

# MotorTrend Announces Winners of the 2025 Software-Defined Vehicle Innovator Awards

These 17 leaders, pioneers, and experts are driving the auto industry toward a future with smarter and more sophisticated cars.

Eric Tingwall - Writer; Ryan Lugo - Illustrator | Jan 07, 2025



While EVs and autonomous cars earn all the headlines, software-defined vehicles are quietly revolutionizing how we move around the world with relatively little fanfare. Cars with fewer but more powerful computers running cutting-edge software are changing every interaction we have with our vehicles—from unlocking and starting them to steering and braking them.



While it largely goes unnoticed by the general public and mainstream media, the work being done on SDVs is transforming not just the cars we drive, but how automakers design and engineer them. That's why, in addition to [MotorTrend's ongoing coverage of SDVs themselves](#), for the past three years we've recognized the key individuals behind this transformation.

The 2025 MotorTrend Software-Defined Vehicle Innovator Awards, presented in partnership with QNX, celebrate the executives, engineers, and product managers steering the auto industry toward a new software-centric paradigm. The awards are given in three categories—Pioneers, Leaders, and Experts—with individuals nominated by their colleagues and collaborators. A panel of *MotorTrend* senior editorial staff chose the winners based on their achievements and impact. The 2025 pool was the largest ever, with the following 17 all-stars emerging as the most influential innovators.



## Pioneer Award Winners

*MotorTrend's SDV Innovator Pioneers are outstanding individuals who have demonstrably broken new ground within the SDV space through research, development, and application of new automotive software.*

- **Milena Boytchef, Tech Strategist, Auto & Manufacturing Generative AI, Amazon Web Services**, for advancing how autonomous systems are created with cloud training platforms, generative AI-enabled tools for synthetic data creation, and scene search. Earlier in her career, Ms. Boytchef also developed the industry's first cybersecurity solution for autonomous trucks and created the "mission control" concept to manage fleets of AVs.
- **Andrej Karpathy, Founder and CEO, Eureka Labs**, for his early work at **Open AI** on deep learning and reinforcement learning and leading the development of the AI and computer vision system that are central to Tesla's Autopilot and Full Self-Driving systems.

- **Dr. Stefan Poledna, CTO and Co-Founder, TTTech Auto**, for his pioneering work developing Audi's zFAS driver-assistance domain controller and the MotionWise safety software platform that decouples hardware and software, allowing for more flexible and scalable vehicle architectures.
- **Joe Xia, CEO, JIDU Auto** for adopting a vision-only version of Baidu's Apollo autonomous driving platform and integrating all sensors, cameras, and functional components into JIDU's SIMO AI assistant.
- **He Xiaopeng, Chairman and CEO, XPENG Motors** for integrating a highly centralized electronic architecture, implementing a large AI model for digital cockpits and autonomous technologies, and for bringing advanced driver assistance features to more accessible price points. Mr. Xiaopeng also entered a strategic collaboration with Volkswagen for joint platform and software development and continues to advance the eVTOL flying car concept.



## Leader Award Winners

MotorTrend's SDV Innovator Leaders are outstanding individuals who hold a senior management position and lead a team that is transforming the automotive industry through the broad adoption and application of software solutions.

- **Anders Bell, Chief Engineering & Technology Officer, Volvo Cars**, for leading the development of core computing technology underpinning the EX90, Volvo's first vehicle to be truly software-defined from inception to production.
- **Michael Goertz, VP, Vehicle Controls, Rivian**, for leading the team responsible for developing more than 95 percent of the code underpinning the new zonal architecture that defines the Gen 2 R1 products at Rivian.
- **Matt Jones, Executive Director of Technology Platforms, Ford Motor Company**, for his work ranging from planning to delivery of digital software inside Ford, and for his industry liaison work and leadership with COVESEA and the SDV Alliance.
- **Jeffrey Shay, President, North America, Valeo**, for his work spearheading software-defined vehicle technology both within his own company and by helping launch and lead the B2B software-services marketplace SDVerse.
- **Qiyan Wang, VP of Digital Systems, NIO**, for spearheading development of the next-gen digital architecture SkyOS that underpins NIO's software-defined vehicles and for his industry liaison work on the board of the open-source

seL4 Foundation.

- **Seok-Hyun Eun, President, LG Electronics VS**, for his work developing LG's AlphaWare suite of software solutions and its Automotive Content Platform designed to deliver immersive in-cabin experiences.
- **Alex Purdy, Global Head of Digital Product, Ford Integrated Services, Ford Motor Company**, for his leadership in Digital Product development at Ford working on projects like BlueCruise, the FordPass app, and other means of optimizing retail and commercial customer experiences.
- **Li Zhuang, Founder and CEO, Megatronix (Beijing) Technology Co., LTD**, for founding Megatronix to support the global automotive industry's need for a "software-defined hardware framework" of domain controllers and big-data platforms.



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2025 Volkswagen Jetta

10 miles  
Overturf Kia Kennewick

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**\$47,735**  
2025 Kia Telluride

5 miles  
Overturf Kia Kennewick

**\$32,335**  
2025 Kia Sportage Hybrid

5 miles  
Overturf Kia Kennewick

**\$42,210**  
2025 Kia Seltos  
In Hybrid

5 miles  
Overtur

## Expert Award Winners

MotorTrend's SDV Innovator Experts are outstanding individuals with subject-matter expertise within a specific SDV discipline (e.g., advanced driver assistance systems, digital cockpit, over-the-air updates) whose work has advanced the field.

- **Tolla Cherwenka, Worldwide Tech Lead, Digital Customer Experience, Amazon Web Services**, for transforming BMW's business with generative AI, cloud technologies, and a "data first" strategy.
- **Wes Morrill, Cybertruck Lead Engineer and Senior Director of Engineering, Tesla**, for bringing steer-by-wire, a 48-volt electronic architecture, and the bidirectional gigabit Etherloop controller network to production.
- **Eddy Reyes, Senior Manager, Embedded Software In-Vehicle Experiences, Rivian**, for his work on advanced 3D rendering for driver assistance visualization, digital instrument clusters, and infotainment, and for delighting customers with monthly over-the-air updates.
- **Roberto Secchi, Head of Software Platforms and DevOps, Marelli**, for leading the development of an advanced Digital Twin solution that replicates the features of a digital cockpit and allows developers to modify and deploy new applications in just seven minutes.

The 2025 *MotorTrend* SDV Innovator Award winners join 36 past recipients in an elite club of changemakers. All these individuals have had a profound effect on the auto industry even though the software-defined vehicle is still in its infancy. The work that they've done and continue to do is why we expect SDVs to become a new standard for the auto industry in the coming years.



## Eric Tingwall



I fell in love with car magazines during sixth-grade silent reading time and soon realized that the editors were being paid to drive a never-ending parade of new cars and write stories about their experiences. Could any job be better? The answer was obvious to 11-year-old me. By the time I reached high school, becoming an automotive journalist wasn't just ...

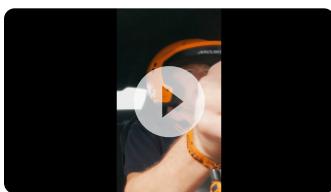
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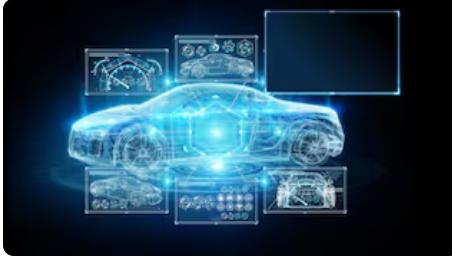
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