

Radical Rides

» If building a hot rod is your idea of fun, **Troy Trepanier**, president of Rad Rides by Troy, is your kind of car guy.



Fresh from being named the 2007 Grand National Roadster Show Builder of the Year, Trepanier will join a strong lineup of speakers at the 15th

Annual *AutoWeek* Design Forum on Jan. 16, 2008, in Detroit.

Other *AW* Design Forum speakers include Jesse James, owner of West Coast Choppers and star of the Discovery Channel's *Monster Garage*; Paul Kolada, founder and principal of Priority Designs; Franz von Holzhausen, director of design at Mazda North America; Aaron Pizzuti, design manager for Jeep; and Carl Zipfel, exterior design director at Hummer.

For more information or to register for the Design Forum, see page 10.

THIS WEEK > EXTRA

UPDATE THE G8

Pontiac has opted to go with the sportier FE2 suspension on both the V6-powered S model and the V8-powered SS version of its coming G8 sedan. Originally, the S model was fitted with a softer FE1 setup. FE2 has better on-center feel and grip in lateral maneuvers.

Pontiac officials note that only a six-speed auto **Powergenix?** will be in the V6 ~~which it launches~~ in early 2008; a six-speed manual will arrive shortly thereafter.

CORRECTIONS

Our Dec. 3 *Escape Roads* should have listed only the Chevrolet Citation as an X-body model. Also, the Corvair should have been identified as a rear-engine car.

In the Dec. 10 issue, we should have listed the U.S. price for the 2008 Porsche 911 GT2 at \$192,560, including \$860 destination.

In *Smokin' Deals* for Dec. 10, we should have shown a photo of a 2008 Chrysler Town & Country minivan.

THIS WEEK >



Brian Hall, self-proclaimed "Main Fuse" of Thunderstruck Motors in Santa Rosa, California, makes his escape from EVS23 on his own electric scooter, a lithium-iron-phosphate-powered screamer.

WOODSTOCK FOR EV LOVERS

Lithium iron phosphate produces biggest buzz

» WE FIRST ATTENDED the Electric Vehicle Symposium 13 years ago (*AW*, Dec. 26, 1994), when an electric-powered future was being forced on the automotive industry by the state of California with its zero-emissions-vehicle mandate. That mandate fizzled (long story), but the number of electric-vehicle makers and suppliers seems to have risen regardless (another long story), spurred this time by commerce instead of government.

This year's EVS23 in Anaheim—yep, they've been doing this since 1984—was sort of a Woodstock for EVs. There were electric bicycles, scooters, skateboards, cars and even full-size Class 7 trucks running on nothing more than the juice that comes out of a wall socket.

Batteries still seem to be the toughest part of the equation. While the first General Motors EV1s ran on lead-acid batteries, the next ones went twice as far on nickel metal



The BugE has three wheels and seats one.

hydride. NiMH is still used, but many EV makers have moved on to lithium-ion batteries. Another battery company swore that nickel zinc was the answer to every thing. Lithium iron (no, not ion) phosphate was being used in everything from electric bicycles to new Shelby Mustangs and real, live Shelby Cobras made by a San Diego company called HST Automotive. HST also says it is working on an all-electric carbon-fiber supercar.

The mighty Smith Electric Vehicle Class 7 truck gets up to 150 miles of range from the sodium-nickel-chloride, or Z5, batteries under its bed.

So far, only three companies are making real cars: Tesla with its lithium-ion plug-in sports car, AC Propulsion with a Scion xB electric conversion and newcomer Miles Electric Vehicles, which converts Chinese cars to low-speed "neighborhood electric vehicles," or NEVs, for the U.S. market. Several other companies had NEVs on hand, and several more had three-wheeled, commuter-looking transport pods. But Miles is certifying a freeway-capable passenger sedan due out in late 2008 or early 2009. Since it's funded by billionaire owner Miles Rubin, the company isn't looking for any more money, which is unique.

To find out if the future will be electric, you'll have to plug in your crystal ball, but there almost certainly will be an increasing electric presence in transportation around the world, from scooters to moving vans. Sign us up for one of those lithium-iron Cobras. —MARK VAUGHN