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Ram Heavy Duty, Dodge Nitro Earn AutoPacific Vehicle Satisfaction Awards

May 19, 2010, Auburn Hills, Mich. - AutoPacific today announced its 14th annual Vehicle Satisfaction Awards (VSA), naming the all-new 2010 Ram Heavy Duty its top Heavy Duty Pickup and the Dodge Nitro its top Mid-Size Sport Utility.

"The all-new Ram Heavy Duty pickups have earned the industry's top awards, driven in large parts by the quality and refinements brought forward from the Ram 1500," said Doug Betts, Senior Vice President - Quality, Chrysler Group LLC. "It's clear that Ram Trucks have become the new benchmarks for the segment.

"We're also proud of Nitro and the Dodge Brand," added Betts. "With customer-oriented packages focused on performance, features and style, Dodge Nitro is a stand-out value in the midsize SUV segment."

AutoPacific's Vehicle Satisfaction Award is an industry benchmark for measuring how satisfied an owner is with his/her new car or light truck. This study by the Southern California-based automotive research firm summarizes the results of over 42,000 new vehicle owners.

“While the auto industry is showing signs of improvement, more than ever before, manufacturers need to be able to differentiate themselves. Proof of satisfied customers is as good as gold,” says George Peterson, president of AutoPacific. “We’ve found that more than 25% of new car buyers are positively influenced by owner-based awards like the VSA when deciding on a new car or truck.

“Vehicles that score highest in the Vehicle Satisfaction Awards are delivering value and satisfaction across a wide range of attributes,” says Peterson. “The winners perform well in 48 separate categories that objectively measure the ownership experience.”

Ram Heavy Duty

The 2010 Ram Heavy Duty brings increased capability and innovative new features to the heavy-duty segment with an uncompromising attitude that remains the standard for all full-size heavy-duty pickups.

For 2010, the Ram Heavy Duty is available for the first time in a crew-size cab model, providing Ram with a formidable entry in the highest-volume part of the heavy-duty pickup segment (approximately 50 percent).

Ram Heavy Duty also delivers the performance and amenities customers demand. The 2010 Ram Heavy Duty pickups feature a hydro-formed, fully boxed frame with advanced torsional rigidity and stiffness. A coil-spring suspension setup is used up front, while the multi-leaf spring design is maintained in the rear for heavy-duty capability. Front and rear shocks and springs are tuned for optimum ride quality and capability.

Improved suspension tuning and new C-pillar hydro mounts were added to the 2010 Ram Heavy Duty models to improve damping through the frame-bending mode frequency in order to better manage shake and after-shake response. The result is reduced shake, which means an improved ride for the customer.

Powertrain choices include the legendary 6.7-liter Cummins Turbo Diesel engine, which produces 350 horsepower (261 kW) at 3,000 rpm and 650 lb.-ft. of torque (881 N•m) at only 1,500 rpm.

The most durable and reliable engine in its class, the 6.7-liter Cummins Turbo Diesel features standard oil-change intervals of 7,500 miles. It also has major-overhaul intervals of 350,000 miles, providing more than a 100,000-mile advantage versus the competition.

The Cummins 6.7-liter Turbo Diesel engine uses a Diesel Particulate Filter (DPF) to virtually eliminate particulate matter emissions and an adsorber catalyst to reduce oxides of nitrogen (NOx) by as much as 90 percent, in order to meet stringent 2010.5 diesel emissions requirements.

Ram Heavy Duty is the only ¾ and one-ton pickup truck to offer a lower cost, lower maintenance alternative to Diesel Emission Fluid (DEF) injection systems to be used by competitors. It's also the only truck in the segment to offer a manual transmission.

The 2010 Ram Heavy Duty comes standard with the 5.7-liter HEMI V-8 gasoline engine, delivering 383 horsepower (286 kW) at 5,600 rpm and 400 lb.-ft. of torque (542 N•m) at 4,000 rpm. The 5.7-liter HEMI was redesigned for 2009, with several new and improved technologies including Variable-valve Timing (VVT), increased compression ratio, active intake manifold with long runners for low-end torque and short runners for high-rpm power, improved cylinder head port flow efficiency and reduced-restriction exhaust and induction systems.

The new 2010 Ram 2500 and 3500 pickups offer the only standard exhaust brake in the segment (diesel-equipped models only). This feature reduces brake fade, prolongs brake life and provides confidence and safety when hauling heavy loads on downhill grades. Large front (360 mm) and rear (358 mm) brakes with integrated Anti-lock Brake System (ABS) increase brake life and braking stability.

Customers in the heavy-duty segment have a range of needs, and most of them involve high levels of capability. The new 2010 Ram 2500 and 3500 are designed to deliver a total package:

- Increased Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) on 2500 4x4 crew cab diesel models to 9,600 pounds from 9,000 pounds
- Increased Gross Combined Weight Rating (GCWR) on 3500 dually models with diesel, auto transmission and 4.10 rear axle to 24,500 pounds from 24,000 pounds. With the Max Tow Package, GCWR increases to 25,400 pounds (late availability)
- Increased GCWR on 3500 4x2 models to 24,000 pounds from 23,000 pounds

Increased front Gross Axle Weight Rating (GAWR) on several models:

- To 5,500 pounds from 5,200 pounds on diesel 4x4 pickups
- To 5,000 pounds from 4,700 pounds on diesel 4x2 pickups

Other towing features include improved trailer-tow mirrors with integrated turn signals, memory function and puddle lamps. The larger 7-in. x 11-in. trailer-tow mirrors offer improved visibility with larger convex glass surfaces. The mirrors flip up and out in a vertical configuration for improved visibility around wide trailers. Trailer-tow mirrors are now standard on 3500. As an added convenience, a Class IV receiver is now standard on all Ram 2500 and 3500 Heavy Duty pickups.

Ram Heavy Duty towing, payload and axle capacity all have been increased for 2010. Suspension upgrades and larger front-axle U-joints, combined with increased front GAWR, result in increased front weight-carrying capability — a must for larger snowplows.

The Ram Power Wagon also returns for the 2010 model year, equipped with electric-locking front and rear differentials, electronic disconnecting sway bar, Bilstein shocks, 32-inch BFGoodrich off-road tires, underbody skid plate protection, 4.56 axle ratio for hill climbing and a custom-built Warn® 12,000-pound winch that is accessible through the front bumper. The 2010 Ram Power Wagon features new exterior graphics and a lower two-tone paint scheme.

Dodge Nitro

The all-new Dodge Nitro lineup has been revised and renamed for 2010, offering new exterior and interior styling and new standard features and safety and security equipment for 2010. These new models (Heat, Detonator and Shock) provide Nitro customers with more standard content and style with 20-inch aluminum wheels, sunscreen glass and monochromatic exterior paint.

The all-new 2010 Dodge Nitro Heat adds to the previous entry-level model with 20-inch aluminum wheels, body-color grille with bright billets, sunscreen glass and monochromatic exterior paint. The quality-proven 3.7-liter V-6 engine delivering 210 horsepower (157 kW) and 235 lb.-ft. (319 N•m) of torque is available in 4x2 and 4x4 models. MSRP for

the 2010 Dodge Nitro Heat 4x2 is $22,335 (including $745 destination).

The Dodge Nitro Detonator packs a punch with 23 percent more horsepower and 12 percent more torque than the Dodge Nitro Heat model. With its standard aluminum 4.0-liter overhead cam V-6 engine, the Nitro Detonator delivers 260 horsepower (194 kW) and 265 lb.-ft. (359 N•m) of torque to the road with a five-speed automatic transmission. The new Dodge Nitro Detonator model features 20-inch platinum-clad aluminum wheels, eight premium speakers with subwoofer, remote start and Parksense® rear-park assist. MSRP for the 2010 Dodge Nitro Detonator 4x2 is $26,495 (including $745 destination).

The Dodge Nitro Shock adds unique 20-inch aluminum premium-painted wheels, heated leather seats and a sun roof to the Nitro Detonator model. MSRP for the 2010 Dodge Nitro Shock 4x2 is $27,495 (including $745 destination).

The new 2010 Dodge Nitro lineup is now available in nine exterior colors, including Detonator Yellow Clear Coat (late availability).

About AutoPacific

AutoPacific is a future-oriented automotive marketing and product-consulting firm. Every year AutoPacific publishes a wide variety of syndicated studies on the automotive industry. The firm also conducts extensive proprietary research and consulting for auto manufacturers, distributors, marketers and suppliers worldwide. Company headquarters are in Tustin, California, with an affiliate office in the Detroit area.

Additional information can be found on AutoPacific's websites: www.autopacific.com and www.vehiclevoice.com.

About the Dodge Brand

Dodge is a full line of cars, SUVs and MPVs that are agile, daring, sensible and inventive. The product line includes the Dodge Caliber, Dodge Avenger, Dodge Challenger, Dodge Charger, Dodge Grand Caravan, Dodge Journey, Dodge Nitro and Dodge Viper SRT10.

Dodge introduced two new vehicles for the 2009 model year: the all-new 2009 Dodge Journey, the brand’s first crossover vehicle and the 2009 Dodge Challenger, a modern-day American muscle car. Dodge also celebrated the 25th anniversary of the minivan during the 2009 model year. With more than 65 minivan-firsts introduced since 1983 and more than 12 million Dodge and Chrysler minivans sold, Chrysler Group LLC has solidified its leadership in the segment. J.D. Power and Associates further acknowledged this leadership by naming the Dodge Grand Caravan the Most Dependable Van for 2009. The 2010 Dodge Grand Caravan continues to set the mark in the minivan segment with unsurpassed fuel economy of 17 city / 25 highway mpg and minivan-first innovations including the segment’s only Stow ‘n Go® and Swivel ‘n Go® seating and storage systems. The 2010 Dodge Journey and 2010 Dodge Avenger (with ESC) also earned the 2009 Top Safety Pick rating from the IIHS.
Also in 2008, the Dodge Journey entered key volume markets outside North America, joining the Dodge Avenger, Nitro and Caliber. Dodge Caliber was the highest sales volume vehicle for the company outside North America in 2008.

About the Ram Truck Brand

With a work-hard, play-hard attitude, the Ram Truck brand offers the boldest, most powerful and capable pickup truck lineup on the planet.

The Ram Truck brand will add to its award-winning truck lineup with the introduction of it all-new 2010 Ram 2500 and 3500 Heavy Duty trucks, Motor Trend's Truck of the Year. The new heavy-duty trucks provide customers with first-time innovations and features along with new standards of strength, utility and driveability, building on the Ram's leadership in the heavy-duty pickup segment.

Introduced in 2008, the Ram 1500 is a game changer in terms of its ability to "outsmart" and "out-tough" the competition with its bold exterior design, crafted and refined interior, engineering excellence, superb innovation and best-in-class features and amenities. The Ram 1500 also ranks at the top of Strategic Vision Inc.’s (SVI) 2009 Total Quality Index™ (TQI) in the full-size truck segment. According to the survey, the Ram 1500 leads the way with the

highest Total Quality score of any truck in the 15-year history of the study. Customers specifically noted that the Ram has the best added storage capability along with the best truck interior ever rated by customers.

The Ram Truck brand will further enhance its commercial vehicle presence with the introduction of a "new crew" of commercial-grade work trucks: the new 2011 Ram 3500, 4500 and 5500 Chassis Cabs. Led by an all-new crew cab, the new 2011 Ram Chassis Cabs are built on a proven frame and chassis, and engineered for maximum uptime, optimum performance and enhanced commercial capability.

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