



October 2, 2012

Not Your Father's Corvette

High-tech materials and massive muscle are reinventing today's dream cars.



The U.S. is a sprawling nation with limited public transportation. Is it any wonder Americans fell in love with the automobile as a means of seeing their country? “I really think it comes down to freedom,” says John Davis, host and creator of “MotorWeek,” when discussing America’s fascination with cars. “The freedom to go where you want, live where you want and do what you want.”

In the post-WWII era, Americans seized on chrome and fins to show their affluence after the lean war years. In the '50s and '60s, hot rods, horsepower and a desire for self-expression gave birth to the American muscle cars — Mustang, Camaro, Firebird. Today, high-tech materials impart dream cars with sexiness and speed, but supply an environmental consciousness, too.

Here are the dreamiest picks from Davis and Noah Lehmann-Haupt, founder and CEO of Gotham Dream Cars, which rents out exotic and luxury vehicles from its locations in Miami and New York.

Ferrari 458 Italia

The [Ferrari 458](#) puts decades of Formula One racing technology into a street car. Some of its innovative features include a mid-rear-mounted engine and seven-speed transmission. According to Lehmann-Haupt, “Our clients say that the paddle shifting, active suspension and high-tech power delivery make them feel like Michael Schumacher every time they push the start button.”

Mercedes SLS AMG

AMG, Mercedes’ performance division, created the [SLS](#) with an aluminum space frame body

and an interior that looks like you are sitting in the cockpit of a high-performance jet. “This is a gull-wing car reminiscent of the Mercedes of the ’50s and ’60s,” says Davis, “but much more powerful, very exotic and well over \$100,000 apiece.”

Porsche 911

Though costing less than six figures (unlike so many other dreamy vehicles), both Davis and Lehmann-Haupt put the [911](#) on their list of favorites. “Our clients ask for it when they’re looking for something that’s both fast, classic and below the radar,” Lehmann-Haupt explains.

Lamborghini Aventador

“Ask any car enthusiast and they’ll tell you they had a poster of a Lamborghini on their wall as a kid,” quips Lehmann-Haupt. The [Aventador](#) explains why. Its carbon-fiber and aluminum body, combined with a V-12, 700-horsepower engine, will get this car to 217 mph. “This is the classic poster car reborn for a new, high-tech generation of sports car lovers.”

SRT Viper

It’s the two-seat, all-American sports car reinvented for a new generation. The [SRT Viper](#) is described as “a predator in its natural habitat” and recalls an era of iconic American sport race cars that were both beautiful and full of muscle.

Ford Mustang Shelby GT 500

Speaking of muscle, the [Shelby GT 500](#), with its 650-horsepower engine, leads the pack of muscle cars. The last vehicle created by Carroll Shelby, this is the car Davis would buy today for its collectability tomorrow. “His cars have been burning up enthusiasts’ dreams since the ’60s, and this is the last car designed with his name on it before he died,” Davis explains. “That car is very, very special.”

Tomorrow’s dream cars

As pedestrian as it may sound, even luxury carmakers are interested in efficiency as well as performance and sex appeal. “All the Europeans are running as fast as they can to put some form of electrification on their most expensive cars,” says Davis. “Lamborghini, Ferrari, Bentley, Rolls-Royce, Mercedes, Audi — all of them are experimenting with all-electric or hybrid-electric power trains.”

Carbon fiber, already in use on planes and race cars, is now being used to make automobiles lighter, which makes them more fuel-efficient. Here’s a peek at tomorrow’s dreamiest vehicles:

BMW i8

BMW’s i brand family of sporty vehicles is epitomized by the [i8](#), an all-electric concept car that looks like the Batmobile straight out of the movie, complete with scissor doors and a shocking amount of glass that renders the car almost transparent. Thanks to its sleek silhouette, this car looks like it’s moving even when it’s standing still.

Lamborghini Sesto Elemento

Lamborghini’s “technological demonstrator” car, the [Sesto Elemento](#), is built almost entirely out of carbon fiber, making it a whopping 800 pounds lighter than a comparable car. It accelerates

from 0 to 60 mph in a head-turning 2.5 seconds. Only 20 of these demonstrators have been built, and none are street legal, but for those who can foot the \$2.2 million price tag, it's like riding a rocket into the future.