

R-e-s-p-e-c-t: Car dealers

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Explorer

After testing a sloping front-end design for the Explorer slated to debut for the 1995 model year, when the compact is largely redesigned front end. What the vehicles apparently competitors from Chrysler Corp. and General Motors.

in Mexico and Canada. He will address the closing general session of the convention on Feb. 1. Perot addressed the convention in 1985, when he was chairman of Electronic Data Systems Corp. Brokaw will speak at the opening session on Jan. 29.

Canadian sales drop again

TORONTO — The Canadian market stayed in the doldrums in August, with car and truck sales falling 1.9 percent. Year-to-date, the market is down 3.8 percent. But there were some surprises. Chrysler sales dropped 5.1 percent, dragged down by a 12.0 percent drop in truck sales. Chrysler, which had a strong year, blamed August fall on shortages used by summer downtime assembly plants. Ford's 4.2 percent gain ranked the firm's fourth straight winning month. General Motors slipped 3.7 percent in one of its best performances of the year. Nissan makes also fared better in August. Mazda, GM and Suzuki all gained. Hyundai, up 12.0 percent.

— Jeremy Sinek

Heavy ads drop heartbeat tag

LAS VEGAS — Chevrolet will retire its "Heartbeat of America" advertising tag line at the beginning of the 1994 fiscal year.

General Manager Jim Perkins said the 7-year-old line has been popular and hard winning — but "it just its course and was losing a grip." Chevrolet will announce a new theme when its 1995 Corveta sedan and Monte Carlo coupe arrive in showrooms next spring.

— Phil Frame

Chrysler still nudged in

DETROIT — Chrysler Corp.

Automotive News

Motor Co. about other ways to cooperate.

The Detroit News said Friday, Sept. 10, that Chrysler was "backing out of negotiations with its Big 3 competitors to design and produce an electric car after concluding it can build a vehicle more cheaply on its own."

Chrysler denied the story. "There is no story," said Chris Preuss, a Chrysler spokesman. "The talks have not ceased. The negotiations are still going on. And it's unlikely the level of cooperation will reach a point where we'll make a vehicle together."

Mary Roznowski, a GM spokeswoman, confirmed that Chrysler has not left the bargaining table.

— Jack Kerbler

Jaguars join Budget fleet

Jaguar dealers are looking forward to buying 500 XJ6 program cars that will be sold at closed auction next spring. The sedans will be sold after six months of service in Budget Rent A Car's fleet.

"Two years ago nobody would have thought Jaguars were reliable enough to put into rental fleets," said Martin Bennett, owner of Thoroughbred Motor Cars in Nashville, Tenn. Budget will get cars beginning in November.

— Charles M. Thomas

GM said to have buyer for plants

General Motors may sell six of its parts plants to a Cleveland-based company, according to a report in the Detroit Free Press.

American Axle, a Cleveland investor group, is offering to buy the plants from GM, the report said.

GM spokesman Jerry Holmes would not confirm that an offer was made by American Axle and said the plants are still for sale.

Richard Dauch, a former executive vice president of manufacturing at Chrysler Corp., and James McLaren, a

"Passport," a name last used on a 70-cc motor scooter that spread the Honda name to baby boomers in their youth. Earlier this year, folks said it would be the "Elsinore," named after a California race venue. Then they said "Hawk." Honda denied those reports, and it was right. The Passport, to be built at the Subaru-Isuzu Automotive plant in Lafayette, Ind., is a rebadged Isuzu Rodeo. Prices of the sport-utility were not disclosed.

MUSTANG POSSE — Ford Motor Co. employees are going on a wild gallop for the all-new Mustang that will go on sale in December. Top executives, including Chairman Red Poling, will visit 100 cities on Oct. 17 and 18 crying out the pony car's imminent arrival. The execs will visit one city each in what will amount to the biggest blitz Ford has done for a vehicle introduction, a Ford spokesman said. On Oct. 17, there will be parties and picnics for various Mustang clubs around the country. On Oct. 18, Ford boosters will visit media outlets and other organizations. The Mustang goes on sale Dec. 9.

NO 'GREEN' NEON — Chrysler Corp. President Bob Lutz is happy about the environmental responsibility shown by Chrysler's new Neon, but the company won't push the idea in ads. "Most people are still of the opinion that their friends and neighbors should be environmentally responsible," Lutz told Detroit's Automotive Press Association by satellite feed from Frankfurt.

RESPECT — What do new-car dealers have in common with Rodney Dangerfield and Aretha Franklin? They too, want a little respect — from manufacturers. That's according to a survey of 417 dealers in the United States and 289 dealers in the Netherlands conducted for Pennsylvania State University's Institute for the Study of Business Markets. "Our survey . . . shows that to the dealers, respect and being treated fairly by their more powerful partners — the manufacturers — are relatively more important than earnings or other tangible rewards," said Dr. Nimalya Kumar, assistant professor of marketing at Penn State.

SUPER TOP SECRET — The White House and the Big 3 weren't talking last week about the secretive "car of the future" talks held Sept. 3 between the three Detroit CEOs and Vice President Al Gore. The White House meeting was part of a Big 3-White House effort to forge a \$1 billion joint research effort aimed at producing a low emission, high fuel economy passenger car. "There are no announcements, and nothing is imminent," said Chrysler spokesman



Gore: trying

John Guiniven. Both the automakers and the White House have put proposals on the table. In addition, they're trying to overcome years of distrust over environmental and fuel economy issues. "There is still a tension and trust factor that needs to