

Mitch Lanzini Extends his Art from Toy Cars to *Overhaulin'*

by **Melanie Anderson**

Custom painter **Mitch Lanzini** of *Lanzini Body Works* in Huntington Beach, CA, began his career polish-

pieces for a prototype airplane that will be featured in the Hamburg Air Show in Germany in March. Other custom painting and designing jobs have included ambulances, surf

much time into a car for so long, and when the day comes where you're actually mixing paint and suiting up to go into the booth, you cross your fingers and pray to the paint gods that nothing goes wrong. Because there are days when things do go wrong that didn't go wrong the day before, and any painter who tells you he hasn't had that day is a liar," Mitch said. "A little speck of dust can ruin hours of prep work. Today's painters have to be part chemist and part weatherman because so many things can go wrong."

His current paint preference is BASF Onyx, and for clearers and primers, he uses Young's House of Klear. "The gloss factor of the clearers are amazing and the other products are very user-friendly, affordable and mix well," Mitch said. He also likes the universal flattening agent that is "outstanding." In addition to cars, he uses the House of Klear products on high-profile artwork he does for an expressionist artist because "the clear looks amazing under gallery lights."

Between 2004–2009, the Lanzini shop was featured in the Velocity network TV reality show *Overhaulin'*

where the concept of the show was to 'borrow or steal' an old, tired or antique car and restore it in one week and return it as a surprise to its owner. The body and paint work was done at Lanzini Body Works, where 25 episodes of the popular car make-over show was filmed.

"It was great to do the show, but



Mitch and Tara Lanzini

also really challenging because during filming, all the other work in our shop came to a halt, and working non-stop meant a lot of sleepless nights," Mitch said. "On *Overhaulin'*, if the car was ready to paint at 2 a.m., you painted the car at 2 a.m. We worked through many sleepless nights, but as crazy as it sounds, the best paint jobs I've done were done in the middle of the night



The Lanzini's own 1933 Speedstar Coupe

ing and showing off his toy cars. As a kid, for Lanzini the Batmobile on TV exemplified hot rods and custom cars, and by high school he was using cans of spray paint on bicycles and motorcycles. At 21, he customized his first vehicle, his own Datsun truck, that earned him his first magazine cover. Today, Mitch, 54, has more than 30 years experience in the business, has been featured on many more magazine covers, and has owned Lanzini Body Works with his wife, Tara, for 20 years.

You could say Mitch was born to be an artist. His grandfather **Angelo Lanzini** was a renowned painter and sculptor in Italy. "Mitch

comes from a long line of artists in his family," said Tara. "It's in his blood. His grandfather painted portraits for two U.S. presidents and was commissioned to paint the Pope's portrait which still hangs in the Vatican today. Angelo's three sons, including Mitch's dad, were all artists too."

Like a typical body shop, Lanzini Body Works does collision repair and exterior custom painting work in a 4,500 square-foot space. What's not so usual is some of the other work they do, like custom painting interior

boards, guitars, race cars, bowling pins, motorcycles, kids' pedal cars and their own line of roller derby skate wheels.

However, building and restoring hot rods is their main line of business. Their two favorite projects are their own cars, a gold 1933 Speedstar coupe and a purple 1932 Zipper Roadster. The



Mitch Lanzini in the paint booth

coupe, Mitch said, is "a piece of rolling art" because many of the parts are handmade. After working some 300 hours on the body, he spent 24 hours straight painting it. Over the course of his career, Mitch figures he's custom painted nearly 200 show-stopping cars.

"What I love about painting cars is that it really is a true form of art." But getting to the painting means hundreds of hours of prep time has already been spent. "Even if you've done everything right, things can still go wrong," said Mitch. "You've put so



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when I was sleep deprived.”

When the producers of the show first approached Mitch with the concept and asked if he wanted to be involved, Mitch admits he didn't think it was possible to completely restore a car in just one week. He thought the show would be a train wreck but, of course, he wanted in. The very first makeover was a Chevelle and it came into Mitch's shop a mess—a bare metal body full of rust and holes. When the body work was done, Mitch spent all night painting the car,

car with heat lamps. “The paint was still wet when the car rolled away,” Mitch said. “It was an intense build.” And that was just the first of many. That's when Mitch got the wake up call that doing the show wasn't going to be easy by any means, and so he asked the producers to rotate filming amongst other shops.

Automobile designer **Chip Foose** hosted the show, which ran for five seasons, and has now returned for its sixth season. Foose is Mitch's neighbor, close friend and also has a shop nearby. “Chip is probably one of my best friends and someone I respect more than most. We always have so much fun hanging out and working together because we're like two little kids who just love to create things. He's been around cars his whole life too, so we have a lot in common and a lot of fun together.”

Some of Mitch's celebrity customers include comedian **Christo-**

pher Titus who had his own FOX show, and race car driver **Jimmie Johnson**. However, Lanzini Body



1972 Torino

Works gives everyone who walks in their doors the same level of attention and painting excellence.

“The day I know everything as a painter is the day I will retire,” Mitch said. “As of now, that hasn't happened, and it probably won't for a long time to come.”

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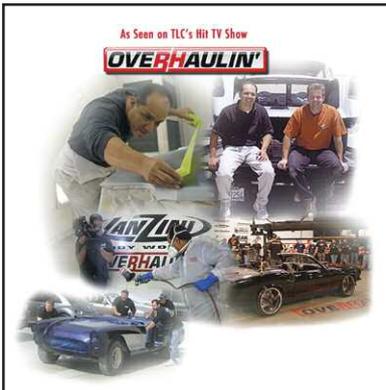
250,500 Cars Damaged by Sandy in 15 States Plus DC

The current estimate of vehicles damaged as a result of Sandy is now set at 250,500 based on claims processed by insurance companies, according to latest figures released by the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB).

The complete list of states generating Sandy-related vehicle damage claims in descending order are:

New York 150,000
New Jersey 60,000
Connecticut 8,000
Maryland 5,500
Massachusetts 5,000
Virginia 4,500
Ohio 4,000
Pennsylvania 4,000
Delaware 2,000
New Hampshire 2,000
North Carolina 1,500
District of Columbia 1,000
Rhode Island 1,000
West Virginia 1,000
Maine 500
Vermont 500

The figures are for insured losses only and may change as additional claims are received and processed. Uninsured vehicles damaged by Sandy are not reflected in these figures.



A collage of pictures from *Overhaulin'*

and when the tow truck showed up at 6 a.m., they sent the driver out for coffee while they walked around the

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California Firms Sue Ford for 'Overinflated' Fuel Efficiency Claims of Two Hybrids

Two California law firms are consolidating lawsuits against Ford Motor Co., alleging the automaker has led a “false and misleading” marketing campaign for its 2013 C-Max Hybrid and Fusion Hybrid vehicles, the *Detroit News* recently reported.

Redlands, CA-based McCune Wright, which on behalf of ‘hundreds’ of C-Max and Fusion hybrid owners is seeking punitive damages because of potentially overinflated fuel-efficiency claims, said it will consolidate with a similar lawsuit filed by San Diego-based Robbins, Geller, Rudman and Dowd.

“There's a lot of really unhappy people,” said **Rich McCune**, partner at McCune Wright, which has previously filed lawsuits against Hyundai Motor Co. for fuel-efficiency claims.

The new filing will have between five and 10 class-action representatives—Ford hybrid owners who say that their vehicles are not living up to fuel-efficiency claims.

McCune said the law firm has spoken to “literally hundreds” of hybrid owners from across the country, and not just those clustered in colder regions with higher speed limits, two factors that can significantly diminish

fuel efficiency.

The original suit stems from the experiences of **Richard Pitkin** of Roseville, CA, who purchased a C-Max Hybrid in October. Pitkin says he averaged only 37 miles per gallon, lower than the Environmental Protection Agency rated 47 mpg.

The EPA said in December it would review Ford's fuel-efficiency claims after Consumer Reports found the C-Max Hybrid and Fusion Hybrid got significantly worse fuel efficiency than the EPA window sticker suggests.

Consumer Reports said in testing, the C-Max Hybrid's fuel efficiency fell 10 miles per gallon short: It got 37 mpg overall, with 35 mpg for city driving and 38 mpg highways. The Fusion Hybrid, certified for the same 47 mpg, got 39 mpg in testing overall, with 35 mpg city and 41 mpg highway.

Ford has said its hybrid vehicles are built to give customers a choice: Drivers can operate the vehicle conservatively and achieve EPA mileage claims. Or they can drive the car for fun, because Ford hybrids get significantly better horsepower than competitor vehicles.