

FAST FORWARD

VEHICLES THAT CARRY ON
THE CHRYSLER TRADITION

EXCITEMENT FROM THE TOP DOWN

YOU'VE BEEN PINING FOR A YEAR,
CROSSFIRE LOVERS. FINALLY, HERE'S THE
RAGTOP YOU'VE BEEN LUSTING AFTER.

BY RICHARD TRUESDELL

Chrysler's bold and exciting Crossfire serves notice that American manufacturers are again taking the lead in automotive design. So what could possibly be better than a Crossfire Coupe? A roadster version, naturally.

Starting this May, the breathtaking Crossfire Coupe will be joined by the long-awaited—if 12 months can be considered a long time—2005 Crossfire Roadster. Practically from the day in 2001 Chrysler unveiled the first Crossfire concept car, enthusiasts demanded a ragtop. Chrysler was happy to oblige in record time—almost as soon as the Coupe was green-lighted for production.

The Roadster takes full advantage of the Coupe's extremely stiff body structure in transitioning from fixed-roof to sexy drop top for a ride without shakes and rattles. Like the Coupe, the Roadster shares the same sense of having been carved out of a single ingot of steel. The result is a Roadster that shares almost every nuance of the Coupe's world-class handling characteristics.



With its unique blend of world-class design and engineering, the Roadster promises to take this to the next level. The Crossfire Roadster looks like no other convertible on the road, enhancing the Coupe's unique profile, especially when its black cloth power-operated top is lowered. When the top, with its glass back light and integrated rear defroster, is lowered below its tonneau cover with full closeouts, the look is sleek and exciting. And the Roadster looks equally great when you have to raise the top. Its mechanical linkages are finished in such a way as to virtually blend into the top itself.

The Coupe's original styling lended itself well in its transition to a roadster. The tapered tonneau and the new rear deck lid are perfectly blended into the original

>>HANDLE WITH FLAIR Unlike so many roadsters, the Crossfire has maintained all the world-class handling of its Coupe predecessor.



Crossfire Humidor

This limited-edition humidor is designed exclusively for Chrysler's stunning new two-seater. For more information on this and other Chrysler branded merchandise, see the special Chrysler Gift Gallery section starting on page 41. Or visit chrysler.com/giftgallery or call (877) 777-7214.



design, avoiding the tall tail look that victimizes so many ragtops that start life as a coupe.

On the inside, the Coupe's high beltline combined with its low seating position is retained, giving the Roadster a major practical advantage: Its cockpit suffers from little of the wind buffeting so common in convertibles. Thus, at Interstate or Autobahn speeds, it's still possible to enjoy the Crossfire's 240-watt Infinity Modulus Audio System, specially tuned and equalized for its duty in the Roadster. A new Cool Vanilla/Dark Slate Grey interior trim with a Light Greystone A-pillar and windshield header trim combination provides the correct balance between sport and luxury. And the switch that lowers the top is centrally located in the center console just aft of the shifter for the 6-speed manual or 5-speed automatic with AutoStick®.

So shake those winter-inspired cobwebs from your brain and try to imagine yourself cruising down the highway this spring, with the top retracted, behind the wheel of your very own Chrysler Crossfire Roadster. Black on black for me, please. ◀

Californian **Richard Truesdell** has covered the auto industry for *Motor Trend*, *Car and Driver* and other magazines for 15 years.

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For more information on the new Crossfire Roadster, click on:

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FAST FORWARD

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3⁰⁰ Rear-wheel drive is back with a vengeance with the introduction of the 2005 Chrysler 300. Inside and out, the 300 recalls a time when powerful, full-size American sedans were the envy of the world. The car combines noble exterior styling—the wheels push out to the edges of the body envelope—with a choice of a pair of smooth, refined V-6 engines or a 340-horsepower hemispheric V-8 featuring Chrysler's innovative Multiple-Displacement System. The MDS has a 5-20 percent improved fuel economy.*

This new-generation 300 will reward drivers with the dynamic balance only a rear-wheel-drive layout provides. Unlike front-wheel-drive vehicles that steer and drive

through the front wheels, the 300 boasts exceptional handling with the ride of a European performance sedan.

All the expected standard and optional amenities found on imported high-performance sedans can be found on the 300. They include (but are not limited to) such available features as 17- or 18-inch aluminum wheels, 5-speed automatic transmission, self-sealing tires, two high-powered Boston Acoustics audio systems, 100-channel Sirius satellite radio system, an integrated GPS navigation radio and Electronic Vehicle Information Center (EVIC), a driver-activated display that's configured by eight switches located in the steering wheel. EVIC can even control the settings for the optional UConnect hands-free system (see *page 16*).

From the car's bold front grille and jeweled headlights to its aggressively styled short overhangs and large wheels, the 2005 Chrysler 300 signals the brand's return to the top rank of premium, performance-oriented sedans—the return of the great American car.

*EPA est. 17 city, 24 Hwy.

THE CHRYSLER 300—THE RETURN OF THE GREAT AMERICAN CAR.

>>HOT NUMBER

The 2005 Chrysler 300 is inspired by the letter series cars of the '50s and '60s but features the most modern amenities.





PT CRUISER
CONVERTIBLE From the day the PT Cruiser was first introduced to universal acclaim, enthusiasts have been demanding a ragtop version. In 2004, the PT Cruiser Convertible is a reality.

Making the iconic PT Cruiser into a convertible involved much more than simply chopping the top. It took a radically different approach that started with the removal of the two back doors and incorporated a unique rear-body design with an integrated sport bar for added rigidity. The innovative sport bar reduces both wind and its noise, making the PT Cruiser one of the quietest convertibles on the road, whether the top is up or down.

The Touring Edition will be powered by an available 180-horsepower turbocharged engine with a four-speed AutoStick® automatic transmission. The even more powerful GT version, with its high-performance turbocharged 220-horsepower engine and five-speed heavy-duty manual transmission, promises to bring PT Cruiser enjoyment to new enthusiasts.

>>LIKE THE WIND The 2005 PT Cruiser Convertible gives its owners tremendous versatility in a package that's sure to turn heads.

ME FOUR-TWELVE It sliced through the dry-ice-generated smoke-screen like a silver bullet, with a tuxedo-clad Chrysler Group Chief Operating Officer Wolfgang Bernhard behind the wheel. When he stepped out and addressed the crowd at January's North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) in Detroit, jaws were still dropping. "ME Four-Twelve is our code name for this prototype," Bernhard says, "which has been top secret until now. It stands for mid-engine, four turbochargers and twelve cylinders. It's an appropriate name, because we truly built this car around its engine."

Weighing 2,860 pounds, with its V-12 developing 850 horsepower, the ME Four-Twelve promises a race car-like performance envelope. All this power to the 20-inch rear wheels is managed via a seven-speed Ricardo double wet-clutch transmission. With a 3.4 to 1 weight-to-power ratio, computer modeling indicates that it should hit a top speed of more than 240 mph. Other prodigious numbers: 0-to-60 mph in 2.9 seconds, with a 10.6-second mark for the quarter-mile at a trap speed of 142 mph.

Constructed of extremely lightweight materials—carbon fiber and aluminum—it is, as Bernhard says, a supercar built around its engine. The suspension employs a double wishbone design. The braking system makes use of 15-inch ventilated carbon ceramic

rotors. Inside the cockpit, designers allowed plenty of the car's carbon-fiber structure to show through, but all surfaces likely to come into contact with the car's occupants are covered in fine-quality materials.

>>BEYOND CONCEPT?

It blew away the 2004 NAIAS and might be headed for a highway near you. Chrysler calls the ME Four-Twelve a prototype, not a concept.

