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The Mopar® Underground Design Team Tricks Out Six Customized Vehicles at Moab Jeep®

Safari 2009

April 6, 2009, Moab, Utah -

The Mopar® Underground design team showcased six customized Jeep® vehicles and Dodge trucks today at the 43rd annual Moab Jeep Safari 2009.

Overseen by Mark Allen, Chief Designer—Jeep/Truck Design Studio, Chrysler LLC, the Mopar Underground design team has been customizing production vehicles since its creation in 2002 and has introduced 14 Jeep concept vehicles to enthusiast crowds at Moab Jeep Safari.

"These vehicles are built with pride and passion for the Jeep brand by a small group of dedicated engineers, designers and fabricators to explore and demonstrate the many facets of off-roading," Allen said.

The Mopar Underground design team creates vehicle concepts, which are meant to develop performance parts, accessories and customization, as well as new vehicle concepts. In fact, the first-generation Dodge SRT4 was born from this team's style initiative.

"Moab Jeep Safari provides a great venue and works as a proving ground to test Jeep vehicle concepts driven alongside Jeep brand enthusiasts, who can provide immediate feedback at the event," Allen said. "As a result, we use knowledge gained at this off-road event to explore new directions for Jeep platforms and to develop Mopar Performance Parts and Accessories to suit these vehicles."

The Jeep Wrangler "All-Access"

The interior of the Jeep Wrangler "All-Access" has been upgraded with premium materials. To give it 'trail and off-road' credibility, the designers souped this "All-Access" Jeep Wrangler with Mopar Performance Parts, including a Rubicon Express 4-inch long arm suspension lift, front and rear bumpers with tire carrier, rock rails, cold-air intake, front Dana 44 axle, rear Dana 60 axle and a Warn 9500ti winch. Power comes from the 3.8-liter V6 engine. Painted Surf Blue, the "All-Access" Wrangler also features beefy 37-inch BF Goodrich mud-terrain tires. The Jeep Wrangler "All-Access" premiered at the 2007 SEMA show.

The Jeep "Liberator II"

The Jeep "Liberator II" features 33-inch BF Goodrich mud-terrain tires and a 2-inch suspension lift from Superlift. Power comes from the 3.7-liter V6 engine under the hood. It features an ARB supplied rear locker with an onboard air-inflation compressor. It also features custom-fabricated rock-rails, a front-fascia skid plate, Mopar brush guard and Borla cat-back exhaust. The Jeep "Liberator II" premiered at Moab Easter Jeep safari in 2008.

Mopar Underground Jeep Wrangler Overland

The Jeep Wrangler Overland is perfect for those craving travel and adventure. Taking a 2009 Jeep Wrangler Rubicon Unlimited four-door, the Mopar Underground team turned the vehicle into a mobile "on-the-go" self-contained campsite.

To increase cargo capacity for hauling gear, the Jeep Wrangler Overland's rear seats were replaced with a large, flat, rubberized utility floor. Mounted to the cargo rack is an all-new ARB two-person Simpson II rooftop-mounted tent and touring awning. The interior of the Jeep Wrangler Overland features water-resistant Mopar front-seat covers, rugged Mopar slush mats and a Daystar dash bin and lower switch panel.

Helping to enhance off-road travel is a new Mopar 2.5-inch suspension lift. A full-traction rear sway bar was added, allowing the addition of aggressive 35-inch tires mounted on 17-inch steel Mopar winter/off-road wheels. Additional off-road protection at the front and rear is provided by American Expedition Vehicles' steel bumpers and for added security a Warn 9.5ti winch.

In order to prepare the Jeep Wrangler Overland for desert duty, an American Expedition Vehicles (AEV) Jeep Wrangler heat-reduction hood and snorkel kit is fitted to the vehicle. Mopar windshield-mounted off-road lights and Daystar bumper-mounted lights provide additional lighting for nighttime and off-road driving.

“J8 Sarge”

The “J8 Sarge” is a military version of the new Jeep Wrangler platform, built as a non-combat military support vehicle. Built from the 116-inch wheelbase version, the “J8 Sarge” is offered in either two-door or four-door configurations. Special J8-only structural upgrades in the body and chassis combine to increase the GVWR rating to 7,400 pounds.

The platform can be configured as a light-troop carrier, ambulance or cargo truck. Other notable features include the Dana 60 rear axle mounted on leaf springs, larger front-disc brakes and exclusive J8-only 17-inch x 8-inch steel wheels with a larger 5-inch x 5.5-inch bolt pattern. The rear differential is equipped with Trac-Lok limited slip device/differential (the front is open).

The powertrain is a VM Motori S.p.A. 2.8-liter 4-cylinder turbo-diesel engine that produces 158 horsepower and 295 lb.-ft. of torque. It's mated to a five-speed automatic transmission. The four-wheel-drive system is the Command-Trac® with both high and low-range gearing.

Other features unique to the “J8 Sarge” are heavy-duty steel bumpers each equipped with two forged military-spec 'helicopter hooks' (rated at 1.5 GVWR each), a hood-mounted air-intake snorkel, dual rear-mounted battery boxes and heavy-duty spring hood latches.

The “J8 Sarge” has been upgraded with 1.25-inch Superlift front coil spacers, 35-inch tires and custom cargo top. It's painted Olive Drab with military markings. The “J8 Sarge” is manufactured in a Chrysler LLC joint-venture facility in Cairo and premiered at Moab Jeep Safari 2008.

Mopar Underground Jeep “Grand Canyon II”

The Jeep “Grand Canyon II” is the most luxurious off-road vehicle built to date by the Mopar Underground Team. The objective for the team was to take a top-of-the-line 2009 Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland and ready it for serious off-road action.

To improve traction for rock crawling, a set of 285/70R17 tires were mounted on a set of Wrangler Rubicon wheels and fitted with a Superlift 4-inch suspension system. Off-road protection was provided with an ARB high-clearance front bumper and Mopar heavy-duty rock rails.

The already well-appointed Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland interior was prepped for severe duty with the addition of Mopar accessories front and rear slush mats, cargo liner and stainless-steel sill plates.

Mopar Underground Jeep “Lower Forty”

Mopar Underground's Jeep “Lower Forty” takes the new Jeep Wrangler platform to a new extreme. The Jeep “Lower Forty” is equipped with massive 40-inch x 13.5-inch 0R20LT tires mounted on Mopar 20-inch forged aluminum wheels. The Mopar Underground crew added the aggressive wheels and tires to a stock, two-door Wrangler Rubicon without the use of a suspension lift. The team's goal was to achieve added ground clearance without altering the vehicle's center of gravity. To accomplish that feat, the team trimmed copious amounts of the body and fenders to provide the needed tire clearance. Once achieved, the team used a saw to chop out 3-inches of height from the windshield frame and increased the rake by 10 degrees.

Custom front and rear fender flares were made 1-inch wider and 4-inches higher compared with a stock vehicle. A new one-piece-carbon-fiber hood with a Jeep CJ-like power dome and an all-new drop-down tailgate stamped with the “Jeep” logo were added to the vehicle to complete the exterior design.

On the interior, an all-new roll cage was neatly integrated into the body tub and tied directly into the frame rails. The spare tire was relocated to the cargo floor and a custom cargo rack, supplied by Poly Performance, was installed. Once all body modifications were completed the exterior received a fresh coat of Red Eye No. 3 paint, a custom color developed by the Mopar Underground team specifically for this project.

Custom touches can be seen throughout the interior of the vehicle, including a color-matched center console and instrument panel. The seats were re-covered with Mopar's Katzkin leather package in a two-tone scheme. The carpet was removed and a durable truck-bed liner was sprayed inside to protect the floor. Rugged Mopar floor mats complete the theme.

The Mopar Underground team turned to the Mopar catalog for the vehicle's mechanical upgrades. The Jeep "Lower Forty" features an all-new 5.7-liter HEMI® V-8 engine and a Getrag 238 six-speed manual transmission. Powertrain installations were handled by Burnsville Off-Road using an AEV installation kit.

Mopar supplied Dana 44 front axles and Dana 60 rear axles equipped with 5:38 gears and Dynatrac prepared ARB air lockers to handle the vehicle's massive tires.

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