

Hybrids getting revved

25 August 2009, By Sandy Bauers

"Experts" have long been saying the popularity of hybrid vehicles is waning, in parallel to lower gas prices. Say it ain't so? It ain't.

The Hybrid Owners of America organization reported today that purchases of hybrids in July were up 35 percent from June numbers, and 31.8 percent from the year before. July sales also reached a record market share of 3.55 percent of new car sales. In comparison, the organization reports, sales of conventional vehicles rose 15.4 percent from June.

July was also the first time a U.S. manufacturer had two of the top four hybrid models in sales -- the Ford Escape and Fusion hybrid.

Meanwhile, Fisker Automotive reports from Monterey, Calif., that its plug-in [hybrid electric vehicle](#) -- a PHEV -- made its public driving debut last weekend, 19 months after being introduced as a concept.

The 403 hp prototype, called the Fisker Karma, reached a speed of 100 mph, but used no gasoline as it went around the Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca during the Rolex Monterey Historic Automobile Races.

The company reports that the Karma can reach 60 mph in six seconds and a top speed of 125 mph. It can go 50 miles on its [Lithium-ion battery](#) and, overall, can achieve well over 100 mpg. [Carbon emissions](#) are also lower than today's hybrids, Fisker says.

"This demonstration represents a significant milestone for Fisker Automotive and PHEV technology," said CEO Henrik Fisker in a statement. "The future of clean cars is bright."

Finally, electric car enthusiasts won't want to miss this week's New Yorker profile of Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla Motors.

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