



THE AMERICAN DREAM, EMBODIED IN CHROME

P-38 Lightning fighter plane—became a style icon of the 1950s, eventually achieving outrageous heights. America also emphasized style in popularizing the station wagon and eventually the SUV, while the legacy of the rugged Wild West turned the pickup truck into a status symbol. Go anywhere, do anything, and don't let anyone stop you.

Perhaps the greatest impact that the American car has had on culture is the muscle car. Unburdened by frugality, motivated by motorsports, and meant to go fast in a straight line right toward the horizon, the muscle car embraced psychedelic imagery via Madison Avenue's "mad men" to promote cheap speed and carefree thrills, right off the dealership floor. They were aimed at a burgeoning concept of youth culture, an idea America exported on a massive scale. The "teenager" demographic was a cultural and economic force to be reckoned with; a young man's

coming of age became aligned with an interest in hot rods, drag racing, and the ability to express themselves through any genre of vehicular subculture—vanning, hot-rodding, lowriders, and road racing were just some of the ways that enthusiasts expressed themselves.

The scale of the American automotive industry feels staggering by today's standards: for much of the 1900s, just three companies owned nearly the entire share of the market. As a result, the years leading into the new millennium were often painful for executives of Ford, GM, and Chrysler, who withstood energy crises, painful downsizing, and the business agility of foreign carmakers. In the 1990s, a wave of prosperity and the advent of computer-aided technology gave the homegrown industry a boost: Ford's wind-cheating Taurus was the best-selling car upon its debut in 1986, while Chrysler's creativity allowed

the smallest of the Big Three (which nearly went bankrupt in the 1980s) to make an impact—especially with the Dodge Viper, a V-10-powered roadster without traction control that demanded pure skill to handle.

A new front of electrification has come to define the automotive industry. America's most prominent representative in this field doesn't come from the heartland of Michigan but from California, with the wildly popular Tesla; subsequently, the race to develop electric drivetrains with more power and more range has become as fervent as the NASCAR rivalries of the 1960s. With American automakers pouring billions of dollars into this new chapter of mobility, U.S. innovation may again lead the way for carmakers across the world. Even 10 years ago, a plug-in hybrid Corvette was thought to be anathema, but Americans know that the pursuit of speed never rests.

“UNMISTAKABLY BOLD, AND DESIGNED FOR THE LONG, UNYIELDING HIGHWAYS, AMERICAN CARS SEEMED TO COMMAND THE ROAD.”

