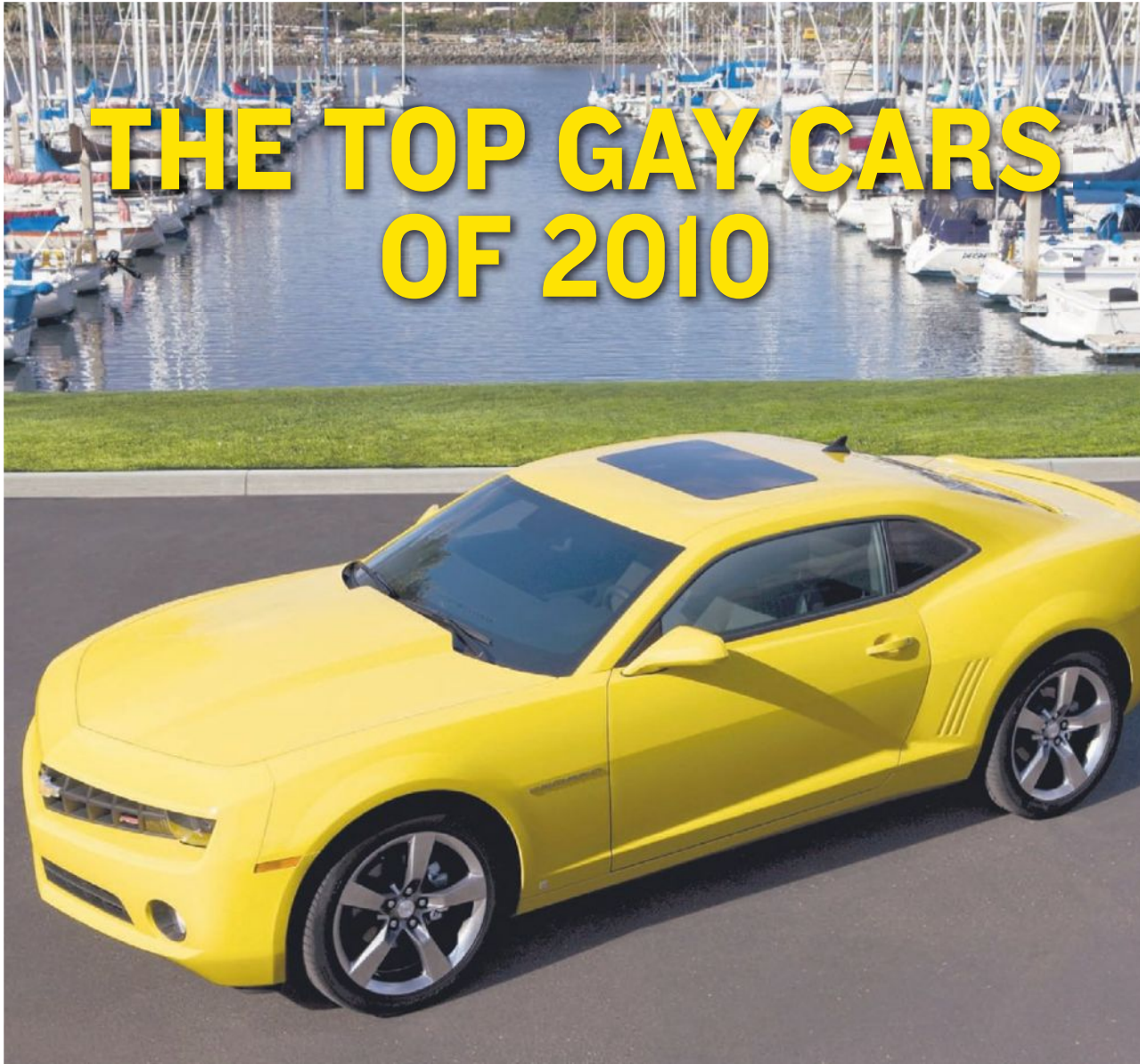
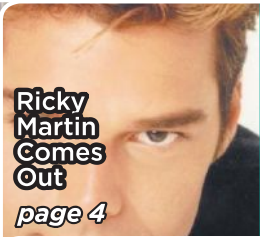




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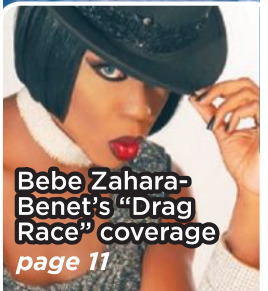
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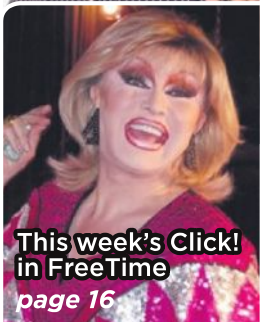
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The top gay cars of 2010

By Matt Alderton

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

For lots of gay men, cruising is a hobby, like gardening or badminton. They do it online, they do it at bars and they can't help but do it at the gym. Some gay men even go cruising on the streets. Often for men, but sometimes for sport—like when they're behind the wheel of a hot new ride.

"Gay men are just normal people who happen to have an attraction for the same gender," says About.com Gay Life Guide Ramon Johnson. "LGBT people are more than a caricature; gay men are just as diverse as straight men, and inside that diversity are some hardcore car enthusiasts."

Johnson, a former quality engineer for GM, is one of those enthusiasts. In 2006, he therefore decided to play a game at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit: While he was browsing the year's hottest new cars, he was going to try matching them with different gay personalities. The result was a list of the year's top gay cars, which he's published every year since. "It started out as a diversity exercise," Johnson says. "There isn't one particular thing that gay men like in a car, be it sheet metal or color or style; it depends on the individual person and the individual car."

Joe Tralongo, editor in chief of gay car review Web site Gaywheels.com, agrees. "There are no gay cars, only gay drivers," he says. "We all know there are stereotypes out there attached to certain cars, the Volkswagen Cabriolet being the perfect example. But those stereotypes don't usually hold water. So what we try to do is find the attributes that describe cars and let our LGBT readers figure out their best match."

Although there's no such thing as a "gay car," there is what's known as a "gay sensibility," according to Tralongo. "The gay sensibility is an appreciation for quality, customer service and intelligent design," he says. "That's what so many gay men and women look for in everything from their homes to their education to their cars. It's about buying products that are worth owning."

Whether you see your car as a political statement, a fashion accessory or nothing more than a way to get around, there's a car out there for you. To help you find it, CFP recently consulted with Johnson and Tralongo in order to choose its top gay cars of 2010:

For the Green Gay

Although most of Boystown is working on building six-pack abs for summer, it's a lot easier these days to reduce your carbon footprint than it is to reduce your waistline—especially with cars like the 2010 Volkswagen Golf TDI, a low-emission diesel-en-



For the Green Gay: Audi A3 TDI

gine compact that gets at least 42 miles per gallon according to Tralongo, who managed to get close to 50 during a recent test drive. For just a little more money—\$29,950 versus \$17,620—you can get the Audi A3 TDI, Johnson's pick for the year's best green car. Either way, forget the awkward-looking Toyota Prius: Hybrid's out and diesel's in.

For the Gadget Gay

Gay men who can't live without Bluetooth, Wi-Fi or 3G should check out the 2010 Ford Fusion Hybrid. Not only is it environmentally friendly and fun to drive, but it's also oozing with high-tech features, according to Tralongo. "People who have iPhones and love apps will love this car," he says. "It has the coolest instrument cluster I've ever seen in a car and it has Ford's SYNC audio system, which is one of the best multimedia interfaces you'll ever find." If you want your car to be as high-tech as you are, Johnson also recommends the 2011 Infiniti M, which has the industry's first 360-degree view cam, a blind spot intervention system and distance control technology that helps you maintain a safe distance from other cars in traffic.

For the Professional Gay

White-collar gays who survived the recession with their job and 401(k) in tact should consider celebrating with a new car like the 2010 Acura ZDX, according to Johnson, who calls the ZDX a "sexier, more refined sister of the Crosstour," Honda's version of the sport utility vehicle. With a luxury interior that rivals that of any Lexus, plus a 300-horsepower V6 powertrain engine, the ZDX is a new breed of Acura for a new breed of professional. Of course, if you're still convinced that Acuras are boring, there's always the boardroom exec's favorite go-to luxury car: the 2010 Mercedes E Class Coupe. "It's almost like art," Tralongo says. "For that reason, certain gay men will definitely gravitate towards it."



For the Gadget Gay: The 2010 Ford Fusion Hybrid

For the Frugal Gay

Gay or straight, everyone would love to own a BMW. Unfortunately, not everyone's a high roller. Even if you're cash-strapped, however, you can afford a little bit of "cool." Just look at the 2011 Ford Fiesta. According to Johnson, the new Fiesta—debuting this summer—is nothing like the old one, which was more comedy than car. The new version starts at just \$13,000, gets up to 40 miles per gallon, and comes in both sedan and hatchback models. Plus, it comes in every color in the gay rainbow, including "Lime Squeeze," "Yellow Blaze," "Blue Flame" and "Red Candy." Because they offer a lot for a little, the MINI Cooper and Mazda 3 also are good budget buys, according to Tralongo.

For the Trendsetting Gay

Gay men who want to drive something that's as posh as their Gucci manbag—but not as pricey—should consider the 2010 Chevy Camaro, which is a new fashion-forward version of the classic American car. Starting at less than \$25,000, it's an affordable way to get a lot of attention, according to Johnson and Tralongo, who also likes the ultra-expensive 2010 Audi R8 and 2011 Mercedes SLS—which start at \$114,200 and \$270,000, respectively—in case money's no object.

For the Hipster Gay

Whether you live in Wicker Park or Lincoln Park, you can look good and be different in the 2010 Subaru Outback, which will take you downtown to dinner just as easily as it will take you downstate for an afternoon of off-roading. "It's the quintessential lesbian car—everyone says that—but lesbians have really good senses and intuition," Tralongo says. "This car really is an amazing vehicle. If you're not worried about impressing your neighbors and you don't need to attract attention, the Outback is perfect."

For the Highway Gay

Summer is right around the corner, and there's no better way to spend a hot Chicago day than zipping up and down Lake Shore Drive in a convertible. Like RuPaul in a real-life drag race, you'll be "looking good and feeling gorgeous" in the 2011 Volvo C70. Johnson's top convertible pick, the C70 has a retractable hard top for rainy days and a 12-speaker audio system that's sure to drown out even the windiest Windy City wind noise. If you're worried about storage when you're headed to the beach, consider a soft top instead; Tralongo's favorite is the 2010 Audi A5 Cabriolet because of its stylish interior, good gas mileage and ample trunk space.

Did You Know?

There's really only one thing that makes a car gay-friendly: How the manufacturer treats its gay employees. According to Joe Tralongo, editor in chief of Gaywheels.com, all but four companies—Hyundai, Kia, Suzuki and Porsche—offer domestic partnership benefits to their employees. To make sure your new ride measures up on gay rights, look at the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index (www.hrc.org) before you make your next purchase.