



SEMA 2003 - Final Thoughts

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There were several things I liked and disliked at SEMA 2003. Top on that list was the DUB party held in the south hall of the SEMA convention on Wednesday night. I give DUB a lot of credit as the party was well organized and secure. Several celebrities showed up and partied with the crowd (I can not reveal who they were because I agreed not to) but safe to say, the crowd went wild. Style and lifestyle networks like E! Entertainment also had people there as well. If you ever get that special invite to go to a DUB party, GO!

We all remember the Pepsi Vanilla commercial with the rad kick'n truck blowing the doors off the competitor, well, at least I do. That truck with the help of some very lovely ladies from Pepsi was jumping and rocking outside the south hall. If you ever get a chance to see this truck, do so. It is truly amazing to see this behemoth, doing its thing.

The show cars at the convention this year are too numerous to list. There were several hundred cars and trucks of all different shapes and sizes. One of the stand out cars was a snake skin painted Supra, with sound and TV systems that would have made the ABC remote satellite vehicle ashamed to show its face. I was actually looking for a small nuclear reactor that powered the system. When it comes to seeing the world's finest automotive creations, SEMA is the place to be.

The racecars that were displayed at the show were as diverse as can be, representing almost all of the racing venues from off-road to Formula One, 300-mph dragsters to solar powered concept racers. The two standouts that struck this reporter were the Ultimate GTR and the Mazda Pro open wheel car. I have included articles and interviews with both of these companies and I invite you to read them.

The one dislike that I did have beyond the size of the show, was the number of companies with Racing in their name that apparently do not race or even sponsor a race car, but use racing as their marketing tool. As a racer for almost 20 years I find this offensive, as it is hard enough to get and maintain sponsorships without the industry being polluted by wana-bees casting their garbage into the market. I hope that they either put their money where their mouth is or the marketplace sees these posers for who they are and they fail. If you want to use racing as part of your marketing plan, have your own team or support an outside team. If you need help with that, I would be glad to point you in the right direction. Continue to use racing without supporting the sport, and you will be exposed for who you are.

In this article I have wrapped up some of the SEMA highlights and new products of interest. I have also



included interviews with some of the major players in today's market place.

My final thought would go out to all of the companies that attended SEMA 2003. The automotive marketplace has become a top fuel drag race. It does not matter if you have the best tires and wheels, the most horsepower, or the best known driver. If your reaction time off the line is slow, you will get the big loser slip at the finish line.

So enjoy and see you at SEMA 2004!

Analytic Systems SEMA 2003

Analytic Systems is an industry leader in power supplies and converters for the automotive, US Army and Motorsports. The unique thing that attracted my eye to this company was the fact that they have a very unique system that provides power to your electronics when there is a power failure from the alternator. From a racing point of view, this means you can eliminate the alternator for sprint races and pick up the 5 to 7 hp that is lost running the alternator. The battery charger is also unique as it charges and provides up to 100 amps of power for those show cars and exotic streetcars. It has a built in heat sensor to determine if you are over charging the battery or too rapidly charging the battery. Keep an eye on this company as they have unique products that meet market demand.

Bridgestone/Firestone SEMA 2003

Talk about the come back kids, wow! Not too long ago Bridgestone/Firestone was on the mat crying for mommy, and by the end of the 2003 SEMA show they are fighting back with a vengeance. I give Bridgestone/Firestone my personal "got it" award for understanding the changes in the market place and reacting to them. Their corporate "vision" has expanded to acknowledge that this is not only a market "trend", but also a lifestyle change. Their "Fuzion" product line, shown at SEMA and to be released in March, puts the company back on the map with the "tuner" market. Bridgestone/Firestone also announced the new Indy 500 tire that brings back many great memories for me. Bridgestone/Firestone continued it's winning position in Formula One, even against giants like Michelin, shows the company's dedication to safety, performance and customer satisfaction.

CRC Industries SEMA 2003

CRC once again shows why it is an industry leader in the chemical market. This year as it would seem in most, I have found that CRC products delivers what they advertise and from the racer point of view, exceeds our needs. My only advice to CRC is that they need to "modernize" their marketing focus if they plan to compete with other players who have adopted a "tuner" mentality.

DaimlerChrysler SEMA 2003

Of the big three OEM's, DaimlerChrysler (Mopar) is the only one that I believe is almost "in tune" with today's youth market (ages 16 to 60. Hey some of us are just big kids and peter pan is alive and well!) from a product and "package" standpoint. Their "Speed Shop" program is 95% on target and with only minor changes, it would be perfect. One of the great things to see is the return of the Hemi engine on the street. As a kid, I only dreamed of a Hemi Cuda or a Hemi Superbird. The ground shaking excitement and roar of the Hemi was "Beethoven" to my generation of car nuts. That being said, it is also where the problem lies with Mopar. When I asked the 25



and under age group at SEMA, 7 out of 10 did not know what a Hemi was and EVEN WORSE, the 3 that did know what a Hemi engine was, knew it as a truck engine. Sacrilege! There is a great market for the new Hemi engine, and all Mopar needs is (someone like me) push in the right direction to once again make Mopar Hemi Engines the things dreams are made of.

As for Mopar's marketing to the "tuner" market, their "ala-cart" style will spell success for Mopar. I give DaimlerChrysler (Mopar) my personal "got it" award and I hope they stay the course that I believe will rocket them forward as one of the major players in the tuner market and an industry leader in the performance market.

Ford Motor Company SEMA 2003

At this years SEMA show, Ford Motor Company celebrated it 100th Year in business. This year's booth, as always, was spectacular. The new Mustang GT, "Eleanor with a face lift" as one "celebrity" called it, was stunning. But I have to admit the new Ford GT; the modern version of the Ford GT40 of LeMans fame (which was also at the show) was my favorite.

Ford has always been number 1 in trucks and this year was no exception. The standard and show trucks that Ford had on display were "Best of Show". I have to say that I am surprised that Ford is not paying more attention to the "tuner" market as my award for the "sleeper of the show" was a very nicely done Ford Focus which would be a great platform to enter the youth market. Maybe the powers that be only wish to concentrate on trucks. So be it, but I see Ford missing an opportunity and thereby missing "the market" shift on its car line. Ford needs to poke its head out of its booth and look around. But if you want a great truck, see Ford's booth for 2004.

G-Force Racing Gear SEMA 2003

For a racing participant, like myself, if you have ever had to wear the Hans device, you will know why I found G-Force's SRS-1 helmet one of the best products at the show. Not only does the device accomplish the same safety goal as the Hans device, but you can also wear it with total comfort and still retain the head and shoulder mobility that you need in racing. Call G-Force or visit their website.

G-Force also has a line of crew and driver safety products that are second to none. To this day I believe they have the best cam lock belt system on the market, bar none. Their standard lines of helmets are expanding and even incorporating graphic designs from the factory. If you have racing product needs, check out G-Force Racing Gear.

General Motors SEMA 2003

GM once again put on a spectacular show with the H2 named Number 1 at show. GM's market direction, while 85% on target, needs only additional "market awareness" and focus. GM is the leader of the Big Three that, in my opinion, dominate the luxury performance market. With the H2, the CTS and the Escalade product lines, GM will be a market leader for years to come.

Where I see a problem is that GM has just started to address the "tuner" market and I am not sure they are tracking the right line. While their intentions are good, I feel that the focus is wrong. GM builds great platforms, not accessory parts. The first rule of business is; do what you do best and don't spread yourself too thin.



Goodyear Tire and Rubber SEMA 2003

Goodyear is still Number 1 in tires as it debuts its new Eagle line of tires. The quality and workmanship is unsurpassed and with the Eagle F1 GSD Ultra performance line of tires, acceptance in the "tuner" market is a sure thing. The Eagle GTHR mid-line tire with race wrap technology developed in NASCAR, also will be a showstopper.

Goodyear's long history of being Number 1 in Racing is also alive and well as Goodyear announced that they will be the presenting sponsor for the Star Mazda Series for 2004. The still unanswered question is, will Goodyear return to Formula 1? Stay tuned in 2004; maybe we will hear that long awaited announcement.

K & N Filters SEMA 2003

From starting with motorcycle filters to becoming one of the leading companies in the "tuner" market, K&N Filters shows why it is a leader and not a follower. With a fuel injection performance line, Typhoon sub-compact line and high flow race tested filters; K&N will lead the industry through 2004. K&N replacement filters for all lines of cars and trucks are not only a great filter but washable and reusable. Try that with your OEM filter!

K&N is also adding chassis dynos to further expand their product line and enhance the performance of present products. K&N Filters get my "got it" award for their marketing plan and understanding for the "tuner" market. Keep up the great work.

Koni Shocks SEMA 2003

Koni has always been one of the industry leaders in racing shocks. This year they are introducing a new line of fully adjustable mid-line racing shocks. Any serious "tuner" should also research their street products.

Mazda SEMA 2003

Zoom, Zoom, Zoom! The Mazda RX-8 is "rad". The design and craftsmanship of the vehicle is unsurpassed. As a really fun streetcar, it provides a platform for the "tuner" market. For the general market the consumer can leave the car stock or go all out with every conceivable add on. The added rear doors give middle age men (like me), with kids, the ability to have your sportscar and use it too. Check the car out at your local Mazda Dealer. You will not be disappointed.

Mazda, also introduced to the racing world the new Star Mazda Series open wheel racecar. As a racer I have to tell you the car was a piece of art. An all carbon fiber chassis, sequential transmission and much more. Over 60 cars are on order which will mean the series will have full fields for 2004 starting at the 12 hour race at Sebring. Goodyear Tires has also become the presenting sponsor of the series. Bravo Goodyear. Look for the Star Mazda Race Series schedule and attend the race. You will not be disappointed!

Peak SEMA 2003

Have you ever wondered what anti-freeze you should use in your car? Well, Peak Anti-Freeze has answered that question; Peak Global Extended Life! This anti-freeze can be used in all makes and models of cars and



trucks from the very old to the very new. No more guessing or "mixing". Available in standard and 50/50 pre mixed version, this product wins the "no more guess work" award.

Recaro SEMA 2003

When you think of the finest seats in the world, there is only one name, Recaro. The new line of street and racing seats are not only beautiful to look at, but have added driver comfort and safety. The unique product that attracted my eye this year is the Recaro Child Safety Seat. The seat is designed to Recaro's exacting standards using the world's finest materials. In a word, the seat is "sweet"! It is fully adjustable and even has integrated speakers in the headrest! For age's 9 months to 12 years and 30-80lbs in weight, the seat will protect your child for a long time, and look great as part of your vehicle at the same time.

Ultima GTR SEMA 2003

24 hours at LeMans, 24 hours at Daytona, many world championships. That is what memories the Ultima GTR brings back, as it is very close in design to the Porsche 962. Designed in the mid 80s as a racecar, the Ultima GTR went full circle from racecar to streetcar and back to racecar. It's classic design, while a step back in time for construction, is still what history's greatest racecars are associated with, even to this day.

Miller Team Racing has plans to enter the car into the Grand-Am series for 2004. I think this is a great idea and will give that series the needed lift in both "sizzle" and field size that makes a racing series great. But without factory support, this is not a realistic idea. If an OEM would support the project, there is no doubt of success. While I interviewed Lawrence Farmer, Technical Director for Miller Team Racing, no less than 20 people took their picture with the car.

The Wheel Collection SEMA 2003

How many versions of 20 some inch wheels can you look at? So why was I attracted to The Wheel Collection? Well, The Wheel Collection had something unique and it did not spin or light up! As a matter of fact, their motto is "Don't Spin and Drive", and being there is a present movement to enforce the spinner laws from the 1960's. Being ahead of the curve is a good thing!

The product that caught my eye was the patent pending carbon fiber wheel and the 3-D wheel that they offer. Additionally, The Wheel Collection had the ONLY set of center knock off wheels used for racing or advanced street applications. After interviewing CEO Kaming Ko, I also found out that The Wheel Collection can make custom one off wheels to give you that personal custom look. They have a team of in-house designers and engineers that can make any dream wheel happen. Keep an eye on this company as they get my "got it" award for not following the crowd, but leading the way to the future.

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