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BLUE BOOK BRIEFING

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INDUSTRY INSIGHTS:

A Lot of Life In It Yet

- Jack R. Nerad, executive editorial director and executive market analyst, Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com

When the Progressive Insurance Automotive XPRIZE was launched in 2008 with the goal to inspire a new generation of commercially viable, safe and fuel-efficient vehicles, many naturally assumed that the winner of the competition would be an electric or a plug-in hybrid car. After all, plug-in hybrids and electrics are touted as being the next wave of auto transport, especially among politicians and in the general media; and, by and large, their greatest virtue is their fuel efficiency. When it comes to things like range or cost-effectiveness, one might quibble with electrics and plug-ins, but they do deliver fuel economy. So it must have come as a major shock, especially to the 'Electric Car Mafia,' that the winner of the most important Automotive XPRIZE category, the Mainstream Class, was powered by an internal combustion engine (ICE) that burned E85.

Now, let us make it clear than one will never mistake the "Edison2 Very Light Car #98" for a conventional gasoline-powered vehicle, but its victory in this prestigious competition points out that there is still a great deal of upside potential in making vehicles powered by ICEs more efficient and more Earth-friendly. The four-passenger Very Light Car bested a field of 135 competing vehicles from around the globe, turning in a miles-per-gallon-equivalent number of 102.5.

To be fair, the winners of the other two classes were both battery electrics and both turned in higher MPG scores, but that doesn't diminish the startling fact that a vehicle powered by an internal combustion engine burning a non-exotic fuel walked away the big winner.

Our guess is, if one had asked Edison2 Founder Oliver Kuttner if an ICE-powered vehicle would win the prize three years ago, even he might have scoffed. He didn't name his effort after electricity's biggest proponent for nothing. But after examining the engineering challenges presented by the Automotive XPRIZE, he and his cohorts came to believe that a very lightweight, highly aerodynamic vehicle powered by a small displacement ICE was the right solution.

While it is unlikely we will see many 800-pound cars like the Very Light Car on our roads any time soon, Kuttner's effort shows what out-of-the-box thinking might do to prolong the life of the internal combustion engine that uses gasoline or gasoline equivalents – fuels that have, needless to say, a robust, ready-built infrastructure. That point was brought home in a very real-world way just yesterday when Honda Accord Product Planner Jeff Swedlund came by our offices to show us the virtues of the 2011 Honda Accord.

“WHILE MANY PEOPLE ARE PREDICTING THE QUICK DEATH OF THE INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE, THE TRUTH IS THAT DEATH MIGHT WELL BE A LONG WAY OFF.”

- JACK R. NERAD

Through a long list of individual efforts, from lower-rolling-resistance tires, to a different grade of automatic transmission fluid, to a front diffuser and many more, Honda engineers have been able to wring an additional two miles-per-gallon out of their four-cylinder Accord. This was accomplished without resorting to a new engine and without making major changes to the existing engine.

The point of all this is that while many people are predicting the quick death of the internal combustion engine, the truth is that death might well be a long, long way off. If engineers apply the same innovative thinking to ICE-powered cars that they do to electrics and hybrids – and we predict they will – we can expect to see continued advances in conventional engine fuel economy and emissions performance. There is a lot of life in the old boy yet.

LATEST NEWS & BLOGS ON KBB GREEN:

Check out the very latest news and blog entries by visiting www.kbb.com/green and clicking on News & Blogs.

The following latest news & blogs by kbb.com's editorial staff went live on the site or were updated during September 2010.

[2011 Chevrolet Volt pricing will start at \\$41,000](#)
[2011 Tesla Roadster 2.5 - First Look](#)
[2012 Ford Focus Electric gets liquid-cooled battery, 100-mile range](#)
[2013 BMW Megacity Vehicle -- an inside look at the EV of tomorrow](#)
[Audi Updates its Autonomous TTS Pikes Peak challenger](#)
[Dutch develop NOx-eating concrete paving material](#)
[EcoMotors "opoc" engine gets funding from Bill Gates, Vinod Khosla](#)
[Feds want your input in creating new fuel economy labels](#)
[First Drive: 2010 smart fortwo electric drive](#)
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[Toyota and Tesla formalize development deal on new-gen RAV4 EV](#)

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Videos Posted to kbb.com:

[Chevrolet Cruze Overview](#)
[Honda CR-Z Video Review](#)
[Lotus Evora Video Review](#)
[Saab 9-5 Video Review](#)
[Volkswagen Jetta Video Review](#)

Written Stories Posted to kbb.com:

[2011 Bentley Continental GT -- Paris Auto Show \(part two\)](#)
[2011 Chevrolet Captiva -- Paris Auto Show](#)
[2011 Chevrolet Orlando -- Paris Auto Show](#)
[2011 Dodge Charger Pursuit -- Laying down the law, quickly](#)
[2011 Dodge Durango -- First look](#)
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[2011 Ford F-150 SVT Raptor Super Crew -- First look](#)
[2011 Ford Shelby GT500 Super Snake -- A new look and 800 hp](#)
[2011 Honda CR-Z -- Recent Drive](#)
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[2011 Peugeot 3008 Hybrid4 -- First diesel-electric production car](#)
[2011 Porsche 911 Speedster -- Paris Auto Show](#)

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[2011 Toyota Avalon review -- At your senior service](#)
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[2012 BMW 1 Series M Coupe: Take II teaser](#)
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[Mazda Shinari Concept -- Paris Auto Show](#)
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[OnStar celebrates its Sweet 15 anniversary](#)
[OnStar embarks on a new age of Responsible Connectivity](#)
[Opel GTC Paris Concept -- Paris Auto Show](#)
[Peugeot EX1 Concept -- Paris Auto Show](#)
[Saab 9-3 ePower -- Paris Auto Show](#)
[Travis Pastrana shatters Mt. Washington hillclimb mark in Subaru WRX](#)
[U.S. highway deaths hit 60-year low](#)
[U.S. Grand Prix organization reveals world-class design for new track](#)

The following new-vehicle reviews written by kbb.com's editorial staff went live on the site or were updated during September 2010. To see any new-vehicle review from kbb.com's editorial staff, please visit www.kbb.com and click on the News and Reviews tab, then select the make and model.

2011 BMW X5

When BMW introduced its first "crossover" SUV (CUV) in 2000, its marketers called it a "SAV" for "Sports Activity Vehicle." The point was to separate it from other sport utilities of the time and position it as a BMW-appropriate blend of performance and handling with practicality, versatility and all-weather capability. For the most part, it worked, for both the positioning and the vehicle. The original X5 was not the roomiest or most practical of SUVs, but piloting it down a twisty two-lane ribbon of road was a revelation. It drove like a taller version of the 5 Series Sedan, which, in many ways, it was. The 2011 version is all of that, and roomier, as well...

2011 Chevrolet Avalanche

When it was first introduced, the Avalanche was unique, combining a full-size SUV body with a pickup truck's cargo bed. Nine years later, the 2011 model continues with the same proportions, but with much better packaging. The Chevrolet Avalanche is built on GM's full-size SUV platform, which is also used for the Chevrolet Suburban and GMC Yukon XL, and it offers gasoline as well as Flex-Fuel (E85) capability. A refined small-block 5.3-liter V8 engine is standard and includes Active Fuel Management cylinder deactivation for optimal fuel economy. Three trim levels are offered: LS, LT, and LTZ with rear-wheel or four-wheel drive...

2011 Chevrolet Aveo

The 2011 Chevrolet Aveo, a smartly styled subcompact, offers excellent fuel economy, a long list of standard features and a bargain-basement price. The Aveo's appeal extends to budget-conscious first-time buyers, anyone on a limited income and unhappy SUV owners looking for an affordable and fuel-efficient way of getting to and from the office. Available as a sedan or sporty five-door hatchback, the Aveo's uncommonly high roof means tall occupants can sit comfortably in both front and rear, a major bonus for those who might stay clear of some small cars due to their cramped interiors. An all-new Aveo is slated for arrival in 2012, meaning come year's end you might be able to make an excellent deal on a remaining 2011 model...

2011 Chevrolet Camaro

There were some working in the halls of General Motors' rescue partner, the federal government, who felt that a V8-powered sports model like the Chevrolet Camaro was the wrong car at the wrong time; clearly the American consumer felt differently and has proven so by voting with their hard-earned dollars. The Camaro is a hit and whether in V8 trim or powered by the also-available V6, the 2011 Camaro is not just a car to be respected; it's a car to be celebrated. Not only does the newest model evoke all the good emotions of an earlier time, it also provides those same emotions for new generations who may remember the Camaro only as the noisy relic owned by the old guy at the end of the cul-de-sac. The 426-horsepower SS model certainly grabs the headlines, but the 312-horsepower V6-equipped LT offers significantly more performance than you might expect, while turning in laudable fuel efficiency...

2011 Chevrolet Colorado

As penny-pinching is becoming the norm these days, the compact pickup is beginning to look mighty attractive. Though it can't tow or haul like a full-size Silverado, the 2011 Chevrolet Colorado makes an attractive alternative for those whose truck use tends to be more recreational than occupational. The Colorado's 185-horsepower four-cylinder and 242-horsepower five-cylinder engines provide good power and excellent fuel economy, while a four-wheel-drive option allows the compact pickup to tackle deep snow and venture off-road. For those seeking more power, a 5.3-liter V8 is available on Extended and Crew Cab LT models. Although the Colorado's cab and bed are not the largest in this segment (and its turning radius is uncommonly wide), the truck remains competitive with Ford's Ranger series and, to a lesser extent, the Toyota Tacoma, Nissan Frontier and Dodge Dakota...

2011 Chevrolet Corvette

Once hailed as America's only true two-seat sports car, the 2011 Chevrolet Corvette continues to offer driving enthusiasts the most bang for the buck, running neck-and-neck (and in some cases surpassing) exotic cars costing up to four times as much – or even more. No where else but in America can you find a two-seat sports car costing roughly \$50,000 and delivering 430 horsepower while returning an EPA highway fuel economy figure of 26 miles per gallon. Although not as light or nimble as the Porsche 911, the Corvette Grand Sport delivers a track-ready performer, while the car's luxurious interior and comfortable ride make it perfect for daily commutes or long weekend getaways. For those willing to spend a lot more, there's the 505 horsepower Z06, and the supercar-status ZR1...

2011 Chevrolet HHR

While some dismiss the 2011 Chevrolet HHR as little more than a PT Cruiser clone, in truth the two vehicles appeal to very different audiences. Where the PT once pulled in Baby Boomers and Gen X males, the HHR speaks to today's young drivers who like to customize their cars with extreme paint jobs and near-deafening sound systems. And, since Chrysler has now officially announced the death of the PT Cruiser, the HHR stands alone in the quasi-retro American panel truck field. There's even a cool Panel version with windowless side panels and side cargo doors. Though smaller than it appears in pictures, the HHR is nevertheless a versatile and fun-to-drive vehicle as equally suited to small families as it is to hip singles...

2011 Chevrolet Impala

The closest thing Chevrolet has to a traditional full-size sedan is the aging, but still capable, Impala. Although its looks have held up, the Impala really struggles when compared to such heavyweights as the Honda Accord, Toyota Camry and Ford Taurus, as well as the new Hyundai Sonata and Kia Optima. Despite not having the strong resale figures of its Japanese and domestic rivals, the Impala does have number of redeeming qualities. The Impala features a large back seat and trunk, is equipped with GM's OnStar telematics system and is very competitively priced. Still, it's fair to say the Impala has its work cut out for it. With newer and better equipped vehicles, such as the Ford Taurus and Dodge Charger, ready to steal away domestic customers, dealers may be willing to deal to help keep the Impala moving...

2011 Chevrolet Malibu

Chevy's mid-size offerings, like most GM passenger cars, suffered corporate neglect in the 1990s and early 2000s as customers – and the company's engineering attention and budget – increasingly shifted toward trucks and SUVs. What a difference a few years make. After surviving one of the worst crisis in automotive history, GM emerges from bankruptcy with a renewed emphasis on high-quality, fuel-efficient vehicles. Nowhere is this philosophy more evident than in the company's most successful mid-size sedan, the Chevrolet Malibu. Now entering its third year of production, the Malibu has bolted from middle-of-the-road contender straight to the top of the mid-size sedan game. The 2011 Malibu looks wonderful, is solidly built and carefully crafted inside and out, offers good fuel economy, drives wonderfully and is priced to sell in serious volumes. If there is one weakness in the Malibu game plan, it is the lack of a proper hybrid model to challenge the Ford Fusion and Toyota Camry...

2011 Chevrolet Traverse

Despite a drop off in full-size SUV sales, American families are not getting any smaller. They still need the room and power of a big SUV, but with better fuel economy and handling. Keenly aware that many Americans have an inescapable need for seven-passenger transportation, Chevrolet created the Traverse, a crossover SUV offering maximum interior space, mid-level towing ability and fuel economy numbers that reach into the mid twenties. The Traverse combines contemporary styling, one of the best accident avoidance system in the business and an interior worthy of a high-end luxury car – all at a Chevrolet price...

2011 Ford Escape

Recently, Ford put a major effort into overhauling its aging Escape compact SUV with the stated purpose of challenging its much newer rivals. The transformation started in 2008 when Ford gave its popular compact SUV a cosmetic makeover, with a new interior and exterior design, and improved sound insulation and seat comfort. Then, in 2009, Ford completed the two-year renewal process with a major overhaul of the Escape's engine, transmission, suspension and brakes – changes that also applied to the Escape Hybrid (reviewed separately). As a result, the 2010 Escape will exit having recorded the second best sales year ever, no small accomplishment considering both the weak economy and tough new competition. For 2011, the Escape continues largely unchanged, but its mission remains the same: Keep luring foreign car buyers into Ford showrooms and into the Escape's driver's seat...

2011 Ford Escape Hybrid

While the bigger, heavier 2011 Ford Escape Hybrid doesn't deliver all the fuel economy of smaller hybrids like the Toyota Prius and Honda Civic Hybrid, it does offer greater utility and capability, especially when outfitted with four-wheel drive. Choosing the Escape Hybrid over a gas-only model will initially cost you more money up front than you'll end up saving at the pump, but you can still feel good about using less gas and spewing fewer pollutants than otherwise-efficient SUVs like the Honda CR-V and Toyota RAV4...

2011 Ford Expedition

Although the Ford Expedition (and other large, truck-based SUVs) may be in market decline, there remains a need for vehicles with their capabilities. In the 2011 Ford Expedition and extended-length Expedition EL, the automaker hopes to meet or exceed that need. Against rivals from Chevrolet, Nissan, Toyota and GMC, the Expedition stacks up well, offering innovative features like a power flush-folding third-row seat, the SYNC audio system and an external keypad locking/unlocking feature. With the auto industry slowly recovering, those willing to take a risk that fuel prices won't spike again may find now is the best time to make a great deal...

2011 Ford Flex

The 2011 Flex is Ford's answer to rivals such as the GMC Acadia and Honda Pilot. Designed to carry seven passengers, yet achieve the same kind of fuel economy as a mid-size sedan, the Flex is part of a growing trend away from V8-powered leviathans and toward more space efficient vehicles, particularly when towing is not a high priority. If all you need is room for the family, a minivan or mid-size SUV could certainly do the trick, but neither have the cutting-edge cool the square-as-a-shoebox Flex seems to ooze. You might even have to wrestle your teenagers for driving privileges – and why not? With room for lots of their friends, an optional built-in refrigerator and the technology-friendly SYNC audio system, the Flex can easily transform itself from family transport to Friday-night cruiser with just a turn of the ignition...

2011 Honda CR-Z

Remember the Honda CRX? It was a nifty little two-seater compact sports car that handled better than it accelerated and, although it wouldn't be considered fast by today's standards, it was definitely fun to drive – and it delivered good fuel economy. Honda stopped making the CRX in 1991, but the car maintains a cult following to this day. Enter the all-new 2011 Honda CR-Z. It's what the CRX might have evolved into had Honda kept it around all these years. Like its predecessor, it's not fast but it is fun to drive and, with a hybrid heart and sport-compact footwork, this new entry brings something different to the table...

2011 Saab 9-5

When General Motors faced bankruptcy in 2009 and was forced to shed half its eight U.S. brands, Sweden-based Saab – acquired by GM years ago – was one that had to go. When early efforts to sell the company failed, it entered the Swedish version of Chapter 11 bankruptcy, suspended operations and went into liquidation. But then tiny Dutch exotic sports-car maker Spyker stepped in and bought the proud “Born from Jets” brand and all its assets, with financing from the Swedish government and European investment banks. Saab then resumed operations as an independent automaker with its own design, engineering and state-of-the-art manufacturing, and is again building mid-size 9-3 models while ramping up production of this larger all-new 9-5 luxury sedan...

Kelley Blue Book Launches Hot Used-Car Report, Helping Dealers Better Understand Consumer Used-Car Interest

2008 Model-Year Vehicles, Hybrid SUVs Top Shopper Activity on Kbb.com

IRVINE, Calif., Sept. 27 -- Kelley Blue Book www.kbb.com, the leading provider of [new car](#) and [used car](#) information, today announces the launch of its monthly Hot Used-Car Report, featured in the company's [Blue Book Market Report](#).

Kelley Blue Book's Hot Used-Car Report captures monthly used-car retail shopper activity on kbb.com, including a list of the top and bottom movers in the same time period. Results are provided by the Kelley Blue Book Market Intelligence Team in an effort to help dealers better understand which used vehicles consumers are looking at most each month. Utilizing the information in this report could help dealers better manage used inventory, which could lead to increased profits... [MORE](#)

Kbb.com: Most Car Shoppers Say New Fuel Economy Letter Grade System Would Make No Difference in Understanding EPA Ratings

Nearly a Quarter of Car Shoppers Say Proposed System Would Make it Harder to Understand Vehicle EPA Ratings

IRVINE, Calif., Sept. 23 -- Kelley Blue Book www.kbb.com, the leading provider of [new car](#) and [used car](#) information, today reports the results of two kbb.com home page quick polls. The latest polls show that not only are a majority of car shoppers unaware of the new fuel economy and emissions letter grade (A+ to D) rating system proposed for new-vehicle window stickers, but most say it will make no difference in their understanding of EPA fuel economy ratings... [MORE](#)

Blue Book Market Report Data Reveals Why Used Hybrids Offer Best Value for Today's Green Drivers

Non-Hybrid Alternatives Still offer Better Long-Term Value

IRVINE, Calif., Sept. 20 -- Kelley Blue Book www.kbb.com, the leading provider of [new car](#) and [used car](#) information, today reports that now may be a great time to buy for those who purchase hybrids with the intent of reducing emissions and greenhouse gases as opposed to savings at the pump, as covered in the company's [Blue Book Market Report for September 2010](#).

During the past year, hybrid values have not kept pace with the appreciation of comparable segments or the overall marketplace. This has created a unique opportunity to buy a hybrid vehicle at a substantial savings compared to last year or even earlier this year. In fact, Kelley Blue Book has seen monthly traffic for used hybrid vehicles increase 10 – 20 percent, perhaps signaling that shoppers are starting to take advantage of relatively low hybrid values... [MORE](#)

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