

SEMA 2018

An event to remember

THIS YEAR WE TOOK A 'DIVIDE AND CONQUER' APPROACH TO WHAT HAS REALLY BECOME A MASSIVE SHOW. WE HAVE AN OVERVIEW OF THE SHOW AS A WHOLE, A CLOSE LOOK AT THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY, THE CARS (OF COURSE) AND A QUICK REVIEW OF THE SCRS SEMINAR SERIES.

SEMA 2018 started off with a real bang and the screeching of tyres as the early morning drifting got underway. As the queues grew, the whole place was buzzing in anticipation and there was a real party atmosphere in the air. As this year was my first time at SEMA, I saw everything from a whole new perspective.

The sheer size and scope are mind-blowing and it appears there really is something for everyone – I'm sure you could have literally built a car with the combination of manufacturer and aftermarket parts across the multiple pavilions and outdoor venues at the Las Vegas International Convention Centre.

It seemed like everyone and anything in the automotive industry was in Vegas – there were street cars, muscle cars, custom cars and some of the best designers and builders on the planet, many of whom competed for the Battle of the Builders – as we said last year, "the cars are the stars".

However, there were also more mechanical and collision parts on show than the eye could see – in fact, you had to go there with a plan of attack because if you wanted to stop at every one of the approximately 2,500 exhibits, you would have less than a minute with each – and that doesn't include time to move between the exhibits!

Once again, there were a great deal of tools and equipment demonstrations, none more so than the I-CAR facility, which was set up for a variety of welding demonstrations



The SEMA experience start here..



Axalta's Michael Matlack at SEMA.

where people could also try their skills. Jason Bartanen, who presented at Autocare in Sydney earlier in the year, was on the stand all week to share his knowledge and skills.

SEMA, of course, would not be complete without education, and it was the SCRS and their Collision Industry Repairer Driven Education program that stole the show. There were over 20 seminars across the four days, culminating on three OEM Technology Summit sessions and the inaugural showcase event, IDEAS Collide.

The SEMA Show closed with the traditional SEMA Ignited, the official after-party, incorporating SEMA Cruise



3M .

on the streets of Las Vegas around the convention centre and, once again, it was a mind-blowing event.

So, what caught my eye?

It was apparent from the outset that the major multi-nationals were out in force, with many of them creating a reason to stop and chat, whether it was products, cars, demonstrations, celebrities or announcements.

3M showed off their latest collision repair technology, with demonstrations of the benefits of their Cubitron II abrasives and a live application of their innovative paint protection film technology.



Car-O-Liner.



Roberto.



Saint Gobain.



Glasurit.



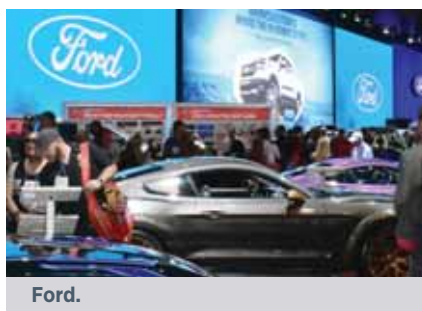
Hyundai.



PPG.



Sherwin-Williams' House of Kolor.



Ford.

The global coatings companies all took different approaches: PPG ran with a native American Indian theme named Camp Wannapaintem and included the 2018 Ridler Award winning '57 Chev "Imagine"; Axalta partnered with Karma Automotive to show off their all electric vehicle coated with Axalta's specially formulated colours; the BASF stand was adorned with some of the best cars at SEMA showcasing the Glasurit technology; AkzoNobel's focus was their F1 connections, announcing an extension

of their 10-year partnership with McLaren; and Sherwin-Williams focused on the special effects of the House of Kolor, supported by founder Jon Kosmoski.

As the name of the show suggests, there was no shortage of collision repair equipment, including Snap-on and Car-O-Liner sharing a stand for the first time and showing off their latest benches and the recently released CTR-9 welder.

In addition, brands all too familiar to us in Australia through the SAPE

Group were also on show, with Celette showing off their Cameleon benches and GYS with their full range of welding equipment.

One could be forgiven for thinking we were at an international motor show as the big brands with strong presence in North America were all on full show. Chevrolet took a prominent position in the centre of the main hall with a full range of trucks, Camaros and performance engines; Ford took a full wall to show off their trucks, Mustangs and high-performance race cars; Kia-Hyundai displayed their full range and even had the Queensland Police pursuit vehicle on display; and Fiat-Chrysler, Toyota and Honda all made strong statements with many of their latest models on show.

Summary

The show was a real eye-opener for me as not only was it much bigger than I ever imagined, but the atmosphere was inviting, with everyone in the right frame of mind to really enjoy the event.

We also ran into several fellow Aussies and Kiwis, including Mark Pulham – Pulham Smash, Colin Edwards – GPI, Stuart Charity – AAAA, Trevor Parkes – Parkes Body Works, Tony Naughton – PPG, Richard Reneman and Murray Howell – Sherwin-Williams, Matt Gennari – 3M, Chris Thompson – Otbury Group, Martin Peart – DBA, and Carmine De Maria – C.A.D Custom. There were obviously so many more friends and colleagues that we just didn't get to see as we found the sheer scale of the event more of a challenge than we imagined.

However, it was a great show and one that everyone in the industry should attend, if only once!



Josephine is our Digital Editor and manages the website, e-newsletter and social media. Her goal is to ensure you are kept up to date with all the latest industry news and information.

Technology at every turn

EACH YEAR SEMA IS A PLACE TO SEE THE COOLEST CARS, AND IT IS ALSO A PLACE TO MARVEL AT THE INNOVATIONS THAT ARE FLYING IN FROM ALL CORNERS OF THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY. OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, SEMA HAS BEEN HIGHLIGHTING NEW TECHNOLOGY IN REPAIR EQUIPMENT, LIGHTING SYSTEMS, ALUMINIUM TOOLING AND MANY OTHER AREAS.

It seemed that this year there was a new energy and a bit of a different focus. The real lift was in the trend towards retro-style new cars (Jeep, Mustang, Camaro, etc.), and then the increased opportunities that has given for technology and accessories.

There are thousands of new ideas brought onto the market each year at SEMA, so let's start with a manufacturer's view.

In 1969, Chevrolet released a Camaro with all the goodies required to go straight to the drag strip. These were only available as a Central Office Production Order (COPO) and they

only made 69 of them. For 2018, as a celebration of 50 years of COPO cars, GM released a fully electric eCOPO Camaro with 800 volts, 700HP and 650 lbs of instantaneous torque. GM then offered the powerplant as a concept alongside 30 other crate engine options, and the large GM stand had a range of displays for plug and play options clearly showing how these new powerplants, drivetrains, and the required electronics and sensors, could be bolted onto an older model vehicle.

Both Ford and Chrysler had similar options for their different

models, also highlighting how easy it is to purchase the hardware upgrades for classic muscle cars.

Moving off the main floor to the new products showcase, there were nearly 2,000 new products on display. They ranged from simple accessories like wheels, storage boxes, grilles and seats, all the way through to major software updates with fully tailorable performance options. Again, this highlighted the range of opportunities to individualise the car of choice, and it was interesting to note how many of the products were for late model or new vehicles. Every part of the vehicle



can be modified, with options for stand-alone items or kits for whatever changes a customer may want to make. There was further evidence of trending towards LED lighting, integrating latest technology options with traditional products (e.g. dashboards and gauges) and a shift towards increasing the computer driven functions of vehicles.

Some of the more attention-grabbing innovations were: Hotchkis released a new Bluetooth controlled Sport Suspension and the new Falcon coilover shocks are controlled by Bluetooth. According to John Hotchkis: "You can now control your shock right from your phone, and this technology will allow you to tune your suspension based on your time and for different race courses." For instance, if you want to change the tuning for the shock when your car hits 5-G's, the dampening will adjust to a more aggressive setting and the system will even notice if you are hard on the brakes entering a turn and change the suspension for more effective braking. The brains of the system is a box that the shocks plug into. This box will assess positive and negative G's along with any lateral movement. The shocks have motors built into the body and will change the dampening depending on the input.

Another new innovation was a complete re-think of the towing hitch, with Lovells displaying a safer, more effective and stronger all terrain off-road hitch system. They also provided a working model for load levelling. It was great to see Australian ingenuity at SEMA.

Walking through the Central Hall, often called Hot Rod Alley, there was a stand that caught the eye of a few people, but not everyone got to see the cool technology on display. A fairly new company called Enicar had a universal kit for infotainment and car connections that can be fitted up to any vehicle. This is a fully integrated system with cellular and internet connections, as well as GPS and safety functionality. The cool thing is that it comes with sensors and front and rear



GM Plug and Play Chassis.



Some of the GM Crate Engines.

cameras all incorporated into the product. This is designed to deliver a full 360-degree view, just like the latest cars available from many manufacturers. The technology has a built-in security module that can block entry or track wherever your car is at any time, as it is connected via GPS signal. And it has different sizes of screens or fully customisable viewing options that cover all the bases.

Moving into the North Hall brought the opportunity to look at a range of new tools, equipment and new ideas for the collision repair industry. Companies like Snap-on had their latest ideas on display with a high-volume John Bean Diagnostic Wheel Alignment system and there were plenty of new ideas incorporated into the spray booths. Now using improved air filtration and short-wave electric infrared curing systems, the

spray booths are focusing on productivity and safety. There were also many different accessories available, with much discussion about preventative maintenance for spray booths to keep them at optimum performance for the long term.

Sometimes it is the simple items that can stand out. With collisions in dense traffic areas happening at low speeds, opportunities for outside-the-box thinking about how to complete faster repairs have been presented. Keco has a range of body repair products and a system for improved dent removal. Using a firm plastic K-Bar, which can be adjusted for any panel shape, with an adjustable temperature glue gun and special glue tabs, a movable light and some plastic centipedes attached to the affected area, the company was able to show how quickly a series of body



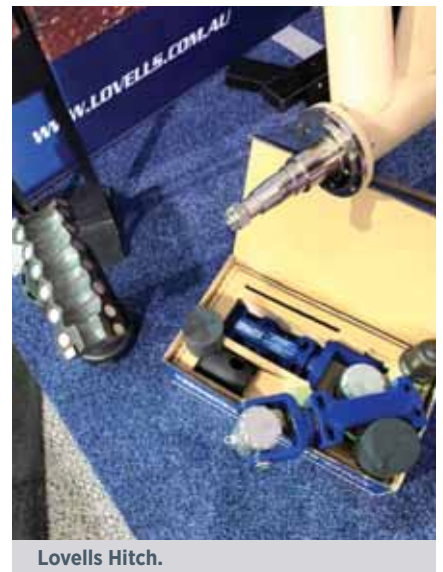
Enicar System.



Hotchkis Suspension.



Pumped-up F250.



Lovells Hitch.

issues could be repaired without having to remove the paint or cause further damage. Scrapes, dents and simple repairs can be fixed in less time – and that’s got to be good for speed of repair.

Further innovations also occurred in the area of using robots. There were many different types available with a full range of flexible applications. What stood out were effective but reasonably inexpensive robots or support tools for management of panels such as doors or bonnets, and ones that could easily suspend engines but didn’t require large infrastructure changes. Others were tailored to support glass. The use of electronics within these robots is providing them with added strength and new opportunities to promote the safety and longevity of the workforce.

SEMA also provided several options for new technology that is the future of collision repair. There was a range of new products for pre and post calibration. And there were also new software options for managing collision repair businesses with automated communication for internal (logistics, inventory, etc.) and external (customer communication) use.

Each year, SEMA showcases new directions in the automotive world, and more specifically, the collision repair industry. It is one thing to see the products on display, but it is another when you see them in action in an actual collision repair facility. The integration of the tools in a working environment is very different to seeing them used in isolation or a demonstration in a booth.

Following the SEMA event, we toured through Las Vegas, Salt Lake

City, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco – visiting top-end custom car builders across the country. We also visited a state-of-the-art European car repair shop that was utilising the latest tools and techniques, including a dedicated area for calibration. Seeing what needs to be – and can be – included into the design of a greenfield site certainly provides a clearer view of the value of the new products, systems and capabilities on offer at SEMA. In the coming months, we will explore some of the key learnings and what’s coming next.



John’s love of custom and restored cars has seen him become an industry leader in the activities of car clubs and automotive enthusiasts across Australia and around the world.

The cars are the stars

IT'S DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE SEMA 2018 IS DONE AGAIN FOR ANOTHER YEAR. THE LAST FEW YEARS HAVE BEEN A SIMILAR FORMAT, WITH MAINLY THE SAME BUSINESSES ALL SHOWING THEIR NEW PRODUCTS AND, OF COURSE, PLENTY OF NEW VEHICLES ON DISPLAY AT THE BOOTHS AND IN THE MANY AREAS OUTSIDE THE CONFERENCE CENTRE.

I heard so many of the exhibitors say you have to be here even if you don't have anything new, as you would lose your position at the show, especially in Central Hall.

I caught up with the MotorEx guys who were cementing their position with SEMA and looking forward to the US businesses coming to Melbourne next year, although I want to cover the vehicles, trends and share a few thoughts from SEMA 2018.

Over the last few years, many exhibitors displayed some crazy and outrageous vehicles on their booths to attract people into their stands. There were still quite a few this year, but not quite as many as previously.

There were four key areas that I looked at during the show, so rather

than write a whole lot of words, I thought I'd get the cars to tell their own stories – after all, a picture is worth a thousand words!

As I've mentioned in many previous columns, America is in love with trucks! SEMA is no different, with over 100 brand new trucks on show, mostly fitted with hi-lift kits and huge wheels. There were a few old patina finishes, as well as some really nicely finished '50s and '60s vehicles.

Many people come to see the new builds on the booths representing their business, and once again SEMA did not disappoint, with a whole arrange of new builds on display.

One of the benefits of being a regular at the SEMA Show is that I can pick up any changes compared to

previous years, some of which were really interesting in 2018. From a colour perspective, solid light greys and pastel blues were highly prevalent and satin paint finishes are still huge and not going anywhere soon. Something that really stood out was the full colour and multi-colour satin wrap schemes that were grabbing everyone's attention.

Another great year, and I'm sure everyone that was an entrant, exhibitor or visitor got plenty out of the show. I feel SEMA will only get stronger with the industry strong and the new building across the road where they will expand into from next year.

The ultimate prize at SEMA is, of course, the Battle of the Builders, and once again it was hotly contested, with more than 300 vehicles entered across



Battle of the Builders Winner, Kyle Tucker.





four key categories. The competition included submissions from seasoned builders as well as new customisers, representing an elite group of individuals who demonstrated extreme talent, creativity and craftsmanship in modifying cars, trucks and SUVs. The program was expanded this year to recognise winners in each of the four different categories, with Kyle Tucker winning the Hot Rod title, Eddie Pettus earning the Truck/Off-Road honour, Rod Nielsen scoring in Sport Compact and Kyle Kuhnhausen winning the Young Guns title. This year was one of the most competitive, but there can only be one winner, which was Kyle Tucker with his '69 Chevy Camaro. Congratulations to all of the entrants, the four category winners and, of course, to Kyle for a great job.



Owen is the Business Development Manager of Motoractive. He is also a leading figure within the auto re-styling and vehicle modification industry.



SCRS Repairer Driven Education

AS WE EXTENSIVELY ADVERTISED IN THE MONTHS LEADING UP TO SEMA, THE SOCIETY OF COLLISION REPAIR SPECIALISTS (SCRS), LED BY AARON SCHULENBURG, DEVELOPED AND DELIVERED AN EXTENSIVE EDUCATION SEMINAR PROGRAM DESIGNED TO BOTH INFORM AND ENLIGHTEN THE AUDIENCE. AS JOSEPHINE MENTIONED, THERE WERE OVER 20 DIFFERENT SEMINARS AVAILABLE ACROSS THE FOUR DAYS.

Not unlike the SEMA Show itself, the SCRS program was so extensive that, once again, we found ourselves selecting those that we thought really hit the mark. Here is a short summary of some of the sessions that Josephine and/or I attended that we believe gives a flavour of the quality of the seminar.

Market trends

Although the overview of the major economic and industry trends was North America-centric, it was easy to see the parallels with our markets in Australia and New Zealand. With a strong economy and low unemployment, the collision repair industry is strong, although the major effect is the shortage of skilled technicians. However, with record corporate debt and the recently-announced international trade tariffs, there will no doubt be a negative impact on our industry that will not be confined to the USA – some are even referring to “the bubble bursting”!

Retaining structural repair information

While we are all aware of the necessity of following approved manufacturer repair procedures, what is not so well understood is the necessity of retaining the evidence to prove it. The presenter cited the recent survey on the “use of OEM procedures” that showed that their use is far from universal and he also believes the survey over-states the actual situation. Interestingly, the speaker stated that even if you did the right thing, “you do not want to be in the Coroner’s Court without the evidence”. Although the

legal environment in the USA is more litigious than in either Australia or New Zealand, this is surely a sign of things to come.

Connecting with the customer

The focus was on how to use Google to maximise your reach to existing and potential customers, with a demonstration of the importance of ‘Google My Business’ having relevant, original and engaging information about your business. Tips on how to create an effective website, together with a range of marketing tips, were also shared. The importance of analytics to measure the effectiveness of online marketing campaigns was not to be under-estimated in today’s online business environment.

The future of telematics

A panel discussed the onset of telematics as it presents both challenges and opportunities for the collision repair industry. The OEM may well have access to real time data and may be able to use the data to analyse the conditions of a collision and fast track the repair using this information. However, the discussion quickly turned to the question of security, privacy and “who owns the data?” There was no definitive answer to these issues, although it was acknowledged that the technology is outstripping our ability to manage the implications. Telematics will be a reality in the not-too-distant future.

IDEAS collide: 10-10-10

Ten individual speakers addressing ten different topics for ten minutes only! The SCRS ran this format for the first



Aaron Schulenburg.

time this year and it was a huge success. Key issues or megatrends impacting the industry, ranging from material technology, big data, mobility and artificial intelligence, were all covered, and Schulenburg kept the speakers on their toes in this rapid-fire format. For me, this was the highlight of the entire Education Program at SEMA 2018.

In summary, while the cars, the people, the trade show and SEMA Ignited all grabbed the spotlight – and not without good reason – it was the SCRS Repairer Driven Education program that really hit the sweet spot. Congratulations to Schulenburg, his team and the board of the SCRS on a great program.