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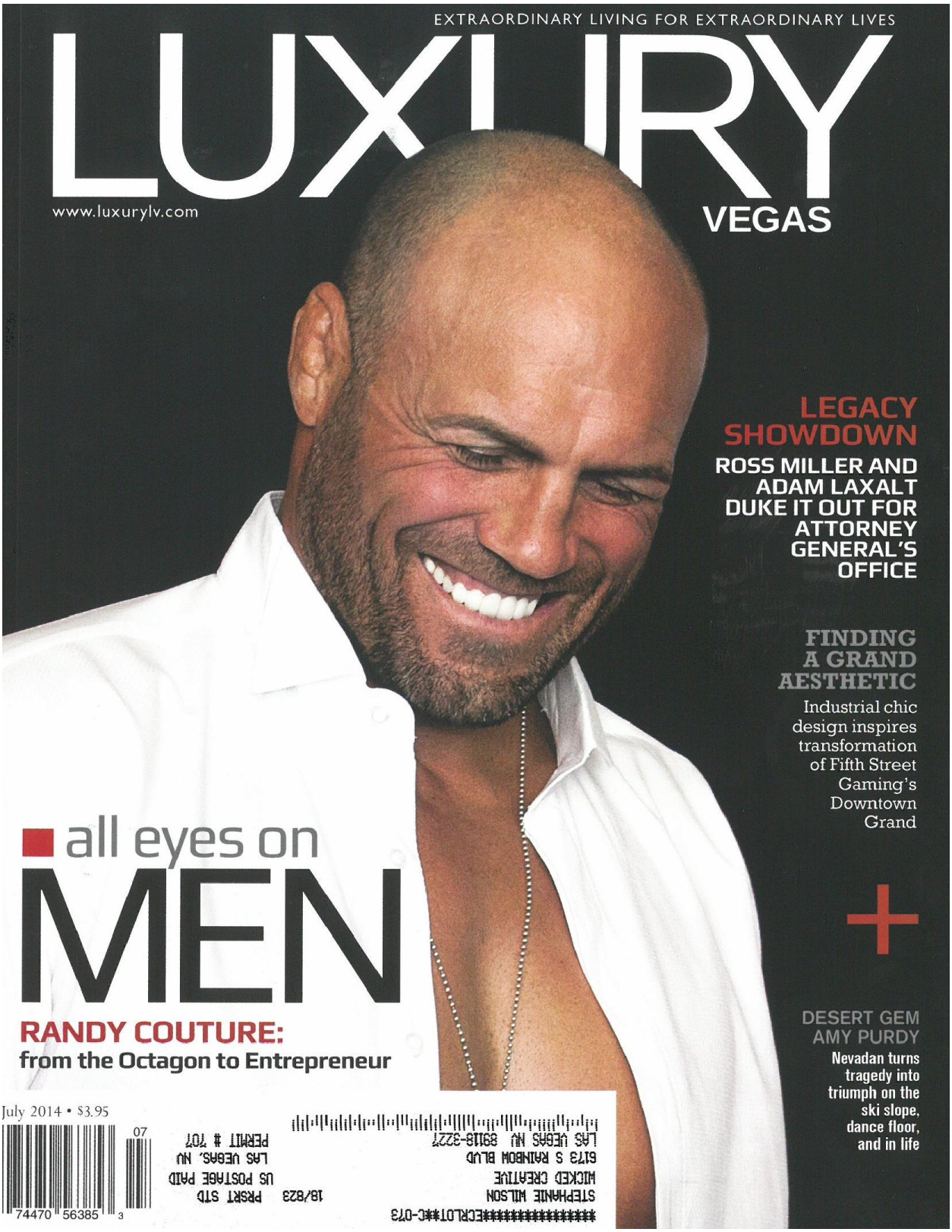

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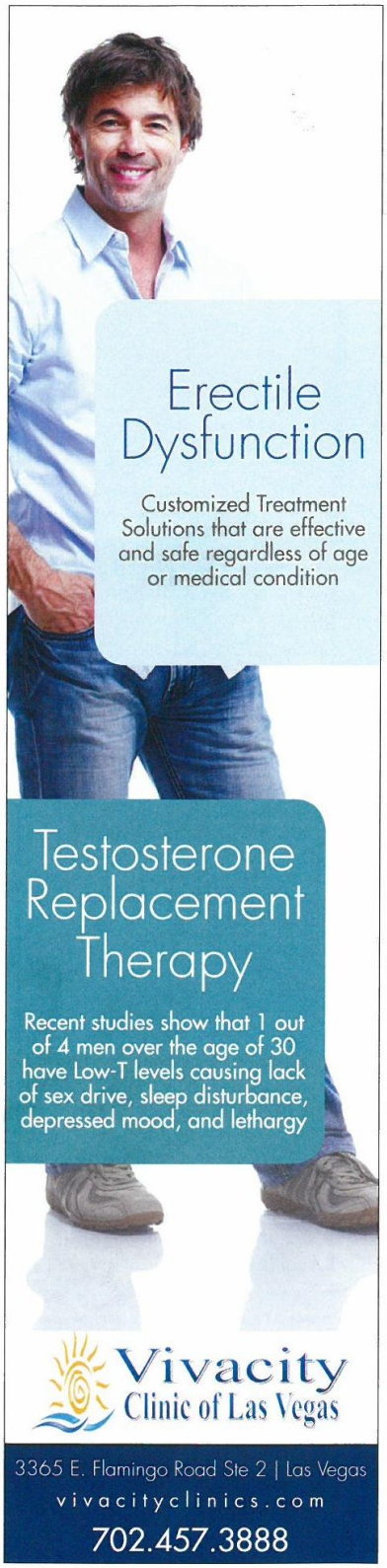
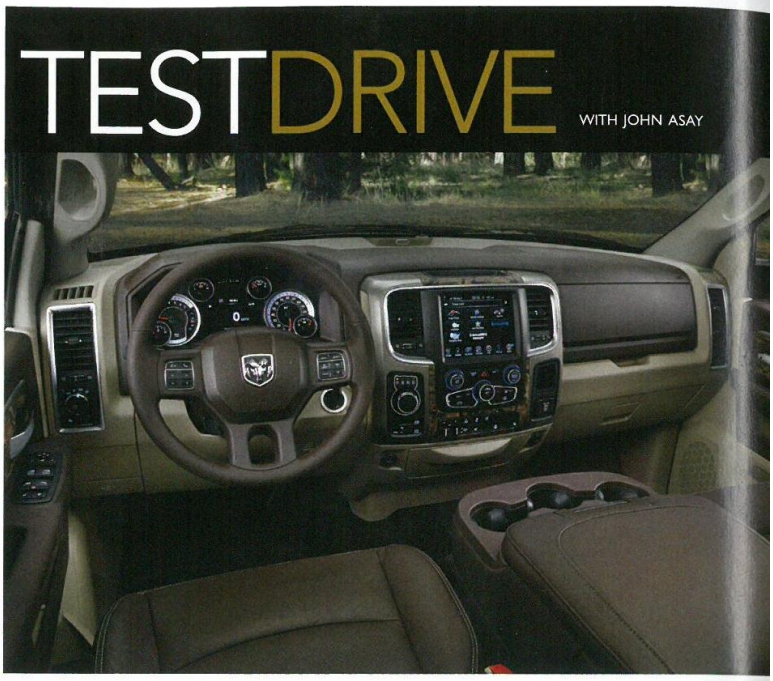


TESTDRIVE

WITH JOHN ASAY



2014 RAM 1500 ECODIESEL LARAMIE

Test-drive a what? That was my response to this assignment. A pickup? C'mon. Yea, yea, I know July is the Men's issue. Okay, I get it.

It turned out to be spot on.

I was on my way to the Towbin Dodge Ram Superstore in the Henderson Auto Mall to test-drive the brand-new 2014 Ram 1500 EcoDiesel. It's unique in many ways. First, it's the first light duty pickup truck to use a diesel engine in North America. In addition, Ram trucks have won back-to-back Truck of the Year awards from Motor Trend, the first time that's been achieved. The 2014 EcoDiesel has also garnered a bushel full of other awards as well.

"That's easy," replies J.R. Rosenbaugh, Ram product specialist, as to why the Ram captured two consecutive honors. "Motor Trend honors only those products which are considered game changers. The 2013 award recognized the truck because of its new air suspension system and the new eight-speed transmission. This year we won the award because of the EcoDiesel engine. Motor Trend considered the engine a brand-new technology for the segment."

Trucks are a new experience for me. "Who buys them?" I ask J.R. "A lot of buyers actually use the truck for business. It's a mobile business center. Then there are the buyers who need them to haul their toys around, you know boats, motorcycles, jet skis and trailers. Then there are folks that like the size of the vehicles and the convenience of moving the occasionally large object."

Acceleration numbers, top speed numbers, and braking distance are not the primary determinants here. Instead truck buyers take note of terms like gross trailer weight, gross combined vehicle weight, trailer tongue weight, and gross vehicle weight. All help to determine how much work the truck is capable of doing. The EcoDiesel Laramie model boasts a max payload of 1276 pounds and towing capacity of 8800 pounds.

The truck is huge. It's a tad over 19 feet long, over six-and-a-half feet wide and weighs in at 6091 pounds. Perfect for our parking garages here in town, right? The power train is a 3.0-liter DOHC turbodiesel V-6 that produces 240-horsepower and 420-lb-ft of torque. It reaches 60 mph in less than nine seconds. I could find no specs for a top speed, enough said.

The exterior exudes masculinity -- big and bold with 20-inch wheels and tires. A dynamite two-toned paint job upgrades the

appearance. The "big rig" look is still prominent in the design language. Chrome is everywhere, I'm feelin' it now.

Climbing up into the driver's seat, I recall hearing that truck interiors have become pretty flush of late, and I was not disappointed with the EcoDiesel Laramie. The Laramie is next to the top of the lineup, only the Longhorn version is more decked out.

The standard Laramie package comes with up-ticked leather seating and wood accents that would be commonplace in many luxury vehicles. The seats were big, plush and very comfortable. The center stack could be used as a work station with lots of connectivity options. A big 8.4-inch Uconnect Touch screen system houses the infotainment including a navigation system. Virtually any luxury option could be had on the Ram, you name it, and you can get it. There is no shortage of creature comforts here.

In another Ram exclusive, a rotary gear selection knob is located on the dash, giving more room on the center stack. Lots of legroom in the back cab which includes several nifty in-floor and under seat storage cubicles.

J.R. climbs in beside me and I start the diesel. I expect to hear a locomotive running, not so. Very quiet. I'm sitting up high as I merge into traffic. The big truck is easy to drive and handles surprisingly easy as well. Visibility is great and in no time I feel very confident in the truck. I ponder that this truck would be great to take on a road trip. The sound system, Sirius channel 32, is crisp and clear. Am I enjoying this too much? Navigation is easy to access, air conditioning a snap to set, and I arrange my seat to the cool mode.

The Ford F150 pickup has been the best seller in this category for the last umpteen years. But Ram has made tremendous strides. The EcoDiesel V-6 Ram has made major leaps in comfort, refinement and efficiency. It's too bad that I have no need for a pickup at this time. But my choice has certainly been made easier. ❑

QUICKFACTS

2014 RAM 1500 ECODIESEL LARAMIE

- *Engine:* *3.0L turbo diesel V-6 2988 cc*
- *Horsepower:* *240 hp @ 3600 rpm*
- *Torque:* *420 lb-ft @ 2000 rpm*
- *Redline:* *4800 rpm*
- *Transmission:* *ZF 8-speed torqueflite transmission*
- *Brakes:* *4 wheel disc brakes Front 13.2" Rear 13.8"*
- *Wheels/Tires:* *20 x 9 alloys P275/60R20 Goodyear Wrangler SR-A*
- *Curb Weight:* *6091 pounds*
- *Performance:* *0-60 9 seconds*
- *Fuel Economy:* *19/27/22 mph city/highway/average*
- *Retail:* *$50,110 (base)*

WHERE TO GET ONE:
Towbin Dodge Ram Superstore
275 Auto Mall Drive
Henderson, NV 89014
702.558.3800