

Babes in Carland

By [Matthew DeBord](#)

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You learn something new every day. A staple of auto-show-season coverage in the blogosphere is the “[booth babe](#)” [post](#). As many of you may know, the major carmakers and their agents employ attractive professional spokesmodels to both conduct presentations and, in most cases, just stand next to the Cadillacs, Fords, Ferraris, and Audis on the floor of the show (those who speak tend to dress a bit more soberly than those who merely stand). This attracts the attention of the 18-35 male demo, and so gets churned into commentary and galleries. A fact of life of modern car-show coverage, regardless of your views on the sexual politics of the whole arrangement.

But thanks to Autoblog and their very own [Detroit Auto Show booth-babe update](#), I now know that the profession is the subject of a whole book, [Sirens of Chrome](#) (catchy!):

Sirens of Chrome is a hardcover visual joyride through auto show history. The focus isn't simply sheet metal; it's on the distinctly human presence. These human hood ornaments are descendents of the Sirens of ancient Greek lore. They seek not to dash ships upon rocks but to entice the purchase of land-worthy ships to sail upon the highways and byways of America. *Sirens of Chrome* includes dozens of photographs, programs, and posters culled from the libraries, corporate files, and auto enthusiast portfolios, capturing decades of hot vehicles and torrid models. Discover whose 'body' inspired the Rolls-Royce hood ornament or sit in a 'rumble seat' with 1930s silver-screen goddess Joan Blondell. Gawk at over-the-top opulence of the Somali leopard pelt-upholstered 1957 Cadillac Debutante, sing along with Dinah Shore while you 'See the U.S.A. in Your Chevrolet' or shake your head in wonder at the fur bikini-clad model atop a soviet-built Lada. Enjoy the ride!

[\\$24.95](#) and probably makes a lovely gift. And, in a sense, redeems the whole practice.

Matthew DeBord has written about the auto industry for the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, the Huffington Post, and Car Design News.