co-developed with [Toyota](#) as a station wagon version of the [Corolla](#) and based on the [Toyota Matrix](#). [Toyota](#) sold a right-hand drive version of the Vibe in the Japanese market through [Toyota Motor Sales \(U.S.A.\) Inc.](#) until the venture and the [Pontiac](#) brand.

The Pontiac Vibe is the subject of the forum [GenVibe.com](#) with over a half million posts as of the 2010s.

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## Video



**2004 Pontiac vibe accelerating 0-60** (ever) March 12, 2012  
Duration: 0:24  
This video is available under a [Creative Commons License](#).  
[Download 2004 Pontiac vibe accelerating](#)



**2005 Pontiac Vibe** August 19, 2011  
Duration: 2:18  
This one owner 2005 Pontiac Vibe with 69,000 miles, ABS and a Pontiac factory sunroof. Price: \$12,995. By Salt Auto Sales



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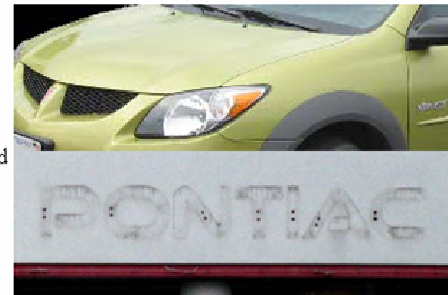
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model year, production ended in August 2009 with the last models being of the 2010 model year. Available in base model, AWD, and

the [Corolla's](#) "E-platform". The [Toyota](#) version of the Vibe is the [Toyota Corolla Matrix](#), as the window sticker read, usually just used in the same market as the Toyota Voltz from 2002-2004. Manufactured by the joint [Toyota-General Motors](#) venture [New United Motor](#) and were discontinued in [General Motors'](#) bankruptcy proceedings.

beginning of 2012.



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000 low miles on it is certified by CARFAX to have a clean vehicle history report. This low mileage wagon comes equipped with a remote keyless entry, power windows, power door locks, and more. Prior to leaving our dealership this vehicle is serviced and it comes with a warranty.

M-A 2011

Tail Lights

P.5



# Walmart

By Bill Crittenden

Last month, The Crittenden Automotive Library got permission from another new source. While all our sources are important to us, this one meant something a little different: it was the world's largest retailer, Walmart.

I've been a fan of Mr. Sam Walton's stores and business model for a long time now. Their advertising slogan, their mantra, "Save Money, Live Better," isn't just something cute an ad firm came up with. It really means something to families on limited budgets.

A few years ago, my wife lost her job. Thankfully, Walmart had just built a SuperCenter in Woodstock, Illinois. We were able to afford the basics of food and household supplies, and that probably would not have been possible paying the higher prices charged by other retailers in town.

Walmart then further helped our family by giving my wife a job in the darkest times of the recent economic recession. She went from a holiday part-timer to a Person-

nel Manager in an incredibly short time, and was even invited to the 2011 Shareholders' Meeting in Bentonville, Arkansas.

We've seen now from the other side how "Save Money, Live Better" can motivate people to operate the most efficient store possible to provide the best value for other families in their communities.

Now a company as big as Walmart is helping my family again, taking the time to acknowledge my little base-ment operation here and allowing us to use some of its marketing materials in the Library.

Aside from the indirect impact being the world's largest retailer has on what an average car owner buys for their automobile, they're also going to sponsor a NASCAR race car for the first time this year, and most importantly they operate a huge private fleet of trucks for shipping the products we buy to the stores we shop in. Wal-Mart Transportation, LLC is a large enough buyer to influence the market for big rig trucks, and they're using their influence to help the trucking industry turn a profit producing fuel-efficient trucks. More pictures and articles at:

<http://www.carsandracingstuff.com/library/special/walmart.php>



# Crushed Cars as Art

By Peter Fedynsky, Voice of America

New York's Guggenheim Museum has turned into something of a junkyard featuring sculptures made of automobile parts by the late American artist John Chamberlain. The artist was known as a rebel who transformed cars into vehicles that transport the imagination.

A sculpture at the entrance to the museum is made of old car bumpers. Inside are dozens of other automobile abstractions by sculptor John Chamberlain. He passed away in December at the age of 84.

While the Guggenheim is not a parking garage, dozens of cars have been parked, so to speak, on each level of its spiraling space. Chamberlain reshaped the cars in a way that's consistent with the exhibit's name, Choices. Curator Susan Davidson explains that Chamberlain assembled materials to create three dimensional collages.

"He is able to choose the positioning of the colors, the fit of the shapes that he brings together, the sound that the metal makes when he assembles it," said Davidson.

She says Chamberlain used common materials in an uncommon way. He sculpted these objects, which look like beanbags, from urethane foam.

This abstraction is made of plastic. Aluminum foil is the material for the towering sculpture in the Guggenheim foyer. But his primary resource was old cars.

Museum Director Richard Armstrong says Chamberlain's work is unique.

"[Chamberlain's work embodies] a free spirit that helps define and redefine mid-20th century art," said Armstrong.

Susan Davidson says Chamberlain had the spirit of an American rebel much like Rock and Roll legend Elvis Presley.

Chamberlain's works are positioned away from the walls so viewers can see them from all sides. Freelance writer Deborah Bearg says the sculptures offer the imagination an infinity of images.

"Everytime you're looking, you're going to see something else," Bearg explained. "I'm sure if I walk back through this part of it today, I'll see very different images."

The exhibit is drawing visitors from New York and far away.

Waynette Ballengee from Louisiana says the show initially struck her as junk.

"But as I traveled up the rotunda, it started to make more sense to me," said Ballengee. "And I thought that it became more interesting, as he changed the way that he worked with the material."

Declan Kennedy, from Ireland, says he was impressed with the building, not the exhibit.

"I think it just looks like a lot of scrunched up metal. So it doesn't appeal to me," said Kennedy.

Susan Davidson says Chamberlain told her that the secret to artistic success is insanity. He added that art and criminality draw inspiration from the individual's own peculiarities. He preferred art.

View the video for this report at

<http://www.voanews.com/templates/widgetDisplay.html?id=141293773&player=article>

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## The Crittenden Automotive Library

Sponsorships of The Crittenden Automotive Library are available for \$50 a month for a text link! Sponsoring the site gets your business name in a prime location for exposure to the 700+ visitors a day that browse the Library as well as linking to your site from over 20,000 automotive-related topics and articles so that search engines can see the importance of your business. For a more visual impact on site visitors, you can place a 185x100 pixel logo or image instead of a text link for \$100 a month.

With the Library averaging over 700 visitors a day and growing, this places your name (\$50 a month text link ad) in front of over 21,000 visitors a week, 52 weeks a year, with your site just one click away for about \$12.50 a week. Compare that to sponsoring a race car that doesn't run in front of crowds of even 10,000 every weekend all year long and costs much more than \$600 a season and depends on fans remembering the business name or website name to type into their browser when they get home!

More information at

<http://www.carsandracingstuff.com/advertise.php>



The 1979 Mercury Capri is available in four versions - the well-equipped base Capri, the sporty Capri RS (above), the performance-oriented Turbo RS and the luxurious Capri Ghia. The Capri's standard powertrain is a 2.3-liter overhead cam four-cylinder engine paired with a four-speed manual transmission. Optional powerplants include a 2.8-liter V-6, a 5.0-liter V-8 and a turbocharged version of the four-cylinder engine. Three levels of suspension - base, Radial Sport and one based on Michelin's revolutionary TRX tires (above) - are also available. The broad choice of powertrains, standard rack-and-pinion steering and three suspension options add up to an extremely versatile car that can be equipped to meet a wide variety of tastes.



**1979 MERCURY CAPRI RS**



performance-  
engine cou-  
version  
tires and  
choices



**This photograph is part of a collection of 1979 Ford-Lincoln-Mercury photographs that is going online in the next few weeks. More to come in the next issue of Tail Lights!**