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SECTION 9

Auto Sunday

Hyundai rolls out flagship luxury sedan

BY FRANK A. AUKOFER
Scripps Howard News Service

In the automobile business, success comes in a variety of ways: deliver a new and exciting product, offer value for the money, or catch the public fancy with a different concept.

You also can benefit from surprise. If you manage to combine low expectations with the other elements, you almost certainly will wind up with a winner.

That is where Hyundai, the South Korean vehicle manufacturer, finds itself with the introduction of the all-new 2009 Genesis sedan, its first foray into the upscale full-size, V8-powered, rear-drive realm currently ruled by a select few manufacturers.

Hyundai has come a long way in a little more than two decades in the United States. It started in the mid-1980s with the Excel, a subcompact hatchback with a low price and good fuel economy.

Unfortunately, the little car suffered from chronic bouts of self-destruction and Hyundai did not establish itself as a desirable brand. The record over the years has been spotty until recently, when the company expanded its lineup and markedly improved its quality.

Although it still offers economy cars, it also challenged the best of the family sedans — the Honda Accord and Toyota Camry — and succeeded with the latest iteration of the Sonata, which now is fully competitive with the two Japanese icons, as well as with the new Chevrolet Malibu, Nissan Altima and Ford Fusion.

Hyundai even crafted a near-luxury sedan, the Azera, which was designed to compete against the likes of the Toyota Avalon, Nissan Maxima and Buick Lacrosse. But from an advertising standpoint, the company draped a tarp over the Azera, so sales have been mediocre.

That's not likely with the new flagship Genesis. This large luxury sedan is so unexpectedly refined that it should create a buzz regardless of whether Hyundai does much to publicize it. The main question is whether its size and powerful V8 will turn off customers sensitive to high gasoline prices.

Nevertheless, the company knows it has a good thing and is looking to sell 50,000 copies a year. Executives also figure that once they get the word out, the Genesis could kick-start sales of the Azera as customers wander through showrooms.

Based on interior volume, both the Azera and the Genesis qualify as large cars under the government's definition. But the front-drive Azera, which offers only V6 power, likely will be perceived as a mid-size near-luxury car, while the Genesis, with V6 or V8 engines, will not be viewed as anything but a full-size luxury cruiser.

How otherwise to classify the Genesis? It performs as well, and is as luxurious and loaded with safety and high-tech features as quite a few imported luxury cars that cost many thousands of dollars more. There's an audiophile's Lexicon audio system, big-screen navigation with a backup camera, Bluetooth connectivity, XM satellite radio and heated and cooled front seats.

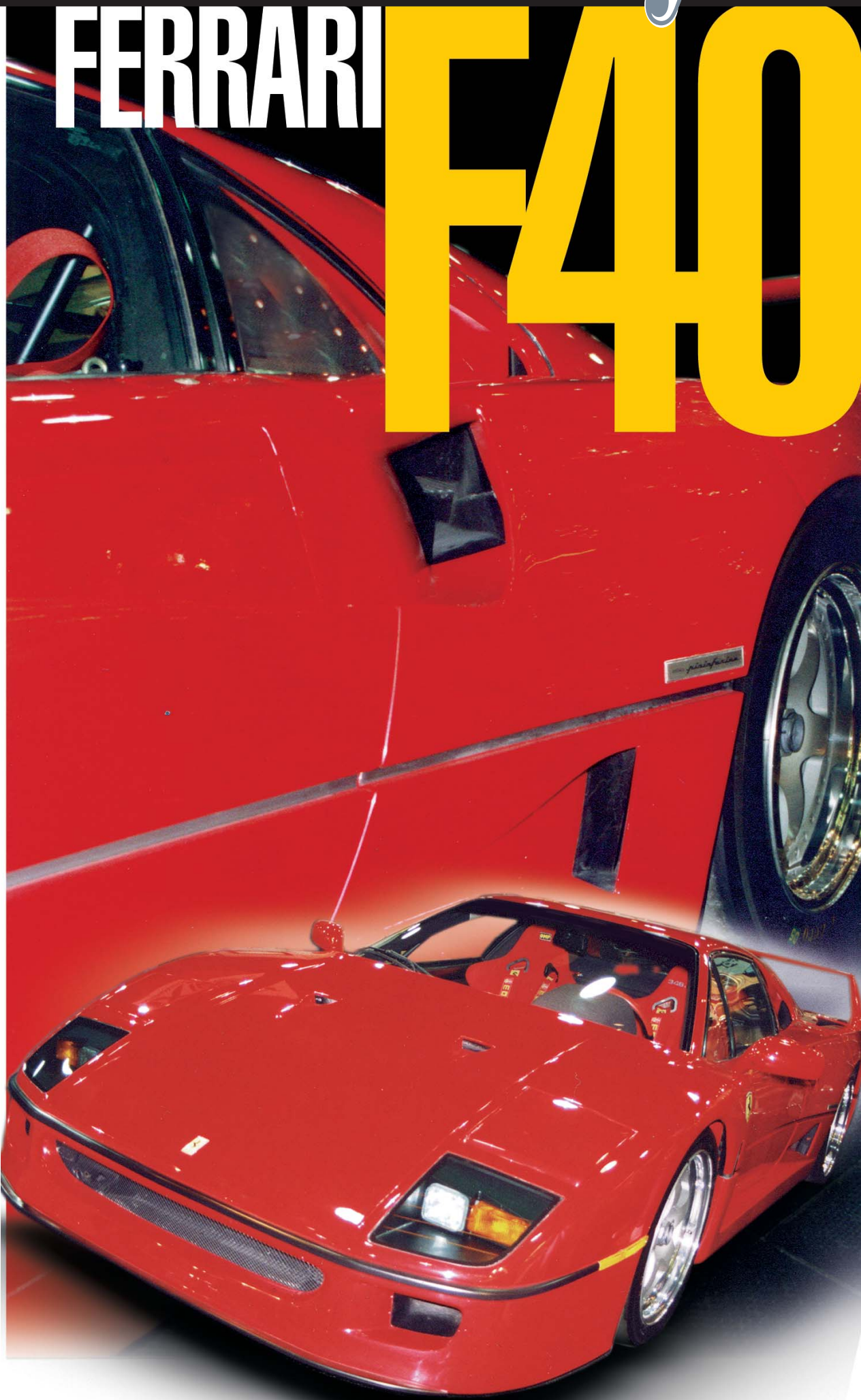
Because it has rear drive, the Genesis suffers somewhat in interior accommodations. The front seats are comfortable and supportive, and the outer rear seats will elicit few complaints. But the center-rear position offers only a hard cushion and a big floor hump.

There are two Genesis models: the 3.8 with a 290-horsepower V6 engine, which has a base price of \$33,000, and the 4.6, with a V8 and an opening price of \$38,000. There are two V8 horsepower ratings. You get 368 running with regular gasoline and 375 with premium fuel. The transmission is a six-speed automatic with a manual-shift mode.

The surprising thing about either Genesis is how well they handle and perform.



SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE
Hyundai introduces the all-new 2009 Genesis, its first foray into the upscale, V8-powered, luxury sedan market.



The standard by which other cars, even Ferraris, are judged

BY MALCOLM GUNN
Wheelbase Communications

It's hard to imagine that a 21-year-old car could still be the basis of comparison for all other sports cars with almost none of them ever coming close to the sheer visceral standard set by the Ferrari F40.

Even its immediate successor, the F50, which many argued was better looking, had a tough time winning the same kind of praise commanded by the F40. Perhaps that's the way Enzo would have wanted it.

The F40 was personally conceived by founder Enzo Ferrari as a dual-purpose car. One that could be driven at the race track and then legally on the street, just like most of his earlier creations dating back to the late 1940s. When his concept was launched in June of 1987, the then 90-year-old head of the company was on hand to personally endorse the end result. It was the last such introduction Enzo attended before his death the following year.

The F40 (the name was picked to celebrate 40 years of Ferrari creations) was a fitting tribute to a man whose life's obsession was to produce race cars for the street. Using the earlier Ferrari GTO as a template (itself a derivative of the popular mid-engine 308 series made famous by Tom Selleck's Magnum P.I. TV detective character), Ferrari engineers wrung every last bit of juice they could from the engine. The displacement on the DOHC V8 powerplant was slightly increased to 2.9 liters and the boost on the twin turbochargers was nearly doubled to 16.2 pounds per square inch (the GTO's boost was set at 8.5).

The result: a startling 471 horsepower and 426 foot-pounds of torque, enough to push this rocket with the prancing-horse logo to 60 mph in 3.5 seconds, and achieve a top velocity of 201 mph. In 1987, that was enough thrust to claim top-dog honors on most road courses as well as on any stretch of public highway.

As a combination race/road car, the F40 was stripped of as much unnecessary heft as possible. Less weight makes for a quicker, better-handling vehicle. Strong, but ultralight (and ultra expensive) carbon fiber materials were extensively used inside and out, and the F40's signature piece, a see-through slotted engine-bay cover, was also made of high-strength composites. Both the front and rear bodywork were one-piece units that opened wide for easy access to the car's vital organs.

There was also a wing perched well above the rear deck.

Further weight savings were visible, or rather, invisible, inside the F40's cockpit, where the absence of exotic leather-covered seats, door panels or sound deadening material of any kind made the car appear unfinished. It was also devoid of windows that rolled up and down, replaced instead by a sliding plexiglass opening above both doors. Both front seats featured race-car-style deep bolsters, and the driver's seat could be ordered in one of three sizes. Available air conditioning was the F40's sole concession to passenger pampering.

As with any Ferrari, handling and stopping power are equally important to brute speed. The F40's suspension closely resembled that of a period Ferrari Formula One car, while the

Fine Lines

1987 Ferrari F40

four-piston disc brakes were capable of successive high-speed panic stops without fade. As a final touch, Pirelli created a new tire to keep the F40 firmly planted on the road at all times. Dubbed the P-Zero, the low-profile (40-series in front and 35-series in back) tires were affixed to 17-inch-diameter wheels (large in the day) and were nearly as wide as those found on an Indy or Grand Prix race car.

Surprisingly, the only area where the F40 failed to best the competition was aerodynamics. Although the car appeared highly streamlined, its 0.34 drag coefficient was considered only average when the car was first introduced. Today, there are minivans that equal that number.

Aside from air conditioning, the very few options available on the F40 were primarily for racing purposes and included a lighter five-speed manual transmission with straight-cut non-synchro gears. There was also an optional turbocharger package that added an extra 200 horsepower to the engine's already formidable output.

Initial European-only F40s were base-priced at about \$190,000. However, by the time the car arrived in North America three years later, the price had escalated to \$260,000. Still, there was no shortage of buyers willing to cough-up the necessary funds for their very own copy, and every one of the 400 cars (of a total production run of 950) destined for our shores was quickly snapped up.

Because of their inherently high investment value, few F40s were ever competitively track raced. This fact might have saddened Enzo Ferrari, who passionately believed in racing above all else. As the dual-purpose ideal fades from view in this age of specially-constructed race cars, the F40 stands as a final salute to an earlier and much simpler age.

Radiator hoses degrade over time

Q. My 1999 Cadillac Seville has the original radiator hoses. They've made it 117,000 miles so far. Why should I change them now?

A. Consider yourself in the bonus round on those hoses. Rubber components degrade over time and those hoses have been at it for 120 months. You know Murphy's law will happen and they will let go when you can least afford the down time. How about on the toll-way on your way to the airport to catch a flight, or maybe when you need to get to an important business meeting? At that moment I suspect I will hear the gnashing of teeth. My advice is to inspect your hoses regularly. While there is no recommended change interval, we see a lot of cars ready for hoses at about the 5-year or 75,000-mile mark. When in doubt, change them. It will save money and frustration.

Q. I have a 2003 Cavalier with 115,000 miles. My repair facility recommends I replace worn front brake pads, rotors and calipers and do a brake fluid flush. What will a fluid flush do for braking?

A. As miles and time rack up, all of the fluids — including the brake fluid — begin to accumulate dirt and moisture. Moisture is especially bad for brake fluid and that could have been one of the reasons you needed new brake calipers. The moisture can accumulate around the piston of the caliper and cause the caliper piston or the bore to corrode, causing a leak or causing the caliper to seize. Over time the seals will naturally break down and cause the fluid to get a little dirty. By flushing the fluid you will not only protect the various components from any corrosion and premature wear, but you will also experience a firmer brake pedal.



Doug McAllister
Under the hood

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• Douglas Automotive is at 312 S. Hager Ave., Barrington, (847) 381-0454, and 7218B Virginia Road, Crystal Lake, (815) 356-0440. Send questions to underthehood@dailyherald.com.

Going into Saturday's race in Phoenix, only three points separated the top three makes in one of the most hotly contested manufacturers championships in Cup history. With two NASCAR races remaining in the Chase for the Sprint Cup, Chevrolet lead the standings with 204 points. Ford had 202 and Toyota 201.

After the 26-race regular season, Chevrolet and Ford were tied for second in the manufacturers standings, 18 points behind first-place Toyota. But, after combining for seven wins in eight Chase races, the two American companies had vaulted into the top two spots.

Jimmie Johnson (two) and Jeff Burton (one) had three Chase wins for Chevy, which has won five consecutive manufacturers titles.

Ford drivers have won the last four years at Homestead, Fla., where teams will compete in the final Cup race of the season, the Ford 300, next Saturday.

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