

Three New Vehicles Set for Michigan Assembly

by Stefanie Carano
Staff Reporter
Detroit Auto Scene

The Michigan Assembly Plant in Wayne will soon be a centrifuge in Ford Motor Co.'s strategy of creating global vehicles that are desirable and cost-competitive.

Once known as the Michigan Truck Plant producing large SUVs and trucks, the facility has been retooled for Ford's new global Focus and Focus Electric vehicles, both of which are scheduled to launch at the end of 2011.

On Dec. 14, Ford said that Michigan Assembly also will produce three additional Ford vehicles to be revealed at the North American International Auto Show in January.

With these new vehicles, the plant will produce a gasoline, hybrid, plug-in hybrid and battery-electric vehicle all on one line, a first for Ford

and the industry.

"It's been nearly two years since we started this journey and the changes are dramatic," said Michigan Assembly Plant Manager Rob Webber. "We've modernized just about every square foot of this facility to establish a new standard for high-tech, green, flexible and efficient auto manufacturing."

He said the transformations at Michigan Assembly will serve as a transformation model for plants around the globe.

As such, Ford Vice President of North America Manufacturing Jim Tetreault said one of the most important things Ford had to work on when it came to operations at Michigan Assembly was its quality culture.

"How we deal with each other within the company between product development, manufacturing, purchasing

with our supply base, and how we standardize, how we go about building quality in our vehicles and, particularly, how we go about launching quality in our new model of launches," Tetreault said.

"And part of that starts right up front with the design and working hand-in-hand with our product development colleagues and, we actually have an hourly workforce working on product development hand-in-hand in the virtual world."

Ford is also building its processes in the plant around a set of standards globally, Tetreault said.

"So that the same Focus that you see here will be the same high-precision vehicle whether it's built here in Michigan Assembly Plant or it's built in Saarlouis, Germany, or it's built in China,"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



PHOTO: STEFANIE CARANO

Michigan Assembly Plant has been retooled to produce the new version of the Focus, scheduled to go into production in late 2011.



The new 2011 Ford Explorer being produced at the renovated Chicago Assembly Plant.

FANUC Supplies Auto Plant Robots

by Gerald Scott
Editor
U.S. Auto Scene

Much has been said about the 21st century being perhaps the "robotics century," what with all manner of robots performing industrial and now even home duties.

Don't tell that to the good folks at FANUC Robotics in Rochester Hills – they've been building and selling high-performance industrial robots since 1982.

Last week, they announced the sale of their 100,000th such robot in the North and South American markets, so it was a big day for the supplier as it hosted a public ceremony and open house tours.

"Automation and robotics are core tools for manufacturing competitiveness," said Rick Schneider, president, FANUC Robotics America.

"This accomplishment underscores the fact that more companies are using robotic technology to expand their overall operations versus transferring manufacturing overseas."

As it happens, Schneider Packaging Equipment Co. of New York state was the purchaser of the 100,000th FANUC robot. Schneider specializes in end-of-line packaging solutions.

"It's exciting news to hear that we purchased the 100,000th FANUC robot in the Americas," said Richard S. Schneider, president of that supplier.

"We are FANUC Robotics' largest integrator in the case packaging and palletized segment in North America, having shipped hundreds of ro-

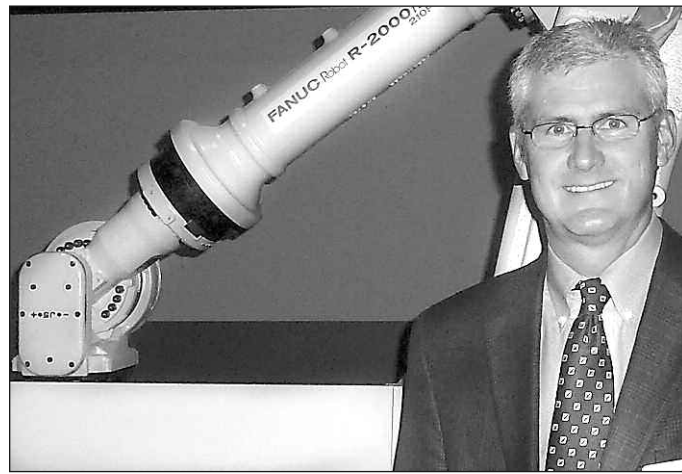


PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

Kevin Ostby, Fanuc Robotics vice president for Body Shop Sales, with the supplier's 100,000th industrial robot sold in the U.S.

bots over the last three years.

"2010 marks the 40th anniversary of Schneider Packaging, and this latest recognition helps us further celebrate what has been a successful year."

In metro Detroit, FANUC is known for providing a variety of its robots to auto plants, including auto painting and welding arm robots.

That's due in part because FANUC used to be GMFANUC, a joint venture with General Motors. GM dissolved the relationship back in 1992 to concentrate on its core business and FANUC Robotics has been the legacy company since that time.

FANUC Vice President of Body Shop Sales Kevin Ostby offered a tour of the supplier's Rochester Hills facility, which is teeming with all manner of R&D and training projects related to industrial robotics.

"We were formed in 1982, we've been in existence for 28

years," Ostby said. "We were in Troy for our first five years – New King Street, Crooks and I-75 area."

"We've been in this building 22 years. This is home. We have operations in Canada, Mexico and South America, then we have regional operations that are all around the U.S. from the West Coast to the East Coast, Cincinnati and Chicago."

"We are the largest supplier of robots in North and South America."

"What's interesting is that a lot of the robots we sell are made right here in this facility. All of our paint robots are manufactured here . . . even though we're no longer owned by GM, of course, that is a core product for us and it's manufactured here."

"For 10 years, GM got what they needed out of it and they wanted to focus more on their core business. It's worked out

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Workers Trained for SUV Output

CHICAGO – The reinvented 2011 Ford Explorer has started rolling off the line at Ford's Chicago Assembly Plant, marking a new beginning for both the historic factory and the iconic SUV.

The Torrence Avenue plant has been extensively renovated to accommodate production of the new Explorer, and all employees have prepared for its launch by participating in extensive training programs.

"Ford is investing in American manufacturing, ensuring that the most important new products in the company's lineup are built in the U.S. by UAW workers," said Jim Tetreault, vice president of North America Manufacturing. "We are thrilled to bring 2011 Ford Explorer production to

Chicago Assembly Plant along with the jobs and investment it provides to the region.

"We look forward to finding more opportunities for competitively growing our business and providing customers with capable, fuel-efficient, stylish, high-quality products."

Ford Explorer – the vehicle that defined a segment 20 years ago with more than 6 million sold – has been reinvented for the 2011 model year, raising customers' expectations of sport utility vehicle fuel efficiency, technology, capability and quality.

The seven-passenger SUV also raises the bar on safety with a class-leading array of features, including industry-first inflatable rear seat belts, Trinity front impact structure, AdvanceTrac with RSC (Roll

Stability Control) and Curve Control technology.

The all-new Ford Explorer SUV offers best-in-class fuel economy from high-tech powertrains, featuring multiple enhancements to improve mechanical efficiency. Explorer comes standard with a powerful, fuel-efficient, 3.5-liter, V6 engine with twin independent variable camshaft timing (Ti-VCT).

For customers wanting top SUV fuel economy, Explorer offers an optional 2.0-liter EcoBoost I-4 engine delivering V6 power with four-cylinder fuel efficiency.

The next-generation Explorer is built at Chicago Assembly Plant on a flexible assembly line alongside the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



2011 Ford Explorer



2011 Chevrolet Volt



2011 Jeep Grand Cherokee

Big Three Dominate 2011 Car/Truck of the Year List

by Stefanie Carano
Staff Reporter
Detroit Auto Scene

The domestics dominated in this year's North American Car and Truck of the Year Awards finalist nominations.

Announced at a meeting of the Automotive Press Association Dec. 16, considerations in the truck category include the 2011 model year Jeep Grand Cherokee, the Ford Explorer and the Dodge Durango.

tions include the 2011 model year Chevrolet Volt, Nissan Leaf and the Hyundai Sonata.

"The two companies that were at death's door a year-and-a-half ago, that needed help to make it through the crisis, made three of the finalists," said local automotive journalist Mark Phelan.

"And the Explorer is hugely important to Ford, it's comfortably a brand name. In terms of the company's identification, probably only the F-150 and Mustang do more people think 'Ford' when they

hear the name."

General Motors' Tony DiSalle, marketing director for the Chevrolet Volt, said if the vehicle is fortunate enough to win, it would be a great acknowledgement of all the hard work and effort on behalf of the company's engineering organization and product development.

"So many (GM) people, quite frankly, have put so many nights and weekends in making this thing come to life over the course of the last three or four years," DiSalle

said.

He said Volt production for Michigan dealers begins in March.

Ford North America and Global Product Communications Manager Said Deep said to be a finalist for truck of the year for a third year in a row is a real honor.

"If you look at the Explorer since it debuted 20 years ago, it's been a favorite of buyers in that segment, I think this is yet another example that we've got a vehicle that is really fitting for the times. It still

does the off-road that people really need, does the towing they need, but now it delivers the fuel economy that everybody expects in a vehicle today, so, you put all those things together, it really is the optimal vehicle for the 21st century," he said.

In a statement released to the press, Michael Manley, president and CEO of the Jeep brand, said the company is delighted by the nomination.

"Consumers are clearly noticing the unique blend of on-road driving, dynamics, ca-

pability, efficiency and craftsmanship that our premium Jeep icon delivers," Manley said.

"We're pleased this respected, opinion-leading group of journalists recognized the Jeep Grand Cherokee's attributes as well."

This year, there were 49 veteran automotive journalists involved in the selection of the award finalists.

Award winners will be announced at 8 a.m., Jan. 10 at the NAA Show at Cobo Center in Detroit.