

Prefix Viper SRT-10 Takes 'Buy American' Message to Racetracks

by Irena Granaas

The Team Prefix modified, supercharged Viper SRT-10 has come out to play, just in time to resume its role as champion for promoting American-made products and American manufacturing.

Rochester Hills-based Prefix Corporation has planned auto-related and charity events throughout the year to make sure the "Buy American" message remains prominent in the minds of customers, vendors, the community and industry.

The company also officially launched Prefix Fiber, an apparel division with T-shirts and other items designed to celebrate their Michigan roots, American ingenuity and dedication to keeping products made here at home.

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Employees and staff at Prefix have long been enthusiastic about promoting American manufacturing and American products, and a weekend event to debut this newest enterprise raised the excitement level another notch.

Local auto enthusiasts, the Michigan Viper Club and auto industry executives gathered for Open Track Day June 23 at the Waterford Hills racetrack facility, which had the vehicles cruise from the Hamlin Pub in Rochester Hills to the racetrack facility in Clarkston, providing guests with a chance to see Team Prefix's

modified SRT Viper in action.

"It's a team effort, so we're spreading the Forge Ahead USA message wherever we can," Prefix President Kim Zeile said. "The Prefix Fiber division provides a fun way for our customers, business associates and community to show their American-made pride and support."

Prefix Fiber is the brainchild of Zeile's daughters, Michelle Zeile Burns and Jennifer Helfrich.

"We had a great turnout," said Burns. "Everyone really enjoyed themselves and it was a really relaxed event."

When Prefix Corporation became title sponsor for the recent One Lap of America competition, entering the specially modified Dodge Viper, no one knew what effective ambassadors the head-turning, hand-finished Viper and its drivers would turn out to be for the Team Prefix: Forge Ahead USA message.

The drivers, owner/driver Steve Loudin and co-driver Tom Drewer, found themselves and the Viper with its "Forge Ahead USA" decals a center of attention wherever they went during the eight-day, multiple-racetrack venue competition. People everywhere cheered them on and responded enthusiastically to the "Buy American" message the team championed.

"When each of us makes the decision to buy American-made products, it absolutely helps put Americans back to work, and recycles dollars back into our economy," said Zeile. "We understand that it takes each consumer and corporate buyer to 'buy American' whenever possible."

Competing in 20 races on 12 dif-

ferent racetracks in eight days, the drivers found people at every stop through the multiple-state contest, spreading the "Forge Ahead USA" message wherever they went.

Team Prefix really brought the message home when the Team Prefix Viper held on to third place overall among 60 race teams, the only American-made car to finish in the top five.

Jhan R. Dolphin, president of J Robert Consulting, who created the Forge Ahead USA campaign concept, said the Viper is the only production car that is made 100 percent in the U.S.

Drewer flew in from Atlanta and Loudin came in from Chicago for the Prefix Fiber debut, and about 400 Forge Ahead USA stickers were made up in advance and handed out. Guests also had the chance to see a brand-new 2014 SRT Viper. A number of Prefix employees came and brought their families to enjoy the cars.

"Once these guys (Loudin and Drewer) got out there in their Viper it was easy to see they were going



Event guests inspect Team Prefix's Viper SRT-10 and, behind it, a 2014 Viper at the Waterford Hills Racetrack facility in Clarkston.

... faster than everybody else out there ... Some of the employees at Prefix and their children came. It was a way to thank them for supporting us on our One Lap of America campaign," Dolphin said.

Dolphin said the shirts are "unique, abstract, but when you look at the design it's really the state of Michigan – support the local guy is the message of these T-shirts. Every one of these T-shirts is American-made all the way through."

Carmaker's SRT Brand Carries Torch For Chrysler Performance Vehicles

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are inextricably linked not only to those who build the machines but to those who dream one day of owning one."

The campaign launched with 30-, 60- and 90-second spots across cable television, and will continue throughout the summer.

"Body and Soul" personifies the connections that owners feel with their vehicle," said Ralph V. Gilles, president and CEO – Chrysler SRT Brand and Motorsports. "It's that feeling of when you get behind the wheel and step on the throttle for the first time and feel the power of the engine.

"It's that feeling and legacy that Chrysler group has forged with owners and their vehicles over the last century.

"The launch of this campaign marks a significant step forward for us and establishes the SRT brand's legacy as a vital component of our company."

Designed to appeal to car enthusiasts, the spots show children in the backseat of a station wagon, jumping to a teen in line to get his license and youths cruising main street on a Friday night.

Beth Paretta, senior manager, SRT and Motorsports Marketing, said the "Body and Soul" campaign is designed to broaden awareness of the Street and Racing Technology brand and celebrate the legacy of its world-class performance vehicles by reaching a new, wider set of consumers.

"The new campaign establishes the SRT brand's legacy as a vital component of our company. It is all about the connection that owners feel with their vehicles, which, for many, begins early in

childhood while riding in the backseat of their parents' vehicles," she said.

Formed in 2002 as one of the industry's leading in-house automotive performance groups, SRT's original premise, which is still followed today, was to create the Chrysler Group's boldest, most distinctive vehicles that delivered benchmark performance.

Original team members were recruited from the established Dodge Viper development team – that had already been building that car for more than 10 years – along with Dodge motorsports and the Mopar engineering teams.

To carry the SRT badge, say Chrysler officials, a vehicle is required to include five specific performance hallmarks:

- Powertrains that earn respect, with the high horsepower and torque ratings that are a prerequisite in the high-performance automotive world;
- Exceptional ride, handling and capability, engineered to ensure masterful handling on complex race circuits and city streets as well;
- Benchmark braking, using proven best-performing components to provide drivers with safe and consistent stopping power;
- Aggressive, yet functional exteriors, that shout "SRT" from far away, yet maintain optimal aerodynamic and performance characteristics;
- Race-inspired and high-performance interiors using only high-quality materials, confidence-inspiring steering wheels, designer ambient lighting, and passenger comfort.

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