

Daily Herald

AUTOFOCUS

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SECTION 9

## AutoSunday

## Lincoln MKT leaves a stylish impression

By ANN M. JOB  
For The Associated Press

Buyers looking for a memorable and luxurious new crossover sport utility vehicle that can seat up to seven people won't have to look beyond the 2010 Lincoln MKT.

This new, 17.3-foot-long, five-door Lincoln grabs attention with its big, grinning grille, boat tail-styled back end and somewhat hearse-like side appearance.

Bottom line: They love the look or hate it, but either way, the MKT makes a memorable impression.

**At a glance****Price as tested:** \$48,995**Engine:** 3.7-liter, double overhead cam, Duratec V-6**City/highway fuel economy:** 17/23 miles per gallon**Length:** 207.6 inches**Wheelbase:** 117.9 inches**Curb weight:** 4,680 pounds**Built:** Oakville, Ontario, Canada**Destination charge:** \$795

With a starting manufacturer's suggested retail price, including destination charge, of \$44,995 for a front-wheel drive model with base 268-horsepower, naturally aspirated V-6, the MKT is a late entrant in the premium crossover segment.

The 2010 Audi Q7 has a starting retail price, including destination charge, of \$47,725 for a base model with 280-horsepower V-6 and standard all-wheel drive.

The 2010 Volvo XC90 starts at \$38,550 with 235-horsepower six-cylinder engine and front-wheel drive, while the 2010 Acura MDX has a starting retail price of \$41,800 for a 300-horsepower, V-6 model with standard all-wheel drive.

The lowest-priced MKT with all-wheel drive starts at \$46,990.

The MKT is based on the platform of the Ford Flex, which is a boxy crossover SUV that debuted in calendar 2008 and now has a starting retail price of \$29,325.

But all the sheet metal outside is new on the MKT as Lincoln designers seek to establish a modern, striking image for Ford's long-running luxury brand.

The interior is all Lincoln, too, and establishes a nearly opulent environment.

Standard premium leather-trimmed seats tend more toward cushioned than firm and supportive, and the rest of the standard equipment list is extensive even on the base MKT, which was the test vehicle.

There were heated and cooled front seats with 12-way, power adjustments, Sirius satellite radio, three-zone climate control, push-button start, pretty ambient lighting, adaptive high-intensity discharge headlights, power liftgate, heated outside mirrors and four power points.

Even a reverse sensing system is standard on the MKT, which is smart because it's difficult to see what's behind the vehicle while it's backing up.

Electronic stability control and side and curtain air bags are standard, too.

Best of all, the interior is roomy, especially in the first- and second-row seats. All have more than 41 inches of legroom. Headroom is commendable, too, in the first two rows. But it shrinks to just 33.5 inches in the third row.

Even at 5-feet-4, I couldn't sit back there comfortably. The top of my head was jammed into the ceiling unless I turned my neck to one side.

No matter where passengers sit in the MKT, the ride is refined and smooth. Passengers felt only mild vibrations over rough roads during the test drive, and long highway cruises were comfortable and fatigue-free.

The interior was quiet. I didn't hear much of the traffic around me, including the diesel semis in the next lane.

I didn't hear much from the 3.7-liter, double overhead cam, Duratec V-6, either. It supplied good power but nothing sporty or racy, as peak torque of 267 foot-pounds came on by 4,250 rpm.

Mated to a six-speed automatic, engine power was delivered smoothly and moved the MKT adequately.

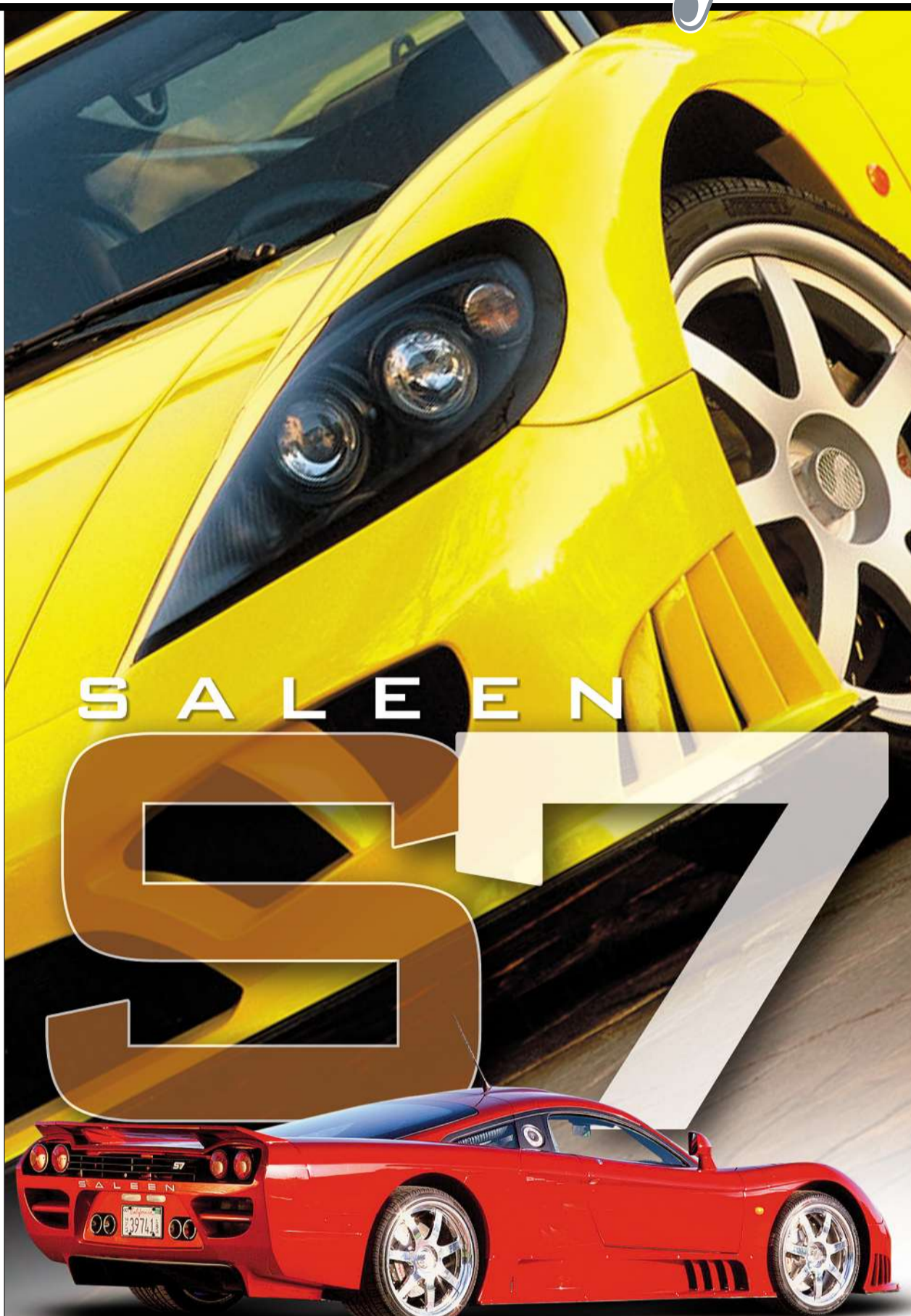
But there was always a palpable sense of the large size of this SUV and how hefty it is, at more than 4,600 pounds.

Still, there's no V-8 offered for the MKT.

Instead, Lincoln officials are promoting the



ASSOCIATED PRESS/Courtesy of Ford Motor Co.  
The interior of the MKT is all Lincoln, too, with a nearly opulent environment.

By STEVEN REIVE  
Wheelbase Communications

During the slow afternoons known in Modena, Italy, as "l'ora del riposo," Enzo Ferrari's legacy lives on in the coffee bars and balsamic vinegar companies on Viale Virgilio. So do the names of Lamborghini, Pagani and Maserati. They are legends.

Saleen? In Italian, it doesn't translate.

But with the S7 supercar, linguistics hardly mattered. In fact, the S7 did all the talking for itself ... in the universal language of horsepower, lateral acceleration and eyeball-flattening speed.

What then company boss Steve Saleen was up to in his unassuming, reserved shop in Southern California was hatching out a little Italianesque mid-engine magic, minus all that Italian exotic-car tradition.

"Are we going after the Italians?" "No. We're just going after pure performance," Saleen once said.

Introduced to the world in August 2000 at the Monterey Historic Races in California, the S7 began as a blank-sheet-of-paper project that was completed in just 18 months. For Saleen, it was a lifelong dream that came alive with up to 750 twin-turbocharged horsepower beneath its rippling carbon-fiber skin.

It was a hand-built road racer from one of the most unlikely places in the world ... big-business, bottom-line America. But, Saleen did it his way.

"The S7 is what we wanted it to be: small-volume manufacturing with the best elements sourced from suppliers that are considered the best in their field."

Designed to flat out beat the best sports cars in the world, the S7 was the union of design and engineering with Saleen's own personal flair thrown in for good measure.

He crossed the globe looking for his world-beater, and found it in places such as the University of Glasgow's

## Fine Lines

## Saleen S7

wind tunnels, the chassis expertise of Great Britain's Ray Mallock racing house, and the final assembly in Southern California.

It was just the kind of concept-to-production turnaround that larger auto manufacturers crave, but can hardly achieve. The S7 also proved that Saleen was much more than a guy who modified existing vehicles (the company sells Saleen-ized Ford Mustangs): he was out to create his own. With several shops, Saleen received Specialty Vehicle Manufacturer status from the U.S. Government, which meant the company fell under the same umbrella as other global auto manufacturers. And that means it's never easy.

"But we've been at this sort of thing before," he said at the time. "It's not like this project started from scratch."

Dramatically styled, the tallest point of the S7 is just 41 inches off the ground, two inches lower than a Lamborghini Diablo of the day, but the S7 was nearly a foot longer. The real visual drama was in the gills: 60 slits carved across the body of the S7 that Saleen said "are all important to the function of the vehicle."

So was the gusto behind the gas pedal. To be a true racer, Saleen said "performance must be the only factor," and the S7 was and is a performer. While the "S" stands for Saleen, the "7" is for the displacement of

the base 550-horsepower OHV V-8 ... as in seven liters, or perhaps a more familiar number, 427 cubic inches. Adding two turbochargers and the supporting hardware bumped the number to 750 horses.

Saleen called the S7 the "American Experience." The competition might have called it an honest-to-goodness threat.

Its space-frame chassis with aluminum honeycomb everywhere saved weight, added structural strength for a racing-like feel, which was natural given its roots. The track version, called the S7R, proved itself on the international motor sports stage, having won numerous championships around the world.

The S7 was all about technology, through exotic metals such as titanium and magnesium.

It breathed style with a steering wheel that detached just as they do in race cars, a hidden button that fired the engine, and, from the outside, "scissor" doors that moved up and away from the body when they were opened.

"When seen in person, it has an amazing overall presence."

Starting at more than \$400,000, it didn't exactly fall into the realm of affordability. It's as if the Saleen company motto, "power in the hands of a few," was specifically written for the S7 ... the American supercar.

And when was the last time you could say that on the streets of Modena? Of course, you didn't have to. Just mash the gas and the S7 did all the talking.

• E-mail Steven Reive at [www.wheelbase.us/mailbag.html](mailto:www.wheelbase.us/mailbag.html).

## Injectors may fail because of fuel

Q. As a car owner for about 50 years now, and one who learned to take care of the car himself, I always like to see what the pros say about the different questions you get.

I just became aware of the

high-end cars' injector issues. My wife drives a 2008 Lexus RX350, and just loves the car. Recently she had a little difficulty starting the engine, which is

highly unusual, since she has been driving this same type of car for almost 10 years. She is highly sensitive to everything on her little baby, and I listen intently when she talks about anything about the car.

So, I take the car in for routine oil change. I talk about the hard start, and the service manager asks what type of gasoline I use. We have been buying gas at Costco for about five years. Her Lexus is just over two years old. They replaced the injectors under warranty, and said use top tier gasoline only. Retailers are listed at [top-tier.com/retailers.html](http://top-tier.com/retailers.html). They include Shell, 76, Phillips, Texaco, Conoco, and the like, but not Mobil, Citgo, BP or Speedway.

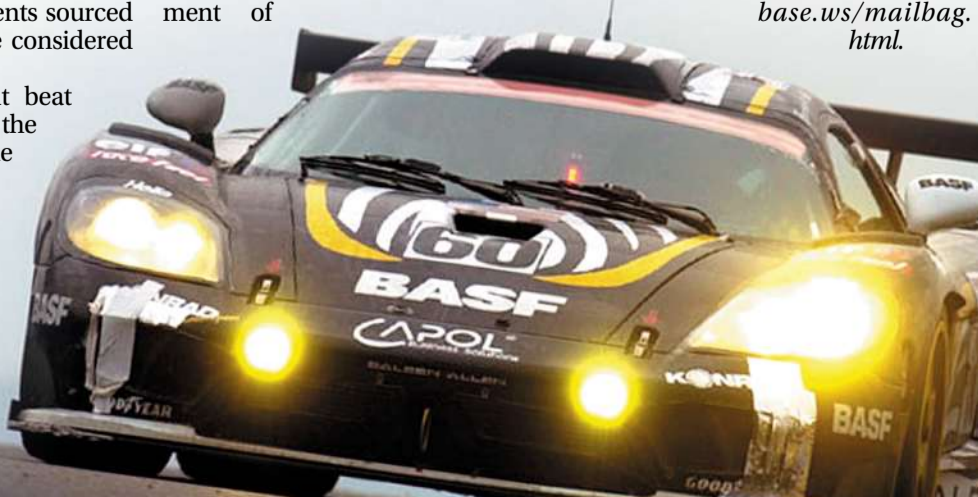
I am an engineer by trade, so when the automotive engineers suggest premium gasoline with 91 or higher octane, that is the gas I buy, however no one said which one until now. This injector issue is on a couple of models of Lexus, BMW, Honda, and Acura, not all models.

I would like to hear your take on all this. They call it an injector problem, but no one has explained what that is. My personal view is the "o" rings are being attacked by an additive in the gasoline, but to date, no car manufacturer, gasoline manufacturer or injector manufacturer is taking responsibility. Also, I have been informed they are unsure what the issues are. They all say their individual product meets all specifications, but we know that is not true, at least not for our Lexus.

And one more question, we just had new wiper inserts installed by Lexus, and the one on the passenger side is streaky. I cleaned the wiper blade and the window but it hasn't helped. Any other suggestions? Something ironic here, as it is the first time in 50 years I have not done the change myself, and funny that it does not work well.

A. You have brought up a great topic and I think the readers will find it interesting. There is definitely a correlation between not using a Top Tier Fuel and the potential for having injector and other problems. There was a period of time about five or so years ago where GM was having a terrible time with Fuel Injectors on their V-6 engines. We would get several cars a week that were misfiring on one or more cylinders, and we replaced a lot of injectors. GM put out a TSB (Technical Service Bulletin) recommending drivers only use Top Tier Fuels to resolve the problem. Now we don't see the problem. What changed?

I read an article from Car and Driver that was written back in 2005 discussing this issue. In the article Larry Webster writes, "But how do you know which brands have the

Doug McAllister  
Under the hood

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