

The Latest: Ford looks to future with new app, stores (Update 7)

January 11 2016, byThe Associated Press

The latest developments from the North American International Auto Show in Detroit.

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4:00 p.m.

While helping Ford unveil some new vehicles, entertainer Ryan Seacrest got some gasps for an offhand remark. Seacrest introduced Raj Nair, Ford's vehicle development chief, as "the only person in Detroit who's shorter than me."

Nair seemed to take it in stride. He climbed on stage and shook Seacrest's hand.

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Ford Motor Co. says it will have four new SUVs on the market by 2020. The company didn't give any more details.

There has been some speculation that Ford could reintroduce the Bronco as an off-road vehicle that would compete with Jeep.

It also could use a subcompact SUV in the U.S. market, like the EcoSport it sells overseas.

The Ford Explorer was the best-selling midsize SUV in the U.S. last year, with sales up 19 percent to nearly 250,000.

— Dee-Ann Durbin, AP Auto Writer

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3:54 p.m.

Ford Motor Co. wants relationships with customers that go beyond car purchases as it anticipates industry changes like car-sharing.

So it's creating FordPass. For now, it's an app that can help drivers reserve a parking space and pay for it ahead of time, or contact specially trained guides to get them through traffic or find a restaurant. Members can also redeem rewards at places like McDonald's.

In the future, the program could expand to facilitate car-sharing or ride-hailing services, or autonomously summon a parked Ford.

The company is also opening stores in several major cities, including New York and Shanghai, where people can learn about Ford technology and configure a car.

Ford Executive Chairman Bill Ford says Ford needs to experiment and not just watch from the sidelines as new ideas about transportation transform the industry. "We're in a very fluid world now."

— Dee-Ann Durbin, AP Auto Writer

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3:18 p.m.

General Motors is gloating about beating Ford in U.S. pickup truck sales last year.

GM North America Executive Vice President Alan Batey says in an interview that GM took truck market share from Ford, which rolled out a new aluminum body pickup last year. He says GM bet on full-size and midsize trucks while Ford bet on aluminum.

"They said they don't think there's a market for a midsize truck. Here we are a year later, we've outsold them on the aluminum truck, and then they've announced they're coming in with a midsize. We may have read it a little bit better than them," Batey says.

GM's entries, the Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra, ended the year with 824,683 sales combined, beating Ford's F-Series by more than 44,000 in the U.S., according to Autodata Corp. It was also the first full year for GM's new midsize pickups, the Chevy Colorado and GMC Canyon, which combined posted sales of almost 115,000.

Ford won in 2014 with nearly 754,000 pickup sales, about 12,000 more than GM. Ford's F-Series sales slowed last year as the company retooled its truck factories to make the new aluminum bodies.

— Tom Krisher, AP Auto Writer

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3:11 p.m.

Hyundai is trying to keep things simple for drivers with its G90 luxury sedan. The South Korean automaker is selling the G90 with a 3.3-liter, twin-turbocharged V-6 engine that offers 365 horsepower or a 5.0-liter V-8 that packs 420 hp.

Hyundai Motor America CEO Dave Zuchowski says it's offering just the two packages to avoid the confusing options and trim levels found in many car lines. All-wheel drive also is an option. Hyundai will tweak the G90 to best perform on the roads of the countries where it's sold.

As part of its effort to offer convenience, Hyundai plans to bring the sales experience to a buyer's home or workplace.

— David Runk, AP Writer

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2:58 p.m.

Honda is boasting about its second-generation Ridgeline pickup truck's 540-watt sound system, which is installed in the bed of the truck.

Honda Executive Vice President John Mendel says you can't see the audio system because six "exciters" inside the bed's walls replace conventional speakers—so nothing gets "bashed or scraped when you're hauling mulch or lumber."

He placed a microphone in the bed and gave a sonic sampling to those attending the introduction of the truck. "You can definitely hear it," he said.

It was hard for an Associated Press reporter standing far from the truck to gauge the quality of the sound system since he heard it through the larger sound system in place at the display.

The Ridgeline features a 3.5-liter, V-6 engine and will be available for the first time in front-wheel and all-wheel drive configurations.

— Jeff Karoub, AP Business Writer

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1:40

Nissan CEO Carlos Ghosn says the company's luxury arm Infiniti has the potential to fuel the Japanese automaker's growth after Infiniti's record-high sales in 2015.

Ghosn on Monday unveiled the 2017 version of the Infiniti Q60 sports coupe. It goes on sale this summer.

The Q60 offers powerful performance with a 3.0-liter, V-6 twin-turbo engine that's available in 300 or 400 horsepower variations. A four-cylinder 2.0-liter gasoline engine that's turbocharged to produce 208 hp also is available.

Inside, the base model features aluminum trim. A black wood option is available. Higher-end models are available with carbon-fiber highlights. White or red leather seating also is available.

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1:00

Volvo says technology on its new S90 luxury sedan that allows it to accelerate, decelerate, come to a complete stop and steer in certain road conditions is another step toward self-driving vehicles.

Hakan Samuelsson, the Swedish automaker's CEO, says improvements such as the ability to detect and react to ever-changing obstacles are needed. In its newest version, the semi-autonomous feature works at

speeds up to 80 mph. An earlier version on a different Volvo worked at speeds up to 30 mph and required a vehicle in front to act as a guide.

Volvo is trying to boost vehicle safety. Its Vision 2020 plan states that no one should be killed or seriously injured in a new Volvo by 2020.

— David Runk, AP Writer

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10:45

General Motors has played up the Chevrolet Bolt's 200-mile-plus range and its communication technology. Now the automaker is touting the electric car's speed.

GM product development chief Mark Reuss tells a crowd at the Chevy exhibit that the Bolt EV "performs more like a sports sedan."

GM also says that a 30-minute recharge for the five-passenger Bolt gets customers 90 miles of range.

The Bolt competes with upstart Tesla Motors on price. It costs \$37,500, excluding a \$7,500 federal tax credit.

GM says the Bolt's higher driving range should draw buyers even with low gas prices.

— Tom Krisher, AP Auto Writer

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10:30

Not content with cars, Audi AG is also helping build a lunar rover. The German automaker enlisted American astronaut Eugene Cernan, the last man on the moon, to show it off.

Cernan jokes that the rover might not have an easy ride. He says the moon is "full of potholes" and its gravity, weaker than Earth's, often leaves rovers on three wheels. Cernan and Harrison Schmidt explored the lunar surface during the "Apollo 17" mission in 1972.

On a more serious note, Cernan says space exploration is key to the future of the U.S. and inspires young people.

Audi is assisting the Berlin-based engineering group "Part-Time Scientists" in the Google Lunar XPRIZE, a space travel competition.

— David Runk, AP Writer

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9:35

The chairman of Audi AG says the German automaker is committed to fixing diesel engines that cheat on emissions tests as quickly as possible.

Rupert Stadler says the scandal "is a unique opportunity for change and for innovation."

Audi parent Volkswagen and U.S. regulators are at an apparent impasse over how to proceed with the expected recall of nearly 600,000 "clean diesel" vehicles.

They were sold with secret software designed to make their engines pass federal emissions standards while undergoing laboratory testing. The

vehicles then switch off those measures in real-world driving conditions, spewing harmful nitrogen oxide at up to 40 times what is allowed under federal environmental standards.

Some Audi-brand vehicles are involved.

— David Runk, AP Writer

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9:00

A cool-looking minivan? Fiat Chrysler car chief Tim Kuniskis lauds the styling of Chrysler's new one. "This may be the first minivan that you drive that the kids will let you pick them up at the front of the movie theater," Kuniskis says of the Pacifica, Chrysler's first new minivan in eight years.

It goes on sale this spring and comes in both a gas and industry-first plug-in hybrid version, which has a 30-mile all-electric range.

Kuniskis thinks low gas prices won't deter some buyers from choosing the hybrid. They'll be eligible for a \$7,500 federal tax credit.

— Dee-Ann Durbin, AP Auto Writer

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8:00

Chevy didn't score the award for car of the year but did earn itself the distinction of becoming the first brand ever with three cars in the final 10.

The Malibu was one of the three finalists for the award, but lost out to the Honda Civic. The Camaro and Volt also made the so-called short list in the car category.

The North American Car and Truck of the awards have been handed out since 1993.

7:55

Volvo's award for the North American utility/truck of the year will be an important marketing tool as it tries to rev up sales in the U.S. market, according to Volvo's CEO for the Americas.

The 2016 XC90 SUV captured the award Monday morning in Detroit. Sales of the XC90 more than tripled last year to 12,777. Overall, Volvo sold 70,000 cars in the U.S. last year, up 24 percent from 2014, according to Autodata.

Volvo was sold by Ford to China's Geely Automobile in 2010.

7:20

The Honda Civic has captured the award for car of the year for a second time. The Civic beat out the Chevy Malibu and the Mazda MX-5 Miata. The Civic won previously in 2006.

The Volvo XC90 was named utility/truck of the year, also making the XC90 a two-time winner. The Volvo SUV beat out the Honda Pilot and the Nissan Titan XD. The XC90 also won in 2003.

About 55 automotive journalists vote on winners from the list of finalists.

A vehicle must be all new or substantially changed for eligibility.

This is the 23rd year for the awards. Organizers accept no advertising, though carmakers try to capitalize on the marketing value of the honors.

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