

# U.S. Auto Scene® ROAD REPORT

## F-350 Super Duty Is Tough Hombre

By Stefanie Carano  
Staff Reporter

As it turned the corner and came into view, I couldn't believe my eyes – my next test car was not really a car at all but the most enormous force that has ever been put on wheels.

Approaching the F-350 Super Duty, it was hard to take in all at once and I knew that this wouldn't be any ordinary driving experience.

The truck was tall, strong and sturdy like my cousin's horse Trooper, and its golden bronze paint shined like Trooper's coat in the sun. The F-350 proved it could be a gentle giant or a vicious beast, depending on how it was handled.

I couldn't just take it on my normal commutes – it was far too mighty of a vehicle for the garage at my condo (and a few inches too high to fit there) and it was almost too robust for a single lane on a local freeway.

I knew a truck like this belonged in its natural environment – a rural setting with empty dirt roads, muddy farm fields and tire tracks forged into high grass.

So, I paid a visit to a friend's house in Highland Township to see how it handled.

Here, there were plenty of dirt roads to drive down, plenty of rural terrain, and I'd never had such a smooth ride. Small rivets and bumps seemed to barely register in the passenger compartment and one of my friends along for the ride noted that it handled much better on these roads than his own truck and he really enjoyed the vehicle.

I tried to throw some things in the back just to see how it would haul.

I didn't have too much to haul except for some lawn chairs and a cooler, but while loading I noticed the truck came with a tailgate step (a small ladder and a rod that snaps up perpendicular to the bed to act as a support beam) and this was a great convenience for helping people get on and off the bed.

I also took it onto some farm property where there was a little bit of mud, some patches of high grass and other typical off-road challenges that I knew the truck was made for.

The truck proved to be great for this. Driving on grass was like sailing over water. It took to this terrain very well.

And while this truck was definitely a big workhorse, the Lariat trim level gave it real, masculine style.

My media test truck had a sunroof, faux (but convincing) wood paneling surrounding the center stack and leather seats designed to look like a saddle – a western style interior.

I should mention there is



PHOTO: STEFANIE CARANO

Ready to tackle tough terrain is the Ford 2011 F-350 Super Duty pickup truck.



PHOTO: STEFANIE CARANO

Inside the 2011 Ford F-350 Super Duty pickup.

more space in this truck's passenger compartment than many people have in their homes. The truck seats up to five people and not only is there plenty of leg room in the back seat, there is a total of about eight storage compartments, sized to fit just about anything you might be carrying around – from tools to maps to a small piglet.

Many of the surfaces have a non-stick coating so that dirt, mud and grease don't cake onto surfaces a passenger would frequently touch. Like the armrests.

And while backing up could pose a challenge, the backup sensor and camera option that came in my test truck made backing up easy, even in tight spots. One thing to keep in mind is that if dirt or mud obscured one of the sensors, as it did after my trip to Highland, the backup alarm sounded until you wiped the dirt off.

Rain, however, had no effect on the sensors. This backup sensor can also be turned on or off at the driver's discretion.

With this kind of vehicle, I wasn't expecting outstanding fuel economy, but I achieved a higher-than-average mpg than I had expected, about 13 mpg, according to the instant fuel economy meter visible in the productivity screen next to the speedometer.

This year, Ford has seen a significantly high number of truck sales and the company boasts an intimate knowledge of its truck customer.

This truck seemed to reflect that knowledge. It seemed to anticipate the every need and want of the customer and it was definitely an exciting vehicle to drive and put through its paces

### 2011 FORD F-350 LARIAT 4X4 CREW CAB

- **Base price:** \$44,745
- **As tested:** \$53,195
- **Engine:** 6.2L EFI V8 flex fuel
- **Mileage:** n/a
- **Curb wt.:** 6,970 lbs.
- **Length:** 246.8 inches
- **Wheelbase:** 156.2 inches
- **Final assembly:** Louisville

- **Options:** Lariat Ultimate Package: power slide moonroof, navigation system with satellite radio, memory group, remote start system, rear view camera, tailgate step and heated seats (\$3,995); 3.73 Locking Axle (\$390); LT275/70R18E BSW A/T Tires (\$125); FX4 Offroad Package (\$295); Chrome Package (\$995); Electronic Shift on the Fly (\$185); Engine Block Heater (\$75); Upfitter Switches (\$125); Lower Accent Two-Tone Paint (\$470); Tough Bed Spray Liner (\$450); Bed Extender (\$250); Cable Lock (\$120).

## Dodge Leads Virginia Beach Marathon

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2, then went on the road to compete in that Half Marathon in Virginia Beach on Sept. 5.

"At the Dodge brand, we are passionate about our products, and we're also passionate about living life to the fullest," said Ralph Gilles, president and CEO – Dodge Brand.

"Running is a fun, energetic and healthy sport that reflects many of our own brand values, and participating in the Rock 'n Roll Marathon Series is an excellent opportunity to expose our brand to the more than 1 million who are somehow involved in or touched by the (running) series."

Marathon runners and attendees at the Virginia Beach event were fully immersed in the Dodge brand experience, with interactive mobile applications such as Facebook and Twitter, throughout the event's two-day Health & Fitness Expo portion.

Running enthusiasts were also able to check up on training tips and runner profiles on the Dodge brand Facebook page.

On-site, the brand also had a display that features the 2011 Dodge Durango, which was out of the market briefly

before returning as a 2011 model year offering. The vehicle will be built at the Jefferson North Assembly Plant in Detroit – the same plant that builds the 2011 Jeep Grand Cherokee.

The Durango display was staffed by Dodge running team members, who answered public questions and provided related information to the thousands who visited the event.

Meanwhile, the Virginia Beach Half Marathon is part of the so-called Rock 'n Roll Marathon Series. The series of marathons and half marathons combine entertainment and running in a unique way. Bands stationed at every mile of the race help keep walkers and runners en-

ergized and involved, engaged and entertained.

With more than 300,000 runners participating at 14 events across the country, it is now the largest and most widely attended marathon running series in the world.

"The Competitor Group is pleased to officially welcome the Dodge brand into our Rock 'n Roll family. We share a commitment to quality performance, dedication and passion for a healthy lifestyle," said Peter Englehart, CEO of the sponsoring Competitor Group, prior to the event.

"We're delighted that Dodge has chosen our Virginia Beach half marathon to unveil its new Durango, which will lead more than 20,000 runners across the finish line



The all-new 2011 Dodge Durango SUV cuts a much sleeker exterior profile than the earlier version of the vehicle. It will be built at Jefferson North assembly plant in Detroit.

# TRW Electric Steering Units Support Ford and Mazda Contracts in China

TRW Automotive Holdings Corp. recently announced it will start production of Electric Power Steering (EPS) systems from its facilities in Anting, China in support of the supplier's Asian Pacific customer base.

The company will add significant production equipment and manufacturing floor space in support of Ford Motor Co. and Mazda projects initially.

"Electric Steering is a rapidly growing technology globally due to the many advantages it can provide," said Peter Lake, executive vice president, Sales and Business Development, for Livonia-based TRW.

"Creating a regional production base for our Asian customers will provide a cost-effective source for these fuel-saving and emissions-reducing technologies as we expand EPS for the production of global platforms and for domestic customers."

Over the next 18 months, TRW will install lines to produce mechanical gear, column power head assembly and electronic control units to fully localize Column Drive EPS manufacturing for the region. Line capacity is expected to be in the range of 450,000 units annually with employment of an additional 170 people including engineering and other support staff.

Nancy Gougarty, vice president, Operations, Asia Pacific for TRW Automotive, said, "The expansion of Electric Steering into Asia continues our efforts to bring all of TRW's highly sophisticated product offerings to China and the wider Asia Pacific region."

"As part of locating EPS here, we will build an efficient and well-developed supply base to deliver cost improvements – essential to competitiveness and customer service.

## Car Guy Restores His Beloved '47 Ford

CENTER VALLEY, Ark. (AP) – Bill Butts of Center Valley leans against his 1947 Ford pickup, arms folded across his Route 66 T-shirt. Butts began restoring a pickup truck identical to the 1947 Ford when he was 13 years old. The truck was his first restoration, and he fell in love with what has now become a lifelong hobby – almost an addiction – to paint, chrome, engines and fellowship with other car enthusiasts. Now, at the tender age of 63, he has a showroom full of cars on display, a testament to his effort.

Butts grew up in Center Valley, joined the U.S. Army and retired at the rank of Sergeant 1st Class. He spent 37 years traveling the world with his profession and returned to his home and his passions – family and cars.

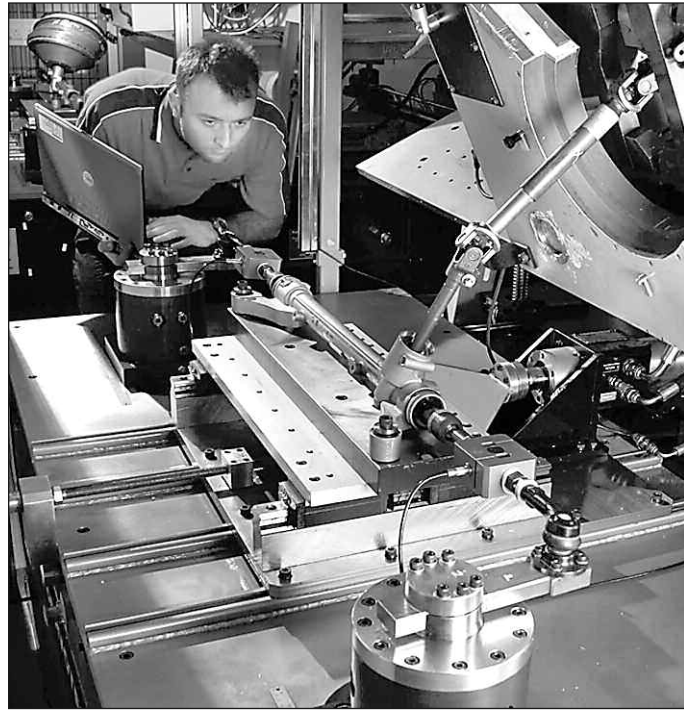
At the shop he runs with a verbal pedal to the metal through the current "complete and total restoration" he and longtime buddy and car enthusiast Tommy Kinslow have in the works, like a briefing on the battle field.

Body parts of a 1936 Ford convertible are scattered throughout before him, but all with great care. Kinslow sands a piece, getting it ready for paint as Butts explains what is going on with each part.

"We've completely disassembled the car," Butts said as he pointed out the different parts. "Tommy has been helping me out with the body work seven or eight months now. We've got all the floor panels out of it now. We've spent about six months on that; the motor's been redone. It's like an old flathead engine. It's going to be like a stock restoration. We were going black, but we've decided to paint it yellow. Painting it sungold yellow for my wife, that's her favorite color. We're going to give it a blood red top and blood red interior."

Butts praised his wife, Joyce, who he's been married to for 43 years, for supporting his pricey hobby.

Butts is a member of the River Valley Antique Auto Club. Currently, there are approximately 100 members, including 50-60 who are active. He said an offshoot of the



TRW Automotive Holdings Corp. will produce its advanced, fuel-saving Column Drive Electric Power Steering system in Anting, China. The program will support Ford and Mazda projects.

"And electric steering has been recognized for its ability to help contribute to the environmental improvements here."

TRW Automotive Components (Shanghai) Co. Ltd. (TACS) was established in 2002 and manufactures airbag electronic control units, crash

sensors, steering gear assemblies and Anti-lock Braking Systems (ABS) and Electronic Stability Control (ECS).

TACS personnel will work closely with engineering counterparts at TRW's Technical Center in Shanghai to support the launch of Column Drive EPS production.

## Visteon Opens in Kaluga

Visteon Corp. has opened an automotive interiors manufacturing facility in Kaluga, one of Russia's main centers for automotive production, approximately 112 miles south of Moscow.

Based in the Kaluga Supplier Park, the new facility manufactures injection-molded door panels and other interior components for the new Volkswagen Polo, which is to be sold in the domestic Russian market.

Visteon plans to reach full production in the first quarter

of 2011.

Equipped with advanced injection molding lines and ultrasonic welding assembly cells, the new plant can be expanded as Visteon develops further business in the region.

"The Kaluga plant demonstrates Visteon's commitment to establishing a strong presence in the growing Russian market in support of our global growth objectives," said Steve Meszaros, Visteon product group president.

Supplier Visteon is based in Van Buren Twp.

club they've fondly pegged the S.O.B. (Sweet Old Buzzards) Club meet at his "Playhouse" on Monday mornings.

"This is something I've always dreamed of," Butts said as he opens the door to a '50s-type, set diner in a building next to the Butts' home.

A large velvet painting of Elvis hangs on the wall surrounded by other '50s memorabilia, old 45 records and a life size cutout of Roy Rogers along with one of his guitar props from a movie. The bar is an old metal Coca-Cola dispenser that the Butts family sanded, painted and put a top on for extra counter space to entertain family and friends throughout the years.

Lining the walls are trophy after trophy reminding onlookers what the Playhouse is all about.

"This is a place for all of us to gather and fellowship," Butts said. "We meet every Monday morning. It is a wonderful time for us. We have coffee and cake in the mornings. We spend the morning playing dominoes, chicken foot and pool, then we have a prayer lunch that is prepared by our wives. We work on each other's cars and help each other out with any problems we are having. There is a lot of good fellowship that comes along with our group."

Butts opened a door to the side of the diner and turned on the lights. A shiny showroom floor was exposed. Finished antique cars from the '30s lined both sides of the showroom, with the exception of a 1936 Cushman motor scooter and a bright yellow 2003 Chevrolet SSR Super Sport Roadster.

"Yeah, that Roadster has a unique story behind it," Butts said. "It was used in an Alan Jackson video. I got it from a man who had bought one in every color when they came out and he put them in a garage. He lost his wife and son back-to-back to cancer and decided to sell everything. When he got ready to sell them I wanted to get the yellow one, because that is my wife's favorite color and it looks like a retro '49 Chevrolet pickup, and it scoots pretty good. It's fun to drive. From the story I am told, Alan Jackson wanted the car, but was

on tour and everything went in the sale, so I got it."

He gave a brief history of each car on the showroom floor.

"This is probably the most unique car I have ever had," Butts said, pointing to a rare '34 Buick waiting in line to be restored. "It's been worn quite a bit, but it is worth a lot of money just sitting there like it is."

Butts pointed to a 1936 Ford with only 26,000 miles in pristine shape.

"I've been to car shows all over the United States. I think this one is the nicest 2-door sedan in the U.S." Butts said.

One of the perks of Butts' efforts is many of his restorations can be seen on the big screen.

"We had one in the Johnny Cash movie, 'Walk the Line,' Butts said. "We had a big time with that. It is a lot of fun. They don't pay you a lot of money, but they feed you. You just basically sit around and watch and move the car around when they tell you. They'll dress you up to fit into the film's character and you can usually get the opportunity to meet and eat with the actors. We've had cars in other movies also. It's just fun knowing your car can meet that expectation."

Butts admitted he has made a few blunders along the road in choosing which cars to buy and restore. Out of an excess of 500 cars restored one in particular stands out among the numerous vehicles and hours Butts has invested in his hobby. The '36 Ford convertible.

"The one I am working on now was the biggest surprise I've ever gotten," Butts admits. "I knew better. I got it from Oklahoma. I went at nighttime. Bad mistake. I know better."

"You never go at night to look at a car you're buying and never go when it is raining. But it was the car I've wanted all my life. The man told me how good the car was, how it had been in a museum most of its lifetime and how he drove it up and down the road every now and then. I get it home, unload it from the trailer and put it up on the rack and the whole floor is rotted out of it."