

# New Smart For Two vehicles easy on gasoline

By Frank S. Washington  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

SAN JOSE, Calif. - When gasoline prices soared, Americans wanted gas sipping cars. Domestic manufacturers didn't have them, the Japanese did, and the rest is history.

We may see a repeat of that equation as gasoline prices rise. But this time, the small fuel sipping car comes from Europe — Germany, to be specific, by way of France.

In this case, we're talking about the Smart For Two.

It holds two passengers and not much else. This car is a two-door hatchback with cargo space for a couple of pieces of small soft luggage or small packages, the kind of stuff you pick up on a Sat-



The Germany-produced Smart For Two models are economy sized and gas efficient.

urday morning.

The Smart is powered by an inline one-liter, three-cylinder engine that makes 70 horsepower and 68 pounds-foot of torque. It's mated to a five-speed manual automatic that can change gears automatically or, of course, be shifted manually.

We didn't like this gear-

box. The shifts were rather abrupt, and lengthy in terms of the time it took to get from one gear to the other. At some point, we wish Smart would give customers the choice of an automatic or a manual transmission. That was our only quibble.

Our Smart was 106 inches long (that's not much),

weighed 1,808 lbs (that's not much either), and it had a turning radius of 28.7 ft. We made a U-turn using two lanes with room to spare. The Smart is so small you could drive it in your house.

Blistering speed is not one of the Smart's attributes. It accelerates from 0-60 mph in 12.8 seconds and has a maxi-

mum speed of 90 mph. That sounds slow, but how many times do you need to get to 60 mph as fast as you can from a standing start? And how many times do you need to go faster than 80 mph?

What's more, using EPA guidelines for 2008, Smart gets 33 mpg in the city and 40 mpg highway. We spent a few hours driving the car from San Francisco, south to Silicon Valley, then to Palo Alto and then on to San Jose, and never saw the gas gauge move.

Our Smart handled the freeways here relatively well. The car was pretty steady on the road, but we noticed that we were constantly adjusting our steering to keep it on track. We don't know whether it was caused by the short wheelbase, the wind, or the fact that we were not used to driving a vehicle that small.

Acceleration was pretty good. In fact, we never found ourselves in trouble because of a lack of oomph. The car was very spacious. We had plenty of leg room. Headroom was great because the Smart was 60 inches tall, but we could have stood a bit more width. We knocked elbows with our driving part-

ner a couple of times.

Still, we were impressed. The Smart looks like it would be swallowed on American roads. But we never got the feeling of being overwhelmed by bigger vehicles. However, let's not get it twisted. The Smart is a commuter car. It has a 10-gallon gas tank, including reserve — and that's the way it will be marketed.

There are two versions of the Smart For Two: a coupe and a convertible. The coupe comes with a clear roof and sunscreen. The convertible has a fully automatic top and glass rear window. The Smart can be equipped with a premium audio system that includes 6-disc CD changers, MP3 capability, and an auxiliary jack.

Our test car had power windows, air conditioning, antilock brakes, heated side mirrors, front and side airbags. However, Smart wants to keep the car simple and affordable. A navigation system is a dealer installed option.

The Smart For Two goes on sale soon with a base price of \$11,590.

Frank S. Washington reviews automobiles for AboutThatCar.com.

## Microsoft

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ternships and opportunities to do interesting work.

Darryl Dickerson, the NSBE's national chair and CEO, said the grant represented a real commitment to fostering diversity.

"As Mr. Gates said, there is wide disparity in the development of engineers within this country, particularly among African-Americans," Dickerson said. "So this is a bridge, a partnership that will allow us to ensure we're developing more tech-

nical talent, especially among African-Americans."

In his keynote speech, Gates noted that the overall dropout rate is about one out of three from ninth grade to senior year, and for African-Americans and Hispanics, that number rises to more than 50 percent.

Gates said he plans to encourage multicultural students to study computer science, through working with high schools, the Boys and Girls Clubs, the United Negro College Fund, the

Thurgood Marshall College Fund, the Society of Women Engineers, the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, the National Center for Women and Information Technology and the National Urban League. The future is full of opportunity for computer scientists and software engineers, he said.

"We used to talk about a computer on every desk, and now we talk about putting the computer in the desk," Gates said. "The overall picture of the hardware we have will be

far better than what we have today and to take advantage of that we need better software."

Gates talked about how in the future computers will remember how you work and how you interact and the software will be intuitive, able to watch how you manage your calendar, see who you send emails and how you interact with your personal computer.

He said, "We're in a period of very big change."

Monica Foster writes for the Skanner.

## Gap

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that encourages students to stay enrolled as they get closer to a degree.

The dearth of women and minorities in top-level science departments is an issue affecting far fewer people, but it, too, has attracted widespread attention. Former Harvard President Lawrence Summers fueled the debate with his infamous 2005 comments that, for the very highest-level jobs, innate ability may partly explain why there are so few women.

Many universities, including Harvard, have taken steps to try to improve conditions and mentoring for women scientists.

In the latest study, sponsored by several foundations, University of Oklahoma Professor Donna Nelson found signs of some gains by women. For instance, at the 100 top-rated programs women account for 12.9 percent of all math faculty, compared to 8.3 percent five years ago. Among physics

faculty, they rose from 6.6 percent to 9.1 percent, and in civil engineering from 9.8 percent to 13 percent.

Those and other fields also have seen substantial jumps in the percentage of women earning doctorates — the pipeline to professorial jobs.

But underrepresented minorities haven't done as well.

In some fields, the proportion of faculty who are Black, Hispanic or Native American has actually declined — from 3.6 percent to 2.3 percent in the top-50 math programs, and from 4.3 percent to 3.6 percent in electrical engineering.

Why are the numbers of women growing more quickly? Nelson says women are reaching critical mass — for example, 20 percent of faculty — in more fields. When that happens, students have more mentors and growth accelerates.

By contrast, underrepresented minority students in the sciences and engineering

are often in departments with, at most, one or two such faculty members.

There are just three Black full professors in the top 100

computer science programs nationally. In chemistry, most of the top 100 programs have no Black faculty, and only nine have two or more.

## Economics

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tal in their communities and thereby build an array of flourishing financial institutions.

In "Why African-Americans Can't Get Ahead," Richardson makes a passionate appeal for a collective Black mindset in terms of money matters. And, in numerous case studies, she eloquently illustrates why she feels this approach is imperative, such as in her discussion of how Koreans came to control the bulk of hair care supply stores in Black communities all across the country.

The author, a graduate of Georgetown University with a B.S. degree in marketing, is not just some ivory-tower intellectual with impractical Pan-African notions. No, she bases the ideas in this, her first book, on her practical experience of 20 years spent as an entrepreneur, which included co-founding with her husband, Willie, Cushcity.com, the largest African-American internet retailer.

"Why African-Americans Can't Get Ahead," an eye-opening game plan for advancement, offers some cutting-edge, 21st century solutions for the host of persistent economic woes still plaguing the bulk of the Black community despite the considerable inroads made since the '60s in terms of integration and basic civil rights.

More information is available online at [www.groupeconomics.com](http://www.groupeconomics.com).

## EMPLOYMENT

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Candidates must have experience in business plan preparation, loan package handling, budget management, reporting and program planning. Preferred Bilingual, Spanish-English, and knowledge of public fund management a plus.

Interested candidates please e-mail resumes to interim executive director, [tp@lvcc.com](mailto:tp@lvcc.com) or fax at (702) 384-1182. No phone calls please.

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