

TEXT AND IMAGES BY BRYON DORR





UTV MOUNTED ON THE BACK THAT IS DESIGNED TO TRUELY GET THE ADRENALINE PUMPING." ellwig knows how to create impressive vehicles that highlight their full line of products. Their latest

build, the Operator, debuted to great acclaim in the Ford booth at the SEMA Show 2017, winning the Ford Outstanding Achievement in Design Award. The vehicle is all about adventure and fun, while being a great marketing tool for the company's load control products. It's based on a '17 Ford F-350 Lariat, and features a Textron Wildcat X UTV mounted on the back.

Payload Management

Few vehicles demanded as much attention at heads it was the impressive custom cab-over especially with a '17 Textron Wildcat X UTV mounted. The mount is a first-of-its-kind unit from Sherptek, called the Dragon Back Dek. It is frame mounted, utilizing the factory

the SEMA Show as the Operator, and while the custom digi-camo paint turned some UTV bed mount that really drew the crowds,



The interior of the Operator is a really nice place to spend 01.5.11 Tactical has the rear seat storage on lock down.

02. Icon Vehicle Dynamics shocks keep this big truck rolling smooth.

03. Rugged Radios and SSV Works keep coms and tunes pumping on the Wildcat.







04. A FabFour rear bumper modified by Wilco Offroad secures the rear load and carries the weight of the spare.



bed mounts, which makes it extremely secure and super easy to mount and remove. Sherptek is a new company that specializes in unique flatbed and truck bed systems, utilizing lightweight and extremely strong fully bonded extruded aluminum construction.

The Sherptek Dragon Bak bed top UTV mounting system offers up a ton of in-bed gear storage, the option to have two fully integrated auxiliary fuel tanks and has nearly infinite tie down/accessory mounting options. Hellwig has already added a Hi-Lift jack, Crazy Beaver shovel and Daystar fuel containers. Besides all the extras, the system makes loading and securing a UTV extremely easy, utilizing collapsible 12-foot loading ramps, a Warn 2500 winch and Mac's Tie Downs.

Bug Out

Sure the entire vehicle is setup to go to remote destinations, but it's the '17 Textron Wildcat X UTV mounted on the back that is designed to truly get the adrenaline pumping. The Wildcat X is a go-fast, go-anywhere vehicle that is sure to put a perma-grin across your face. Besides looking cool and being a ton of fun wherever it goes, Hellwig also has some thoughts to take this Wildcat desert racing. Why wouldn't they? The support vehicle is already built, and the Wildcat itself is fully upgraded and ready to hit the dirt.

For clear communications between passengers and the support truck, this Wildcat has been fully outfitted with headsets and a helmet intercom system, with push-to-talk functionality, by Rugged Radios. To keep the fun factor high and the tunes pumping, it also has an SSV Works bluetooth enabled head unit and speaker system. Rigid Industries rock lights and a 10-inch LED light bar, along with a huge Buggy Whips LED whip, let this machine see and be seen when out on night missions. The Trigger

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Thanks to the onboard Textron Wildcat X UTV, the Hellwig Operator is ready for both big and small adventures.



Wireless Switch System made adding all the lighting and electronics a breeze, while an Assault Industries steering wheel and side mirrors add to its aggressive look and feel. Daystar Cam Lock fuel containers mounted on the rear roll cage, make sure this machine has the range to truly explore off the beaten path. Method Race Wheels and a full desert digi-camo wrap help finish off this Wildcat, and help tie it into the overall Operator build.

Not Incognito

While this truck was designed and built with full functionality in mind, it is also meant to turn heads wherever it goes. Sure an F-350 with a crazy custom bed rack and UTV mounted on top is a sure bet to get some

looks, but the Operator keeps you looking with a ton of impressive details. The first thing you'll notice is the desert digi-camo graphics, which were painted onto the originally black truck by Theresa Contreras of LGE-CTS Motorsports, using custom paint colors from BASF.

The exterior accents are finished off with Bushwacker Pocket-style fender flares, a T-Rex X-Metal grille and Billet Badges custom side badges. Complementing the tactical and aggressive exterior is a full 5.11 Tactical one-off custom interior. It utilizes the MOLLE system on all available surfaces, allowing for secure and easy mounting of a full host of 5.11 Stash Bags for convenient organized gear storage for all types of adventures.

Tools are important for a successful adventure and the Operator, is well appointed.

Control

It's important that this adventure vehicle have a smooth and controlled ride in all conditions, especially while carrying a heavy load. It will spend much of its life plying the highways between events, but it also needs to perform off road at the events, and just for fun. The Operator features Hellwig's front and rear sway bars, as well as the Hellwig SXS Big Wig Air Springs, controlled by the hands-free Hellwig Auto Leveling Air Management System. This combo makes sure that the taller center of gravity, from the UTY and a lift, doesn't negatively affect the vehicles handling and safety. A Viair dual compressor, with large air tank, keeps the air springs at pressure, air tools powered up and tires inflated.



The Operator also utilizes an Icon Vehicle Dynamics Stage 5 suspension kit, which provides adjustable remote reservoir shocks and a full 4.5-inches of suspension lift. The lift provides enough room to run 37x12.5 Falken MT Tires, fitted on 17-inch Method NV HD wheels. The combination of Hellwig load control parts, top quality adjustable Icon suspension and the big Falken tires provides a buttery smooth ride on any terrain.

Mission Critical

No matter the adventure before it, the Operator is ready to take on the task. The front of the truck is up armored with a front Fab Four Vengeance bumper, modified to handle a Warn 26.5ti-S winch. The undercarriage is protected and component performance

The Whelan Liberty Light Bar makes sure everyone knows that the Operator has arrived.

improved with differential covers, a transmission cover and an oil pan from Mag-Hytec. The rear of the truck is protected with a modified Fab Four Vengeance bumper, which helps support the extra weight of the oversized spare tire mounted to a custom Wilco Off-Road prerunner-style tailgate.

Whether day or night the Operator is ready for adventure. The truck is fitted with a full compliment of Rigid Industries LED lighting, in both bumpers and in all the wheel wells. In order to give the truck a unique and functional support truck feel, a Whelen Liberty Light Bar was mounted to the cab. If the flashing light bar doesn't get your attention, the Whelen PA system sure will. The truck is also fitted with a full host of Rugged Radios,

providing quality communication between vehicles on the trail. Powering all these new electronic accessories are two Optima Yellow Top batteries under the hood.

It's always the little things that help make a vehicle truly stand out from the crowd and perform at its best. To keep the Operator breathing properly you'll find a black 5-inch Magnaflow DPF back exhaust underneath the truck. Also under the truck you'll find AMP Research powered steps, making the task of getting into and out of this tall machine manageable. Bolt Locks keep all mounted items secure, with the convenience of utilizing the vehicle ignition key for all locks.

This truck was built to win the hearts of true



off-road enthusiasts, while paying homage to Hellwig's made in America roots and military offerings. The professionals at LGE-CTS Motorsports accomplished the build itself, while the project was dreamed up and managed by Mike Hallmark, who also has the pleasure of driving this incredible rig regularly.

The Operator might have debuted as the ultimate show truck at the SEMA Show 2017, but rest assured that this rig will be used and enjoyed, like all that Hellwig creates. You're not going to see this rig on a trailer, but you are going to see it driving the highways and back roads across America, as it makes the rounds at a wide variety of off-road events in 2018. •

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The Shertek Dragonback Dek is a piece of engineering art.

