

Contact sports

BY JOE SAGE

The importance of tires, providing those four tiny patches that connect your many tons of vehicle to a variety of pavements and conditions at high speed, can never be overstated. Michelin recently presented two new designs to us, not with drive time but via zoom conference, as with many vehicles over these months of pandemic lockdown.

We like to emphasize the difference between styling and design for vehicles, as so many people tend to refer to a new car or truck's sheet metal appearance as its design, when they mean styling.

Design is the more complex synthesis of engineering, materials, purpose, manufacturing process and, yes, styling. These two new entries by Michelin are both highly innovative, one obviously so at a glance, as its design leads to quite distinctive styling, the other less obvious till second glance, as you start to learn how its design combines elements of two highly desirable, yet generally divergent, fundamental tire categories—ultra-high performance and all-season.

Both are designed to tackle weather. And where-

as Arizona is famously dry, when it rains it pours, and half the state gets very wintery conditions. On top of all that, our readers love to get behind the wheel and go anywhere and everywhere.

Michelin CrossClimate®2

IN THEIR WORDS: Michelin's most advanced, versatile passenger tire in two decades stands alone in its category, a tire with a combination of performance and safety attributes that have never been seen in a passenger or crossover tire in North America, designed to bring unmatched year-round performance in unexpected weather conditions.

Competitors in the all-season tire category typically deliver one or two performance areas well, but have to make sacrifices in other areas that are important to drivers. The CrossClimate2 delivers them all—wet stopping, longevity, dry grip and snow performance. The CrossClimate2 has a distinct V-formation tread pattern, which works together with the tire's proprietary rubber compound to redefine the all-season category for more climate conditions than any competing product.

Michelin engineers knew they needed a tire that "grips to the last stop." In dry conditions, the CrossClimate2 stops up to 16 feet shorter (a car length or more) than four leading competitors. All tires begin to wear after their first drive, and not all offer outstanding stopping power as they wear. But in wet conditions, even when worn, the CrossClimate2 stopped shorter than leading competitive tires—up to 50 feet shorter from 50 mph.

Drivers in snowy climates benefit from the tire's "three-peak mountain snowflake rating" for up to 31 percent better snow traction when worn than four leading competitive all-season worn tires.

PIANO Noise Reduction Tuning to design a tread with blocks and angles that cancel out harmonic road noise and create ideal amplitude for the contact patch, creating a quieter ride.

Road tests show the CrossClimate2 delivers more than 15,000 miles longer wear than leading competitors—up to an additional year of use.

The CrossClimate2 will be available in 56 sizes, fitting 76 percent of top-selling cars and crossovers; 25 sizes are available today, with an additional 31 sizes available arriving in early 2021.

Michelin Pilot® Sport All-Season 4

Ultra-high performance (UHP) tires typically have considerable smooth surface without detailed tread blocks (full rubber-on-surface contact) with large water evacuation grooves. All-seasons have much more detail, with various combinations of tread blocks and sipes to add grip on successively

smaller scale, in conditions with successively more detailed grip challenges. What's new and significant about the Michelin Pilot Sport All-Season 4 is that it goes farther than other before, to combine the two.

IN THEIR WORDS: The Michelin Pilot Sport All-Season 4 is designed to provide year-round performance and ultimate control in any moment, any season. Michelin's previous all-season ultra-high-performance tire broke the performance barrier between summer tires and all-season tires. The latest generation improves on that performance with 4 percent better dry braking, 5 percent better wet braking and 10 percent more snow traction.

The tire's Asymmetric Tread Pattern has more rubber on the outer shoulder for lateral dry grip. Superior wet grip comes from a race-inspired tread compound engineered with maximum levels of silica to grip slick pavement. Large rain grooves evacuate water from under the tire to prevent hydroplaning, while full-depth and interlocking 360-Degree Variable Sipe Technology provides biting edges for improved traction in rain and snow.

The Michelin Pilot Sport All-Season 4 was developed with Dynamic Response Technology to ensure forces and temperatures are distributed evenly for a longer tread wear life—up to 29 percent longer than leading competitors.

Michelin's previous-gen Pilot Sport All-Season proved all-season and ultra-high performance capabilities were possible in the same tire. In a testament to the new generation's ability to provide supercar-worthy performance, Chevrolet has made it the first all-season original equipment tire on the new Corvette C8, proven both on and off the track. The tire has a Z speed rating and fits high-performance vehicles, including Alfa Romeo Giulia; Audi Q7, A8 and S4; BMW X5; Chevrolet Corvette C8; Lexus IS; Mercedes GLC and AMG C Class; Range Rover Sport; Volvo XC90 and XC60; and VW GTI.

Michelin Pilot Sport All-Season 4 will be available in 105 sizes, with 31 new SKUs to include larger rim sizes for more coverage of the SUV/ CUV market, with 59 sizes now available and an additional 46 sizes available in July 2021.

Potential road test

Coming up, we'll be driving the new Corvette C8 2LT with the Z51 package for a week. Will it have a set of Michelin Pilot® Sport All-Season 4 tires? Or something else? They can come more than one way, and early materials do not reveal this. We've always liked UHP performance tires in Southern Arizona, but would traditionally be hesitant to take them up into snow country, on a low slung performance car all the more so. Watch for an update on this in the near future. ■

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