

Photo Of The Day: Thomas Edison Visits Auto Show

David Runk, Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Past met present at the auto show Monday when a holographic image of Thomas Edison was used to promote vehicles from electric truck and van maker VIA Motors.

Bob Lutz, the retired General Motors executive who led development of the Chevy Volt, took to the stage at the North American International Auto Show to listen as a hologram of a person portraying the inventor gave advice about the potential for electric vehicles.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Edison, and I assure you we will not let you down," Lutz told the image.

The talk with Edison followed a trapeze performance above the exhibit floor featuring two scantily clad women that was received by applause. Such an attention-grabbing presentation isn't a first for Lutz at the show. In 1992, the then-Chrysler chief drove the new Jeep Grand Cherokee through a plate glass window.

"This conversation seemed so real to me," Lutz quipped. "I feel like we're old friends."

Privately held VIA Motors is offering a large SUV and cargo van to fleet customers. Pacific Gas and Electric Co. partnered with VIA Motors on the SUV, which is called the Presidential, and Verizon is using the cargo van. VIA also showed a full-size concept pickup truck.

The vehicles are powered by an engine that the company said can generate more than 400 horsepower and offer extended-range driving. They also can generate power for outside use, a feature the utility said could be beneficial.

"VIA's new vehicles have the potential to transform the way we at PG&E manage electrical outages, and to help us provide safer, more reliable service for our customers," PG&E Senior Vice President Greg Pruett said in a statement.

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