


p a i n f u l s y m b i o s i s

painful
symbiosis

*the auto industry's complex
relationship with the media
and consumers*

laurance yap

i n t r o d u c t i o n

 At least in North America, the automobile is everything. The health of the national economies is directly tied to car sales; cars litter our roads, our driveways, even occasionally our sidewalks. As the second-most-expensive (and often first-most important, emotionally) investment of our lives, the amount of attention we pay it is perhaps justified.

In print, on television, even on radio, the car's pervasiveness continues. A browse through a bookstore's magazine racks reveals dozens—nay, hundreds—of publications devoted to automobiles, the automobile industry and car culture. There's a seven-day a-week, twenty-four-hour-a-day cable channel devoted to cars and the people who drive them; cars are the focus of radio programs and even many popular songs.

With such an important role in our society and such a high profile in the mass media, the automotive industry has a difficult task set before it: it must manage the relationship between itself and the public using the automotive media as its tool—a tool, unfortunately for the industry, that has a tendency to bite back.

The automotive media thus finds itself in a unique and often tenuous position. It is not only expected to serve the public's seemingly insatiable need for automotive information, stories and advice, but must also carefully manage its relation-

ship with the automotive industry, which provides it with the information and vehicles upon which its stories are based. Perhaps most importantly, the industry is also the source of the majority of the advertising dollars in automotive publications and shows.

That this circular industry-media-public and back relationship works at all is something of a minor miracle. But to say that it works is not to say that the relationship is perfect; far from it. Because the automotive media must help create interest in new cars, and are also for the most part obligated to sell them, they are caught in a moral and ethical dilemma: how to retain their objectivity under the relentless soft-bribery tactics of the manufacturers, who do everything in their power to ensure favorable reviews and recommendations by showering journalists with gifts, trips and other perks.

The media isn't the only party in this love-hate triangle that has to make compromises either; the industry itself often has to make changes to new car designs to appease the writers and broadcasters who are seen to have such power over public perception. The ride, for all parties involved—including the audience, who often have difficulty accepting the system—is a continuous roller-coaster, full of sharp turns, surprises, ups and downs. But it's also a fascinating world, and a lot of fun.

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There's a total of twenty-four BMWs, Lexii and Lincolns, all of them fresh off the factory floor, without even license plates, heading down U.S. 28 and 64, some of the most beautiful and challenging roads in the southeast United States. Inside each car are two journalists—they'll switch spots in the middle of the trip—and, in the back seats, two PR people.

It's the second year that Michelin has run its annual technology forum, where over fifty auto writers from around the world are invited to the company's South Carolina headquarters to test-drive new tire technologies on the road and on the track; to participate in discussion groups, and in essence, to have their say in the direction that the replacement and OEM (original equipment manufacturer) tire market will take in the next few years. On the first full day of the trip, the writers drive to the track, spend the whole day there, and drive back; on the second day, they're broken up by language and geographic locale and are asked for feedback.

In this case, Michelin's showing off its new PAV technology, a tire that will hold its shape even when flat and in addition offers better handling and roadholding compared to tires of comparable size. Their main drawbacks? They're hugely expensive, heavier than normal tires, and will require new wheel designs to accommodate them. Michelin's hoping that the technology will be the world standard within ten years, and hopes to license it to other tire manufacturers.

Lloyd Storer doesn't think the PAVs will fly. At almost seventy, he's been writing for Modern Tire Dealer longer than most of the other journalists in the room have been alive. "For one thing," he's saying, "who's going to pay what amounts to double the cost for these things? Most normal drivers don't push their cars nearly as hard as we were doing yesterday."

"The tires cost only fifteen percent more than conventional tires." Don Baldwin, Michelin's technical marketing manager, is heading up the meeting.

"That's not including the cost of the warning system. I don't know about all of you," he says, looking at the sixteen writers gathered into a conference room at the posh Grove Park Inn resort. "But I think whoever can do a low-cost version of this—one that's maybe even just half as good, but a lot cheaper, without a warning system—is going to make a killing. And Michelin's going to be left in the lurch."

Baldwin's scribbling furiously. "How cheap?" he asks.

a

As much as is made of the automotive industry's great influence on the media—as much as you will read about it here—it's important to keep in mind that their relationship is in many ways a two-way street. Because of the media outlets' perceived power, the auto industry has to try its darndest to please them, whether it means providing them with test vehicles, or, in many cases, redesigning and recontending their products to meet the media's expectations.

The automotive media's influence on automobiles themselves can be clearly seen in the realm of styling. Influential critics like Robert Cumberford, who writes for *Automobile* and the car-styling bible, *Auto & Design* and Mark Stehrenberger (*Automobiles Classiques; Road & Track*) not only select the trends that they see as important and exciting, but in their own published sketches and critiques, have the power to dictate what future designs and models will look like.

The new Volkswagen Beetle, introduced at the Detroit Auto Show in January 1998, was profoundly influenced by Robert Cumberford's notes in *Automobile*. In a review of the 1994 VW concept car, he pointed out many changes—such as



Many of the changes made to the 1994 Volkswagen “new beetle” concept car on its way to production—the higher bumpers, the bulging hood, and the larger mirrors—were suggested by writer Robert Cumberford and are seen here.

changing the door cuts, enlarging the mirrors, extending the hoodline upwards and forwards, as well as changes to the instrument cluster—that he felt would be necessary to make the car a realistic, producible, and marketable production car. Almost all of his recommendations were followed to the letter by VW designers J. Mays and Freeman Thomas: a glance at the New Beetle indeed reveals an enlarged hood, raised roofline, large mirrors and less complicated door cuts.

Car interiors are equally susceptible to journalists' pens and offscreen voices. David Hill, chief engineer for the 1997 C5 Corvette, made costly changes to the new car's instrument cluster in

order to please the automotive media. Even though General Motors' marketing department (Schefter 52), which had spent untold millions on market-research studies concluded that most Corvette buyers wanted digital readouts instead of analog gauges on the instrument panel (IP), electrical system head Mike Andolora decided that what the press thought was more important:

At every review of future plans, someone would bring up the latest critique by an automotive magazine. The influence of the “buff books” was a frightening thing to people already sticking their necks out for the new Corvette. Auto writers who probably wouldn't buy a Corvette themselves wielded more influence in engineering meetings than loyal Corvette owners who were already saving up for a '97.

Andolora finally threw in the towel. “I don't care if it's the wrong thing to do,” he said. “I'm tired of getting beat up by the auto writers. We're not doing a digital instrument panel on C5. We're going back to the old analog stuff.”

(Schefter 183–184)



The design of the instrument panel for the 1997 Corvette was dictated more by the media's preferences than the buying public's. Despite millions of dollars of research suggesting that digital instruments would sell better, the car's engineers decided to use analog instruments in an effort to appease auto writers.

Despite their power in the styling field, it is in the realm of content, features and safety where the automotive media wields most of its power. Publications such as *Autocar* in England, *Teknikens Värld* in Sweden, and *Car and Driver* in the United States have been instrumental in the push for safety features such as anti-lock brakes, airbags and deformable crush zones.

Ironically, the same publications and shows can also be the motivating forces behind the revision and even deletion of safety features. Articles all over the automotive press through 1996 and 1997 led to the “depowering” of airbags in most models sold in 1998; the bags had inflated too violently in some cases, hurting



The 1996 Ford Taurus is an example of both positive and negative effects of the media—they spurred the introduction of many of its safety features, but the drive for 'newness' resulted in a complete redesign whose end result was a car that was slower, heavier and a poor seller compared to the 1992 model.

and injuring children and short people behind the wheel. Patrick Bedard, a respected journalist working out of *Car and Driver*, was particularly vehement in his attack of what he considered to be the airbag conspiracy:

When Joan Claybrook, as head of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, promised to Congress in 1977 that airbags would save 12,000 lives per year, the media cheered her on...[but] airbags are a scandal, in my opinion, not because they're an expensive way to save lives; they're a scandal because they're killing people. (Bedard 20)

Less than a year later, all the major manufacturers were touting depowered airbags—which before would probably have been considered a cost-cutting measure—as a safety device.

Media members have also forced carmakers into a constant cycle of refinement, redesign and retooling that can end up being quite costly. Comparison testing, a frequent occurrence at the upper echelons of magazines, place pressure on carmakers to include more features at lower prices; higher performance with lower weight. The power of comparison testing over carmakers was certainly evident during the development of the new-for-1996 Ford Taurus, where Ford engineers worked night and day out of stifling launch trailers and noisy factory floors through the Christmas holidays to launch the car and “get it into dealers just before the end of the year, to qualify for the *Motor Trend* Car of the Year award” (Walton 268). Yet most journalists, when pressed, agreed that the Taurus which was being replaced really wasn't at all a half-bad car. In fact, *Automobile's* Joe Lorio compared it to “The Super Bowl,” averaging over 350,000 sales year after record-breaking year (Lorio 76); in an interview with Alex Trotman, chairman of Ford, he likened the risky new car to “changing the design of the dollar bill” (80).

Yet, in the review- and consumer-driven world of the auto industry, the media's responsibility is to drive interest in new products, and its job thus becomes—at least in part—to push automakers to spend more and more money and manpower on redesigns that may or may not be necessary; to spur redesigns of the dollar bill every few years. The new \$2.7-billion Taurus was undoubtedly more stylish than its predecessor, but it was also slower, had less interior and trunk space, and had lower fuel economy (Walton 347). It also tumbled from the top of the best-seller lists, dropping below the conservatively styled and aging Toyota Camry.

travel

"I don't know what these Nissan guys think they're trying to pull," says Victor Wai Kwan Luk as the white stretch limousine rounds another corner, taking the off-ramp that will eventually lead to the \$1900-a-night Californian hotel in which the hundred or so invitees to this BMW-staged event will be housed for the next four nights. "They know that holding a pickup event at the same time as a BMW event isn't going to get covered. They know that. So what's up?"

While we're down here, Nissan Canada is up in Québec, hosting the première of its new Frontier pickup, a completely new redesign of a twelve-year old stalwart. They, like BMW here, have probably spent millions booking hotel rooms, airline tickets, and banquet halls. Not to mention the dozens of preproduction vehicles that had to be hauled up from the plant in Smyrna, Tennessee.

For a while I can't answer him; I'm having a hard enough time holding in my lunch from the plane because I'm sitting facing backwards, facing him. There are two PR guys here too, one of them sitting beside me, one of them beside him. For the last half an hour or so, we've been trying to avoid shop-talk; so we've chatted about their kids, video games, what TV shows are good now. What we think of Santa Monica.

"An honest mistake?" I ask.

"It can't be," he says. "They must be trying to hide something."

Hey, who am I to argue with him? I've been doing this for less than a year; he's been t it for nine. "Who knows?"

"I hope the bar's still open when we get in." It's past eleven o'clock, according to the Lincoln's dashboard clock.

"No problem," says the PR guy. "All night, if you want. Help yourself."

for free

the ritual of the press launch for a new car is not a new one; it's existed as long as the car itself has. It's only been in the last few years, however, that manufacturers have started trying to outdo each other in their efforts to win positive reviews, get pictures of their cars on the front covers. With the car market raging at full speed ahead over the last three years, manufacturers have poured untold millions into flashy press launches and car introductions, have poured even more millions in gifts and "help" to members of the motoring press, all in an attempt to one-up the other players in the field and to garner as much of a magazine, newspaper's, or show's attention as is humanly possible.

Launch etiquette means exotic locales; it means scheduling time at racetracks; it means no traffic on beautiful roads that manufacturers hope will be used for photo shoots. Most of all, it means pampering journalists in an effort to get them to support the company, to write reviews favorable towards the company's products; to foster close personal friendships that can be counted on when the occasional lemon press vehicle surfaces. (In fact, when Korean manufacturer Daewoo launched its US cars without a fancy press event, *AutoWeek* ran a front-page story with the headline "There's no fancy press event here, no photos of cars on winding roads in exotic locales. There aren't even any color shots. Which makes you wonder, what does Daewoo have up its sleeve? What is this upstart trying to pull?")

California is a favorite spot for car launches, with its generally good weather and

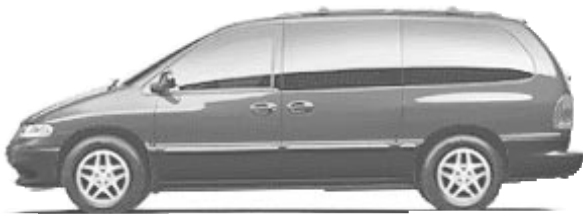


For a tire-testing event held in July 1997, Goodyear provided journalists with passes to a sold-out stock-car race and a free day of lessons (about \$900 worth) with Skip Barber racing school in almost twenty different vehicles, from mitsubishi eclipses to Dodge Vipers. A crashed Corvette was written off as a business expense.

scenic drives away from major urban centers. During 1997, it hosted introductions as diverse as the Chevrolet Malibu and Ferrari Maranello; the Plymouth Prowler and Mazda 626. The Carolinas are favored for sports-car launches as they provide some of the most challenging (and lightly-patrolled) stretches of roads in the States; rare indeed is the event held near an urban smog center—so much so that *USA Today* opened its review of the 1998 Honda Accord by asking why they had chosen to launch it in rusty, dusty, smoggy Cleveland (08.27.97).

The PR people are kept on their toes, too, by lazy or forgetful journalists, and their job is to cover for them and their idiocy. When a writer from *Town and Country* overslept and got left behind in Morocco, BMW sent a plane to retrieve him (Walton 304). When another took a cab 120 miles to the wrong hotel, Chrysler shouldered the blame for “giving the bad directions, and picked up the tab” (304).

Driving pleasures and good photo shoots aside, it’s an area’s amenities that pull carmakers in: without good restaurants, nearby golf courses and tennis courts, and well-stocked bars, who would come? Manufacturers expect that reporters expect to be pampered, and for the most part, they’re right: Eric Descarries, a Québécois truck reviewer, tells horror stories of a launch he attended in a “dry” Vermont town. Never, he said, would he ever go back to Vermont in his lifetime (07.23.97).



*For its 1995 launch, Chrysler arranged cliffside cabins, picnic baskets, video cameras and side trips for testers of its new NS-series minivan. The vehicle was an immediate critical and commercial success, winning the coveted **Motor Trend Car of the Year** award and racking up record sales.*

Pampering writers and broadcasters means everything from flying in their spouses and significant others to join in the fun and providing perks that normal tourists and travellers wouldn’t have a chance of getting. For instance, Goodyear flew in a group of about eighty journalists and their guests to Indianapolis in July of 1997, set them up in a \$300-a-night hotel, and provided tickets to the sold-out Brickyard 400 NASCAR Winston Cup race to which tickets were apparently being scalped for upwards of \$1000 (07.24.97). In addition, journalists who chose to stay for an extra day got free lessons from Skip Barber Racing School in various expensive high-performance cars. When the wife of a writer spun a yellow Corvette into a copse of trees during a hot lap, it was written off by PR guy Scott

Baughman as the cost of doing business; of keeping his friends happy (07.23.97).

For its 1996 minivan ride-and-drive, Chrysler invited four groups of writers and their spouses, gave them a sporty Dodge Stratus sedan to drive to Napa Valley:

Then they drove back to San Francisco, swapped the cars for minivans...they spent the night at a small, secluded hotel in cliffside cabins or treehouses, both with ocean views. On day three of [the] odyssey, Chrysler gave these Very Special reporters picnic lunches and maps, along with video cameras to shoot marketing messages for a make believe competition judged by their hosts. They had to return the cameras, but got to keep their tapes. Many headed south for the William Randolph Hearst castle, San Simeon, a monument to yellow journalism. (Walton 305)

Journalists even get perks for their personal, non-automotive travel. When Michelin's Katia Cyr phoned me in the middle of August to confirm my attendance for an event being held the next week, her first question was which airline I flew—you get to keep all of the frequent-flier points. Accredited Canadian automotive journalists have a program sponsored by over 15 major car manufacturers to receive 25% discounts during personal travel in any major hotel chain, and are also provided with free travel insurance.

Then there are the soft bribes. Ferrari provides to the exclusive group of journalists invited to its launches beautiful handpainted model cars worth upwards of \$200 each. Goodyear schedules free rides when the blimp's in your town, and a model blimp to take home to the kids. Mercedes gives away luggage and Porsche, leather jackets. Fruit baskets arrive on your penthouse-suite doorstep from BMW the night you arrive; Cadillac gives away free gold Cross pen sets. Castrol, at motorsports events, hands out \$100 watches like pieces of candy. Veterans of many launches "had closets full of jackets, luggage, cameras, radios, binoculars" (Walton 304).

Not that money isn't available. On the way back from their Laurens proving grounds on highway 64, Michelin's Gord Sadler, watching the speedometer of the BMW 5 series I was driving creep up to 100 mph (160 km/h), told me, half-jokingly: "we'll do anything for you guys, you know. We'll bail you out of jail, even. You just have to ask. But one thing we will not do is pay your speeding ticket" (08.26.97).

It's good to know that there's at least some integrity left over.

It's lunch during media day at the Canadian International Autoshow. Four hundred of us are packed into the Convention Centre's basement banquet hall; there are two open bars, and the bartenders are as busy as can be—most of us are here at somebody's invitation, and will have a ride home afterwards. I'm staying off the booze because Land Rover wants me to do a test-drive in half an hour.

We're packed eight to a table, sitting around, discussing what we're going to say about what we've seen in this morning's presentations. The general consensus? Mazda's pyrotechnic show for the new Miata was pretty impressive, and it looks like a great car, but the company's still struggling—its displays are pretty much the same as last year. The new Volkswagen Beetle looks like a bona fide hit; so much so that it's not going to need much help from us—the first three months of production are already sold out. The Lexus floozy didn't know what he was talking about, but their new RX300 sport-ute looks like a winner, though at its \$46,000 price point, why would anyone buy it instead of the similarly-priced Mercedes ML320, which a couple of us at the table actually have on order.

GM was the only one not to trot out any company brass—Chrysler's president spoke this morning—instead relying on foolish male and female dancers singing the praises of the new Oldsmobile Alero. Tacky, we decide, and tasteless, though the car doesn't look half-bad; we're all eager to get in line for our try at it.

I'm talking with the Star's John Terauds about getting a Miata to test out. If I manage to get one, it'll be the first new car I've test-driven during my week-old AJAC membership, the first one I'll have all to myself without a PR guy or gal sitting in the seat next to me rattling off the features of the car or its performance numbers.

I'm talking paperwork. Do I need to sign any forms? Is there a master schedule somewhere that I have to sign up for, and then wait in line? Who do I talk to? Will they even think of lending a car to a twenty-year-old, admitted car freak?

He raises a hand to silence me. "All you need to do," he says, "is call up the PR guy. They'll arrange for a car and drop it on your doorstep."

"That's it?" I ask.

"That's it. At the end of the week, they pick it up." He turns around and motions to a tall guy, gray hair and a moustache. "That's Greg Young, the PR guy. Want me to introduce you?"

f Forget airline tickets, thousand-dollar-a-night hotels; forget little toys and fancy luggage—no perk is as nice as a free car. Top-level journalists get them all the time, an average of one a week, although sometimes, in the case of writers like Jim Kenzie or Cam McRae, it can reach three or four. No mileage restrictions. Just a one-time \$25 fee to transfer your insurance policy over to the cars that you test.

Sure, there are certain guidelines for testers, but they're few and far between; journalists with media vehicles pretty much use them however they want to use them, however much and however hard they want to. Magazines like *Motor Trend* burn thousands of dollars' worth of rubber just to get tire-smoking photographs; they also slide the cars sideways through turns to get the all-important "oversteer picture," often causing damage to the wheel alignment and suspension. *Car and Driver* took a Ford Contour that had been lent them and raced it at Nelson Ledges.

So what restrictions are there? Bring the car back with a full tank of gas, and don't leave any of your personal belongings behind.

With all of the pampering that journalists receive, it's hard to see how they can remain objective. Luggage and closets packed with merchandise, good meals and expensive wine in the stomach, a free trip for the wife or husband, ought to cloud even the most jaded of judgements a bit.

Journalists are aware of the negative impression all of the pandering creates. John Mahler, a *Star* photographer and driving-school instructor, asked of the Goodyear people, "why the hell do you need to do all of this? You know that all we really want to do is drive. The booze, the food, the hotel, it's all nice, but it's not going to change *anything* if the product sucks" (07.22.97).

Sensing a public backlash, many media outlets now tell writers to refuse gifts presented by car companies. *Car and Driver* doesn't even accept plane tickets anymore; its reporters drive to press events and stay in different hotels. (They still join the group for dinners, though, where much of what eventually gets written in every publication, takes its form.)

Yet most outlets still take free press vehicles from manufacturers to test, unable or unwilling to finance them on their own. The *Washington Post* is the only exception (Yates 244), leasing or financing its own testers; its automotive section is also one of the smallest and least-read on the continent.

Still, freedom of the press, says Jamie Kitman of *Automobile*, definitely has its limits; because automakers rely on the media to promote and sell their new products—both in reviews and in advertising space allotted to such—they can exert incredible editorial control.

Nowhere is this more prevalent than in the weekly automotive sections of daily newspapers, which are for the most part run by advertising departments:



The editorial integrity struggle is often at its worst in the realm of newspaper automotive writing. That's because in thousands of cities and towns across the land, the local newspaper's automotive section is produced under the auspices of the paper's advertising department. Though you or I might disagree, the entire subject is not deemed of sufficient relevance to warrant expenditure of editorial effort or funds. (Kitman 61)

Attempting to demonstrate that "only a full-size sport-ute is big enough to bottle life in all of its variegations," Dan Neil went on to describe having sex with his fiancée in the back of Ford's largest sport-utility, the Expedition, on new year's eve. "This was loving, consensual, and—given the expedition's dual air bags, side-impact beams, and the standard four-wheel anti-lock brakes—safe sex," Neil wrote. It was not to assuage his critics, though; his antics got him fired.

When a writer doesn't please an advertiser, "justice" can be swift and harsh. Dan Neil, a former writer for the *Raleigh News & Observer* was shown the trap door a week after he "described sexual congress with his fiancée in the back of Ford's largest sport utility on New Year's Eve" (62). Careful readers of what became

known as the “F*** in a Truck” story found out that he liked the Expedition pretty well, too (62).

Positive review or not, readers were offended (though given Neil’s previous writings, they shouldn’t have been surprised), but more importantly, so were local dealers who were advertising the hot-selling Expedition. Pull him, they told the *N&O*’s advertising guys, or we’ll pull out. Dan got the boot.

The question of objectivity is one that continues to plague the industry-media relationship, yet it is a question that is becoming increasingly irrelevant, as differences between cars, particularly in the areas of performance and quality control, are becoming so minuscule as to be irrelevant. Bill Vance, who writes for the *Globe and Mail*, says: “All of this debate is really unnecessary. It’s not going to change anything in the long run. The problem is, everything out on sale today is so good—ten times, twenty times better than what was on sale even ten years ago—that nobody’s going to believe us” (Vance 08.26.97).

From another perspective, and perhaps a more pragmatic one, the give-and-take relationship between the automotive industry and the automotive media is a necessary one for our capitalist economy to function. Both parties understand their roles in perpetuating each other’s business profits, and both of them have a vested interest in keeping consumers—whether they’re buying cars or magazines—desiring, and buying, the latest thing. That some cheating, some payola, and perhaps even some lying, is involved is, like in politics, almost a given to the current media-literate public; and for the most part, it’s something that they’ve chosen to deal with.

c o n c l u s i o n

One need only look at the profligate expansion of the car-magazine stack at their local bookstore to see that interest in automobiles, ethical questions aside, is at an all time high. Similarly, on TV, we now have many shows about the automobile, and even one channel, Speedvision, dedicated to car enthusiasts and their ilk.

The car industry itself is doing similarly well. General Motors, BMW, Mercedes Benz, Toyota, and many other car manufacturers posted record profits in 1997—sometimes with earnings up to 60% higher than last year. The amount of spending that gets poured into pampering journalists and flashy car launches seems to have been well-spent; people are buying in record numbers as the North American economy—itsself largely driven by the car industry—continues to improve.

Yet this situation isn't going to last. Study after study has shown that the automotive industry works in cycles, and is very much a roller-coaster ride between huge highs and terrible lows. It wasn't more than five years ago that GM was down in the dumpster, bleeding billions of dollars of red ink every month. Not surprisingly, 1992-93 were also low years for the automotive media, which responded

to the context of the time with the cancellation of magazines like *Exotic Cars Quarterly*.

The current proliferation of magazines and TV shows, when the industry takes a slide, will be dragged down along with it, and once again, the important questions of objectivity, of overspending, of bribery, will become major issues once again, as readers and viewers again question who's giving them the so-called informed opinions, who's paying for the journalists' perks, and how reporters can avoid being compromised.

For now, though, the car industry is riding high, and so is the automotive media. Both have been successful at promoting one another, and both are currently basking in the glow of great expansion and upswinging profits—a situation, that, ironically, may allow more press freedom, may allow more leeway to journalists who, like Dan Neil, have “creative” tendencies. After all, so long as Ford continues to be sold out of Expeditions, so long as Chrysler's minivans are at the top of the sales charts, who really cares *what* journalists write?

b i b l i o g r a p h y

The following books fit under a general “how-to-build-a-car” genre that is now unfortunately extinct. Packed with inside information and with intricate details of the development process of each car covered, they infuriated too many management types to carve out a real niche for themselves. Mary Walton goes so far as to claim that Ford management tried to have her book pulled from shelves.

Scheffter, James. *All Corvettes Are Red: The Rebirth of an American Legend*.
New York: Simon and Schuster 1996.

Shnayerson, Michael. *The Car That Could: The Inside Story of GM's Revolutionary Electric Vehicle*. New York: Random House 1996.

Walton, Mary. *Car: A Drama of the American Workplace*.
New York: W.W. Norton 1997.

Yates, Brock. *The Critical Path: Inventing an Automobile and Reinventing a Corporation*. New York: Little, Brown and Company 1995.

During the course of this project, I attended many press previews for cars and other automotive products such as tires. Listed below are the dates that I spoke to people cited in the text. as always, the automotive PR people—really the industry's unsung heroes—were a great help.

Sammy Chan, automotive journalist for *Auto Motive*:

Toronto: 02.12.98

Eric Descarries, freelance journalist:

Indianapolis, IN: 07.22.97

Jim Kenzie, freelance journalist, chief reviewer for the *Toronto Star*:

Toronto: 02.12.98; 12.18.97; 11.10.97

Joe Kyncha, editor of *World of Wheels* magazine:

Toronto: 02.12.98

Edwin Lau, freelance journalist, writer for *Auto Motive* and *Living Times*:

Toronto: 02.12.98

Barbara Manha, media relations manager for Porsche Cars North America:

Toronto: 02.12.98

Pascal Mismaque, managing director of Land Rover Canada:

Toronto: 02.12.98; 02.11.98.

John Terauds, editor of the *Toronto Star's* Wheels section:

Toronto: 02.12.98; weekly since July 1997

Victor Wai-Kwan Luk, automotive journalist for *Ming Pao Daily News*:

Ashville, NC 08.25.97; Santa Barbara, CA 06.02.97

Bill Vance, columnist for *The Globe and Mail*:

Ashville, NC 08.26.97; Greenville/Spartanburg SC 08.27.97

Gregory Young, media relations manager for Mazda Canada:

Toronto, 02.12.98

Because I was trying to write about the mainstream automotive press and its relationship with the car companies, many of the articles that I referenced come from magazines such as Car and Driver which are widely circulated (but also respected in their field.)

Bedard, Patrick. "How the airbag shapes your information about cars." *Car and Driver* June 1997 (42.12): 20–21.

Kitman, Jamie. "Noise, Vibration and Harshness: Freedom of the Press and its Limits." *Automobile Magazine* November 1997 (12.8): 60–62.

Lorio, Joe. "1996 Ford Taurus: After the Revolution, Evolution." *Automobile Magazine* April 1995 (10.1): 76–86.

Car show media days are a great place to meet other journalists, get their opinions on what's hot, and pump them for introductions to pr people that can get you a ride for next week. a couple of the most important:

North American International Auto Show. Detroit: Cobo Hall 01.09.98.

Canadian International Autoshow. Toronto: Metro Toronto Convention Centre
02.12.98.

Colophon

This document was designed, typeset and produced using Macintosh computers and QuarkXPress. The original manuscript was prepared in Corel Wordperfect. Adobe Photoshop was used to remove backgrounds, resize and alter images downloaded from the Internet using Microsoft Internet Explorer.

The entire paper is set in a typeface called Trade Gothic, designed in 1987 by Swiss typographer Adrian Frutiger. The body text is 9- on 15-point Trade Gothic light; captions are in 7-point Trade Gothic bold.

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