



Behind the Scenes at 2013 TestFest: Part 2

Careening (and crooning) across the tarmac

CARS

Steven Bochenek

October 25, 2012

Share on Facebook

Share on Twitter

Share on Pinterest

[CLICK HERE FOR BEHIND THE SCENES AT TESTFEST PART 1](#)

It's noon on Wednesday. After two-and-a-half days of switching and out of cars, the first round of voting is done. KPMG begins tabulating over 40,000 votes this afternoon.

The Automobile Journalists Association of Canada (AJAC) has rented the Niagara-on-the-Lake Airport for the week. Instead of a track, there's "handling course" set up out on the runways. There are 60 different models (180 test cars in total) being reviewed by over 80 journalist AJAC members. After swiping a barcode on our personalized lanyards, we're given a set of keys. We then walk outside onto the tarmac, which is divided by category.

Of the 11 categories, I was assigned two that I had to complete by now: small cars under \$21k (Chevrolet Spark, Dodge Dart, Kia Rio LX, Mazda3 SkyActiv sedan, Nissan Sentra, Toyota and Toyota Prius c) and family cars under \$30k (Chevrolet Malibu, Ford Fusion, Honda Accord sedan, Mitsubishi Lancer AWC, Nissan Altima). We drive them on pre-assigned routes; each test takes from half to three-quarters of an hour.

On a scale of 1 to 10, 7 being 'good' and 1 being just plain unkind, we rate aspects of the styling and appearance, occupant environment, performance and vehicle dynamics. There are a total of 18 separate subjects we rate.

The rules here are strict and the AJAC executive team brooks no deviation. For instance, a category must be completed on a single day. In other words, no journalist can drive 3 of the cars in one of his categories one day and the remaining 4 the next. The reason? To keep the conditions and comparisons as similar as possible. Some categories contain as many as 8 vehicles but most are just 4 or 5, so it has

not been onerous.

Another interesting rule: even if we've previously driven and reviewed a given car, if it's in our assigned category, we must test it again here with the others in its category. The reason is sound: an impression of a car changes when directly compared to its competitors. An example: I was at the launch of the Chevy Spark in August, immediately after returning from 5 days in California, bombing around in Cadillac XTS and ATS models. No surprise, the Spark didn't feel exciting then. On Monday however, it was a completely different experience among its peers.

I blew through my categories fairly quickly and signed up for a couple more yesterday. As of half an hour ago, I've tested 20 different vehicles and expect to drive at least 15 more before the week is through.

Busy as the days have been, the nights have been riotous fun. However all play and no work makes Steve a wreck. Tonight is the big annual AJAC party, with entertainment provided by The Troubadours, a ragtag combination of auto journalists with guitars and big amplifiers. Fortunately, I've volunteered to sit in on the piano and do some crooning. Being part of the band will keep me sober and I'm looking very forward to *not* being hungover tomorrow during the final round of judging.

Image courtesy of [AJAC](#).

« **PREVIOUS ARTICLE**

RANDOM ARTICLE

NEXT ARTICLE »



Add a comment...

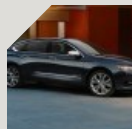
Facebook social plugin

Getting hitched?
Taking the plunge?
Seizing the day?

Get the financial advice you need to take your next big step.

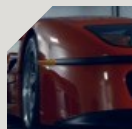
rbcadvicecentre.com RBC Royal Bank

MORE STUFF



2014 CHEVROLET IMPALA: JUST OFF THE PRODUCTION LINE

It's not just a police cruiser anymore.



VIDEO: THE AUTOMOTIVE LIFE

An ode to cars, all around the world.



REVIEW: 2013 CHRYSLER 200 S

Are you ready to love an American car again?



THE POLICE LAMBORGHINI



Stay classy, Dubai?



OUR TOP 5 CAMAROS

Chevy's pony cars have had a wilder ride than Ford's, but that just means they've been more fun.

Recommended

3 Steps for a Faster PC

Three easy steps:

1. Click "Start Download".
2. Run the quick scan.
3. Fix the errors.

START DOWNLOAD

★★★★★
"Winner of over 100 5-star awards"

RegClean Pro

FACEBOOK FAVOURITES

Recommendations

[Sign Up](#) Create an account or [Log in](#) to see what you

Video: Drew MacIntyre's Incredible Save
One person recommends this.

Insane Office Escape
Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

St. James's White Shirt Week
Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

Engine Note Electronica
4 people recommend this.

Facebook social plugin

- CARS
- CULTURE
- FOOD+DRINK
- HEADLINES
- MONEY+WORK
- SPORTS+HEALTH
- STYLE
- TECH
- WOMEN
- ABOUT
- ADVERTISING
- TERMS OF SERVICE
- PRIVACY POLICY

Website by



COPYRIGHT 2006-2013
XY MEDIA VENTURES LIMITED.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

PUBLISHED ON 2013-04-30 11:17