

Former NBA Great Chris Webber Tours Volt Factory

DETROIT – Former NBA and University of Michigan basketball star Chris Webber dropped in on General Motors' Detroit-Hamtramck plant, home of the Chevrolet Volt, last week to gather video footage for a documentary of his life.

Webber's father, Mayce, worked at the plant for 30 years before retiring.

Webber, who helped lead the University of Michigan to the college basketball championship game twice in the 1990s before a 15-year NBA career, greeted workers and checked out the Volt, plugging in its electrical charger and finding ample room for his 6-foot, 10-inch frame.

A famous basketball name since high school, Webber attended Detroit Country Day then the University of Michigan before his prolific NBA basketball career spent mostly with the Sacramento Kings.

Since retiring from the NBA, Webber has become an analyst on TV's "NBA Gametime Live." He does the Tuesday "Fan Night" alongside Ernie Johnson and Kevin McHale. He also served as an occasional guest analyst on TNT's "Inside the NBA" during the 2008-09 season.

During Charles Barkley's leave of absence, Webber substituted for him, along with

other guests such as Gary Payton and Mike Fratello. Webber has also expressed interests in eventually becoming an NBA GM and owner.

Webber has also stated he is working on a book. Outside of basketball, Webber has been active in his investment company representing basketball and football players, real estate, and film projects. In 2011, it was reported that that company had lined up investors to build the Kings a new arena.

Webber was the owner of Center Court With C-Webb, a restaurant in Sacramento, Calif. The restaurant closed on Nov. 17, 2009. Earlier that

year, Webber married his longtime girlfriend Erika Dates during a private ceremony at his Atlanta home. In attendance were 200 guests, including family and close friends.

So, Webber's travels finally brought him back to the Detroit area and a tour of the GM Hamtramck Assembly Center.

The Volt itself first came in to being back at the 2007 Detroit auto show, where it went on display as a concept car.

Public and critical reaction was so strong that it was soon put on production track, and even though GM went through a corporate bankruptcy in the meantime, the

Volt survived and came to market on a 29-month program between 2007 and 2010.

The Volt is produced exclusively at GM Hamtramck in association with UAW Local 22.

Many celebrity visitors to the GM RenCen and to Detroit in general pass through the Hamtramck facility in order to see the Volt being built.

Orders for the Volt are up and Chevrolet generally describes the unique, plug-in, extended-range vehicle as having a rather bright future.

GM assembly line staff have seen a number of celebrities come and go, but they especially enjoyed seeing Webber.



Former NBA player Chris Webber hugs a line worker.



Plugging in a Chevrolet Volt while touring GM's Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly Center.



Robotized Unit for Tactility and Haptics (RUTH).

Ford Engineers Let RUTH Tell Them What to Do

DEARBORN – You won't hurt RUTH the robot's feelings if you disagree with her, but it's very difficult to prove your point given her opinions are backed up by mathematical evidence.

Thanks to the Robotized Unit for Tactility and Haptics (RUTH) machine, which arrived in North America earlier this year, Ford knows its 2013 Fusion has an interior that customers want.

Quality can be difficult to express, yet when customers sit in a high-end car, they know by the feel of the trim and the touch of the buttons that the car is special.

The sense of touch and the intuitive understanding of quality are innately human characteristics, but how do you measure them? The answer: use a RUTH.

RUTH allows engineers to quantify vehicle characteristics such as softness, roughness, temperature, hardness and comfort. This allows Ford to tailor each vehicle interior to exactly what a customer group wants.

The RUTH robot is a giant arm with six joints, programmed to poke the trims, turn the knobs, push the buttons and interact with many of the vehicle's interior areas in the same way a person would.

Engineers in North America are finding several different ways to use RUTH. They are the first in the world, for example, to use the robot to

measure seat comfort. Eileen Franko, Ford craftsmanship supervisor, believes RUTH results in greater customer satisfaction.

"Thanks to the data provided by RUTH, we can be sure the customer who buys a car like Fusion will experience the same type of quality they might feel if they were to buy a high-end luxury car," Franko said.

"I might be biased, but RUTH isn't. We know the steering wheel and the armrest softness in Fusion are the best in the world."

For years, Ford's quality interiors resulted from worldwide studies where customers actually tested various parts, documenting their preferences.

RUTH won't change that concept, Ford says.

But now, RUTH is involved from beginning to end to determine the feeling of quality.

Interior samples are pre-measured by RUTH. Customer test studies are conducted, and after the results are tallied, RUTH supplies the data to implement the finest option into mass production.

In other words, quality is no longer an intangible guessing game.

As a relatively new resident to North America, RUTH, first introduced in Europe, is found only in Ford's product development center. And the robot has already helped engineers improve the quality of many parts of the car.

Inventors and Tinkerers Set To Gather at 'Maker Faire'

DEARBORN – On July 28-29, more than 400 makers will bring their MacGyver-like, Do-It-Yourself (DIY) wonders to the home of innovation, The Henry Ford, for Maker Faire Detroit 2012 – the Midwest's largest two-day festival dedicated to those who build, tinker and create.

Featuring fun demonstrations and hands-on activities for the whole family, Maker Faire Detroit offers a little bit of everything from robots, flame shooters and animatronics to solar-powered mechanical sculptures, fashionable finds and musical performances.

Michigan Makers who are making their debut or displaying new projects this year include 14-year-old Kathryn DiMara, who has been working on rebuilding a 1986 Pontiac Fiero by herself for the past two years; Dozer Studios with steel sculptures created out of motorcycle parts; Hydro-Electric Motown, a project that uses water to power a gas motor through the integration and use of electromagnetism and wireless applications.

Also, former presenter Jacqueline Swain and Fused Glass Adornments will be giving a demonstration on how fused glass is created into a finished product.

Maker Faire Detroit veterans returning for 2012 include The LifeSize Mousetrap, Cirque Amongus, i3Detroit Hackerspace, the Coke and Mentos Guys, Handmade Detroit, and Royal Oak resident and Lego Studio owner Nick Britsky, who will be hosting a Lego Brick Challenge Game Show in the Anderson Theater.

Along with entertainment, guests will also have a variety of culinary delights to choose from, including a selection from The Henry Ford's award-winning culinary team.

More than 40,000 people have attended the first two Faires in 2010-2011.

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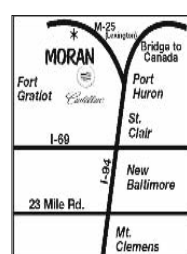
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