

# Chevy Offers Social Media for Gearheads

DETROIT – Are you on The BLOCK? That's the question car enthusiasts will be asking this summer now that The BLOCK – powered by Chevrolet Performance – is online at theblock.com.

The BLOCK is a new performance-oriented online social community that blends online "bench racing" with interactive features of enthusiasts' vehicles and projects inside info on new parts, the latest Chevrolet factory-performance models and Chevrolet racing activities.

With the scan of a "QR," or Quick Response, code, a BLOCK member's profile, including photos, videos and more, can be viewed at a car show, cruise night, drag race or even at the end of the rockiest off-road trail.

"The BLOCK is social media for gearheads," said Jim Campbell, General Motors U.S. vice president of Performance Vehicles & Motorsports.

"Whether you're into street rods, muscle cars, trucks or late-model performers, it is designed for enthusiasts of all stripes to share their experiences and talk about their projects with like-minded people who share a passion for building, racing and enjoying cars and trucks."

When it comes to sharing knowledge that can help enthusiasts build their project vehicle, The BLOCK delivers advice and insight of fellow builders as well as the first look at the latest crate engines, engine parts and vehicle accessories from Chevrolet Performance.

Since GM engineers and other insiders will be on The BLOCK, the advice on selecting the right camshaft for an LS-engine upgrade, for example, might just come directly from a Chevrolet Performance engineer.

The BLOCK is also the first source for information on the latest new parts and accessories, as well as the bulletin board for all things related to Chevrolet racing – from the



*The BLOCK is a new performance-oriented online social community that blends online "bench racing" with interactive features of enthusiasts' vehicles and projects inside info on new parts, the latest Chevrolet factory-performance models and Chevrolet racing activities. Information on becoming a member of The Block is accessible via this QR Code.*

wheels-up action of the LSX Challenge Series and the fender-rubbing rivalries in NASCAR, to the dirt-slinging scrums in circle track and even the high-tech competition in Chevy's new IndyCar venture.

And just like engineers who hang out on The BLOCK, well-known racers are also there, offering opinions and points of view from the racing world members can't get elsewhere.

"Wherever your car is, other enthusiasts will be able to view everything you want to share about it," said Campbell. "It's a great way to start conversations with new friends and tell your story in a unique way."

When someone signs up at theblock.com, a unique, easy-to-use QR code is assigned specifically to his or her profile. It's designed to be placed in the window of a vehicle, allowing other enthusiasts to scan it and instantly call up the profile and details about the car – including a restoration history, racing sponsorship details, car-show awards and even videos linked on the profile.

At The BLOCK, community members can also:

- Be among the first to learn about the newest Chevrolet performance vehicles, including the COPO Camaro, Camaro 1LE, the next-generation Corvette and more – along with the parts and accessories Chevrolet Performance has to offer for them;
- Keep up on the latest performance news from inside Chevrolet Performance and the broader enthusiast world, including the first look at new crate engines and other components from Chevrolet Performance;
- Read about the latest Chevrolet vehicles and other Chevy news the moment it's announced;
- View exclusive content, including industry news, personality profiles, vehicle and component features and more;
- Follow the latest in Chevrolet Performance racing, from the LSX Challenge Series to circle track;
- Connect with other BLOCK members by way of

the site's exclusive forum;

- Track upcoming events, including races, car shows, auctions and more;

- Create a profile and display photos and list details about their vehicle(s), including technical specifications, show awards, race results and even performance results, such as 0-60 times and drag strip elapsed times;

- Post videos of their car or truck to share with other enthusiasts.

Interaction among members allows them to "like" one another's vehicles, engines, etc., as well as post comments. All those features are viewable by others who visit the site or scan the QR code sticker on the member's vehicle.

The BLOCK also offers members a platform to reach a broader audience of enthusiasts, enabling greater visibility for their vehicle ahead of a classic car auction or to help promote a club's upcoming car show.

## Rock Star Patti Smith Exhibits Her Polaroid Work

by Gerald Scott  
News Dept.

Rock musician, poet and writer Patti Smith is currently earning her due at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

It turns out that Smith, famous for many things, including that she was married to Detroit and MC5 guitarist Fred "Sonic" Smith for a time, is also quite a prolific photographer at that.

Smith took many photos on the road as part of her rock star life, but the most compelling photographs in her new exhibit at the DIA tend to be of the intimate variety including detail shots of ephemera belonging to Robert Mapplethorpe, the famous photographer she lived with in New York back in the 1960s and 1970s.

All of this came to light last week when the DIA opened the exhibition, "Patti Smith: Camera Solo," which comprises more than 70 black-and-white gelatin silver prints taken with her vintage Polaroid camera.

Asked during the media kickoff tour of the exhibit if she had a favorite image, Smith replied, "I haven't thought about it . . . I really loved my

pictures of this little winged cherub that I'm so fond of.

"But I like different pictures for different reasons because of something I felt (at the time of the photograph).

"(Well), for instance, like any artist, any worker likes their new work – there's some new work that I just shot May 7 at the Frida Kahlo house (in Mexico City)."

Smith observed that back in the 1990s when she was married to guitarist Fred Smith and they were living quietly and raising a family in St. Clair Shores, they were frequent visitors to the DIA so that the large Diego Rivera automotive murals and his association with Kahlo were all very familiar to her.

For that matter, "Patti Smith: Camera Solo" explores a variety of themes that are significant to her, including other poets and writers, portraiture, travel, art, architecture and more.

Her best work is perhaps her detailed work, such as "Herman Hesse's Chair," "Arthur Rimbaud's Utensils," "Walt Whitman's Tomb" and close-ups of Robert Mapplethorpe's hands. Hardly any of the material is literally

## Bing Meets with Feds on M-1 Rail

by COREY WILLIAMS  
Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) – Federal Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood met last week with city and state officials to discuss the status of a proposed light rail project viewed as a way to help Detroit rebound from an economic crisis.

The \$137 million project is expected to extend 3.3 miles north along Woodward Avenue from downtown to Detroit's New Center area. It has been hailed by some as a linchpin to an economically viable downtown and midtown.

LaHood presented several questions during his meeting at City Hall with Mayor Dave Bing, Gov. Rick Snyder, Penske Automotive Group chief Roger Penske and others involved in the M-1 rail. Among other things, he asked who eventually would run the rail system and what the long- and short-term operating costs would be. Snyder called it a "short list of action items."

"This is a natural process of going through this," Snyder said. "The federal government has now done a very thoughtful review of the good hard work done by the M-1 team. Now we're getting to the point of saying, 'What's the last pieces that need to come together to tie it together in some constructive way?'"

All sides are expected to meet again with LaHood in 60 days.

Early on, the project had a 2016 completion date. Some plans included eventually extending it several more miles to Detroit's northern city limits to Oakland County.

The Detroit City Council has approved issuing \$75 million in bonds to provide a local match for the work. About \$131 million has been raised privately, according to Penske, a member of the M-1 Rail group.

"There were no game stoppers," he said of last Monday's meeting with LaHood. "Hopefully, in 60 days we'll have the final answer."



PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

*Among the ephemera in the new Patti Smith photography exhibit at the DIA are, from left, Smith's Polaroid 250 Land camera, a portrait of 19th century poet Charles Baudelaire and the shoes of an earlier Pope, which Smith acquired as a photo subject.*

drawn from her prolific rock-and-roll musician life, but there was a quote in the photo gallery that explains her philosophy of life and camera work:

"When I was young, one of my favorite books was 'Around the World in 1,000 Pictures,'" Smith writes.

"I often think of it when I travel and try to capture an essence of a city in one shot. Being a singer, I've been in as many as 32 countries in 45 days while on tour. I always bring my camera and try to find something that speaks of each city."

It turns out that Smith began taking 35 mm photographs in 1968 as components for collages and took up the serious use of the Polaroid Land Camera back in 1995. Her photos are infused with personal more than literal significance and possess the same unfiltered, emotional quality prevalent in her poetry and song lyrics.

The allure of her photographs, critics have said, is their often dreamlike imagery while their modest size belies their depth and power.

"These intimate photographs provide a fascinating look at the world as seen through Patti Smith's eyes," said Graham W.J. Beal, DIA director.

"Both longtime fans and people newly exposed to her work will be impressed by her truly touching commemoration of the artists, poets, authors, family and friends from whom she draws inspiration."

Indeed, Smith's use of vintage Polaroid Land 250 camera lends genuine intimacy to her images, whether casual, unvarnished portraits of herself and her children, or symbolic portraits such as of Mapplethorpe's slippers.

In the era of digital imaging and manipulation (thank you,



PATTI SMITH ©2003

*"Self-Portrait, NYC," Patti Smith, 2003, silver halide print.*

PhotoShop), Smith's work nonetheless champions the use of photography in its most classical sense: as a tool to document a "found" and altogether genuine moment.

She finds the poetic qualities of a particular time and place, and captures that beauty on film.

She told the amusing story that a few years ago when Polaroid Land camera film was being retired, her assistant hurriedly bought \$3,000 worth of the rare film stock while Smith was traveling overseas.

It was a fortuitous moment, because Smith said she's down to her last 100 frames of Polaroid film and the end of the film seems to perhaps symbolize the end of her career as a photographer as well – Smith is a vibrant 65, to be sure – but still, the exhibit feels like a life retrospective less just a photo-career retrospective at that.

All in all, Patti Smith made a career of being where the action was, even if sometimes, ironically enough as far as her camera was concerned, the action was "still."

"Patti Smith: Camera Solo" runs through Sept. 2.

Go see it, you'll enjoy it immensely.

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