

Robb Report

FOR THE LUXURY LIFESTYLE™

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Best of the Best

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An entire issue devoted to
the greatest things in life!

Sport Ute Specialists

Canepa Design combines ingenuity and quality to outpace a growing field of customized sport utilities.

BY PATRICK C. PATERNIE

After Bruce Canepa ordered a new Suburban to use as his daily driver in 1992, the sport-utility vehicle boom was hardly more than a ripple in the automotive marketplace. As SUVs flood the market today, Canepa is still in the driver's seat of a Suburban, but now he's making waves as the leading aftermarket specialist catering to consumers who want vehicles that match their personalized transportation needs.

Canepa, who was in the exotic car business in 1992, recognized the potential of the Suburban to satisfy an owner's desire for power, handling, luxury, comfort, and convenience at

a time when manufacturers viewed it simply as a truck. The aftermarket pieces he purchased to upgrade his own vehicle did not meet his standards as a Porsche racer and a race car restorer.

So Canepa decided to design and modify suspension and performance parts to match his high quality demands. Soon he was offering a menu of choices in his Santa Cruz, Calif., shop that ranged from superchargers and antisway bars to bigger brakes and more comfortable seats. Customers such as computer magnate Bill Gates and actor Sylvester Stallone were among the first to buy Canepa's creations, which helped to fuel and legitimize the growth of the SUV

Aftermarket Specialists

1. Canepa Design
2. Ultrasmith Systems
3. Becker Automotive
4. Stilen Design
5. Special Vehicle Concepts



Aftermarket Specialist **Canepa Design**

Bruce Canepa **outpaces the**
aftermarket field with his innovative
design and quality.

performance aftermarket. Canepa's success, in turn, prompted mainstream automakers to offer their own versions of luxury sport utes such as the Lincoln Navigator and the Cadillac Escalade.

Every time, though, Canepa rose to the challenge. He continues to outpace the rest of the aftermarket field by offering a line of sport utilities with superior innovative design and quality.

While Canepa may have been the leading proponent of aftermarket SUV customizing, other companies experienced in specialized automotive demands also saw the potential for their talents in the burgeoning SUV aftermarket.

For instance, 25-year-old Ultrasmith Systems Inc. of New York City has evolved in recent years from customizing Mercedes-Benzes and Ferraris to personalizing Suburbans and Tahoes.

Ultrasmith operates in the heart of the original urban jungle and offers a complete menu of selections for the urbane guerrilla. Options range from rear surveillance cameras and run-flat tires to fax machines and sophisticated entertainment centers.

In Los Angeles, Howard Becker saw more of his entertainment industry clientele turning to SUVs. He had built a reputation as the automotive sound and electronics guru who could satisfy the professional standards of his customers. Once

Becker was turned loose in the concert-hall-size confines of a Suburban, he was able to install equipment such as DVD video systems and computerized sound systems while furthering his talents as an ultraluxurious interior designer.

At the same time, other aftermarket specialists saw the potential to improve SUV performance. Sports car champion Steve Millen of Stillen Design in Costa Mesa, Calif., who had modified sports cars like Nissan's 300 ZX, soon began to produce parts and accessories that have become the industry standards. Stillen Suburbans and Expeditions offer the best blend of performance, state-of-the-art electronics, and price.

Still other aftermarket specialists learn from mentors. Peter Cameron of Special Vehicle Concepts in Newport Beach, Calif., plied his trade under Canepa's training. When he decided to establish his own company, Cameron began to improve the on-road prowess of the legendary Range Rover. Cameron has transferred the luxury, performance, and styling of his Signature Range Rover to Lexus models, the Ford Expedition, and the Hummer. Subtle but perfect changes are his trademark.

While Canepa is the leader in the aftermarket field, the ingenuity displayed by all of these companies makes SUV owners the ultimate winners. ®

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