

28. The Roar & The Breeze

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Since the Lexus LC500 Convertible was revealed at the 2019 Los Angeles Auto Show, people have been salivating, just waiting to get their hands on it. And the wait is almost over. This feat of engineering is equipped with the same luxurious interior and 471-hp 5.0-liter V-8 engine as the original coupe, that same familiar roar of the engine, but now just a little bit sexier.?

We got a chance to sit down with two members of the Lexus team that created this beautiful car — Chad Deschenes and Josh Burns — to talk about what it's like when you're behind the wheel of this car.

Full transcript below.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:00:00] Hey, everyone. It's Tyler. And welcome back to Toyota Untold. Since the Lexus LC500 Convertible was revealed at the 2019 LA Auto Show, people have just been salivating, waiting to get their hands on it. And the wait, it's almost over. This vehicle is equipped with the same luxurious interior, and 471 horsepower, 5.0 liter, V8 engine is the original coupe. That same familiar word, the engine, but, now, it's just a little bit sexier.

My co-worker, Audrey, has been drooling over this car like many of our customers. And I always like to tease

her because she used to work on the Lexus side of the business. And now, she works on the Toyota side of the business. So, every time she says, “LC,” I say, “You mean Land Cruiser?” She does not appreciate this. But we get a good laugh over this, and she just cannot wait to get her LC Convertible.

Kelsey and I got the chance to sit down with two members of the Lexus team that worked on this beautiful car, Chad Deschenes and Josh Burns, to talk about what it’s [00:01:00] like when you get the opportunity to get behind the wheel of this car.

So, today, on Toyota Untold, Kelsey, we are talking about the Lexus LC Convertible. And today, we have Chad Deschenes and Josh Burns from Lexus who are going to talk about it.

Kelsey Soule: Welcome to the podcast.

Chad Deschenes: Thanks for having us.

Josh Burns: Thank you.

Tyler Litchenberger: And if people remember, Josh has been on our podcast before, but you were on the Toyota side. And now, you’ve made your way over to Lexus.

Josh Burns: We’re all one big family.

Tyler Litchenberger: Exactly. One Toyota.

Kelsey Soule: He went over to the fancy side.

Tyler Litchenberger: So, LC Convertible. This started off as a concept, right, that was unveiled at the Detroit Auto Show?

Chad Deschenes: Yeah. It was a slight little teaser that we want to showcase off to the public and kind of get a reaction, see what people thought about it.

Tyler Litchenberger: And what do people think about it?

Chad Deschenes: We’re making it. So, that’s the reason why-

Kelsey Soule: That’s right, yeah.

Chad Deschenes: ... everyone is very, very excited about this vehicle. And quite frankly, that’s one of the beauty parts of the LC. Once you looked at it, you knew it had to be a convertible someday. It’s what the people [00:02:00] wanted. So, now, we finally released that in LA and we’re excited to have that coming.

Tyler Litchenberger: That’s right. At the LA Auto Show, it was the big unveil of the convertible. Listen, I love to drive a tank. I drive a GX. I talk about it all the time. A lot of people are moving towards SUVs or we’ve been moving towards SUV over the past couple of years. Why a convertible? Why like redesign this? And then, why a convertible?

Chad Deschenes: Well, from my perspective, I think for being a car guy and a car enthusiast, I personally own an LC. I absolutely love this car to death. And why make a convertible is like I said earlier, once you look at it, it just was dying to have the top off. To be able to really listen to that engine when you're driving down the road and, also, just have that breeze going by you.

It's one thing at Lexus, we haven't had a convertible for about three years. So, we've had that missing from our lineup and our dealers, our owners. And quite frankly, the public have been asking, "When's that convertible coming?" And LC is just that perfect [00:03:00] halo to really bring that style, beauty, and luxury into our vehicles.

Kelsey Soule: Like do you think that the market for convertibles, although you said that dealers and consumers, you know, are asking for it and the LC was the perfect vehicle for it, do you think it's kind of a niche market, like more of an enthusiast car?

Chad Deschenes: It's a great question. The marketplace actually has a good area of convertibles and coupes in that performance luxury coupe buyer. So, there's actually a good marketplace for us. And potentially, we see that the convertible is actually going to open up some new doors and opportunities for us to take even a little bit more of that market share that we've had before in the past.

Kelsey Soule: Yeah. And I mean obviously comparatively to the flagship sedans, we're never going to have the volume that we do in those vehicles, right? Because it's never the intention, right? I'm assuming. I'm like, I'm just saying this like I know.

Josh Burns: Well, Chad brought up an interesting word earlier, halo. I think LC is a halo vehicle for us. So, it is a little bit more of a niche, but it's a high-performance, grand touring [00:04:00] coupe. And we've really taken that and put it into convertible form. And it's really more of an expansion of that halo flagship vehicle family. So, it's kind of an extension of the family. And you're right, it's not going to do the volume of an ES or, you know, one of our big selling vehicles but it is more of a niche. And I think that, also, it gives us some of the liberties to do some of the things that we've done, like with the Powertrain, for instance.

We're going a little bit different direction than a lot of people. There's so much buzz around electrification and, you know, a turbo-charged V6 or a smaller displacement engine. We have a larger displacement V8 in a convertible. That's a huge sell for buyers because it's such a visceral ... Chad, can speak to it. He owns one.

Chad Deschenes: Yeah. It just makes you a lot ... it's like a vacation every single day when you get inside of the vehicles.

Kelsey Soule: Wow! There is no better endorsement than a vacation-

Tyler Litchenberger: Really?

Kelsey Soule: ... every day in your car.

Chad Deschenes: And honestly, I can attest to that every single day. It's having a V8 inside of a vehicle, especially in this market. Like you said, [00:05:00] most people are going and most brands are going down smaller displacement, adding in turbochargers for fuel economy and other reasons behind that. But the V8 is there's something about it that just gets your blood pumping. It makes you feel alive. It makes you feel connected to it, and quite honestly, puts a smile on my face every day.

Kelsey Soule: Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: So, what's different about this vehicle?

Chad Deschenes: So, different part is the top's out now. So, the top is off-

Kelsey Soule: Wow!

Chad Deschenes: ... so to speak, letting that sun in. So, previously, before in the past, the LC had an optional either having a glass roof or having a carbon fiber top. This opens up the doors, so to speak, or the roof with a new fabric top that's been designed that has electric and hydraulic opener and closer.

And why that's important, electric and hydraulic? Some brands go with all electric top, and that takes ... it's all about speed in opening and closing it, but it can't really deal with the weight over a long period of time. Others have hydraulic, which helps with weight. So, being electric and hydraulic, [00:06:00] best of both worlds combined into this, it's able to open and close very quickly. So, open in 15 seconds.

Josh Burns: Yeah, closing about 16.

Kelsey Soule: Is that a priority for people? And why?

Josh Burns: Double that. And you might start getting to the answer because, you know, I think there's been a focus from some manufacturers to make it be the fastest-

Kelsey Soule: What?

Josh Burns: And there's some that don't place much emphasis on it at all when you start seeing the times that it takes. But yeah, you want to get in and go. So, it gives you the ability to do that without having to sit and wait. You can't operate them at full speed, for instance. Ours, actually, you can operate up to roughly 31-32 mile per hour. So-

Kelsey Soule: Okay. So, I've obviously never owned a convertible. I didn't know that you couldn't just like hit the button at any given time.

Chad Deschenes: There's a lot of wind at 60 miles an hour on these highways here, especially on Dallas North tollway.

Kelsey Soule: Oh, I'm not going 60.

Chad Deschenes: We're going to 80, that's for sure, especially in the LC. You're lucky if you're [00:07:00] not going over that.

Josh Burns: As long as speed ... speeds per-

Tyler Litchenberger: Speed limits, yeah.

Chad Deschenes: Speed limits.

Tyler Litchenberger: Obviously, I'm not auto-buying you to go 80.

Chad Deschenes: We're just talking about like New Mexico out in the desert.

Josh Burns: Of course.

Kelsey Soule: Okay. So, got it. So, because when you get in the car, you want to put the top down and take off. And so, that's a priority.

Tyler Litchenberger: If it starts raining or something like that and you're going 30 miles per hour.

Chad Deschenes: Yeah. If you've actually ever seen a convertible person that has a vehicle at a stoplight, and you see them opening up their top. And then, all of a sudden, it's a green light. And either their tops taking a very, very long time, and everybody starts honking their horn, like move, move, move.

Kelsey Soule: All right. Good to know.

Chad Deschenes: Or they are just sitting there going, "Oh, what do I do? What do I do?" And then, they just let it go. And then, it's halfway open. And then, they start driving off. It's looks kind of funky. So, it's nice having it going faster for you.

Kelsey Soule: Okay. Well, you touched ... Josh, you said something earlier, and I know there's probably a ton of people that know what this is, but we've mentioned the term halo vehicle a lot this year as it pertains to Supra. What does halo vehicle actually mean for non-auto people?

Josh Burns: It's a great question.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:08:00] For my mom who's listening.

Josh Burns: Well, I think not everybody's going to buy a Supra, right? But it definitely draws attention to the brand. So, it's an aspirational vehicle. It's something that there are people that seriously look at it and say, "I need to have one. I'm going to buy that vehicle." And there's some that look at it and dream about it, right? So, it's an aspirational vehicle for us. And it's a performance vehicle, and it sets a certain standard, I think. LC does that for Lexus as well. And not everyone's going to necessarily buy it, but it draws attention to the brand. And I think it's, I don't know, it's a headline for you, right? Really, it's-

Chad Deschenes: It's aspirational.

Josh Burns: It absolutely is. Truth be told, I think for a lot of people, a 4Runner is not necessarily a halo vehicle, but it's an aspirational vehicle.

Kelsey Soule: Exactly for me.

Josh Burns: I think for a lot of people, yeah, 4Runners, you feel like, you know, there's a certain mark, I think.

Kelsey Soule: Mom and I made it, a 4Runner.

Josh Burns: Well, you see, yeah, [00:09:00] on the Toyota side, that's been Land Cruiser for-over 60 years here in the US. And then, for the Lexus side, LX does that on the SUV side as well. I think for a lot of people, a Lexus does that, you know. Toyota may have been their entry into the brand or maybe they had an IS initially on the Lexus side, but, you know, they may aspire that this is the vehicle I want.

Tyler Litchenberger: Yeah. It's either that. I feel like it's either aspirational or it's that emotional connection that you have to a vehicle or brand, basically, that makes it a halo product.

Josh Burns: Well, and there's ... you know, you look at-

Tyler Litchenberger: It brings goodwill to the rest of the brand, that vehicle.

Josh Burns: It does. And you look at what it is, I mean, it is a dedicated focus on driving and driving performance. So, it may be an aspiration for someone and it might be just a dream for them. And for others, you know, it's a reality that they want to drive every day, but it definitely draws attention to the brand and it elevates all of the other vehicles, I think, in a way.

Tyler Litchenberger: Now, I have to give a shoutout to Audrey on my team. Audrey is [00:10:00] obsessed with the LC Convertible. Not just that. She has an LC sticker on her laptop. And come end of next year, end of 2020, she is going to be getting an LC Convertible.

Chad Deschenes: What?

Tyler Litchenberger: It's all she talks about. Are these the customers or guests that you're hearing from that have been like, "I want this car." I mean, steady drum beat from Audrey on this.

Chad Deschenes: I think for everyone that I've met that have had an LC or talking about LC Convertible, that's kind of their mindset. As soon as they saw it, they fell in love. It's kind of that first love emotion. That was like for myself. I saw it at our dealer meeting back in 2012, the concept car.

Tyler Litchenberger: When did it come into your career? Like when did it come? You saw it at a dealer meeting, but when did it come into your work life?

Chad Deschenes: To work life, that's a great question. I got to be involved with actually helping launch the vehicle, the technical side from the Lexus College. So, I helped go around and talk to the media and the press about the vehicle. So, I started falling a lot in love with it and speaking with the chief engineer, and other [00:11:00] engineers on the vehicle, and the chief designer, and really starting to understand the backstory of the vehicle and their passions that they wanted to bring to life on it. And it's just kind of interesting to see a vehicle that changed the look and perspective of Lexus or even any car manufacturer just by one vehicle.

I think that's kind of like the halo aspect as well. This convertible kind of opens those doors for the people that are like, "Well, I would love to have it but I would like to have a convertible as well to have the top down." I may have chosen to go that route as well if it was available when it came out to start with. However, I like it to have a hard top too, which is nice for the performance aspect. This vehicle, playing around with it now is just it's almost a dream in a way. Have your dream car in front of you, grab it, and then literally, you get paid to talk about it. I mean, you can't find a better gig in the [00:12:00] world that that.

Kelsey Soule: So, I want to talk about ... like I mean, it is an aspirational vehicle. So, for some people, they may never be in it unless they go test-drive it or whatever. So, I want to talk about like all of the aspects of the vehicle, especially from somebody who owns one. Like can you walk us through a little bit of the description of what it's like to be in it?

Tyler Litchenberger: Paint a picture for us.

Kelsey Soule: To drive it, you know? And then, also, if you've worked with the engineer, comment some of

the ideas behind the vehicle and why decisions were made the way that they were.

Tyler Litchenberger: Yeah.

Chad Deschenes: Sure, absolutely. So, approach it.

Kelsey Soule: Open the door.

Tyler Litchenberger: Yeah.

Chad Deschenes: Well, first off, it's all about walking up to the car first. So, just looking at the vehicle alone, that's kind of the starting point. When you start feeling the drive in your blood. When you want to just go to the grocery store, as soon as you walk into your garage and you see the vehicle, you say, "Maybe we'll go a little longer today." I also have a 4Runner, and the 4Runner is like, "Oh, I want to go off roading," but you have to schedule that time to do that. LC is [00:13:00] like any single time that you want to take a longer drive. And that's kind of an amazing vehicle.

So, once you get inside the vehicle, it kind of just starts wrapping around you. As soon as you sit inside those seats, they just hug you. And I call it the hugging action that you're looking for every single day. So, it kind of gives you that cushion feel, feel connected.

Tyler Litchenberger: More of a hug than like the F Sport seats?

Chad Deschenes: Yes, absolutely. And I have the touring seats, and they have a performance seat. Actually, it's even ... they hold you in tighter.

Kelsey Soule: So, what is a performance seat like?

Chad Deschenes: So, a performance seat basically wraps around you from your backside all the way up to your shoulder blades.

Tyler Litchenberger: Love handles. I just want to paint the picture.

Chad Deschenes: It really hold you in exactly. It just wants to grab your love handles and go all the way up to your neck. It kind of holds you in. But the main point of that is you feel secure. So, when you're going around like an on-ramp, let's try to bring it home a little bit here. You go on an on-ramp that kind of has a curve to it, and you're accelerating going up through that corner. In a regular seat on a normal vehicle, [00:14:00] you'll start feeling a little bit of a slide into it. You can feel your back moving across the seat left to right.

Kelsey Soule: You're bracing a little bit, yeah.

Chad Deschenes: So, you're starting to use your abdomen a lot, so it can tire you out. With a performance vehicle, you're constantly trying to stay at a faster speed around the corner when you're on a racetrack. So, the whole point of sports seats and performance seats are to hold you in, so that way, you can do it for a long period of time. So, with it holding you in to the seat all the way up to your shoulder blades, you feel that seat just almost like one with you. So, when you go around those corners, you're staying put. No matter how hard you're going into the corner, your head may turn a little bit, but that's about it. So, you're going to feel a little bit more relaxed.

Kelsey Soule: So, it's keeping your focus on driving instead of what your body's doing while you're driving.

Chad Deschenes: Yeah. And you can do it longer because once you start driving at those speeds, you don't want it to stop for any reason. So, you don't want to get tired. So, having those types of seats inside of a grand touring coupe made to go for long-distance drives, enjoy those canyon [00:15:00] roads or some nice country roads here in Texas, for example, you want to go for a long period of time and not be tired. So, it's a great point of our Lexus vehicles over the recent years are really focusing in on how comfortable you are in the seats, so you're more relaxed and more refreshed. And we want you to be able to take that vehicle and keep going, and going, and going.

Kelsey Soule: Yeah. Okay. So, now, we're sitting in the seats, turn the car on, I'm assuming. We're getting there.

Chad Deschenes: Turning the car on, that's an experience in itself. It just roars and says hello.

Josh Burns: It's kind of almost a growl to it, I think, right? Like, I don't know. Growl, is that right?

Chad Deschenes: And then, the gauges just come alive. Kind of like on our Lexus vehicles, we pulled over a lot from our LFA supercar and brought in a lot of that into our vehicles today. So, one of the things you start noticing in our performance vehicles is a TFT LCD display that kind of just wakes up and moves, and it actually is kind of cool. And it has a metal circular bezel ring [00:16:00] in the middle to focus in on your tachometer and speed, so that way, you're just focused in one way.

If you need more information as we do with safety systems and things like that nowadays, you can look at your fuel economy and everything else. You can tap a button on the steering wheel and that bezel actually slides and moves over. Now, that could be silent. They could have made it that way, but they actually have a mechanical noise of it sliding when it moves, which is actually, I think, really, really cool about the vehicle. It makes it more mechanical, more robust of a vehicle. And that can be interchanged. You can select how you want to drive. If you want to be an eco-mode, I personally haven't put my car ever in eco-mode. Comfort, which is kind of nice in some of the expansion joints here in Texas.

Kelsey Soule: So, what is that? What are the differentiations there?

Chad Deschenes: So, eco-mode basically is all about trying to focus in on proper RPM levels and gear shifting to have higher fuel economy for you. Then, you go to the comfort mode, which actually, this vehicle has what's called adaptive variable suspension, [00:17:00] which actually has 650 different levels of dampening force. So, it can actually completely adjust to any surface on the road that you're going into. That will relax it out to kind of take out of the small undulations in the road and make it a lot smoother, which is really, really nice.

Then, you have your normal mode right in the middle. So, that's just every single day life looking for performance and fuel economy and an average perfect ride that pretty much you need on every single day. That's pretty much where I leave it. However, when you want to go on the country roads or drive a little harder and you go on the racetrack, we have Sport S, and then we have Sport S-plus mode.

Sport S, that changes the throttle input and the gear ratio on the vehicle to hold the gears longer. So, that way, you're in a higher RPM level. So, that way, you're hearing more from the engine, you have a little bit more torque going into it. So, basically, it's that power you want in like a lane change. So, if you're trying to pass somebody with a lane change, you want to get up and go really quickly. That's [00:18:00] where you want to be. It's kind of where it tries to place you all the time.

Josh Burns: You don't want it to settle back into a gear, right? You want it to stay at a higher RPM, so that

you have the more throttle response.

Chad Deschenes: Yeah. So, nothing's in front of you, you're just ready to go. And then, Sport S-plus adds in a little less electric power steering assist. So, that way, you feel a little bit more out of the road for the steering wheel. And also, it changes the adaptive variable suspension to be more sport-tuned. So, you're feeling everything out of the road, but it keeps the vehicle extremely flat.

That was actually the biggest thing that I heard from my father actually inside the vehicle for the first time. He was like, "This car just rides so flat around corners, I can't believe it." He's so used to like older Corvettes and older Mustangs that he used to have as a kid that he always strived for and loved, and they kind of had that lean and body roll to the vehicle. And it's ... it's nothing like the modern-day performance cars and what this vehicle can do and just stay so flat around corners. You just feel so [00:19:00] much more stable and you feel like a better driver because of it, which is kind of nice.

Josh Burns: And I think those are some important points that were kind of carried over from a coupe to convertible, is you're ... you're going to lose some of that rigidity. So, some of that performance that you're going to get out of a coupe. We talked a lot about that that with Supra in the past. So, some of that performance, you get on the coupe side, you have a firmer structure so you can put more demands on it with your suspension with how firm all of those elements are, so that the car can respond to that. You lose some of that with a convertible because you lose the top. So, you don't have that same-

Kelsey Soule: The weight.

Josh Burns: It's not even just the weight, it's also just the structure itself. You have more bracing in the top of it, right, that allows you to kind of put more force at each corner of the vehicle. So, that was one of the big changes that engineers really looked at, is trying to retain that structural rigidity, so that it's [00:20:00] not going to be identical to coupe, of course, so that they can kind of retain those same characteristics that Chad's speaking to on the coupe side and have that translate over to convertible.

Tyler Litchenberger: And Josh, what was the response from the media?

Josh Burns: Unbelievable.

Tyler Litchenberger: Yeah?

Josh Burns: Yeah, they loved it. So, we did a couple of cool things this year. So, we didn't have a traditional press conference at LA. We had our traditional booth space, so anyone that went there and attended the show, it looked like business as usual. But on the front end of the show, instead of doing a traditional press conference, we actually had a party offsite. And it was cool. We got to kind of tell that LC story. We had coupe there, we had convertible there, and we also had the LF-30 Electrified concept vehicle. But the convertible, no doubt, was the star of the show. Everyone loved it. And kind of to Chad's point earlier, I think a lot of people said it kind of feels like this is what it was all along.

Kelsey Soule: Yeah. Yeah. I think that's kind of ... like I was confused for a bit. I was like, "Wasn't it always a convertible?"

Josh Burns: Well, [00:21:00] you know what, it's funny too because the same, we just talked about kind of structural rigidity and the performance angle, like that's a very important component to this vehicle but also the lines. Chad talked about falling in love with the lines earlier.

Kelsey Soule: On the outside.

Josh Burns: That was a huge part of the design story with convertible is making sure you retained like that sleek, sexy curvature that everyone really loves about LC. It was kind of trying to make sure that it doesn't just look like an LC with the top cut off, you know. It still retains those lines. So, there's a lot of little careful detail in how the top slides in. You know, aside just from the quality of the components of how it functions, but also just making sure that when it comes to rest, you know, that it is covered and it looks clean and that all the lines to kind of keep certain sounds out that you want, like wind deflectors and stuff. Like all those things are just very carefully crafted to make sure it doesn't take away from the overall vehicle.

Chad Deschenes: Yeah. And besides that, they had to add in the fact of making sure you still have trunk space [00:22:00] with the convertible, which, actually, they did a remarkable job on this vehicle. So, the convertible top, actually, if you look at our LC Hybrid, we used to have a hybrid battery behind the rear seats on that vehicle. The convertible top fits just in that exact same spot. So, you still have great trunk space for this type of a vehicle, which really helps with the usability of every single day. So, that was one of the biggest things I learned from the engineers was that was the hardest point is to create those lines, so that way, it didn't look like it was just chopped off and to keep it right in that trunk area where the top could just stay put and stay down.

Tyler Litchenberger: Josh talked about the media response. What was the dealer response? Are dealers excited about this vehicle?

Chad Deschenes: So, that's a great question. And dealers have been asking for this and love it.

Kelsey Soule: For themselves or for their customer?

Chad Deschenes: For their customer.

Josh Burns: I mean, all of the above.

Chad Deschenes: Because they actually love both, yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: Both, yeah.

Chad Deschenes: But talking about the guests, the guests are hampering on this. Even before this convertible is coming out, people were asking about it. They heard rumors of a [00:23:00] convertible coming-

Kelsey Soule: Always.

Chad Deschenes: And doing dealership training, that's what we've always heard is, "When the convertible is coming? When is the convertible coming?" It was like, "Well, wait and see." You won't be too disappointed when it comes. And everybody's like, "This is amazing." And that's kind of what the whole point of it is the guests are now lining up getting ready for this vehicle. And we're pretty much going to probably see a lot of people lean towards this convertible side over coupe. We, actually, are seeing that moving forward into this vehicle.

Kelsey Soule: So, I know we talked about the driving performance and, you know, the way that you feel when you're driving the vehicle, but what about the ... I'm sure there's other elements that customers will have feedback on or have had feedback on for the coupe and now, the convertible, which is things like the technology and all the other little finesse that Lexus tends to put on their vehicles that really, truly make a difference. So, can you tell us a little bit about some of those things?

Chad Deschenes: Just talking about connectivity, the vehicle has it all. So, we have Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, and Lexus [00:24:00] Plus Alexa, which is Amazon Alexa inside your vehicle. Kind of like you have Toyota plus Alexa inside the vehicles. So, you have anything you want and it makes it just that much easier. On the Lexus side, we did a retrofit of car planes of the vehicle and just made so much greater joy out of people with the LC. So, now, offering the Android Auto as well for those buyers, it solves all the questions that people are asking and gives everyone what they need.

Josh Burns: Well, and I think too, the LC coupe is amazing, just to sit inside it. It's just a beautiful vehicle, but there are certain things that you want to emphasize and certain things that you don't in a convertible. So, there was a lot of careful design elements into enhancing certain sounds and keeping others out.

One of the biggest things, we were talking about LFA earlier, we were talking about the visceral sound of the engine and just having a naturally aspirated V8. So, there's actually a [00:25:00] way that engineers enhance that sound. It's essentially a diaphragm that's between the engine compartment and the passenger compartment. Doesn't allow any air in, in any way, but it allows some of that sound to kind of amplify a little bit into the cabin to kind of give you-

Kelsey Soule: So, you're like feeling it?

Josh Burns: You feel that. But then, while you're driving with the top down, you want to make sure that you don't have a lot of wind noise. You want to make sure that, you know, you can hear the engine and you can hear your passenger, but not everything else. So, I know Chad's actually spent a little bit of time in the vehicle, so he may be able to speak a little bit better to that, but I know there's a lot of emphasis on keeping certain things out and a lot of it.

Kelsey Soule: What does it sound like, Chad?

Chad Deschenes: I think they did a great job. So, you have two different experiences inside this vehicle. One with the top up and the one with the top down. With the top up, going out to dinner, that's kind of what I'm thinking about or having a nice, relaxing drive home after a long day. And maybe you just want to have it a little bit quieter. [00:26:00] And with that top closed, even at being a fabric top, they did an exceptional job to really showcase off what Lexus is known for, that quiet, comfortable ride.

And then, when you take the top down, it just allows everything to just come alive for you. So, you're hearing everything out of that V8 engine just roar especially, and just ask you to hit the throttle a little bit more every single time. And what they use is active noise control. It actually, also, helps enhance the noise to make it better. It's not adding anything. What it's doing is it is taking out a reverberation that happens from the transmission that isn't necessarily ideal of what you're looking for. So, it eliminates that sound. So, it actually is kind of like noise canceling, but only for a very small frequency. And then, everything else, you're just hearing that engine just raw power coming from it, is a whole another experience.

[00:27:00] And our audio system partner we have with Mark Levinson, and they've been a great partner with Lexus for ridiculous amount of years. And it's really cool how close they are with us with the whole audio

experience because they're actually a part of the development process on all of our cars right from the very beginning. So, when the convertible came up, they obviously had to make some changes because the speakers aren't in the back, on the side anymore. They're now actually in a really cool spot behind the headrest of the rear seats, and they have a cutout area.

Tyler Litchenberger: Interesting.

Kelsey Soule: Like the headrest of the rear seats. Okay.

Chad Deschenes: Yeah, it's actually a really, really cool location to have a speaker, so that way, you're still engulfed with a sound-

Tyler Litchenberger: The sound, yeah.

Chad Deschenes: ... in the entire car. And the vehicle instantly knows or the computers inside the car instantly knows when the top's up and when top's down, and it can switch how the sound is playing inside the vehicle to accommodate for [00:28:00] that. And we tested that to be able to see how it's like when top's up and when the top's down, when you have wind going, how great is that sound? And it's impeccable in all situations. So, you can still jam out to your favorite music, hear every single note, and not have to worry about that wind noise going by you.

Kelsey Soule: Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: That's incredible.

Kelsey Soule: And then, obviously, one thing that's equally important to all of our vehicles, safety element. So, this have the same safety features as the rest of our Lexus vehicles. Can we talk a little bit about safety in these high-performing vehicles?

Chad Deschenes: Absolutely. Because that's the beauty part is you can talk about safety on any one of our cars because they all have Lexus Safety System Plus. So, they have a little bit of all worlds to keep you a little bit safer each and every day. So, for things from like pre-collision system, and we have our all speed dynamic radar cruise control, so it can even take you down to a complete stop, which is awesome in traffic situations [00:29:00] and morning commutes. Then, you have things like lane keeping assist.

And also, you have your intelligent high beams. So, adding in all those different components for the vehicle just makes it that much easier and you really stop thinking about ... at least, for the automatic high beams, if you use those in the car, those are fantastic because you don't even have to think about turning on your high beams or turning them off at any point in time. Traffic's coming, you don't have to worry about blinding them. So, it's not even just for you, but it's also for everyone else around us. It's helping everyone stay safer.

Kelsey Soule: The ultimate in beauty and consideration.

Chad Deschenes: Exactly. I love that line.

Josh Burns: There are also some safety features that are unique to convertible, Chad. I know that in the event of a rollover, there's a system that engages in that instance.

Chad Deschenes: Yeah. So, right behind the driver and passenger areas, in the back of the rear seats, it'll actually expand up two roll bars, and that will just come right up when the vehicle senses that it's going to do a rollover and block out all that instance into the [00:30:00] cabin, so that way, there's no protrusion in.

Tyler Litchenberger: It minimizes impact essentially.

Kelsey Soule: Right, yeah. Because I mean, typically-

Tyler Litchenberger: Interesting.

Kelsey Soule: ... if you have a convertible and the top is down, and it doesn't have this safety feature, then you're just kind of assuming that risk, right?

Josh Burns: think in the vein of all of our Lexus products, that safety is still at the forefront.

Kelsey Soule: Paramount, yes, for sure.

Tyler Litchenberger: All right, Chad. So, you are a driver. You have an LC that you drive. People are going to get this vehicle, the LC Convertible just to have as like a driver's car. But do you think people will collect this car as well? Will it be a collector's car?

Chad Deschenes: I hope so, honestly. Because I think this is the new chapter for Lexus and being kind of those collector cars. So, for example, the SC430 and the vehicles before that, it's starting to be a really big collector car right now. And people are striving to try to find SCs because the coupe styling of a vehicle from Japan is a little bit different than everywhere else in the world. And the-

Tyler Litchenberger: How so?

Chad Deschenes: By the different [00:31:00] dimensions they do on the vehicle, how low it is to the ground, and just the driver's seating position is a little bit different. And the LC is no different. This is the vehicle that marks the change of the design philosophy at Lexus, and then brings in a unique new driving feel into the vehicle. So, unique new driving field, what we mean by that is kind of what we've all been speaking about here at Toyota, is kind of the TNGA. But at Lexus, this is what's called GAL, Global Architecture Luxury platform. It gives you a much more connected driving feel.

And then, we have it before in the past. And the styling look of this vehicle alone and being in movies like Black Panther, and what it's been seen so far in the public's eye, it can be not only showcased at an auto show, but also can be showcased at a fashion show and a study on design. So, I personally think that this is a [00:32:00] car that can continue on because this is actually the vehicle that is the closest to a concept car that you can buy. And that's personally the biggest thing for myself is every person that wants a collector car, they want to have a concept car. This is that, that you can actually buy. There is no other car that's closest to the concept.

Kelsey Soule: And I think that that kind of leads us into a conversation that we're having at Lexus all the time, which is the lifestyle brand and how Lexus is really moving more towards a lifestyle brand and building products that support that, right? So, how does this car ... I mean, it's pretty obvious that it's the ultimate in luxury, but how does this car fit into the direction that Lexus is going in as far as a brand?

Josh Burns: Well, I think that to Chad's point, you know, on the collector side of it, I think part of this vehicle, it's, again, limited numbers. So, I think you have some flexibility with that. I don't want to get into cafe

restrictions and emissions too much, but because it is a lower volume [00:33:00] vehicle, I think that's part of the reason we're able ... obviously, we sell a great deal of cars, trucks, and SUVs across the board, but this is a small enough volume vehicle that we can still put a naturally aspirated V8 in it.

That is such a unique thing. I think to Chad's point, that's part of the reason why this will be a collector's vehicle because we're not going to see a lot of those vehicles here in the future. They just-

Kelsey Soule: For sure.

Josh Burns: They're not going to be able to make the standard. So, you know, this may be, you know, one of the last of its kind in that regard. So, I think we've always placed an emphasis on driver connectivity, you know. Even when we start talking about safety and we start talking about autonomy, it's always been a priority for us as a company to have that connection to the driver. And I think this vehicle represents that more than anything, right? It's so very driver-focused. It's so focused on the experience that-

Chad Deschenes: Absolutely. And the only thing I would add to that is, also, how it's being made. On this vehicle, it's the only one that is [00:34:00] really almost exactly hand-built we do actually at Lexus. So, any of our vehicles, let's talk about Corolla, Camry, or even like IS, RX, those vehicles on a factory line, we have tach times. So, we've heard about that. Usually on a tach time on a vehicle is somewhere between 50 seconds to a minute-and-a-half, maybe three minutes max.

Tyler Litchenberger: And that tach time, for people who don't know, is the amount of time between each vehicle rolling off the line.

Chad Deschenes: Yes. And each individual section, you're responsible for this one job and you have three minutes to do your job or 50 seconds to do your job, and then it gets passed on to the next person. It's part of the Toyota processing system to make sure that we can get vehicles out at the highest quality level where we're at, and then the whole mass quantity. When it comes to LC, it's completely different. So, currently right now, people that actually produce the vehicle on a line at a given time, there's eight people that touch this vehicle.

Tyler Litchenberger: Eight total people.

Chad Deschenes: Hard to finish. Yes. So, [00:35:00] they have a tach time, get this, 60 minutes.

Tyler Litchenberger: Oh, wow.

Kelsey Soule: What?

Chad Deschenes: The vehicle moves one millimeter a second on the line and keeps moving down the line. So, it's moving, but extremely slowly.

Tyler Litchenberger: Extremely slow.

Chad Deschenes: They're able to-

Kelsey Soule: You said 60 seconds? The car is-

Chad Deschenes: Sixty minutes.

Tyler Litchenberger: Sixty minutes. He said 60 minutes.

Kelsey Soule: Oh, I thought you said 60 seconds. I was like, how are eight people building my car in 60 seconds? No way.

Chad Deschenes: So, 60 minutes is 60 minutes for the first person, 60 minutes for the next person.

Kelsey Soule: Yes, yes, understood.

Chad Deschenes: So, they basically have eight hours on building a car, but they're hand-putting together everything on the vehicle.

Kelsey Soule: I mean, that's still pretty impressive to me.

Chad Deschenes: Absolutely.

Tyler Litchenberger: Eight people.

Kelsey Soule: Eight people, yeah.

Chad Deschenes: So, it gives you an amazing feel of that Takumi craftsmanship in our vehicles. And the importance behind that human-centered connection of the vehicle that a hand-built vehicle, I think, is the upper echelon of super cars and collector cars because it's very [00:36:00] human. You can feel it, you can see it. It's something that you can't really describe, but you can tell. The attention to detail, it just really showcases off our Takumi craftsmen that we have inside this company. And it really is kind of their trophy every single day that they're showcasing off their mastery of their profession that they have.

Tyler Litchenberger: One last question for you, Chad. Are you planning to get an LC Convertible?

Chad Deschenes: That's a question I get asked all the time. Honestly, to tell you the truth, I absolutely love mine now that I couldn't be able to part with it at this point in time.

Tyler Litchenberger: Maybe you'll pull one out from, you know, the marketing stock.

Chad Deschenes: The good part is on our training side or in a part of Lexus College, we do have a few that are coming in.

Tyler Litchenberger: All right.

Chad Deschenes: So, I am going to have an opportunity to drive one when we can, when we start training this vehicle. However, unfortunately, at this point, I'm already doing ramen a few nights a week, so I don't know if I can do the entire weekend ramen.

Kelsey Soule: So, I think actually, that's probably a point we should at least touch on a little [00:37:00] bit is when the importance of the dealer education on a new vehicle and how. I think that that's really unique to Lexus or just the level that we go to, to make sure that our dealers know this car in and out before they're selling it to people. Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

Chad Deschenes: Sure. And we're really, really excited about this car. So, we actually have a tour that's going to be happening later on this year where we're going to be traveling around the country to 16 different cities and to showcase off this vehicle and some others. And then, give the opportunity for dealership associates to drive this vehicle. And not only drive it, but also see the competition too. It's a very, very important to really

understand the competition in the marketplace that we are in, in any given time.

And since we've been away from convertibles for a little time, we're going to spend a great amount of opportunity on the street statically looking at convertible tops and what's the buyer's intention, why they want to have a convertible, and really [00:38:00] giving the all-encompassing open-ended view. The passion that we have behind our sales associates, we want them to have real perspectives. We want them to be able to tell a story when somebody comes in through the door and says, "Oh, I want to see an LC convertible that's coming out in a couple months", or whatever it ends up being, and they can say, "I've driven that car. This is what I felt. This is what you feel as you're driving the car with the top down, how amazing it was."

That's what we're looking for. And especially when we're trying to speak to other guests who might have had convertibles before from other brands to be able to have an apples-to-oranges type of a discussion with them of saying, "Well, I understand that experience from that vehicle. I've driven that too. This car, this is what you're going to feel," and have that great connection point.

So, we're going to be doing that. And we're also going to ... we've been creating more lifestyle and brand walkaround videos. We've been [00:39:00] changing those up, which have been going really well. Recently did one on the GX. And we're doing one on the LC as well, where we're trying to get in the mindset and the lifestyle of this buyer, and then also talk with another pro and a person that's really involved into that segment, and getting their perspective on the vehicle. So, it's not just about, here's all the 10-point walk around, this is what you're experiencing in the car. And that's where we're at, at Lexus. We're looking to, get this, experience amazing. Talking about our tagline.

Kelsey Soule: There it is.

Chad Deschenes: It's all about the experiences.

Kelsey Soule: Yeah. But I think it's important for customers to know that we really put a huge priority on educating our dealers about vehicles long before the cars hit the lot. So, if you're looking for a Lexus vehicle and you want to know all about it, the best person to ask is the dealer.

Chad Deschenes: Absolutely. Because you can find all the facts and figures you want on statistics online and through your research, but the experiences, and [00:40:00] understand that backstory, and the development, Takumi aspect, human-centered connection, that's what you're going to get from that dealership associate. Getting more of that understanding.

Kelsey Soule: Right. Awesome.

Tyler Litchenberger: Thank you guys for being with us today on Toyota Untold.

Kelsey Soule: Yeah, thanks so much for joining us.

Chad Deschenes: Thank you very much.

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