

Detroit Auto Show, Day 2: Tiny Cars, Touchscreens

The Associated Press

A roundup of news and notes out of the Detroit auto show on Monday:

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Korean car maker to make electric vehicles in U.S.

DETROIT (AP) — South Korean electric car maker CT&T said Tuesday it will begin producing electric cars in the U.S. this year.

The company makes low-speed two-seaters and golf cart-style vehicles as well as the City EV, which can reach 65 miles per hour and travel up to 70 miles on an electric charge. CT&T says the City EV is ideal for small businesses or delivery drivers or for use in retirement communities or small cities. The vehicles recharging cord can be plugged into a standard socket.

CT&T said it plans eventually to produce around 10,000 electric cars per year in the U.S. at 40 manufacturing and distribution centers, starting with centers in South Carolina and California. It didn't reveal prices.

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Ford introduces redesigned Lincoln MKX

DETROIT (AP) — Ford Motor Co.'s 2011 Lincoln MKX crossover has a new split-wing grille, 3.7-liter V-6 engine with better horsepower and fuel economy and capless refueling among its new features.

But the most noticeable new feature may be a touch screen that replaces the knobs and dials to adjust climate controls and music volume; there also are voice controls for phones and music and Internet access when the vehicle is parked.

The system, known as MyLincoln Touch, will be standard on the MKX and eventually appear on 80 percent of Ford products.

Ford's president of the Americas, Mark Fields, called the introduction of four new products in five years a renaissance for Lincoln. He said the brand's share of the U.S. luxury market has grown 30 percent in the period, though luxury auto sales overall fell 25 percent last year.

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Commuter Cars Corp. promotes tiny Tango

DETROIT (AP) — The solution to crowding on the world's highways, says maker Commuter Cars Corp., is the 39-inch-wide Tango, so narrow that two can fit side-by-side in a single lane.

President Rick Woodbury of Commuter Cars, based in Spokane, Wash., whose company has built 11 Tangos so far, presented the vehicle at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit Tuesday. All electric, the Tango has one seat in front and one in back and can travel up to 200 miles on a charge, depending on the kind of battery purchased.

Woodbury says the car's racing-style steel cage and weight, similar to a mid-size sedan, make it safe. It's also fast, going from zero to 60 mph in 4 seconds.

Delivered as a kit, the car requires some final assembly. Woodbury says actor George Clooney was among the first Tango customers and paid \$108,000 for his.

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Ford says it's staying focused

DETROIT (AP) — Ford Motor Co. executives may be riding high from the company's dual North American car and truck of the year awards at the Detroit auto show and the positive response to the newly unveiled 2012 Ford Focus, but they're not taking much time to celebrate.

"The last thing I want to do is convey a sense of complacency, because there's no complacency here," Ford Chairman Bill Ford Jr. told reporters on the sidelines of the show.

Ford design chief J Mays said he told designers not to get arrogant.

"What we need to do right now is keep our head down and not start thinking we're better than we are," he said. "Don't start believing your own press."

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Kia unveils Shadow Dragon Soul urban mini-truck

DETROIT (AP) — Kia Motors Corp. is offering its urban mini-truck in a special edition called the Shadow Dragon Soul.

The one shown off Tuesday at the North American International Auto Show is the third special edition Soul in less than 12 months for Kia Motors America, a division of the South Korean automaker.

The 2010 Shadow Dragon Soul has black dragon graphics over a black-on-black color scheme. It also features black 18-inch wheels, a body-color wing-type spoiler

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and high-gloss black accents on the front and rear bumper inserts.

Inside, Shadow Dragon Soul features black leather-trimmed seats — the first leather seating available on any Soul model. The Shadow Dragon Soul starts at \$18,195 with a five-speed manual transmission.

At the show, Kia Motors America celebrated 15 consecutive years of increased market share in the U.S. Despite the industry's general downturn in the U.S., Kia's sales rose 9.8 percent to 300,063 vehicles in 2009.

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Mulally says not planning to retire from Ford

DETROIT (AP) — Ford Motor Co. CEO Alan Mulally said he has no plans to retire soon. At a speech before the Automotive News World Congress Monday, Mulally was asked whether Ford had a succession plan for his retirement.

Mulally, 64, said he "never had so much fun" and "as long as I'm contributing and Ford wants me, I love it here."

Mulally has been mum about whether General Motors Corp. Chairman Ed Whitacre is recruiting him to be that company's new CEO. At a dinner with reporters Monday night, Mulally said, "No comment." He added, "I love Ford," when asked if Whitacre had contacted him about that CEO job.

On Tuesday, Mulally said Whitacre had called him but didn't elaborate.

"I thought it was really neat that Ed called and checked in and we agreed that we're going to work together," he said.

Mulally arrived at Ford in September 2006 and has been credited with turning around the Dearborn, Mich., automaker.

Whitacre declined to update GM's CEO search Monday at the Detroit auto show. He has said the search could take up to a year.

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