

entertainment

Collegian Autos

Brutes: The rise of the super SUV



The 2018 JEEP Grand Cherokee Trackhawk has a 707-hp V8.

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I remember when I was about eight or nine, the news was non-stop reporting on global warming. One way that we can help, the news reported, was to get rid of your SUV.

Channels would show man-on-the-street interviews where reporters would ask SUV owners about their vehicle and inform them of the great damage their Explorer was doing to the environment.

I also remember my mom yelling at me as I rolled down the window of our minivan to scream “Get rid of your SUV!” at some innocent couple in their Range Rover at Sheetz.

Flash-forward 10 years and we have Sports Utility Vehicles that not only get greater than 30 MPG, but hybrid and all electric SUVs, like the Kia Niro Plug-In Hybrid or the Tesla Model X.

You could have yourself a reliable, economical and attractive car loaded with technology for no more than 20-grand. Or, you could have a reliable, economical and attractive SUV loaded with technology that does everything a car does, holds all your junk, seats five or more, for no more than 20-grand.

Nissan Rogue, Ford Escape, Jeep Patriot, Honda CR-V, Toyota RAV-4, Buick Encore, I could go on all day.

So, the SUV has been and always will be a go-anywhere people hauler that sits high like a truck but has enough room to move your mother-in-law, with her entire plant collection, to the nearest AlterCare.

And it is not a minivan, so your

pride stands tall even if your mother-in-law cannot.

But there is a new breed of SUV out there. Gas mileage doesn’t matter to them. Price tags don’t matter to them. You don’t matter to them. All they care about is making even the highest performing cars in the world nervous.

It all started in 1986 when Lamborghini introduced the LM002, a burly looking SUV packing a 444-horsepower 7.2-liter V12 from a boat. 0-60 happened in 7.7 seconds and it could hit 120 mph.

Only 300 of these strange animals were ever made, as production was halted in 1992. This \$120,000 hunk was an instant classic that not too many people know about.

The 1992 GMC Typhoon really kicked off this trend because it was more of a performance SUV than the Lambo; faster, lighter, more readily available and far more affordable.

The GMC’s 4.3 L turbo V6 kicked out 280-hp and 360 lb-ft of torque, enough to send the Typhoon to 60 in just 5.3 seconds. That is quick by today’s standards. And it’s a freaking 90’s SUV.

Comparatively, a 93’ Corvette in its beefiest spec would push 0-60 in 4.9 seconds. 93’ Ferrari 348ts? 5.5 seconds. Granted, these cars were rear-drive and the Typhoon benefited from the BorgWarner transfer case to supplement its all-wheel drive, greatly reducing those 0-60 numbers.

But still, an SUV that could keep up with an American Dream and a Thoroughbred Italian? Picking up the kids from the day care might become the best part of your day.

It was not all grunt either. The

Typhoon came hot off the press with upgraded brakes, sport suspension and a limited slip differential.

Again, this is an SUV we are talking about here. And every last one of the 4,697 units sold for just \$29,970.

So the 90’s is when the SUV gained traction, but in the late 2000’s, they took flight.

4.5% of new car registrations in 2000 were SUV’s. That number leapt to 11% by 2013 and by then, there were 52 different models from every car company on the streets.

Nowadays, a good chunk of cars on the market have performance trims. Take the Ford Focus. It starts out as an inoffensive daily driver at \$17,950. The perfect car if you drive to work, the book club, and that’s it.

The top trim, the RS, has 350 horses, a Quaife LSD, and a driving mode called “Drift”. Hmm. Seems like Fifty Shades is higher on the reading list than Jane Eyre.

The same philosophy has been applied to SUVs. And as a car guy, I couldn’t be happier.

Mercedes put an AMG V8 in the ML55 in 2000, and it was mostly trash except for that glorious engine.

Chrysler stuffed its 6.1 HEMI V8 into a Grand Cherokee in ‘05, slapped some SRT badges on it and created an American rocket ship.

Porsche came up with the Cayenne in 2003, ugly as sin but quick as lightning.

So much variety, so many options, so much unneeded but greatly appreciated buffoonery.

These cars represented some-

thing so Frankenstein that one might scratch their head at them, but only because they are so wonderfully weird.

One downside to these hasty heavyweights was the fact that they were born with a little heft on their hips.

This meant that you could blast down a straightaway, but as soon as a corner presented itself, you all of a sudden remember you’re driving an SUV as your side mirror traded paint with the tarmac.

That’s why people love their sports cars as low and as tightly damped as possible. Not only are they fast like the super-SUVs, but they corner flat, handle great, and give massive feedback through the steering wheel.

Manufacturers took note, and these villainous vehicles have become even more sinister. And they began to handle, too.

The annual Motor Trend Best Driver’s Car is a yearly event in which the magazine gathers up around 12 of the years newest and hottest rides.

Anything from Lambos to hot hatchbacks are invited to throw down with the best in the world.

This year, the fleet got even more diverse. The 2018 BDC represented the first time an SUV has been invited.

Alfa Romeo’s 505-hp Stelvio Q4 Quadrifoglio is the best the super-SUV scene has to offer. Wickedly fast, drop dead gorgeous, handles like it is on rails, oozing with luxury, stunning Italian curb appeal, it’s got it all.

In the BDC competition, it beat the sporty Kia Stinger GT, the no-nonsense Audi TT-RS, the terrifying Chevrolet Corvette ZR1

w/ZTK Track Package, and the white-knuckled Ford Mustang GT w/ PP2 to place eighth. What a machine!

What more could you want? More power? That’s absurd. How childish. Unless, of course, you’ve heard of the Jeep Grand Cherokee Trackhawk and its 707-hp Hellcat V8(!). That’s right, Chrysler did what everyone (secretly) wanted them to do; throw its monstrous 6.2 supercharged engine in the already potent Grand Cherokee SRT8.

But wait, there’s more! Is a 707-hp people-hauler not enough for you? A little company out of Texas called Hennessy will tool around with your Trackhawk, offering 3 levels of performance upgrades; the HPE850, the HPE1000, and the HPE1200. Any idea what those number designations stand for?

The whooping 1,200 brake-hp HPE1200 Trackhawk is the world’s fastest SUV. I cannot even think as fast as this thing hauls donkey.

For \$179,000, you could have yourself an SUV that will shatter the quarter mile in 9.66 seconds. The Bugatti Veyron Super Sport takes a snail-like 9.7. Oh look, the Bugatti also makes 1,200-hp, but the price difference is \$2,247,904. Trunk change, really.

Progress is inevitable. 10 years ago, the iPhone was still AT&T exclusive, everyone was buying Call of Duty: World at War and the SUV was a mover of many things and soccer teams. But its 2018. The iPhone can read your face. Call of Duty has Battle Royal. And the SUV can outhustle, out handle, and outright boot the best cars in the world back to pit lane.



The 2018 Chevy Equinox (left) and Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio.

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If you have a car that you want to be driven and reviewed by Trey, contact him at trobin14@ashland.edu

Phi Psi and Kappa Sigma to host a “Turkey Trot” 5K

MIKE SERRATO
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On Nov. 17, the brothers of Phi Kappa Psi and Kappa Sigma will be holding our joint philanthropy event “Turkey Trot!”

This event will be a 5k or 3.1-mile walk/run that will be around campus.

The event will start at 9:30 a.m. and will end at 10:30 a.m. with registration starting at 8:45 that morning.

All proceeds collected for this event will go directly to The St. Jude Children’s Hospital!

If you are interested in signing up for our event, we will be tabling in the student center through Nov. 12-16 in Convo from 11:00 a.m.-

2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.-6:15 p.m.

We will also accept registrations the day of the event as well.

The first 50 people to register for the event will also receive a free t-shirt with registration, so hurry and act now!

We hope that we will see you there!

Contact Mike Serrato at mserrato@ashland.edu or Michael Wolfrum at mwolfrum@ashland.edu for more information.

If you have a story idea or want event coverage, you can email Bree Gannon at bgannon@ashland.edu