Article published on December 6th 2011 | Auto

Americaâ€™s thirst for cars of significance continues unabated. Long tired of copycat, cookie cutter, uninspiring models, consumers are demanding â€“ and receiving â€“ cars that are, quite frankly, retro. Yes, Americaâ€™s automakers are reaching back in time to build a bunch of models based on popular models from yesteryear. Letâ€™s take a look at the â€œBig 3â€• automakers and their current crop of retr as well as â€œfutureâ€• models soon to be released.

Defined, retro cars are vehicles that take their styling cues from cars built a generation or two ago. No, these vehicles arenâ€™t carbon copies of earlier models, rather each retro car borrows much of their look from earlier models.

Although American automakers dominate the retro market, the Volkswagen New Beetle was one of the first cars to reach back as it went forward. Based on the VW Golf platform, the circular shaped New Beetle hearkens back to the flower child era with its current rendition of the peopleâ€™s car. Fortunately, VW had the presence of mind to include its famed â€œflower holderâ€• in with the dash, to evoke memory of the earlier model.

Ford pushed the retro market forward with its introduction of the Thunderbird in 2002. Borrowing heavily from early sixties era TBirds, the car has had mixed success as Ford sold a very limited number of the model for a few years and then discontinued it after the 2005 model year, citing poor sales. In 2004, Ford introduced a retro version of the Mustang, based on the â€™67 Mustang fastback. Unlike the TBird, the Mustang has been a huge success and Ford can barely keep up with production. No word if a retro Pinto is being planned by FoMoCo.

Chrysler got in the retro craze with its introduction of the 2000 PT Cruiser. Based on 1950s era panel vans, the PT Cruiser sits on the now defunct Neon platform, but sales have been strong for Chrysler. The Dodge Challenger, another Chrysler product, is the car many are waiting to see if and when it debuts as an â€™09 model. Borrowing cues from the â€™71 model is part of the fun of this car: a hemi engine coupled with a fantastic interior will certainly help move sales. For the record, the current Dodge Charger isnâ€™t retro â€“ it has four doors â€“ but I am mentioning it because it is one cool

Chevrolet went retro with the SSR, a â€œtruckâ€• based on 1950s era pick ups. Word has it that the slow selling SSR â€“ hey, $42K for THAT thing â€“ is on its last legs. Fortunately, the HHR [Heritage High Roof] will keep Chevy in the retro business as this new for 2006 model takes its styling cues from the â€™49 Suburban. Some would say the PT Cruiser!

Are we likely to see more retro cars in the future? Maybe, but probably not a Caddy replete with fins or a Chevy Vega. Americaâ€™s love with old models is strong, but selective, and the automakers must be certain that consumers really want a particular retro car before putting it into production. Oh, by the way, the â€™09 Chevy Camaro concept is one hot looking car!

Article Source:
http://www.articleside.com/auto-articles/retro-mania-old-cars-rock.htm - Article Side

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a 2012 Chevrolet Silverado houston

Article Keywords:
tie rods, Mustang tie rods, Dodge tie rods, Ford, Chevy, HHR, PT Cruiser, New Beetle, Dodge Charger

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