

# **Buick Tries To Carve Out Niche For Crossover**

Tom Krisher, AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Buick is trying to break into the market for small luxury SUVs with its new Encore.

The company wants the Encore, unveiled Tuesday at the Detroit auto show, to be more upscale than the Toyota RAV-4 and Honda CR-V, which are also small SUVs build on car rather than truck frames. These "crossovers" are increasingly popular.

The new Encore is will compete with the BMW X1 and Audi Q3. Its price was not announced. The Encore is due in showrooms early in 2013.

General Motors Co., which owns the Buick brand, thinks luxury buyers will want a crossover that's smaller than its midsize Chevrolet Equinox and GMC Terrain. The Encore will still have high seating, maneuverability and amenities normally reserved for larger luxury vehicles

Here are the highlights of the Encore:

**POWER:** Engine is a 1.4-liter turbocharged four-cylinder, similar to one that makes 138 horsepower and runs the Chevrolet Cruze.

**LOOKS:** Like a sleek version of the RAV-4, with Buick's trademark grille and plenty of chrome accents.

**INTERIOR:** GM says it's upmarket with soft plastic surfaces, wood grain and brushed aluminum. The Encore is built to haul stuff, too. It's got a hatch and fold-flat rear and front passenger seats.

**NOISE:** Engineers tuned the Encore to be quiet, with engine and suspension isolation techniques used in the larger Buick LaCrosse sedan. Encore has a thick laminated glass-and-plastic windshield to cut down on wind noise and electronic noise cancellation technology.

**MILEAGE:** GM says it'll be above 30 mpg on the highway.

**MANEUVERABILITY:** GM claims the Encore will handle well, with a tighter turning radius than the smaller Mini Clubman.

**SAFETY:** 10 air bags. GM says it expects top safety ratings from the government and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

**CHEERS:** Small crossover should fill a niche for those who want the versatility of a larger SUV but the efficiency and maneuverability of a compact car.

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JEERS: New model has to have high quality for Buick to lure buyers away from Honda, Toyota, BMW and Audi. Brand ranked 24th out of 28 in the most recent Consumer Reports magazine auto reliability survey.

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