

STAND UP FOR OUR BORN IN DETROIT MUSTANGS

By John M. Clor

It's been another cold, snowy winter in The Motor City, and I've now walked another million miles inside Detroit's Cobo Hall attending "media days" at the North American International Auto Show. Well, O.K.—at least it seems like I've again walked a million miles during three days of vehicle introductions and press conferences. Typical of the times, coverage of this year's show has been peppered with doom and gloom for the domestic auto industry—with our beloved sporty high-performance cars (the 2010 Shelby GT500 Mustang included) taking a back seat to hybrids, plug-ins and electrics.

If you believe everything you read, you'd think that hybrids are the hottest-selling vehicles on the planet (even though they account for less than 3 percent of the new vehicle market), and that the Japanese automakers are in the driver's seat for hybrid, plug-in hybrid-electric and electric car technology. The problem with reading the mainstream media (or should it be called lamestream?) and internet car-site bloggers (I use that term as most of them really are not bona fide journalists or writers) is that there's a strong anti-Detroit sentiment out there that corrupts any real reporting and promotes a lemmings-like mentality that clouds the view of America's automotive future.

My friends tell that me my years of attending the major auto shows (2009 marks my 20th year of covering the shows professionally) have given me a cynical view of such press gatherings, but I totally disagree. I think that a couple decades of experience have rewarded me with the kind of deep perspective that is required to put predispositions and trend swings into context. Those of you who know me or have read my views in other Mustang publications know that I like to challenge conventional thinking. I feel compelled to speak out against misperceptions and the misunderstood. For instance, I take a lot of jabbing for being a big fan of the 1974-'78 Mustang II—the underdog of the Mustang hobby. But if you've read my book, *The Mustang Dynasty*, you can begin to understand why so many of today's opinions of those unappreciated cars are truly unfounded.

Like any other real Mustang person, I have no overwhelming urge to follow the crowd. I like what I like, and "I calls 'em like I sees 'em." Unlike you'll read in almost every other report, I don't automatically put the words "gas-guzzling" in front of SUV or full-size pickup." Nor do I always use the word "beleaguered" to preface Detroit's Big Three. Real journalists won't do that—just as they wouldn't write that someone was "rushed to the hospital"—after all, what ambulance driver simply takes his sweet time getting there?

Yes, there's no denying that there was less glitz and glamour at this year's Detroit show. And yes, a number of foreign makers cancelled their press conferences or dropped out of the annual event entirely—including Nissan, Suzuki, Porsche, Ferrari, Rolls-Royce, Land Rover, and Mitsubishi (although the latter had local dealers put together a display). But that had much more to do with the world's economy than it did the car companies, and certainly didn't make Detroit or the big news from the auto show any less important.

I was very impressed with what I witnessed this year at NAIAS, as the cars are the best ever, the technology is amazing and even more noteworthy we are truly on the verge of re-introducing electric cars to the marketplace. And for those who think that the Hybrid-focused Japanese automakers have also invented electric cars, I say "re-introducing" because when you do some homework, you'll come across the "Detroit Electric" car that dates all the way back to the early 1900s. While you're at it, research what role "The Arsenal of Democracy" had played in the freedom that our country enjoys today, and maybe also check into the monumental impact that Henry Ford's "\$5-a-day wage" had on building America's middle class, powering our economy and raising our nation's standard of living. Then let's talk about which of today's automakers have invested the most money here in the United States in powertrain and safety technology alone over the past 20 years. Once we come to understand the total universe of what Detroit has done and IS DOING for America, then maybe our attitudes about car buying will change.

You only need to look as far as the U.S. Congress for evidence of today's sheer ignorance about the value of

Detroit automakers to our way of life. Most specifically, there are some Southern Senators (including one crackpot named Shelby—how ironic!—from Alabama) who have expressed views about the domestic industry that are so totally outdated and ill-informed, you wonder how truly disconnected these so-called leaders can possibly be! I'm not talking politics here. I'm simply talking common sense!

With that in mind, I have some Mustang friends who have asked me to organize a full boycott of the state of Alabama, including calling for all of us to pull our Mustang 45th Anniversary celebration out of that state and hold the event someplace that better appreciates our Ford Mustangs, all of which were "Born In Detroit" no matter where they were actually assembled. But not only is such a move for an event this big nearly impossible at this late date, it would only serve hurt the people of Alabama, and extract the kind of financial penalty that their anti-Detroit Senator wishes to extract on others.

Perhaps a better solution would be for us to use our 45th Anniversary event down there as a "statement" by domestic car lovers with a massive visual demonstration of our support for Ford Motor Company and our "Born In Detroit" Mustangs. Maybe we can put together a drive to their capitol building to show our solidarity, and our desire to have a Detroit viable enough to continue designing and building Mustangs for generations to come.

So I hope all of you plan on heading down to Birmingham for the 45th Anniversary weekend and help to turn it into a "million Mustang march" of sorts—a gathering that shows the world we love the Mustang, which is arguably Detroit's most iconic product.

Personally, I don't want to buy a hybrid or electric car right now, foreign or domestic, and prefer that I can continue to enjoy the freedom of choice to drive a Mustang if I so desire!

John Clor

John M. Clor
Ford Racing

www.FordPerformance.com

