

AutoPacific Announces 2008 Ideal Vehicle Awards

*Porsche Top Premium Brand, Ford Top Mainstream Brand,
Mercedes-Benz S-Class Top Vehicle, Lincoln Navigator Top Truck*

Tustin, California, June 30, 2008 – An “ideal” is defined as an excellent or perfect example. In the annual Ideal Vehicle Awards (IVA), announced today by automotive research and consulting firm AutoPacific, owners rate their new 2008 model year cars and trucks by how closely they come to their ideal, as measured by 15 key vehicle attributes. The cars or trucks that owners would change the least are the most ideal.

The conclusion to be drawn from AutoPacific’s IVA results is that carmakers that best understand their customers create the vehicles that are ideal for their core buyers.

There are twenty-eight segment winners and overall winners for premium brands and mainstream brands.

The top-rated premium brand overall is Porsche, out-scoring Jaguar and Buick for the most ideal premium vehicle brand honors. The top-rated mainstream brand is Ford, out scoring GMC for top mainstream brand results.

The top-rated vehicle (and top-rated car) is the Mercedes-Benz S-Class, a Premium Luxury Car. The second and third top-rated cars are from Ford Motor Company – the Mercury Sable and the Ford Taurus, both in the Large Car category. The top-rated truck is the Lincoln Navigator, a Premium Luxury SUV, closely followed by the Ford Taurus X, a Large Crossover SUV, and the Ford Expedition EL, a Large SUV.

Ford Motor Company leads the industry with a total of fifteen segment winners (including three for Volvo). General Motors has six segment winners. Ford won no less than five sport utility vehicle categories with Expedition EL, Taurus X, Edge, Escape, and Lincoln Navigator.

Including eight ties, of the twenty-eight Ideal Vehicle Award (IVA) categories, American brands have twenty segment winners, European brands have nine, Japanese brands have six and Korean brands have two winners.

The top-rated product segment is Large Crossover SUV confirming that Americans continue to value large, comfortable vehicles suitable for suburban driving and longer distance highway cruising, but without the fuel consumption of heavier, traditional SUVs.

2008 Ideal Premium Brand: **Porsche**

2008 Ideal Mainstream Brand: **Ford**

2008 Ideal Product Segment: **Large Crossover SUV**

Top rated 2008 Ideal Vehicles:

Passenger Cars:

Premium Luxury Car
Aspirational Luxury Car
Large Luxury Car
Large Car
Luxury Mid-Size Car

Mercedes-Benz S-Class
Cadillac CTS/Volvo C70
Mercury Grand Marquis
Mercury Sable
Volvo S40

Premium Mid-Size Car
Mid-Size Car
Image Compact Car
Compact Car
Economy Car
Premium Sports Car
Sports Car
Sporty Car

Buick LaCrosse/Chevrolet Malibu
Ford Fusion
Volvo C30
Volkswagen Rabbit
Nissan Versa
Porsche 911/Cayman/Boxster
Mazda MX-5 Miata
Ford Mustang

Pickups, SUVs, and Minivans:

Large Light-Duty Pickup
Large Heavy-Duty Pickup
Compact Pickup
Luxury Sport Utility
Large Sport Utility
Premium Mid-Size Sport Utility
Mid-Size Sport Utility
Compact SUV/Off-Road Vehicle
Premium Luxury Crossover SUV
Luxury Crossover SUV
Large Crossover SUV
Premium Mid-Size Crossover SUV
Mid-Size Crossover SUV
Compact Crossover SUV
Minivan

Ford F-150/Chevrolet Silverado
Ford Super Duty
Ford Explorer Sport Trac
Lincoln Navigator
Ford Expedition EL
Chevrolet Trail Blazer/Toyota 4Runner/GMC Envoy
Kia Sorento/Jeep Liberty
Suzuki Grand Vitara
Audi Q7
Buick Enclave
Ford Taurus X
Ford Edge
Ford Escape
Subaru Forester
Toyota Sienna/ Hyundai Entourage

In addition to identifying segment winners, IVA also establishes numerical ideal vehicle ratings for virtually every passenger car and light truck in the United States market. This results from calculating owner input across 15 specific areas related to a vehicle's attributes, including: exterior styling, exterior size, passenger roominess, cargo space, driver's seat comfort, drivers seat visibility, interior technology, interior lighting, power and acceleration, ease of getting in and out, interior storage compartments, ride, handling, safety features and tires and wheels.

AutoPacific is a future-oriented automotive marketing and product-consulting firm. Every year it publishes a wide variety of syndicated studies for the automotive industry. The firm also conducts extensive proprietary research and consulting for auto manufacturers, distributors, marketers and suppliers worldwide. Company headquarters and its state-of-the-art automotive research facility are in Tustin, California, with an affiliate office in the Detroit area.

Additional information can be found on AutoPacific's websites: <http://www.autopacific.com> and <http://blog.vehiclevoice.com>. To weigh in with comments concerning these results, you can comment on the VehicleVoice blog site.

CONTACT: George Peterson or Dan Hall @ AutoPacific, 714.838.4234 or 800.576.AUTO

AutoPacific, Inc.
2991 Dow Avenue
Tustin, California 92780-7219

gpeterson@autopacific.com
dhall@autopacific.com

2008 Ideal Vehicle Awards: Top-Rated Brands

Porsche wins 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award as Top Premium Brand: Porsche is the top-rated Premium Brand in AutoPacific's 2008 Ideal Vehicle Awards. With three wins (out of four vehicles) the Porsche 911, Cayman, and Boxster (all Ideal Premium Sports Car Award winners) propelled the brand to the top of the class. All three had solid, high scoring results, leading to Porsche beating out all other brands.

Ford wins 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award as Top Mainstream Brand: The planners, engineers and designers of Ford products have paid close attention to what their customers want and have delivered a range of 15 award winning cars and trucks.

Additional comments regarding individual winners:

Mercedes-Benz S-Class Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Premium Luxury Car:

For the second year in a row owners in the Premium Luxury Car segment crown the Mercedes-Benz S-Class an Ideal Vehicle. The same S-Class that has become synonymous with safety, style, and performance has also become an ideal choice for owners in 2008. Winning out over Audi, Lexus, and Infiniti, among others, by receiving higher ratings for exterior styling, interior lighting, passenger room, ride, handling, safety, ingress/egress, interior storage and an level of technology.

Cadillac CTS and Volvo C70 Win AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Aspirational Luxury Car:

The Cadillac CTS won the 2008 IVA award in the Aspirational Luxury Car segment. Owners rated it highly for its exterior styling and size. It also scored very well for power and acceleration. The infotainment system added to owner's ratings of the CTS as it scored highly with respect to level of technology.

Even though the Volvo C70 is only available in one trim level (T5) it seems as though the Swedes have packaged the vehicle just right. With the most modern convenience features, owners in the Aspirational Luxury Car segment found the C70 well equipped, giving the C70 top honors as a 2008 ideal vehicle. Of course it comes standard with numerous safety features (it's a Volvo), sharp wheels and tires, excellent interior lighting and appropriate seat firmness.

Mercury Grand Marquis Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Large Luxury Car:

A perennial favorite at Mercury the large, spacious and comfortable Grand Marquis won the 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award in the Large Luxury Car segment. With large cargo space, appropriate exterior styling, V8 power and acceleration and easy ingress/egress it's no wonder owners rated the Grand Marquis an ideal vehicle.

Mercury Sable Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Large Car:

The Large Car category had some stiff competition between the Sable, Taurus and Avalon. In the end, owner's scores ranked that the Sable as the ideal Large Car. It was the Sable's scores for visibility, interior storage and handling that really helped outpace the competition.

Volvo S40 Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Luxury Mid-Size Car:

The Volvo S40 was the clear winner in the Luxury Mid-Size Car category. With high ratings for exterior size, visibility, ride, handling and safety it's easy to see why the S40 is an ideal vehicle. Volvo engineers and designers definitely hit their target. Luxury Mid-Size car owner's scores prove that Volvo understands their buyers very well. Top marks were also given for seat firmness, interior lighting, wheels and tires, and exterior styling.

Buick LaCrosse and Chevrolet Malibu Win AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Premium Mid-Size Car:

Winning for ride, power and acceleration the Buick LaCrosse wins the 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award in the Luxury Mid-Size Car segment. With refined chassis tuning and Stabilitrac the LaCrosse came out on top. We must hand it to Buick for knowing their target buyer.

The all-new 2008 Chevrolet Malibu has already caught the attention of the automotive press. Now, owner's preferences for the Malibu's exterior styling, exterior size, and passenger room helped bringing home a 2008 IVA award in the Premium Mid-Size Car category. High marks for the level of technology, seat firmness, and interior lighting help compliment the victory.

Ford Fusion Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Mid-Size Car:

For a Mid-Size car the Ford Fusion really packs a lot into a mid-size package. Already known as an affordable, well-styled vehicle with good road manners, we were not surprised to find the Fusion winning over owners in the Mid-Size Car category. The Fusion came out on top, and is highly rated for passenger room, cargo space, seat firmness, ride and handling.

Volvo C30 Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Image Compact Car:

Image Compact Cars are products where style typically trumps absolute function. In the case of the Volvo C30 it seemed to appeal to Image Compact Car owners on both an emotional and rational level. Owner's preferences for the C30's exterior styling, ride, and safety blended well with the interior lighting, seat firmness, and level of technology.

Volkswagen Rabbit Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Compact Car:

Package considerations placed the Volkswagen Rabbit at the top of the Compact Car segment. Winning the 2008 Ideal Vehicle award for it's exterior size, passenger room, and interior lighting, it also garnered top marks for seat firmness and ride.

Nissan Versa Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Economy Car:

The Nissan Versa comes through as the 2008 ideal vehicle in the Economy Car segment. Owners in the Economy Car segment rated the Versa as having top rated passenger room, handling, and ingress/egress. As a vehicle positioned below the Sentra, owners are finding the Versa really retains many of the qualities found in larger vehicles.

Porsche 911, Cayman and Boxster Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Premium Sports Car:

Sweeping the field in the Premium Sports Car segment, owners provided validation that Porsche really knows their target buyer and understands how to build an ideal vehicle. This year they cleaned house in the Premium Sports Car segment. Not only did all of the Premium Sports Cars they produce score in the top three. It was a three-way-tie for first place, with the 911, Cayman and Boxster all sharing in the glory.

For the second year in a row the Porsche Cayman wins as the ideal vehicle in the Premium Sports Car segment. The 911 may have had the edge when it came to visibility, ride, and ingress/egress but the Cayman was touted for its safety features, cargo space and exterior styling.

The owner ratings found that the only substitute for a Porsche is... well... another Porsche. Winning a 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award in the Premium Sports Car segment, owners gave the Boxster strong ratings for handling, wheels and tires, and seat firmness.

Mazda MX-5 Miata Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Sports Car:

A sports car in a timeless, traditional layout, the Mazda MX-5 Miata scored at the top of its class in the 2008 Ideal Vehicle Awards. With high ratings for cargo space, visibility, handling, power and acceleration and interior storage the MX-5 Miata blew the competition away.

Ford Mustang Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Sporty Car:

For the second year in a row the all-American pony car comes in for a win in the Sporty Car category. Owners gave top marks for the Mustang's exterior size, cargo space, visibility, ride and interior storage. In the Sporty Car segment the Mustang still reigns supreme.

Ford F-150 and Chevrolet Silverado Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Large Light-Duty Pickup:

The Ford F-150 takes home the 2008 Large Light-Duty Pickup 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award. Available in almost every conceivable configuration F-150 owners were particularly pleased with their cargo space, level of technology, and handling. Chevrolet's Silverado comes in for a win in the Large Light Duty Pickup segment for a 2008 IVA victory. Interestingly, the Silverado won the 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award because it received very high marks all across the board. Especially strong ratings for interior lighting and safety ensured a victory.

Ford Super Duty Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Large Heavy-Duty Pickup:

The venerable, tough and rugged Ford Super Duty earns its keep, scoring the 2008 IVA in the Large Heavy-Duty Pickup category. Dominating the segment, owners found very little wrong with their trucks, especially when it came to exterior size, cargo space, visibility, and exterior styling. According to owner's ratings, this workhorse has the right technology, safety, and ingress/egress to be top of the class.

Ford Explorer Sport Trac Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Compact Pickup:

As owners of compact pickup trucks have migrated towards four, full size front-hinged doors, it makes sense that the winner in the Compact Pickup segment is only offered in a four-door version. The Ford Explorer Sport Trac comes out a winner with a 2008 IVA award in the Compact Pickup segment. With highly rated exterior styling and size, a top ranked ride, and handling the Sport Trac came out number one. The win also comes thanks in part to V6 or V8 power with plenty of power and acceleration.

Lincoln Navigator Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Luxury Sport Utility:

An iconic SUV since it hit the market in 1998, the Lincoln Navigator proves itself once again as it wins the 2008 IVA in the Luxury Sport Utility segment with room to spare. The Navigator scored well in all fifteen categories. From exterior size, passenger room and cargo space to unparalleled ride, safety and wheels & tires, the Lincoln Navigator still satisfies its owners.

Ford Expedition EL Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Large Sport Utility:

For the second year in a row, the Expedition scores. Owners ranked the Ford Expedition highly for cargo space, exterior styling, and level of technology. It was further noted that the 2008 Expedition EL had exceptional ride and handling.

Chevrolet TrailBlazer, GMC Envoy and Toyota 4Runner Win AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Premium Mid-Size Sport Utility:

The Chevrolet Trailblazer wins a 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award in the Premium Mid-Size Sport Utility segment. Scoring particularly well for cargo space, visibility, and great ingress/egress.

GMC's Envoy wins in the Premium Mid-Size Sport Utility segment with owners strong ratings for seat firmness, level of technology, ride, handling, power and acceleration. Even in it's sixth model year the Toyota 4Runner is still an Ideal Vehicle Award winner.

Toyota has done a great job with this body-on-frame SUV. Few buyers would change interior storage space, exterior size or passenger room. Owners also noted the 4Runner's level of safety.

Kia Sorento and Jeep Liberty Win AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Mid-Size Sport Utility Vehicle:

Not only has Kia improved its image, it has reinvented itself with vehicles like the Sorento. Owners rallied around the Sorento commending it's passenger room, visibility, and interior storage. It was easy to see why the Kia Sorento won this year's IVA in the Mid-Size Sport Utility segment.

A vehicle still true to its off-road capable lineage, the Jeep Liberty is no poser. According to owners it is an ideal Mid-Size Sport Utility Vehicle with highly rated safety features, technology, seat firmness and interior lighting. The Liberty also scored very well for exterior size and passenger room.

Suzuki Grand Vitara Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Compact SUV / Off-Road Vehicle:

Owners in the Compact SUV/Off-Road Vehicle segment place the Suzuki Grand Vitara into the winner circle, winning the 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award. With highly rated visibility, interior lighting, technology, wheels & tires, safety features, and great ingress/egress the Grand Vitara comes out ahead. Combining off-road capabilities with on-road comfort the Grand Vitara proves itself a winner with owners.

Audi Q7 Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Premium Luxury Crossover SUV:

Owners in the Premium Luxury Crossover SUV segment crowned the Audi Q7 as the winner in the 2008 Ideal Vehicle Awards. Across the board, the Q7 did very well, winning for exterior size, interior lighting, exterior styling, seat firmness, handling, wheels & tires, and top-notch safety features.

Buick Enclave Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Luxury Crossover SUV:

Pulling double duty, essentially replacing both the Rendezvous and Rainier, the Buick Enclave has not only caught the attention of a much larger and much younger demographic, it has earned a reputation as an ideal vehicle. The interior is spacious with generous passenger room and interior storage. Its interior lighting, safety and ample technology compliment the exterior styling, wheels & tires, and ride.

Ford Taurus X Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Large Crossover SUV:

Beating out strong competition in the Large Crossover SUV segment the Ford Taurus X claims victory as owners give it the highest ratings for visibility, interior lighting, seat firmness, level of technology, handling, wheels & tires, and ingress/egress.

Ford Edge Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Premium Mid-Size Crossover SUV:

Bridging the gap between Minivans and truck based SUVs the Ford Edge sliced through the competition in the Premium Mid-Size Crossover SUV segment. With highly rated seat firmness and just the right amount of technology it was easy to understand how the Edge became the best-selling Premium Mid-Size Crossover SUV in the U.S. Owners were also very impressed with their interior storage and safety equipment.

Ford Escape Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Mid-Size Crossover SUV:

Already a success, the Ford Escape received a redesign for 2008. Owners find the Escape is the right package at the right price in a segment that has ballooned over the last decade. The Ford Escape is the 2008 Ideal vehicle in the Mid-Size Crossover SUV segment, winning for exterior size, visibility, interior lighting, seat firmness, ride and handling.

Subaru Forester Wins AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Compact Crossover SUV:

What makes this a Subaru a winner? Well, aside from this foul-weather friend's seamless AWD system and solid build quality owners in the Compact Crossover SUV segment claim the Forester has what it takes to be a 2008 Ideal Vehicle segment winner. Performance in terms of exceptionally sure-footed handling and plenty of power and acceleration was balanced with practicality as owners appreciated the interior storage, and visibility.

Toyota Sienna and Hyundai Entourage Win AutoPacific 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award for Minivan:

The Toyota Sienna has been declared a 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award winner by owners in the Minivan category. Owners declared the Sienna a winner by complimenting the exterior size, ride, and handling. Also scoring top points for the Sienna were its V6 power (266hp), which made for swift acceleration, and excellent ingress/egress. Owners in the Minivan segment have given the Hyundai top marks as it won the 2008 Ideal Vehicle Award. Earning a five-star safety rating owners gave the Entourage kudos for its safety features. Owners complimented the exterior styling and wheels & tires, and gave the Entourage high ratings for passenger room, seat firmness and interior lighting.