

Chrysler's New Products Aid Record Sales Streak

Chrysler has racked up a morale-boosting sales streak of more than 34 consecutive months of year-over-year sales gains, and the month of February brought the unbroken streak to 35 months.

However, the end of the first quarter in March may interrupt Chrysler's sales streak, due to several factors, including the production end of the Jeep Liberty in August, shutdown of the Jeep Grand Cherokee Plant in Detroit in January for a week for model changeover, and the recent start-up of Chrysler's Ram Heavy Duty truck line in Mexico.

"Naturally, there have been bumps along the way, and the first quarter of 2013 is a case in point," Gualberto Ranieri, senior vice president of Chrysler Communications commented.

Sales and shipment volumes for the first quarter are being negatively affected by the ongoing product launches and preparations for the new 2014 Jeep Grand Cherokee, which is the replacement for the Liberty, and the Compass, Patriot and the new 2013 Ram Heavy Duty truck line.

In spite of all that, Chrysler has now extended its sales streak to 35 consecutive months.

It's a record that Chrysler is very proud of and, of course, one the company would like to see continue.

Chrysler Chairman and CEO Sergio Marchionne also noted in a year-end earnings call that Chrysler's first-quarter sales performance is expected to be lower compared with the first quarter of 2012 due to product launches. Monthly Jeep sales, for example, have been down in recent months due to product launches and temporary plant shutdowns.

Ranieri noted the sales streak started when Chrysler reported

a 25 percent year-over-year sales increase in April 2010, a mere 10 months after Chrysler Group began operating in June 2009.

Ralph Kisiel, spokesperson for Chrysler Sales and Dealer Communications, explained that Chrysler has launched 18 all-new or refreshed products, including an all-new Jeep Grand Cherokee that was the first new model introduced around that time, and which was very well received by consumers.

"Product is the heart of any sales streak, and that's definitely the case here," said Kisiel.

He also cited improved marketing, especially Chrysler's very successful ad campaigns broadcast during the 2011, 2012 and 2013 Super Bowl games.

Kisiel said ads that debuted during these games for the past three years have really connected with the public and Chrysler has received a lot of positive feedback on these marketing campaigns.

He also cited exterior design changes, completely new interiors and new powertrains that are far more fuel efficient than before.

"All these new products have been resonating with consumers and that's why we've been enjoying a 34-month sales streak . . . We're thrilled that we've had this sales streak and we'd love to have it continue through this year," said Kisiel. "But there are factors which could affect it."

Kisiel said the real test will come in March, because it will be compared with March 2012, which was the best sales month of the year. Chrysler sold 163,381 units in March of last year.

However, Kisiel did not expect the streak to necessarily end in February.

GM Shows Heart in Donating 2012 Camaro

A unique Chevrolet Camaro donated by GM to the American Heart Association was sold for \$400,000 at the Barrett-Jackson Auction in Scottsdale, Ariz.

The name of the buyer has yet to be released.

All proceeds from the auction benefit cardiovascular research through the Southeast Michigan American Heart Association.

Money raised from charitable auctions such as this is vitally needed because, according to the American Heart Association, 82.6 million heart disease and stroke survivors are living proof that donations make a difference.

"The heart is the engine of the body," said Jim Campbell, vice president, Chevrolet Performance. "Just like a car, if the engine isn't running in top condition, it affects the entire body. We are happy to be able to help the Association accelerate advances in cardiovascular research with a very special Camaro."

The factory drag-race car is the only 2012 Central Office Production Order (COPO) convertible offered for sale, and the only one painted Inferno Orange Metallic. A total of only 69 COPO Camaros were built in 2012.

Since 1949, contributions to the American Heart Association have produced significant findings and discoveries, which opened doors for thriving, life-saving campaigns such as Go Red For Women Luncheons, Heart Walks, Heart Balls and Jump/Hoops For Heart.



This Camaro sold for \$400,000 to benefit the American Heart Association.

"Funding our mission equates to more lives saved or vastly improved . . . it is both that simple and profound," said Kathy Kauffmann, executive director and vice president for the Southeast Michigan American Heart Association.

"Thanks to generous supporters like Chevrolet, the American Heart Association continues to bring life-saving research and resources to communities across Michigan."

The association is recognized as a worldwide leader in cardiovascular research. In 2012, \$9.3 million was invested in research in Michigan. Since the organization's inception, \$3.4 billion has been invested nationwide. As a result, research advances such as the artificial heart valve, CPR, and lifesaving drugs have been

created to save lives.

The American Heart Association is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary health organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke.

Its mission is to build healthier lives by preventing, treating and defeating these diseases – America's No. 1 and No. 3 killers. The group funds cutting-edge research, conduct lifesaving public and professional educational programs, and advocate to protect public health.

To learn more or join in helping, call 1-800-AHA-USA1 or visit americanheart.org.

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2014 Ram 1500 to Offer EcoDiesel 3.0-Liter with 8-Speed Automatic

Beginning in the third quarter of 2013, Ram will become the only brand to offer a small-displacement diesel for its half-ton line of trucks, according to Chrysler officials.

The 2014 Ram 1500 will offer a new, 3.0-liter EcoDiesel engine, mated with the eight-speed TorqueFlite automatic transmission. Chrysler officials say they expect the powertrain to deliver a combination of best-in-class fuel efficiency and best-in-class torque, while still being capable.

"Truck owners have been emphatically asking for it, and Ram will be the only manufacturer to offer a diesel powertrain in the half-ton segment with the 2014 Ram 1500 EcoDiesel," said Fred Diaz, president and CEO – Ram Truck Brand and Chrysler de Mexico.

"The half-ton truck market is incredibly competitive, and although we're honored the Ram 1500 has received a number of prestigious awards, we cannot rest on what we have accomplished, we must keep pushing."

The 2013 Ram 1500 won *Motor Trend's* Truck of the Year, The North American Truck of the Year and Truck of Texas. Building on the award-winning truck, the 2014 Ram 1500 EcoDiesel, say Chrysler officials, will further stretch its best-in-class fuel economy title lead and continue to raise the innovation bar in one of the automotive industry's most customer-loyal segments.

"The Ram 1500 with 3.0-liter V6 turbo EcoDiesel and TorqueFlite eight-speed transmission delivers on the demands of truckers by providing best-in-class torque, fuel economy and range," said Diaz.

"There's no doubt that being the only truck manufacturer to offer this game-changing technology will provide Ram with a competitive advantage."

The new 3.0-liter V6 EcoDiesel is an advanced diesel engine, say Chrysler officials, who add that its emissions are 60 percent less than those produced by diesel powertrains 25 years ago. The combination of torque and fuel economy marks new levels of performance for small V6 engines, Chrysler officials say.

Ram's newest turbo diesel engine is manufactured by VM Motori, a Chrysler Group diesel engine supplier since 1992.

Macomb Chamber Will Hold Mixer

The Macomb County Chamber of Commerce is holding a special member mixer at the Twisted Rooster in Chesterfield Township on Thursday, March 21, between 5:30 and 7:30 p.m.

The event is free to members. Come early to take advantage of the restaurant's happy hour specials, which end at 6 p.m.

For more information, visit macombchamber.com.

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