



2012 NEW CAR GUIDE: AND LUXURY FOR ALL

**GET
READY
FOR A
NEW
RIDE**

**HELLO,
2012!**

PERK UP!
**EXTRAS FOR
EVERYBODY**

THE WELL-CONNECTED CAR

**MORE AMENITIES
MORE SAFETY
*MORE FUN***



LAND ROVER
RANGE ROVER EVOQUE

➤ FUEL-EFFICIENT AND FABULOUS ➤ POP QUIZ: NAME THAT GIZMO

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2012 NEW CAR GUIDE



ASTON MARTIN'S
CYGNET MICRO CAR

FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY

NEW VEHICLES FOR 2012 – EVEN UTILITARIAN FAMILY CARS – BOAST AN ASTONISHING ARRAY OF AMENITIES. GET READY FOR A NEW RIDE.

By definition, any luxury item is pleasurable, self-indulgent and nonessential. There was a time when even the simplest automobile was the pinnacle of luxury, transporting the rich around town and for weekend excursions to the country. Henry Ford and his Model T made cars affordable to the masses, available in any color – so long as it was black. To differentiate themselves from mere motorists the affluent embraced ever-grander automotive expressions: Duesenberg, Bugatti and Rolls Royce.

Then as now luxury cars set themselves apart from the crowd by virtue of exceptional performance, refinement and exclusivity.

But what to make of today's family cars? These workhorses are show horses, too, with sophisticated ride and handling qualities, powerful engines, complex bodywork, fanciful conveniences and high-tech safety systems that all but take a driver's hands off the wheel to avoid a collision.

To further muddy the waters, luxury-car makers are creating smaller, but no less posh models for those looking to downsize their rides but not their expectations. Noted British sports/luxury carmaker Aston Martin is doing its part to rewrite the definition of automotive luxury this year with

its new Cygnet micro-car. It's smaller than a MINI Cooper yet promises a distinguished driving experience and treats its occupants to a plush interior with hand-trimmed heated leather seats and myriad amenities.

This special issue on new models for 2012 is devoted to finding luxury at virtually every new-car size and price level. We'll look at the latest upscale safety, convenience and connectivity features that are just now finding their way into moderately priced models, along with exclusive ownership perks that are becoming available to mainstream car buyers. We'll also examine the tangible and perceptual differences between a well-equipped family car and a bona fide luxury model. For those who have money to spend but who don't necessarily want to spend it at the gas pump, we highlight several indulgent vehicles that nonetheless boast top fuel economy ratings.

Plus, we're pulling the wraps off some of the most significant all-new and redesigned vehicles coming for the 2012 model year, from the sporty and luxurious to the practical and fuel efficient (and some that are all of the above). Whether you're in the market for a new car or are just kicking the tires you've come to the right place. Sit back and enjoy the ride. – *Jim Gorzelany*

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LUXURY FOR ALL: TIME TO STEP UP?



THE GAP BETWEEN A LUXURY BRAND AND A MORE MAINSTREAM RIDE HAS NEVER BEEN NARROWER. SOMETIMES, IT SIMPLY PAYS TO GO UPSCALE.

By **JAY KOBLENZ** CTW FEATURES

If cash appears to be spilling out of their pockets, even abrasive personalities – think Donald Trump – tend to be well treated when it comes time to make a luxury purchase. Yet today's competitive climate in the automotive business makes it possible to drive away in a luxurious ride without necessarily being affluent.

For example, all the “full-line” luxury brands now have what they consider an entry-level vehicle. When BMW's 3 Series

started becoming too pricey, the more-basically equipped but otherwise similar 1 Series took over the spot as the brand's most affordable model. Similarly, Acura offers the TSX, Audi the A3, Infiniti the G25 and the Lexus IS 250. The idea is to let in upwardly mobile buyers early on, persuading them to form a long-term with an upscale company.

Those new-car shoppers considering a fully loaded car of a more mundane brand just might be within easy reach of a similar car with a bit more indulgent attitude. For example, those shopping for a Toyota

Camry will find the MSRP approaching \$32,000 when loaded with a full assortment of options. At that point, it might be wise to consider spending just a few thousand dollars more to get the Camry's richer relation, the Lexus ES 350. While both are mechanically equivalent in many ways, the Lexus comes with added prestige, more elegant styling, upgraded interior materials, higher-grade paint treatments and almost certainly improved treatment at the dealership.

While an equivalent luxury-branded car might cost more money up front, this premium could well come back into an owner's pocket down the road in a variety of ways. For starters, luxury brand ownership perks typically include a free loaner car when bringing the vehicle in for service (common at Lexus and BMW, for example),

along with free scheduled maintenance programs that could save hundreds or even thousands of dollars over the length of coverage.

Luxury cars also typically come with longer and more inclusive warranties that can save owners big money if major problems arise. By comparison, buying an extended service plan to augment a mainstream model's warranty would cost around a thousand dollars per year of added coverage. (The accompanying chart shows how new-car warranty terms differ between five luxury brands and their conventional equivalents from the same manufacturer.)

Importantly, a luxury-branded car tends to hold its value better than a non-luxury model, which further narrows the long-term cost differential. This brings up the



THE LUXURY V. MAINSTREAM EQUATION

Luxury has its privileges. Here's a comparison of warranty coverage of five manufacturers' luxury brands v. their mainstream nameplates:

Brand	Basic Warranty	Powertrain	Corrosion	Roadside Assistance
Acura	4/50,000	6/70,000	5/Unlimited	4/50,000
Honda	3/36,000	5/60,000	5/Unlimited	Not offered
Audi	4/50,000	4/50,000	12/Unlimited	4/Unlimited
VW	3/36,000	5/60,000	12/Unlimited	3/36,000
Lincoln	4/50,000	6/70,000	5/Unlimited	6/70,000
Ford	3/36,000	5/60,000	5/Unlimited	5/60,000
Infiniti	4/60,000	6/70,000	7/Unlimited	4/Unlimited
Nissan	3/36,000	5/60,000	5/Unlimited	3/36,000
Lexus	4/50,000	6/70,000	6/Unlimited	4/Unlimited
Toyota	3/36,000	5/60,000	5/Unlimited	Not offered

INFORMATION CURRENT AS OF SPRING 2011

issue of leasing, which is popular among upscale brands for several reasons, among them the penchant of luxury owners to trade in for a new car more frequently. Since the cost of a lease is largely based on a vehicle's resale value, a car that's worth more in two or three years than another comparably priced would be inherently cheaper to lease.

Then there is the dealership experience to consider. Luxury-brand showrooms tend to be posher, with more accommodating service department waiting areas and personnel who may be better trained than those in most conventional dealerships. Shoppers looking at the cheapest car in an upscale lineup will likely get the same top-drawer treatment as customers who pay six figures in cash for the fanciest sports car in the showroom. What's more, this level of

customer service may extend beyond the dealership. Many luxury branded cars come with advanced telematics systems through which owners can access concierge-like services for such things as buying theater tickets or making restaurant reservations.

Not only that, the luxury ownership experience is available to more than just new-car buyers, with even budget-minded shoppers welcome thanks to so-called Certified Pre-Owned vehicles. These are late-model used cars that have been inspected, reconditioned if necessary and usually carry an extended warranty. They may command a modest price premium over a non-CPO used car, but owners get virtually all the perks as they would buying a brand-new luxury car in the bargain.

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By **JIM GORZELANY** CTW FEATURES

Even those who prefer to be pampered by a bona fide luxury car needn't go broke keeping the gas tank filled. Here's a cross-section of upscale models that boast 30 mpg or better, but give up little in terms of either performance or comfort.

- **Lexus CT 200h.** This compact four-door hybrid hatchback is sleekly styled and packs a 1.8-liter gasoline engine and an electric motor-generator that deliver a lively 138 horsepower, with a four-wheel independent suspension for playful handling. Selectable driving modes can maximize fuel economy or sporty driving characteristics. Many safety and luxury features are standard, with a sticker price around \$30,000. It's rated at a class-leading 43-city/40-highway mpg.

- **Lincoln MKZ Hybrid.** Lincoln's version of the Ford Fusion Hybrid comes wrapped in formal chrome-capped styling with a more luxurious interior. A 2.5-liter four-cylinder gas engine and an electric motor generate a V6-like 191 hp. The car can run at speeds up to 47 mph solely on battery power. A long list of standard convenience features includes heated and cooled front seats. Best of all, the MKZ is the only hybrid that's priced on a par with its gas-powered equivalent at about \$35,000. It's rated at 41/36 mpg.

- **Lexus HS 250h.** Lexus' midsize five-passenger hybrid-powered luxury sedan is more handsomely styled than its cousin at Toyota, the Prius, though it can't match the fuel economy. A 2.4-liter gas/electric power train produces 187 hp, with comfort-tuned ride and handling characteristics. Some 30 percent of its cabin and trunk materials are so-called bioplastics that are responsible for 20 percent less carbon dioxide emissions. It starts at around \$36,000 and is rated at 35/34 mpg.

- **BMW 335d.** The "clean diesel" version of the acclaimed 3 Series sedan is efficient and sporty, with a turbocharged 3.0-liter diesel inline-six-cylinder engine producing 265 hp with a whopping 425

pound-feet of torque for quick launches. It drives the rear wheels via a six-speed automatic transmission. Superior suspension and steering systems enable agile cornering abilities that reward a skilled driver. An available M Sport package makes the 335d even racier. Priced at around \$44,500, it's rated at 23/36 mpg.

- **Lexus RX 450h.** Available in front- and all-wheel-drive versions, the stylish mid-size RX 450h hybrid luxury crossover SUV is quicker and gets better mileage than its gas-powered equivalent with its 295-hp electrified 3.5-liter V6 power train. It's practical and a pleasure to drive, with a comfy wood-trimmed five-passenger cabin and 10 air bags. Options include a head-up display that projects data onto the windshield in the driver's line of sight. Starting at around \$44,000, it's rated at 32/28 mpg.

- **Mercedes E350 BlueTEC.** This is the most-efficient version of Mercedes' elegant and accommodating midsize E-Class sedan, and it leverages its 3.0-liter turbodiesel V6 engine for V8-grade acceleration with 210 hp and a generous 400 pound-feet of torque. A seven-speed automatic transmission shifts smoothly and efficiently. Buyers can upgrade the base comfort-oriented suspension to a sport package for improved handling and specific upgrades at no difference in price, which starts at just over \$51,000. It's rated at 22/33 mpg.

- **BMW 528i.** The midsize 5 Series sedan is one of the most pleasurable-to-drive luxury cars and among the most fuel-efficient, with its standard 240-hp 3.0-liter inline-six cylinder gas engine. A manual transmission is standard for enthusiasts; eight-speed automatic transmission available at no extra cost. Cutting-edge amenities include a rearview camera with top-down side-view perspectives, a lane-departure warning system and an infrared Night Vision system. It's base-priced at around \$45,500 and rated at 22/32 mpg.

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FUEL-EFFICIENT AND FABULOUS



LUXURIOUS AND ECONOMICAL NEEDN'T BE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE TERMS, THANKS TO A GROWING ASSORTMENT OF GAS-SIPPING AUTOMOTIVE INDULGENCES.



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TECHNOLOGY: ATTAINABLE OPULENCE

EVEN BUDGET-MINDED NEW RIDES OFFER AN ARRAY OF FANCIFUL HIGH-TECH FEATURES. MORE SAFETY? MORE TUNES? MORE COOL? YUP. THERE'S A GIZMO FOR THAT.

By **JIM GORZELANY** CTW FEATURES

At one time only high-end luxury cars offered sophisticated safety systems and amenities like power leather seats, automatic climate control and GPS navigation. Today such items are widely available in the vast majority of cars and trucks, with an array of even more fanciful luxury features now being offered on mainstream models. Here's a look at some of the latest high-tech safety and convenience items to migrate from the upper strata of motoring into the family car.

- **Adaptive Cruise Control/Collision Warning System.** An advanced version of cruise control uses sonar sensors to maintain both a set speed and distance from the nearest car in its path, braking automatically when traffic slows and accelerating to keep pace. While nifty in its own right, adaptive cruise control enables another recent feature, the collision warning system. Here, the sensors determine if the car is closing in on the vehicle or other obstruction in its path too quickly (like when the driver isn't paying close enough attention) and will both engage audible and visual alerts and pre-prime the brakes to full force in anticipation of an emergency stop.

- **Blind Spot Warning Systems.** One of the most valuable safety technologies to come in recent years, this system uses a set of sensors and/or cameras to detect other



cars just to the side and rear of a vehicle and alert a driver to their otherwise unseen presence. Many blind spot warning systems also warn motorists of traffic that's approaching from the side when backing out of a parking space or garage.

- **Digital Audio/HD Radio.** Interfaces for connecting iPods and other digital devices to auto systems are now widespread, with many models further offering onboard hard-drive storage of digital music files. A few cars even use the hard drive to pause and replay live broadcasts like a mobile TiVo. HD Radio units that can receive higher-sound-quality stations (where they're available) are also becoming increasingly available; some allow a user to "tag" a song being broadcast and save the artist and title information to an iPod or iPhone for later purchase.

- **Heated/Cooled/Massaging Seats.** Heated seats have become common options on many family sedans, but they're now finding their way into smaller cars as well. Midsize models are now offering cooled front seats, in which air is ventilated through the seat fabric to make summertime motoring more comfortable, especially with leather seats. Massaging front seats and heated seats for backseat riders are also just now migrating from luxury cars into mainstream autos.

- **Lane Departure Warning Systems.** This high-tech safety system helps keep inattentive drivers from inadvertently veering into another line of traffic and causing a collision. It looks for highway lane markings via an embedded camera and generates a signal if the vehicle is in the process of crossing them; engaging the turn signals before

purposefully changing lanes temporarily deactivates the alert.

- **Keyless Push Button Entry/Start.** Fast becoming available on a wide range of models, the latest twist on keyless entry technology goes a step further than simple remote locking and unlocking via a key fob switch. Here, a motorist can unlock a vehicle by merely touching the door handle or trunk lid and start it via a push button on the dashboard, so long as the transmitting key fob is sitting in his or her pocket or purse.

- **Multimedia Systems.** Luxury automakers developed the first automotive multimedia control systems as a way to reduce the clutter of dashboard buttons and controls, using touch screens and joystick-like knobs to operate various systems and adjust vehicle settings. These systems are making their way into a wider selection of models and are becoming easier to use. Many allow voice-control commands to, say, make phone calls via Bluetooth enabled phones, select radio stations by name and even play specific songs from iPods and stream music and information from smartphones, entirely on a hands-free basis.

- **Parking Aids.** Many cars now offer a proximity alarm system for easier and safer parking. A succession of beeps tell a driver how close the car is to the one behind it or if a person or object is in the car's path. Several models offer rear-view cameras that display a back-bumper perspective of what's immediately behind the vehicle on a dashboard display or one incorporated into the rearview mirror. And a few models now offer self-parking systems that use sensors to automatically steer the vehicle into a parallel parking space, with the driver simply shifting gears and modulating the brake pedal.

- **Real-Time Traffic and Travel Information.** These days most every car offers an optional GPS navigation system for the directionally challenged. The latest systems include real-time traffic and travel information, typically on a subscription basis, that can include anything from weather conditions and forecasts, sports scores, traffic information, nearby gasoline prices and even movie times and restaurant reviews in three different fashions: locally, along a route and at a destination.

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BUICK VERANO The smallest Buick to date is based on the Chevrolet Cruze, but carries a more fluidly sculpted design. Inside there's a plusher interior with metallic and wood trim and warm, ambient lighting. A 2.4-liter four-cylinder engine generates an estimated 177 horsepower and teams with a six-speed automatic transmission to get 31-highway mpg. Coming well equipped and featuring 10 air bags, the Verano boasts options including heated leather seats and a heated steering wheel. They automatically engage with the remote start function at temperatures below 45 degrees.

**LUXURY
FOR ALL:**

WHAT'S NEW FOR 2012

By **JIM GORZELANY** CTW FEATURES

A fleet of fuel-saving small cars, hybrids and all-electric vehicles will reach dealers' showrooms this fall, with a few sleek and sporty models included to spice up the mix. Here's a look ahead at some of the most-significant all-new and redesigned models coming down the road for the 2012 model year.



CHEVROLET SONIC Replacing the Aveo in Chevy's lineup, the subcompact Sonic is offered in sedan and hatchback models, with aggressive, motorcycle-inspired styling cues inside and out. A 1.8-liter four-cylinder engine is standard with a five-speed manual or six-speed automatic transmission; a peppier 138-hp 1.4-liter turbocharged version can be mated to a six-speed manual. Stability control is standard, with top-shelf options including a remote starter and heated front seats. Myriad "Z-Spec" accessories like ground effects, body graphics and aluminum sport pedals are available for customization.



VW BEETLE While Volkswagen's new Beetle is no longer called the New Beetle, it retains its familiar look, albeit with a longer hood, more horizontal roofline and a pronounced crease running along the side. The coupe's interior is upgraded and features added cargo space, but the iconic dashboard bud vase is gone. A 2.5-liter five-cylinder engine and five-speed manual transmission are standard with a six-speed automatic optional. Also offered is 200-hp turbocharged 2.0-liter four and a 2.0-liter diesel that boasts 40 mpg; either can be mated to a quick-shifting six-speed dual-clutch automated manual transmission.

HONDA CIVIC Honda redesigns its venerable Civic compacts for 2012 with added style and substance in coupe and sedan versions. A 140-hp 1.8-liter four-cylinder engine teams with a five-speed automatic transmission in most models, with the HF version boasting 41 mpg on the highway. The sporty Si models get a 200-hp 2.4-liter engine and six-speed manual gearbox, while the hybrid sedan is the fuel economy leader at 44-mpg city/highway with its electrified 110-hp 1.5-liter engine and gearless CVT transmission. A selectable "Eco Assist" driving mode affords added fuel efficiency, while a new dashboard display provides access to multiple customizable features.



FORD C-MAX Ford gets back into the minivan business this fall with the compact C-Max. With seating for up to seven passengers (four comfortably), the second row center seat can hideaway to create a walk-through to the rear. Both second and third rows fold flat to create a large load floor. A 168-hp 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine is standard, with a powerful and economical 180-hp 1.6-liter turbocharged engine available. Options include an automatic parallel-parking function and a power tailgate that's operated by simply waving one's leg under the rear bumper.



2012 NEW CAR GUIDE



FORD FOCUS ELECTRIC An all-electric version of Ford's compact Focus sedan promises a top speed of 84 mph from its 123-hp 100-kW electric motor. Its lightweight lithium-ion battery pack is automatically heated or cooled when charging to help maximize the car's range, which Ford says will "cover the majority of daily driving habits of Americans." It recharges in three to four hours when tethered to the optional 240-volt charging station, though it's likely to be an overnight affair when using a standard 110-volt outlet. High-tech features include push-button entry/start, HD radio, a navigation system and the MyFord Touch and Sync multimedia operating systems.



TOYOTA PRIUS V Toyota expands its line of hybrid cars with this new midsize five-passenger four-door hatchback. As in the standard Prius, a 1.8-liter four-cylinder engine teams with an electric motor/generator to channel 134 hp through the front wheels via a gearless CVT automatic transmission. Its fuel economy will likely be at or near 42-city/38-highway mpg. Standard features include push-button entry/start, a backup camera and Toyota's new Entune multimedia system that can engage mobile apps via smartphones. Amenities like adaptive cruise control and a panoramic moon roof are optional.

SUBARU IMPREZA This compact all-wheel-drive sedan and hatchback combo sports fresh styling and a roomier interior with added cargo space. Its 148-hp 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine can be mated to either a five-speed manual transmission or gearless CVT automatic. In higher trim levels the CVT includes a six-speed manual "shift" mode. Electric power steering and low rolling resistance tires help boost the car's fuel economy to an estimated 27-city/36-highway mpg. An enhanced suspension system promises improved ride quality, secure highway stability and crisper handling abilities.



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HYUNDAI ACCENT/KIA RIO These corporate cousins share power trains and most mechanicals, but get fresh, brand-exclusive styling inside and out with roomier interiors than before. Both are offered in sedan and hatchback models. A new direct-injected 1.6-liter four-cylinder engine generates 138 hp and can be mated to either a six-speed manual or automatic transmission. Featuring a stop-start function that automatically de-powers the engine at idle, both should garner 30-city/40-highway mpg. Neither car skimps on features, with six air bags and stability control standard. The Rio additionally offers amenities like a backup camera, heated front seats, push-button entry/start and a hands-free multimedia operating system.



Land Rover Range Rover Evoque Coming in two- and four-door models, the evocative Evoque is the brand's smallest SUV, denoted by a combination of sharp edges and curves with an angular sloping roofline. A new 240-hp turbocharged and direct-injected four-cylinder engine drives all four wheels via a six-speed automatic transmission. No mere poseur, it includes multi-terrain capability via separate driver-selectable settings, while an available MagneRide auto-adjusting suspension maintains a smooth ride with capable cornering. An available Surround Camera System gives a 360-degree view around the car for easier and safer parking.



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HYUNDAI VELOSTER Is it a coupe or isn't it? The compact Veloster looks the part with sleek exterior styling, but adds a rear door on the passenger's side for painless back-seat access and a rear hatchback for easier cargo loading. A 1.6-liter direct injected four-cylinder engine generates 138 hp and up to 40 mpg on the highway. A six-speed manual transmission is standard with Hyundai's first dual-clutch automated manual gearbox optional. Expect lively handling abilities with a sport-tuned suspension and electric power steering system. A bevy of advanced connectivity features includes Internet radio streaming from an iPhone and Hyundai's new Blue Link communications system.



VOLKSWAGEN PASSAT A redesigned Passat takes aim at the mainstream midsize sedan market with more upright and horizontal exterior styling and a purposefully cast interior with added rear legroom. A 170-hp 2.5-liter five-cylinder engine is standard with a choice of a five-speed manual or six-speed automatic transmission. Also available is a 280-hp 3.6-liter V6 and a high-torque 2.0-liter four-cylinder diesel engine with an estimated 43-highway mpg. Optional with the diesel and standard with the V6 is a quick-shifting dual-clutch transmission that can be shifted manually or automatically. Coming well equipped, available features include a high-performance audio system developed in conjunction with rock-and-roll legend Fender.



MITSUBISHI i Having the shortest product name among all new cars, this all-electric four-passenger four-door subcompact promises a top speed of 80 mph. Three selectable driving modes accentuate either performance, battery charge longevity or more-aggressive recharging via power recovered from braking. Mitsubishi claims the i can run for 85 miles on a charge, which takes six hours with a 220-volt home charging station or as long as 22.5 hours from a 110-volt wall outlet. More than an oversized golf cart,

the car comes with all the expected features, including a navigation system, rearview camera and a multimedia interface optional. It will initially be available only in California, Oregon, Washington and Hawaii, with a nationwide rollout by December 2012.

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TECHNOLOGY: THE WELL- CONNECTED CAR

AUTOMAKERS ARE REACHING OUT TO TECH-MINDED BUYERS WITH NEW WAYS TO MAINTAIN THEIR CONNECTED LIFESTYLES WHILE ON THE ROAD.

By **DEB ACORD** CTW FEATURES

Zee Rodriguez is too young to remember the popular 1980s TV series “Knight Rider,” but she can relate to one of that series’ stars: K.I.T.T., a talking car that could accept voice commands from its driver.

Rodriguez’ new car, a 2011 Mazda3 in gunmetal blue mica, has Bluetooth hands-free capability that allows her to use voice commands or controls mounted on the

steering wheel, effectively “talking” with her car. Rodriguez, 25, who lives in Colorado Springs, Colo., traded in a 2008 Chevy Equinox Sport for the Mazda3. She was worried about missing the OnStar system she had grown to love. “But the Bluetooth system in my new car is my new favorite tech feature, for both calls and music,” she says.

Rodriguez is as tech-savvy as much of her generation. She owns a Droid Incredible smartphone, a Toshiba laptop and recently purchased a digital heart mon-

itor for her workouts. She appreciates the technology link her car offers as well. “I can send and receive calls through the Bluetooth option, and play my MP3 files or Slacker Radio via my phone,” she says.

Her car is one of dozens of makes and models that allow drivers to stay connected, even while driving.

“Integrating smartphones in vehicles gives drivers a seamless connected lifestyle experience,” said Thilo Koslowski, a manufacturing analyst for Gartner, an information technology research firm. Koslowski was responding to a ground breaking Car Connectivity Consortium launched in March by eleven companies including automakers and consumer electronics manufacturers.

For drivers such as Rodriguez, a connect-

ed car is just another extension of a connected life. But how about older drivers, those who might be drawn to the novelty of a “Knight Rider” type experience but not consider it an essential function of a car?

“The connected car provides valuable data access for all consumer demographics,” Koslowski says. “Older driver segments value safety and security functions more than younger drivers. But all age-groups value infotainment-related web content such as streaming Internet radio or the latest map data information for their navigation system. “I foresee that the automobile will become the ultimate mobile device platform in the future that – in addition to transportation – will address drivers’ information and communication needs across all age groups.”



Alan Hall, a spokesperson for Ford Motor Company, says the automaker offers several options and systems that allow customers to choose what is right for them. "Our technology features are designed to be intuitive and easy to use by all customers, not just those that are technology enthusiasts."

The concept of cars as giant smartphones has overtaken the entire industry. Founding members of the connectivity consortium include Daimler (parent company of Mercedes-Benz), General Motors, Honda, Hyundai, Toyota and Volkswagen; system suppliers Alpine and Panasonic; and consumer electronics makers LG Electronics, Nokia and Samsung.

And nearly all auto manufacturers are offering their own versions of connectivity. Those involved in the consortium are working on something they call a "Terminal Point" standard that connects between smartphones and in-car computer systems. Here's a quick review of what's now being offered in the way of in-car connectivity:

- General Motors offers the MyLink that uses Bluetooth technology and integrates online services such as Pandora Internet radio and Stitcher SmartRadio; adds flash memory to USB device connections; and features the safety and technology features of the OnStar communications system.

- Toyota's connectivity service is called Entune, which features a mobile app that allows the driver to navigate options with a touch screen or voice commands; it interfaces via a Bluetooth-enabled smartphone with Pandora, the Bing search engine, OpenTable restaurant information and MovieTickets.

com, among other Internet services.

- MINI offers MINI Connected, with downloadable apps for traffic and parking information, roadside assistance; Bluetooth connectivity, real-time traffic and navigation information; and a scoring system that allows drivers to track mileage and CO2 emissions.

- Ford's SYNC system includes hands-free calling, turn-by-turn directions and traffic alerts, a music search, personalized daily information, and audible text messages; the latest version adds smartphone connectivity and Pandora Radio and Twitter message streaming.

- BMW's ConnectedDrive includes services such as roadside assistance, traffic and parking information, a theft-prevention option, and a maintenance notifier.

Industry analysts predict advances toward multi-media experiences and connectivity in cars isn't a passing trend. In-Stat, a market research firm, says that the electronics industry is responding to the demand for multi-media experiences in cars and forecasts that more than 35 million in-vehicle infotainment systems are expected to be shipped in 2015.

Can consumers keep up with the demands on their tech skills? New Mazda owner Zee Rodriguez says Yes - with a little help. "I think it would have been difficult to figure out on my own, but the salesman didn't let me leave until I learned how to use these features. He actually set it all up for me and all I have to do is get into my car and it automatically links."

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SOMETHING SPECIAL

PERK UP!

By JAY KOBLLENZ CTW FEATURES

There's more to choosing a new car these days than simply picking the one that's affordable and appealing, comes with the requisite features and is available in just the right color. Astute buyers should also consider benefits of ownership that otherwise differentiate one brand rather than the other.

In other words, what are the perks? How far is an automaker willing to go to ensure a buyer will remain both a happy and brand-loyal repeat customer?

Although many new-car ownership perks are associated with luxury brands, a few are filtering down to mainstream models. It's no surprise, however, the best are still reserved for well-heeled customers.

Among the most popular perks in the auto business right now is offering free scheduled maintenance. This not only can add up to substantial cost savings over the life of the coverage, it also ensures the vehicle will be maintained at or above the minimum standards required to keep the vehicle's warranty intact. It also assures owners any necessary repairs will be made by specially trained technicians and with factory-backed parts.

For the dealership, it provides regular contact with the customer to build a relationship that can help build loyalty. This type of program negates the most common reason customers choose to shop elsewhere for service, namely the higher prices dealer service departments typically command.

EVEN THE AVERAGE NEW-CAR BUYER CAN ENJOY BENEFITS TYPICALLY RESERVED FOR OWNERS OF LUXURY MODELS.

NEW-CAR FREE MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS

Free scheduled maintenance programs on new cars are more popular than ever across a spectrum of auto makers. Here's a look at what's available as of Spring 2011.

BRAND	COVERAGE
Audi	First scheduled service
BMW	4 years/50,000 miles
Cadillac	4 years/50,000 miles
Fiat	3 years/36,000 miles
Jaguar	5 years/50,000 miles
Land Rover	First scheduled service
Lexus	First scheduled service
Lincoln	3 years/45,000 miles
Mini	3 years/50,000 miles
Saab	3 years/36,000 miles
Scion	2 years/25,000 miles
Toyota	2 years/25,000 miles
Volkswagen	3 years/36,000 miles
Volvo	3 years/36,000 miles

Of course manufacturers don't just give away perks. They're marketing tools used to bring in and keep clientele. For example, until Toyota's recent publicity debacle over its myriad recalls, the brand had been notoriously stingy with perks. The automaker relied heavily on its reputation for quality to attract and keep customers. It also allowed the company to reserve such benefits for those willing to pay a premium for models from the company's premier Lexus brand.

Circumstances change. Toyota recently began offering a scheduled maintenance program across its broad spectrum of model lines because,

"they need to have one more incentive now," says George Peterson, president of the research company AutoPacific Group in Tustin, Calif. Because this is an expensive program for the manufacturer, those looking to buy a Toyota model shouldn't expect this perk to remain in effect for long, however. Peterson believes once Toyota revives its reputation it will drop the free maintenance program, "like a hot potato."

It's also important to note that not all maintenance plans are created equal. They vary in length, services covered and service intervals. At just one year and one covered oil change, Audi's is among the stingiest, while

Jaguar and Volvo both provide five years of coverage for their models. According to Edmunds.com, BMW's four-year program is worth the most in cash savings because of its all-inclusive service, which is valued by the website at \$2,300 more than Jaguar's longer deal. Currently, 15 brands offer free schedule maintenance programs, starting with such pedestrian brands as Fiat and Volkswagen (see the accompanying chart).

Free maintenance programs change from model year to model year, sometimes even more frequently. For example, Mercedes-Benz abruptly dropped its free maintenance program, Peterson says, because it proved to be too expensive. Meanwhile, BMW continues to offer one of the best programs to counter the brand's reputation for overpriced maintenance and service.

Similarly, to refute the perception that its cars depreciate at a higher than average rate, Hyundai recently launched a new program across its model range that assures owners a guaranteed trade-in value for their vehicles when they're between two and four years old.

One perk that's become relatively commonplace is roadside assistance, which works much like an auto club membership and can be depended on for such services as towing to a dealership in the case of a breakdown, jumping a dead battery and unlocking a car with the keys left inside. Most brands offer a roadside assistance program; again, specifics vary quite a bit, with most - but not all - cars covered through their warranty periods.

Other perks tend to be more luxury-oriented. For example, to attract high-end buyers for the brand's Equus, Hyundai brings service right to their doors, from the test drive to whisking the car away for service. This ensures

owners of the \$58,000 Equus will never need go to the dealership and rub elbows with those who drive a \$10,000 Accent.

Getting a loaner car while service or repairs are being performed is a major perk, and luxury brands like Lexus and BMW are leaders in this regard, says Peterson. While he reports Lexus as being the most generous in giving its owners something to drive while their own cars are the shop, BMW uses its program as a marketing tool that gets customers into other vehicles in its lineup. Those dropping off a 3 Series model for maintenance might wind up driving a larger and costlier 5 Series for a day or two.

Other perks are localized to the dealerships, with some benefits being required or encouraged by the factory. Among those Peterson says can be important is being greeted quickly at the service department. No one likes being ignored and various brands have minimal requirements, such as giving service department customers personal attention within three minutes of showing up at the door.

Many dealerships, both luxury and mainstream, will deliver serviced cars washed and vacuumed and perhaps even with the fluids topped off when returning them to customers. The waiting room may have coffee and snacks available, either free or for purchase, depending upon the dealership. More progressive dealerships will have HD televisions, video games and even play areas for small children. The idea is to make customers enjoy their time spent at the dealership rather than dreading the thought of taking their cars in for service.

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POP QUIZ:

NAME THAT NEW-CAR FEATURE!

The automobile business has long been responsible for creating imaginative names for ordinary features. Anyone remember the Dynaflo automatic transmission or Rocket 88 engine? See if you can match up the trade names of some current new-car features in the column at the left with the descriptions of the functions they actually perform on the right. (The answers and which company is responsible for the nomenclature are given below.)

A. GAUGE THAT RECORDS THE AGGREGATE AMOUNT OF TIME THE CAR'S CONVERTIBLE TOP HAS BEEN LOWERED

B. KEYLESS PUSH-BUTTON ENTRY/START SYSTEM

C. CONTROL ON THE DRIVER'S SIDE FOR THE PASSENGER'S POWER SEAT

D. PANORAMIC GLASS ROOF THAT CAN SWITCH FROM LIGHT TO DARK TRANSPARENCY

E. SYSTEM THAT AUTOMATICALLY ENGAGES THE BRAKES AT LOW SPEEDS TO AVOID REAR-END COLLISIONS

F. SYSTEM THAT RAISES THE FRONT END OF THE CAR SLIGHTLY TO CLEAR RAMPS AND SPEED BUMPS

G. ADAPTIVE SUSPENSION

H. MANUAL GEAR-SELECT FUNCTION FOR AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION

I. INSTRUMENT PANEL ILLUMINATION SYSTEM

J. CLIMATE-CONTROL AIR-FILTRATION SYSTEM

1. City Safety

2. Plasmacluster

3. Gentleman's Function

4. Openometer

5. Optitron

6. Parking Lifter

7. Comfort Access

8. Magic Sky

Control

9. Sentronic

10. Skyhook

Answers:

1. E (Volvo) 2. J (Toyota) 3. C (BMW) 4. A (MINI) 5. I (Lexus) 6. F (Ferrari) 7. B (BMW)
8. D (Mercedes-Benz) 9. H (Saab) 10. G (Maserati)

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