Richmond DRIVES

Your local automotive online source

HOME   BUY   SELL   RESEARCH   TRAFFIC CAMS   EVENTS & PROMOTIONS   ABOUT US

Car Talk

The new ways that car companies are getting into your head
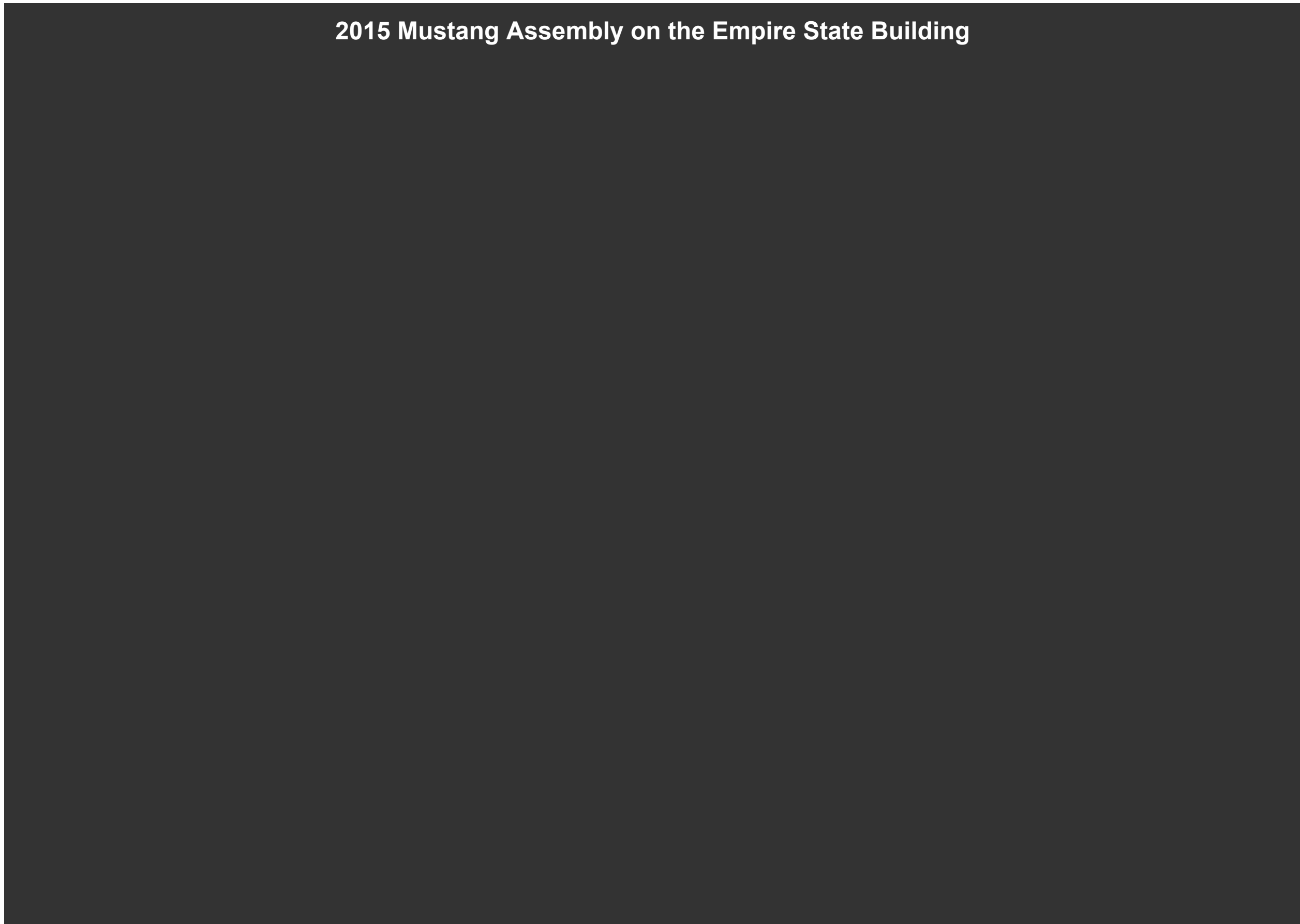
■ Your Weekly Full Throttle by Courtney Hansen

| Story | Comments | Image (3) |

Print   Font Size: ▬ ✚

Tweet 0   g+1 0   *Pin it* 0   ✚   0
Tweet 0   g+1 0

2015 Mustang Assembly on the Empire State Building

Unlike in 1964, Ford had to disassemble a Mustang to get it to the top of the Empire State Building in New York.

By Courtney Hansen www.wheelbasemedia.com

"**W**hat is Internet, anyway? Can someone explain what Internet is?"

Those words were spoken in 1994 by Katie Couric and Bryant Gumbel on NBC's "The Today Show" in wonderment of what must have seemed like a crazy new way of communicating. The comment came

about as they tried to figure out what the "@" symbol was for as well as its proper name.

It was entertaining to watch the parallel in the recent Super Bowl football TV spot as they fast-forwarded to the present only to find themselves in exactly the same boat, stumbling over how to describe the new BMW electric car.

"Can someone please explain what an i3 is...?" A very clever parody that applies to many aspects of the rapidly changing automotive world.

TV, magazine and newspaper ads have been joined by social-medial campaigns and online videos that can be viewed at any time by anyone who happens to search them out or stumble over them.

That's one of the reasons for writing this column: There were far fewer car commercials that aired during the Super Bowl game as companies are finding creative alternatives using the Internet.

And that means that car commercials are everywhere. They reach out and grab you from your TV, radio, computer, tablet, phone and even wristwatches. Today's car buyer walks into the showroom with many hours of Internet research already logged in. Mr. and Mrs. Smartypants know exactly what they want and how much they are willing to pay, right down to having chosen the shift knob that best matches their phone cases. Automakers have to be marketing their cars during every step of the buying journey.

Aside from the online information and reviews, car ads have been appearing as short films . . . clever, poignant, at times heart-wrenching works of art, appearing on the Internet ahead of their TV release dates. They can be so moving they have us teary-eyed before we realize that it's a Chevy truck commercial. They go right for the gut. And they go absolutely viral. Remember that Volkswagen Passat commercial with the little kid in a Darth Vader costume who uses "The Force" to start dad's car in the driveway? As I am writing this, it has 61,380,198 views on YouTube.com. Make that 199.

If you are an automaker, you've got to grab people's interest and quickly. People are short on time and attention spans. And of course, money. Dodge came up with a plan for buying a new Dart, targeting perhaps the younger buyer who is a tad strapped in the financial department. Startup businesses use crowdfunding to raise money, so let's make that happen for new grads who need a car. Why not? Simply put, your desired Doge Dart is presented like a gift registry, complete with a list of parts and prices. Your friends and relatives sign up and buy the car for you, piece by piece. For example, grandpa can sponsor your tires. Aunt Teala can contribute with buying your muffler, and so on. Pretty awesome plan.

I've read varying accounts of its success, but it did generate some buzz for the Dart. Hyundai later followed with a similar program.

Nissan thought it would be cool to get a rock band together with some actors and spend 12 hours making improvised music videos shown live on its Pathfinder Facebook page. It was called an "Improv-tastic Road Trip". Using ideas submitted by viewers, the group of 10 acted out and made up songs about road trips and other wacky Nissan Pathfinder adventures. Each song highlighted a feature of the car. It sounds kinda nutty, right? It was. Staying on pace with the digital age requires some significant thinking outside the ol' toolbox.
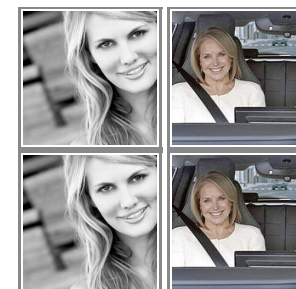
To commemorate the Mustang's 50th birthday, Ford last year decided to re-enact something fun that they had done in 1964: the marketers put a 2015 Mustang up on the observation deck of the Empire State Building. The freight elevator was a little snug for the whole car, so it was taken apart, brought up 86 floors, and reassembled. Boom! Who wouldn't want to enjoy the view from the top, standing next to a yellow Mustang? I thought it was a great mix of the new and the nostalgic. There were critics, but at least Ford wasn't afraid to put it out there. Er, up there.

When it comes to marketing in the auto business, originality is key, just like it always has been. However, it is now imperative that car companies make their digital presence known throughout the buying process. Customer participation through social media has become the new normal. For me, I

love the old-fashioned car commercials. But I do look forward to seeing the evolution of cutting edge creativity.

More about 🏷 *Full-throttle*

2015 Mustang Assembly on the Empire State Building

Katie Couric and Brian Gumble driive I3.

- **ARTICLE**: Are you a true 'enthusiast' if you only like one genre?

1976 Mustang Mod

Discuss   Print 🖨

Posted in Car-talk on *Friday, February 27, 2015 4:00 am.* 🏷 Richmond-2015, 🏷 Full-throttle, 🏷 Courtney-hansen, 🏷 Car-talk, 🏷 Richmond-drives, 🏷 Richmond, 🏷 Drives

Similar Stories

- Car runs rough when defroster is on.
- Car needs new converter to pass inspection.

Most Read

- Snow day: Richmond gets up to 8 inches in morning blast
- Snow totals from the region
- Police identify man killed when car plowed through his Chesterfield home
- Friday school closings
- Aldi plans stores for the Boulevard, Forest Hill Ave. and Robious Rd.

Add a comment...

☑ Also post on Facebook

Posting as **Tracy Leonard** ⌄

Comment

f Facebook social plugin

Richmond DRIVES

SECTIONS

HOME   SELL   VIDEO

SERVICES

CONTACT US   SEARCH SITE