

Road beat: Sports car scores in nearly every category



Collaboration ends with a winning sports car.
Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman and Mitchell Weitzman

This is one I've been waiting for a long time. Ever since its release a couple years ago as both the FR-S and Subaru BRZ (they're identical, save the badge and name), a joint sports car collaboration between Toyota and Subaru, I've wanted to drive one. Badly. The basic idea: longitudinal engine up front, rear-wheel drive, cheap, and a penchant for drifting.

The name FR-S does mean front rear sports, after all. So, when I finally had the keys to one thrown at me you could imagine it got my blood boiling a bit. It is, in design, a modern version of the heralded 1980's "Scarface"-era AE86 Corolla, a classic synonymous with drifting and the anime show "Initial

D". On paper, this is my kind of car. Does it live up to the ideal? Nearly.



Specifications

Engine

Horizontally opposed 2.0L,
DOHC, 16 valve four cylinder
200 hp @ 7,000 rpm
151 lb-ft of torque @ 6,400
rpm

Transmission

Six speed manual
Six speed torque converter
automatic

Configuration

Longitudinal front
engine/rear wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 101.2 inches
Length 166.7 inches
Width 69.9 in inches
Height 60.6 inches
Track (f/r) 59.8/60.6 inches
Ground clearance 4.9 inches
Turning circle 36.1 feet
Steering lock to lock 2.48
turns
Fuel capacity 13.2 gallons
Trunk capacity

Seats 4

Weight (m/t/a//t)

2,758//2,806 pounds

Wheels 17X7 inch alloys

Tires 215/45X17 Michelin

Primacy HP summer

Co-efficient of drag 0.27

Performance

0-60 mph 6.81 seconds

50-70 mph 3.82 seconds

50-70 mph up 6% grade 5.79
seconds

Top Speed Plenty fast (130
mph plus plus)

Fuel economy (MT//AT) EPA
rated 22/30/26//25/34/28
mpg. With the M/T expect 30
mpg in rural county driving
and 37 mpg on the highway at
legal speeds.

From the outside, things are off to a good start because in true sporting nature, this is a good looking car. It's small, measuring only 167-inches long, but gives generous interior room and actual four-seat capabilities with its long 101-inch wheelbase that belies the shrunken outside. It's also low and wide, giving a muscular and purposeful stance with pronounced haunches and tapered nose. As far as sports cars go, it makes a 370Z look cumbersome. Showing homage to the original 86, the FR-S boasts a side emblem with 86 emblazoned upon it. The inside is nicer than expected for the cheap price point, nearly matching its more expensive rivals from Japan and South Korea. If you spec the NAV system option, one of only a few options available, it will likely come pre-programmed with several addresses, including Laguna Seca and Sonoma Raceway (Sears Point).

Let's get the hard numbers out of the way. Laying low in the engine bay is a Subaru 2.0 liter flat four producing 200 ponies at 7,000 rpm and a 151 foot-pounds of torque at 6,400 rpm. Why a flat four? Because it's short, as is the nature of a boxer engine having the cylinders opposed, allowing the engine to sit lower and bring the center of gravity closer to the ground. And when I say it sits low in the chassis, I mean it. It's under there like a bomb shelter. But keep in mind this engine is no nuclear reactor, making its modest power quite high up in the rev range. However, the old AE86 was no firecracker either in terms of performance. The Scion, like the classic Toyota, is focused first and foremost on handling. The car only weighs just less than 2,800 pounds too, which, in the modern world of overweight supercars, is a godsend.

Acceleration runs reveal decent performance with 0-60 mph taking 6.81 seconds and 50-70 mph passing runs level and up a 6 percent grade requiring 3.82 and 5.89 seconds, respectively. Fuel economy is way above the EPA numbers of 22/30/25 and 25/34/28 mpg (manual/automatic). On the highway at 70 mph with the engine spinning 3,000 rpm the FR-S averaged 37 MPG and overall, including 50 miles of crawling traffic and performance testing, an astonishing 30 MPG was delivered. Maybe the EPA tests were done with the emergency brake on.

This all means almost nothing though. What matters with the Scion, and any sports car, is how it drives. This is a driver's car, one designed for the enthusiast. So does it deliver? Yes, for the most part. On the road, the chassis feel is superb; the super quick, almost race car steering (2.48 turns lock-to-lock) has a little more weight than expected given the car's mass, but it feels spot-on. Steering responses are very sharp and quick too, giving the sense of supreme agility with sublime feedback coming from both the front (MacPherson struts) and the rear double wishbone setup behind. The six-speed manual, an increasing uncommon sight in cars now

(49 percent of FR-S have the manual thankfully), is a welcome addition, giving a positive if notchy feel with a slight overly sprung clutch. It's not bad, just takes a little adjusting. A few miles in and heel-toes become a legal obligation. The driving position itself is perfect too, sitting low with great support from the super comfortable bucket seats.

Grip is huge, despite the diminutive 215-width rubber worn. Understeer is non-existent and the trademark oversteer is there when seriously provoked. I was expecting the tires to slip early, but it needs to be pushed very hard still. The best bet is to literally chuck it into a corner and pin the power. Do that, and you can hold slides until your next paycheck, which will be surely spent on new Michelin Primacy HPs. Mid-corner adjustability is fantastic too, being able to tighten or broaden your line with ease without any kicks from the rear that vintage 911 owners will tell you horror stories about. The engineers did their homework here for sure.

Even with its stiletto-sharp handling, the ride is quite compliant and extremely smooth on the highway. Being such a lightweight machine, it benefits from not needing to be oversprung or with stiff shocks to control the mass. The result is a smoother ride. And at light throttle pressures, it is reasonably quiet, too. It was a great road car for a 300-mile road trip to San Francisco until traffic came to a mandated dead stop 30 miles too soon. It's why I don't live there.



Comfort has not been compromised.

Yes, there is a but, and it's a rather large one: that engine. An appliance might be a better word actually since it sounds and feels like a blender with the cap off. It's not so much a power issue as it is a character and smoothness factor. A car like this doesn't need a cavalry of horsepower anyway, as it would dilute the precision of its chassis. Down low in the revs it's never gutless either thanks to short gearing, but from 4,000-5,000 RPM there seems to be a flat spot in the powerband in what should be the meat of its midrange and key accomplice in mountain tackling. From there on it picks up again, but by 6,500 it feels all out of breath with another 1,000 RPM to go, such is the unpleasantness of the noise and roughness. It doesn't race to the redline the way an inline-4 from the Civic SI does, a smoother and much more exciting motor that offers the same power from the same displacement. Most probably won't notice, but though the engine doubtlessly aids in the FR-S' supreme cornering ability, it's largely humdrum and uncultured, and without a noise worthy of its drifting talents. Maybe the help of an aftermarket exhaust or intake will help mask and cover up the sound, but the engine I can see as being a deal breaker for some. Years of driving a silk-weaving smooth inline 6 have perhaps spoiled me.

All together, the FR-S is a great car. It's inexpensive (sticker for this well equipped FR-S is \$24,900 plus \$770 for destination, auto will add \$1,100), fun to drive, gets great gas mileage, and it looks ace too. The FR-S is all about the

chassis though, and it shines brightly in the evening sky. However, it's the engine that almost spoils the party. Hopefully it might have just been this particular example, showing wear from its time relegated as an abused press car by other journos. Advice? Absolutely give it a try. If you want one of the most focused and uncompromised sports cars on sale today, you just might love it.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States. Mitchell Weitzman has been around cars most of his life, and has hundreds of hours of lap track experience. He is a recent graduate of UC Santa Barbara, with a degree in English.

Fans embrace Chesney's brand of country



Kenny Chesney had people on their feet all night July 22. Photo/Taylor Flynn/Tahoe Mountain News

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – Country music great Kenny Chesney rocked a packed house of American kids, their parents and other beach-loving party music enthusiasts Wednesday night at Harveys casino for its outdoor summer concert series.

Along the way, Chesney enlisted some high-profile help on stage. He was joined by red rocker Sammy Hagar and singer Uncle Kracker near the end of the show, keeping an engaged audience on their feet and screaming.

Chesney, who has also played the Lake Tahoe arena in 2009 and acts like he has fun doing so, provided quite a show with signature hits from his 15 albums. The Country Music Association's Entertainer of the Year for four years transported concert-goers to a beach scene with videos of pearly white sand, tanned bodies and libations like Corona,

the Big Revival Tour sponsor, along with other concoctions. While the Americana band Train that played the night before has its own wine and Hagar touts his signature tequila, Chesney promotes his own rum – Blue Chair Bay.

Opening with the song “Reality,” the veteran country artist took most in attendance away from that. He played and sang hit after hit after hit as the beach balls flew in the audience and the bras flew on stage. The singer-guitarist added three to his collection on display attached to a pole in front of drummer Sean Paddock.

“Impressive,” Chesney quipped at the size of one of them.



Kenney Chesney creates a party atmosphere at Harveys. Photo/Taylor Flynn/Tahoe Mountain News

Chesney, who spent most of the concert smiling and complimenting the Tahoe crowd, was there to impress the “No Shoes Nation,” a following that has made the term beach bum upscale and fashionable.

“I like the nature of his songs. It’s island music, so it’s laid back with no shoes,” said Steve Mussell of Sparks, who

wore a Chesney concert shirt from the 2009 tour in which he saw the artist at Harveys.

Mussell wasn't alone in his sentiment.

During his second number, "Beer in Mexico," someone up front thrust a sign high that read " $\frac{1}{2}$ Wild Child, $\frac{1}{2}$ American Kid," named after two Chesney songs.

Chesney often acknowledged the crowd's enthusiasm.

"We are so happy and thrilled to see your faces," he bellowed. "We're here for one simple reason – because you guys are here."

Upon wrapping up "Til It's Gone," a woman yelled: "How about that?"

Then, he launched into yet another hit "Summertime," while occasionally pushing out his tongue from those pearly white teeth.

Most in the audience joined him in song.



Sammy Hagar and Kenny Chesney turn the show into pure rock for a few songs.
Photo/Taylor Flynn/Tahoe Mountain News

"You sound amazing," he said. Then, he slowed the hard-driving rock performance a tad for his sultry, sexy mega hit "Somewhere With You."

With one bra flying on stage at that time, Chesney laughed and admitted to forgetting the lyrics.

It all soon returned though as Chesney cranked out the nostalgic "I Go Back" off his first album. The lights came up and everybody sang. The band got the love and fed off of it.

He labeled his next song, the blockbuster tune, "You and Tequila," as one of his favorites and geared it for those who feel addicted to someone.

Chesney and his six-member band – Clayton Mitchell, Kenny Greenberg and John Conley on guitars, Paddock, Wyatt Beard on keyboards and bassist Harmoni Kelley, who took the lead on "Whole Lotta Rosie." This is not your grandmother's country. The rock song rivaled anything Robert Plant pumped out with Led Zeppelin.

And all this was even before Hagar joined the stage. Right before, concert-goers got in the mood dancing through the jumpy new hit "American Kids."

"Any night that I can make music with this guy is a good night," Chesney said. And on came Hagar to the stage with drinks for the duo.

"You'll like these. I call them Sammy's red, white and blue," he said, further admitting to having four or five to make sure "they were all right." He was so relaxed, Hagar kicked off his shoes on stage.

From there, Hagar had the audience roaring with old rock hits "I'll Fall in Love Again," "Finish What Ya Started," from Van Halen fame and his hard-driving "I Can't Drive 55." The latter represented a perfect song for Tahoe's summer tourism traffic

on U.S. Highway 50 from Nevada to the Y. He even changed the lyrics to be more Tahoe specific.

When Chesney and Hagar weren't singing and drinking, they hugged, showing their closeness.

Chesney even told the audience how he rode a horse on the beach to Hagar's beach house in Cabo San Lucas. The woman with Chesney told him: "That man has Sammy Hagar hair," Chesney recalled.

"He thought I was some tourist," Chesney said, laughing.

The male bonding didn't end there.

"You never know who's going to share the stage," Chesney yelled out.

Then, singer Uncle Kracker came to the stage for duets of "Follow Me" and "Drift Away." The crowd almost drowned out the singers.

It was one big party.

"We're not done yet," Chesney said before bringing on more romance with "How Forever Feels."

His encore brought out opening act Chase Rice to the stage for "She Thinks My Tractor's Sexy."

Chesney changed the lyrics to his top song: "she thinks Chase is sexy."

Rice put on an entertaining opening act. He has a history of entertaining being a University of North Carolina linebacker and having a stint on the "Survivor" show.

But it was his boyish charm that got the attention of a woman up front named Michelle. He brought her on stage and created a song just for her. She was wearing a "I'm gonna ride" T-shirt, so Rice tailored the lyrics to accommodate the display on her

chest. Lots of flirting was going on.

“Look, empty hand,” he yelled to the crowd, while holding up her left arm.

Then, Rice – a lyricist initially – involved the whole crowd with the song he wrote: “Cruise” recorded by Florida Georgia Line. Music to the ears, the entire arena filled with singers – the ultimate compliment.

The Harveys Summer Outdoor Concert Series continues with rock singer Jackson Browne on Aug. 7, legendary superstar Elton John the next night, Dierks Bentley on Aug. 23, Sammy Hagar on Sept. 5 and Dave Matthews on Sept. 9.

Editorial: Gun control tactic hard to shoot down

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the July 20, 2015, Las Vegas Sun.*

Aside from picking office holders, Nevada voters next year will have the opportunity to help keep guns out of the wrong hands.

Granted, we can't always identify “the wrong hands” because many crimes are committed in the passion of the moment by first-time gun-wielders who might not fit the profile of a gunman-in-waiting.

But as a society, we at least can try to weed out those people who, on the face of it, shouldn't be allowed to carry a weapon. It's an obvious group: felons, domestic abusers and the mentally ill who have been identified by the state as

having been committed involuntarily to a mental health institution or deemed a danger to themselves or others.

Read the whole story

Rugged El Dorado County 4WD trail opens

The Barrett four-wheel drive trail, a rugged 6 mile off-highway route from Wright's Lake to Barrett Lake, just west of Desolation Wilderness, is open.

Three segments of the trail were reconstructed to protect sensitive meadows.

The Barrett 4WD Trail has been used by recreationists since the 1960s and offers one of the most challenging off-highway vehicle experiences in the Sierra Nevada. The trail has a high rating for difficulty and is only recommended for very experienced OHV users prepared for remote travel over large rocks.

The Barrett 4WD Trail was identified as one of 18 routes in the Eldorado National Forest travel system which needed corrections to comply with the environmental protection guidelines in the Sierra Nevada Plan.

The work was funded by the Forest Service with assistance from a California Department of Parks and Recreation, Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division Ground Operations grant and a Secure Rural Schools Title II grant through the El Dorado County Resource Advisory Committee. The project was implemented by the Forest Service together with two

contractors, a Student Conservation Association Leader Crew and volunteers from the Hi-Landers 4WD Club.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• The Governing Board of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency on July 22 unanimously approved the Tahoe Valley Area Plan for South Lake Tahoe.

• The Championship Golf Course in Incline Village has various demo days. The next is July 25. For more info, go **online**.

• The 5th annual Aviation Roundup at the Minden airport is Aug. 22-23 featuring Air Force Thunderbirds, Team Rocket, Bill Stein, Kyle Franklin, Matt Younkin, Manfred Radius, and Dan Buchanan. Gates open at 10am.

• The 8th annual Conservation Landscape Tour is Aug. 19 from 4:30-7:30pm. Check-in is at the demonstration garden at Lake Tahoe Community College starting at 4:15pm. The event is free. For more info, contact Sarah Bauwens at 530.543.1501, ext.126 or sbauwens@tahoercd.org.

• South Lake Tahoe Library on July 24 will host the summer reading club performance Wild Things. The free show starts at 2pm at 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd in South Lake Tahoe. Wild Things Inc. will bring a mix of wild animals and share

with children a message of conservation and appreciation for wild animals.

SLT, EDC to work on unresolved land issues

South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County officials are expected to get together soon to work on resolving issues pertaining to county-owned properties and facilities in the city.

Up for discussions are Lakeview Commons, Campground by the Lake, and buildings that house the senior center, museum, art building and the visitors' center. El Dorado County owns the land and provides programs, while the city oversees operations and maintenance of the buildings.

The county's ad hoc committee is made up of Supervisors Sue Novasel and Ron Mikulaco, with Supervisor Brian Veerkamp as the alternate.

Novasel said she expects the ad hoc committee to report back to the Board of Supervisors at the special Tahoe meeting on Aug. 31.

However, the city isn't even discussing the formation of an ad hoc committee until the council's Aug. 4 meeting.

"We are very pleased the county has established an ad hoc committee to work with city on these issues. We've discussed these topics with Supervisor Novasel since she was elected and discussed the need to resolve the city-county agreement for the 56-acre property and look forward to finding the right solution for the benefit of the many community members who

utilize these properties,” City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Legalization of pot in Calif. would be a process

By Joe Garofoli, San Francisco Chronicle

Even if California voters legalize cannabis in 2016, it will take “many years” of patience to figure out how to tax and regulate a multibillion-dollar industry that’s forever been largely underground.

That’s the cautionary conclusion of a thorough examination of what it will take to legalize marijuana in the state, led by Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom and a panel of academic and law enforcement experts.

“Legalization of marijuana would not be an event that happens in one election,” they wrote in the 93-page Blue Ribbon Commission on Marijuana Policy report released Wednesday. “Rather, it would be a process that unfolds over many years requiring sustained attention to implementation. That process of legalization and regulation will be dynamic.”

The report offers 58 policy suggestions on the myriad questions raised by legalization – from how and when to tax cannabis to how to determine when users are driving under the influence.

Read the whole story

Ex-NFL'er to teach youth clinic in SLT

Former New York Jets wide receiver Jo-Jo Townsell will host a USA Football FUNdamentals clinic for children ages 8-18 in South Lake Tahoe.

The Aug. 1-5 camp (9am-4pm each day) will be at South Tahoe Middle School. The free clinics are designed to introduce children to football by teaching basic skills.

The clinics incorporate a series of drills to teach passing, catching and running skills in a non-contact setting. All skills and drills selected are based on USA Football's Player Progression Development Model, ensuring children are learning in an age-appropriate manner, based on their cognitive and physical maturity.

Registration is available **online**.

Wildland fire closes Highway 50

Updated 9:40pm:

The Kyburz wildland fire has jumped across the American River heading east and prompted mandatory evacuations from Whitehall

to Sand Flat Campground, according to U.S. Forest Service reports.

The federal agency has beefed up its personnel working the fire to 350. The blaze that started this afternoon shortly before 2pm is 5 percent contained and under investigation.

CVS Pharmacy worker Tracy Nasca told Lake Tahoe News the air outside her Pollock Pines store is not enshrouded in smoke and there are no signs of the fire from the Sly Park Road exit aside from Highway 50 being closed. However, store personnel has been forced to deal with some confused customers needing to be diverted along Route 49 to Interstate 80 to go east.

Updated 9:05pm:

The Kyburz fire has grown to 100 acres and deployed 224 personnel working 21 engines and six water tankers among five hand crews, the U.S. Forest Service's Incident Command site reported.

Voluntary evacuations are underway from Sand Flat to Strawberry, with centers established at the Pollock Pines Community Center at 2675 Sanders Dr. in Pollock Pines.

The fire is burning in steep terrain on both sides of Highway 50, which closed earlier this afternoon.

Still, the Forest Service indicated "making good progress," despite the threat of structures.

A wildland fire has Highway 50 closed between Ice House Road and Strawberry.

At about 3pm the fire was at 20 acres.

"It's burning on the north side toward the 2013 Kyburz burn.

Structures are threatened,” Kristi Schroeder with the Eldorado National Forest told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It is not known how the July 23 fire started. However, reports are that a broken axle from a truck may have ignited the blaze.

The U.S. Forest Service is attacking the fire by air, including using the Super Scooper airplane that arrived at Lake Tahoe Airport this week.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Reno man ID'd in wilderness remains case

Remains found near Spooner Summit in June 2014 have been identified as Ryan Wallace Osburn, 32, of Reno.

The investigation by Douglas County sheriff's investigators concluded Osburn died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

The remains were found in King Canyon. Investigators also recovered personal property, a handgun, projectile and shell.

Prior to residing in Reno, Osburn lived in Ocala, Fla. He was a professional gambler.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*