#### One Foot Holds Key to Opening **New Ford C-Max Minivan Liftgate**

AP Auto Writer

WAYNE, Mich. (AP) - Ford Motor Co.'s new C-Max small minivan will have an exclusive feature when it goes on sale in the U.S. next fall: A hands-free liftgate.

The C-Max liftgate opens with the wave of a foot under the back of the minivan. The van will only open for the person who's holding its key. Ford says the U.S. version of the C-Max will be the first vehicle on the market with this

The C-Max marks Ford's return to the U.S. minivan market five years after it stopped selling its last minivan, the Freestar. The C-Max has been on sale in Europe since 2003, although a seven-seat version wasn't sold there until this year. The C-Max is built on the underpinnings of the Ford Focus, and is part of the company's plan to build 10 Focusbased vehicles worldwide by

Ford will sell the seven-seat C-Max in the U.S., a configuration that will make it unique in the small-minivan market. The Mazda5, its closest rival in size, seats six. Ford man- Odyssey.

ages the extra body by giving the second row a middle seat that can be folded away under the right-hand seat. Buyers will be able to get the third row removed if they prefer to have five seats.

Derrick Kuzak. Ford's product development chief, said the company sent teams to live with young families and see how they used their vehicles. Ford tried hard to mask the twin sliding doors and make the C-Max fun to drive so it could overcome minivans' reputations as boring family haulers, he said.

"We wanted a minivan that would be aspirational, something they would actually choose," Kuzak told reporters at a recent preview for next month's Detroit auto show, where Ford will unveil the U.S. version of the C-Max.

The C-Max hits the market at a time when minivan sales have been growing.

Meanwhile, domestic minivan sales were up 9 percent through November over the same period in 2009, according to Autodata Corp. The Chrysler Town and Country was the top seller, followed closely

#### Ford's C-Max Compact Minivan **Combines Space, Fuel Economy**

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"The hands-free liftgate, the seating flexibility and the dual sliding doors are the results of some very detailed market research with young families," said Frank Davis, vice president of product development for Ford of Europe. The C-Max comes with two

engine options - a 2.5L i4 and a 1.6L EcoBoost i4. Both engines offer the same horsepower, but the EcoBoost offers the same power in a smaller package.

"It offers outstanding performance, fuel economy and CO2 emissions," Davis said of flexibility that a utility or the EcoBoost model.

KIN HONDA

KIA MOTORS NISSAN

panoramic sunroof.

Like the new Fiesta, the C-Max was initially introduced in the European market and will now come to North America as part of the company's One Ford plan. The vehicle is scheduled to begin North American production at the Michigan Assembly plant in Wayne in 2012.

"There's really nothing like it in the marketplace," Fields

"And our approach is, first, always take it from a consumer's standpoint. You've got young families that are out there where they want the minivan gives them, but they Features will include My- don't necessarily want to be Ford Touch, Sirius Satellite ra- penalized on the fuel econodio, ambient lighting and a my or the size of the vehicle."

## **Facebook Page Connects Ford to Its Customers**

Company is sparking up a conversation with more than 135,000 Explorer fans on Facebook as a way to build one-onone relationships with owners and prospective customers and get real-time feedback on Ford's all-new SUV.

Called "Explorer Live," the Facebook program was set up in response to the outstanding reaction to the live reveal of the Ford Explorer on Facebook on July 26. More than 75,000 people logged in on that day to see the new Explorer for the first time.

"Explorer Live' is a program that allows us to get to the Holy Grail of marketing direct, unfiltered dialogue with thousands of customers with real-time responses to their questions and to our answers," said Matt VanDyke, director, Ford U.S. Marketing Communications.

"The ability to interact with customers and get feedback from them about what they really want from their vehicle allows us to tailor our marketing outreach accordingly."

Customers have used the Facebook page to ask questions and share information and, as Eric Peterson, Ford Communications Explorer manager explains, this gave the team an idea.

DEARBORN - Ford Motor Michaels "parties" with available MyFord Touch in the 2011 Ford Explorer, go to the popular web site http://www. youtube.com/v/umjK84xPVX

> "We were getting up to 25questions a day from Facebook fans with topics ranging from simple and easy-toanswer questions right up to very technical and detailed product questions," said Peterson. "Our response was to come up with a series of different ways to respond.

"At the basic level, for a simple question about something like product availability, we respond directly to the customer in almost real time. However, where we spot a trend in questioning, we wanted something more engaging, and that came in the form of rapid-response videos."

The video responses give Ford the opportunity to respond to a question using either product experts, or in some cases, celebrities such as Bret Michaels and Snoop

The videos can be straight product-related responses, or, as in the case of the Michaels video, a more tongue-in-cheek response that provides product knowledge mixed with entertainment.

With more than 40 videos To see just how Bret posted, more than 100 in pro-

Rock star Bret Michaels in a Ford Explorer.

duction and 250,000 views, the "Explorer new creative energy within Ford's marketing team, VanDyke said.

"Traditional TV advertising takes months to develop through initial scripts, research, filming, editing, revisions and finally on to the screen," VanDyke said.

way of working, with the turning to posting being some- from the 2011 Ford Explorer.

more than times as short as 72 hours.

"For our creative team, this Live" program has fostered a has been extremely liberating - to have an idea one day and to see it on film just a few days later. It is really changing the paradigm for us - allowing us an unfiltered link to the end customer in a way that traditional TV advertising does not "

To see more of the creative "The 'Explorer Live' pro- work, log on to www.facegram is a completely different book.com/fordexplorer and join the more than 135,000 around time from idea to film- fans getting regular updates

## Ganassi's IndyCar Race Team Adds Two Drivers

By MICHAEL MAROT AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) - Chip Ganassi believes his two Indy-Car winning drivers can still win championships.

He's just starting to look for their successors.

Last week, Ganassi's team took a major step by expanding its two-car stable to four full-time cars after hiring 20something American drivers Graham Rahal and Charlie Kimball.

"Look, I don't want to push Dario (Franchitti) or Scott (Dixon) out the door, but I think you need to keep an eye on who's coming in the door, too," Ganassi said. "What beting these two guys on your team and having them getting firsthand knowledge rather than learning from afar?"

By adding Rahal and Kimball, Ganassi will now field the biggest, and perhaps, best IndyCar team next season.

Franchitti, a 37-year-old Scot, has won two Indianapolis 500s since 2007 and three of the last four points titles, including the last two with Ganassi's team. Dixon, the 30year-old from New Zealand, won Indy in 2008 and owns two points titles.

With both still on top of their game, Ganassi hopes a youthful infusion will make his team one of the series' most dangerous for another

"These guys probably represent the next generation of drivers and they'll be around IndyCar racing for a long time," Ganassi said.

Most IndyCar fans know what Ganassi has in Rahal, the 21-year-old son of 1986 Indy winner Bobby Rahal. Graham became the youngest pole-winner and race winner in series history in 2008 when he was driving for the McDonald's-sponsored car of New- pinnacle of IndyCar racing tion of drivers."

he finished seventh in the points standings with the same team. But last season, Rahal, one

of America's brightest hopes, struggled to find sponsorship. He had seven top-10 finishes in 12 starts, driving for four different teams. Now, with Service Central

joining forces with Rahal for a the double, then topped it off full season on the No. 38 car, he can focus on racing.

"Coming off the year I've just been through, it's a huge relief to find a home with this team and to have guys like Dario and Dixon to learn from," Rahal said. "There was only one place we all felt we needed to be to succeed, and you had to be with this team."

Kimball is more of an un-

The 25-year-old spent the last two seasons in Indy Lights and is best-known for being competitive despite his battle with type 1 diabetes. Novo Nordisk, a healthcare company that develops new care, will sponsor Kimball's No. 83 car

true for me to move up to the our eye on the next genera-

ter way to do it than by hav- man/Haas/Lanigan. In 2009, and to do it with a team like Chip Ganassi Racing and to do it right," Kimball said. "It's a great opportunity."

> Ganassi is coming off his best season as a team owner and arguably the best season of any American team owner ever. He won NASCAR's Daytona 500 and the Indy 500, the first owner to ever achieve with Franchitti rallying to take the IndyCar points title.

Now, Ganassi is using his NASCAR experience as a roadmap for IndyCars.

"What we're going to do is have two two-car teams, I'd say it's going to be a lot like what (Rick) Hendrick does, Ganassi said. "That's sort of the template for four cars."

IndyCar has added 14 new sponsors in the last 12 months. Ganassi's move gives the series seven American drivers, including Danica Patrick and Ryan Hunter-

"That's a breath of fresh air," Ganassi said of the Amertechnologies for diabetes ican resurgence. "I don't want to take anything away from Dario Franchitti or Scott "Today is a dream come Dixon, but we do want to keep

# Hong Kong Auto Show Big in China

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) - China's second major auto show for 2010 kicks off next week in the southern city of Guangzhou, capping a year of record sales for the country's booming auto market, though analysts warn the strong growth will likely ease.

Unlike its more glitzy cousins in Beijing and Shanghai, which are held in alternating years and are aimed more at establishing China's presence globally with product launches, the Guangzhou show has always been aimed at local buyers.

But car makers will still put on a show for the tens of thousands of potential buyers expected to pour into the eighth annual Guangzhou International Automobile Exhibition, in bustling Guangdong, one of China's most prosperous provinces. The show, known as Auto Guangzhou, runs from last week through to Dec. 27.

China overtook the United States in 2009 as the world's biggest car market, with sales surging 45 percent to 13.6 million vehicles. Monthly sales this year have seen doubledigit percentage growth and analysts are forecasting that for the year as a whole, sales may climb roughly 30 percent to about 17 million vehicles.

brisk clip.

Such explosive growth may not continue in 2011 because tax cuts and other government incentives look set to end, although analysts say sales will still expand at a

"The growth rate will slow

down but it still will have ipate demand from the U.S. healthy momentum. We think there will be 8 to 10 percent for growth for passenger car sales next year," said Lin Huaibin, a Shanghai-based analvst at IHS Automotive.

For many automakers, Chistruggle with weak sales in the U.S. and other developed markets.

Guangzhou is a major base for Japanese automakers including Toyota Motor Corp. and Honda Motor Co., which both have joint ventures with Guangzhou Automobile Industry Group.

Toyota and its upscale Lexus division will be out in force in Guangzhou with 45 models on display, three of them making their China debuts. Nissan Motor Co. promises the global launch of one model among the 18 cars it will have on show, including six from its luxury Infiniti brand Local car makers, which

have been itching to expand overseas, will also have a presence. Geely Holding Group, little

known outside of China until it bought Sweden's Volvo Cars from Ford Motor Co. earlier this year in a \$1.5 billion deal, will have at least 13 models on display. Industry observers will be looking to see whether Geely will make any announcements on its plans for Volvo.

One of this year's hot themes has been so called "green" cars, including hybrids and electric vehicles.

because of tighter fuel efficiency standards. The Chinese government is also pushing the development of the

electric car industry at home. General Motors Corp.'s joint venture with local partna is their best hope as they ner Shanghai Automotive Industry Corp. will have 23 vehicles on show. They will include an electric battery-powered version of the Chevrolet Sail, which was developed in China specifically with the local market in mind.

> GM will also display its plug-in hybrid Volt and the next generation Spark city

Ford, which operates two joint ventures with local partners, is also getting in on the green theme by displaying its Mondeo equipped with its fuel-efficient EcoBoost turbocharged gasoline engine, along with its Edge sport utility vehicle

Volkswagen is set to reveal an all-electric Bora sedan, according to China auto blogs. Volvo will be bringing 15 cars, including the battery powered plug-in C30 that it unveiled earlier this year.

Electric vehicles are well suited to China, where most drivers live in crowded cities and typically make short trips. However, despite the hype, they haven't yet taken

"Everybody talks about green cars but there's no breakthrough," said Yale Zhang, an independent auto analyst based in Shanghai.

Zhang said electric vehicles Local Chinese car makers need bigger advances in bathave been racing to develop tery technology and lack suffielectric vehicles as they antic- cient infrastructure.



Mercedes-Benz