

Hyundai impresses at Detroit auto show

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DETROIT: While Kia was quiet with no new offerings at the 2015 North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) in Detroit, its Korean partner Hyundai made up for it with the introduction of two new production cars and an innovative concept vehicle.

Hyundai introduced an all-new Sonata Hybrid model as well as a Sonata Plug-In Hybrid, the firm's first plug-in hybrid. These 2016 models will be introduced in Canada later this year.

One of the surprises of the show, however, was the Santa Cruz Crossover Truck Concept, that may or may not see production at some point in the future.

If I was a betting man, I would say yes, but Hyundai uses shows like Detroit to gauge consumer reaction to new concepts and the Santa Cruz is another example of that.

Somewhat similar to Ford's larger Explorer Sport Trac, the Santa Cruz is what Hyundai calls a "new interpretation of truck utility for the Millennials generation who now represent the second largest population of truck buyers."

Designed for what Hyundai calls "urban adventurers", the Santa Cruz offers seating for five along with the



Whether this vehicle actually makes it to production remains to be seen, however Hyundai said it did extensive market research to find out what Millennials were looking for in an urban vehicle before launching into the Santa Cruz Crossover Truck Concept.

versatility of a truck bed in the rear, which can be covered by a lockable rigid tonneau cover.

The cargo bed provides a separated storage area for things like dirty and smelly sports equipment and the like.

The back seat is accessed through rear-hinged rear doors that blend in seamlessly with the front door design.

Power for an all-wheel drive system comes from a 2.0-litre turbodiesel engine, producing

190 hp and 300 lb/ft of torque. Fuel economy is rated at 7.8 L/100 km.

The Santa Cruz features a nifty tailgate extension to increase the cargo bed to the equivalent of a mid-size pickup. However, the truck wasn't designed with heavy hauling or towing in mind; the bed is there to offer greater utility for crossover and sedan buyers who want the utility without going to a full-fledged pickup.

The smallish footprint of the Santa Cruz

compared with regular pickup trucks means it is easily manoeuvred in tight urban parking lots and narrow city streets.

To this end, unique wheels as well as different front and rear fascias that help to improve aerodynamics are found on the new Sonata Hybrid.

Both vehicles will be built at the Asan South Korea plant.

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