

Under the Hood July, 2021

We all know that the super-rich do not live like the rest of us. In our car hobby the current king of the hill seems to be the Bugatti Chiron Sport. A recent test drive of the Bugatti put this into perspective. I can remember when a car with a quarter mile time of 15.7 seconds was considered reasonably quick. The Bugatti takes 15.7 seconds to reach 200 mph, on the way to a top speed of around 260 mph. This Bugatti has base price of \$3,273,000. Again, the super-rich think differently, as the test car had \$437,850 of options pushing the final price to \$3,710,850. Remember that this is the list price. I suspect if I called the local Bugatti dealer, they wouldn't even talk to me about actual selling prices without seeing my financial statement. Can you imagine how you would be greeted at our club sponsor, Evergreen Chevrolet, if you arrived with just the Bugatti option amount of \$437,850 in your pocket to talk about updating your fleet of Chevrolet autos. Perhaps not a C8 in every color, but certainly you would have a great start to every color.

Not to be outdone by those pesky Europeans, John Hennessey (Houston, TX) has announced that he will be building 24 examples of his new Venom F5 supercar. Twelve cars for the US market and apparently 12 will go to Europe to challenge the Chiron Sport on its own territory. The price was originally expected to be about \$1.6 million, but now has been increased to \$2.1 million. The Venom F5 is powered by a twin turbo V8 supposedly rated at 1,817 hp, at 8,000 rpm. The engine is based upon a General Motors LS cast iron block (truck engine?). This is an overhead valve engine with push rods, not an overhead cam engine, which makes me question the long-term durability of that 8,000 rpm limit. The rating reminds me of an old hot rodder saying "Any engine will make (add any number here) horsepower ONCE". Hennessey claims that the F5 will reach 500 kilometers/hour (huge bragging rights) or 311 mph. After all these top speed claims, they intend to use Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tires. Yes, those are Z rated, but for in excess of 300 mph? One big difference between the Chiron Sport and the Venom F5 is that Bugatti installs extremely expensive tires actually rated for the achievable speeds. Hennessey has been a tuner of high-performance cars since the 1990s. Vipers were one of his specialties, although he has performed tuner work on Corvettes, Dodges and Camaros. Although he has consistently gotten fairly good press, there have been plentiful negative reports and lawsuits over the years. You can do your own search on the internet. Perhaps that will help you decide whether to purchase a Chiron Sport or Venom F5. Best to you with either choice, and please let me know when I can come visit.

Formula E (all electric race cars) has been running since the 2014-15 season. Formula E sanctioned by the FIA is popular in Europe/Saudi Arabia/ Morocco, but almost unheard of in the US. The race cars resemble F1 or Indy cars, but of course are much quieter. A Formula E race typically lasts for 45 minutes, plus one lap. When the series started with the Gen1 cars, the battery packs limited speed to about 140 mph. Drivers had two identical cars and would make a mid-race pit stop to change cars since the battery would not last the entire 45 minutes. Formula E uses Michelin all season tires, which were chosen for their ability to last the entire race. With the advent of the Gen2 race car, the battery pack was greatly improved so that a single charge could last the 45 minutes, and top speed increased to about 175 mph. With the enlarged battery pack and all-season tires, the race cars will only make a pit stop in the event of a flat tire, or mechanical issues. There typically have been 12 teams with 2 drivers each for a total of 24 entrants. Many of the drivers are former F1 drivers. Formula E has announced that the new Gen3 cars will be introduced for the 2022 season. Now, it seems that some of the teams are dropping out. BMW has announced that they will quit after the 2021 season. Audi is also leaving. BMW has said that they feel they have captured all the development they feel is possible in converting

their race experience into electric street vehicles. Is this just marketing spin? A reluctance to spend the money to build the Gen3 cars? No one can be sure, but with two of the major players leaving the series in 2021, it will be interesting to see if there are new entrants, or whether Porsche will dominate as the last of the major players.

In my December 2020 column I had discussed the latest outboard motors with huge horsepower numbers. I had reported that the king of the hill was Volvo Penta's Seven Marine Division and their 627 hp outboard based upon the Chevy 6.2-liter supercharged V8. The ink had hardly dried on that column before Volvo Penta announced that the entire Seven Marine Division was being shut down, and they would phase out production of the monster outboard as customer demand/orders were filled. However, outboard buyers didn't have to wait long before Mercury Marine stepped up with a V12 outboard rated at 600 hp. Anyone for a V16 and 800 hp outboard?