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# 2007 Jeep Gladiator Concept



## Bringing Back This Pickup Should Be a No-Brainer

by Richard Truesdell

**I**t's been a long time coming, but it looks like Jeep's product planners are giving serious consideration to the addition of a pickup to the line. Based on the Wrangler body-on-frame platform, with solid axles front and rear, the Gladiator Concept draws on Jeep's legendary pickup heritage dating back to 1947, while giving us a look at some of the styling cues likely to be found on the next-generation Wrangler, due in 2006.

Since the demise of the midsize Comanche truck in 1993, the Jeep brand has been without a true pickup. Many Jeep dealers have long called for one; the Gladiator Concept shows that those requests haven't fallen on deaf ears.

"Jeep Gladiator is an authentic statement of Jeep brand heritage," says Trevor Creed, senior vice president, Chrysler Group Design. "It blends classic cues and modern-day functionality and innovation. The classic silhouette

and the box-side-mounted spare like those on some classic Jeep models are merged with a turbodiesel powertrain and a flexible, expandable truck bed."

For those who aren't familiar with Jeep history, civilian Jeep production began at the end of World War II. Starting in 1947, Jeep offered a rugged pickup, which shared the majority of its components with the original Jeep station wagon built from 1946 to 1963. One of its most notable styling cues was a side-mounted spare.

When the full-size Jeep Wagoneer was launched in the fall of 1962 as an all-new 1963 model, it shared the underpinnings with its pickup-truck counterpart, then called the Gladiator, which remained in production until 1987 when Chrysler merged with American Motors and the full-size Jeep pickup line was eliminated. While not big sellers in their later years, the full-size SJ trucks (the internal Jeep designation)

have attained cult status in the Jeep community. When it goes on the market, a good example typically sells for more than a Big Three counterpart in similar condition.

Like most Chrysler Group concepts, the Gladiator looks production-ready, as the design team has successfully integrated Jeep styling and design cues into a forward-looking package, including the name itself, the traditional seven-slot grille, open-air roof with canvas top, part-time 4x4 system with front and rear locking differentials, front winch, and skidplates. And, just as light trucks increasingly are lifestyle statements for their owners, so is the Gladiator.

There's driver-side access to cabin storage and a lockable compartment (where the jack is stored) in front of the rear wheel. The expandable bed, with a bed/cabin extension and true fold-flat rear seat, is a highly creative design. The bed can be transformed easily from its



The Gladiator's interior is Armor Green with Dark Slate Gray accents. Not surprisingly, it features all the necessary technology for finding the way there and back, including GPS, a navigation system, and a communications system.

It's clear that even with the move to IFS on the Liberty and the 2005 Grand Cherokee, there are many designers and engineers at Jeep fully aware of the brand's off-road and utility heritage and are addressing it with the Gladiator Concept. Looking into the crystal ball, it would seem that the next-generation Wrangler will remain the icon for the brand. That Jeep is even thinking about building a Wrangler-based pickup bodes well for the future. **Tr**

standard length of 68 inches to 80 with the midgate expanded; drop the tailgate and the bed's 107 inches long. The Gladiator Concept is an extended-cab pickup (moles deep inside the Tech Center in Auburn Hills assured us that the Gladiator rides on a dedicated Jeep platform) with the ability to carry four occupants in reasonable comfort.

The Gladiator Concept's powertrain gives us a clear look at Jeep's commitment to engine innovations. Underhood is a green-friendly 2.8-liter, four-cylinder common-rail turbodiesel with 295 pound-feet of torque and approximately 163 horsepower on tap; this engine's currently available in the 2005 Liberty. (With a new Wrangler on the horizon, it's almost certain that the long-lived AMC-based straight-six will be replaced

by two engines: the 3.7-liter V-6 offered in the Liberty and Grand Cherokee, and the CRD.) It delivers ample power to all four wheels through a five-speed manual transmission.

The solid front axle is attached with five-bar links, while the rear uses dual coilover springs, again possibly a look at what might be found in the next Wrangler. With 13.7 inches of ground clearance, a breakover angle of 23 degrees, and approach and departure angles of 47 and 38 degrees, respectively, this is clearly more than just another me-too pickup. It has 265/75R18 tires with 18x8.0-inch wheels and an outer diameter of 33 inches. This combination ensures that, even with its length, the Gladiator Concept (if it reaches production) will be ready for the Rubicon.

## 2007 Jeep Gladiator Concept

Base price	..... \$28,000 (est)
Vehicle layout	..... Front engine, 4WD, 2-door, 4-pass pickup
Engine type	..... DOHC turbodiesel I-6, 4 valves/cyl
Displacement, ci/L	..... 171/2.8
SAE horsepower, hp @ rpm	..... 160 @ 3800
SAE torque, lb-ft @ rpm	..... 295 @ 1800
Transmission	..... 5-speed automatic
Curb weight, lb	..... 4200 (est)
GVWR, lb	..... 5800
Towing capacity, lb	..... 5500
Payload, lb	..... 1600
0-60 mph, sec	..... 10.0 (est)
EPA fuel economy, city/highway	..... 22/27
On sale	..... Possibly 2007

