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The all-new 2011 Ford Explorer was revealed in Toronto on July 26, featuring a more curvaceous look, better fuel economy and loads of innovative safety and handling technologies.

Photo courtesy
Ford Motor Company

Explorer has raised the bar in mid-size SUV segment

By NEIL MOORE
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Carguide Magazine

Today's SUVs have undergone a radical transformation in design, with many brands trading their traditional trucky lines and body-on-frame construction for curvier exteriors and car-based platforms.

Which makes sense as the typical owner will seldom, if ever leave the pavement.

A few models, like the current Toyota 4Runner, are embracing their truckiness—and being rewarded with a boost in sales. The Ford Explorer, on the other hand, has seen better days.

The original '91 Explorer defined the look of the

traditional, pickup-styled SUV. Boxy and robust, it was a replacement for Ford's Bronco II and was available in two- and four-door versions, with either rear-drive or four-wheel-drive. The Explorer was not first on the scene, but quickly became a top-seller in this emerging market segment.

Fast forward nearly two decades and the current generation Explorer, having evolved little in appearance, has seen its popularity reflected in a steady drop in sales, from a peak of 20,000 sold annually in Canada to only 4,000 last year.

As could be expected from a red-hot automaker like Ford, having reinvented its vehicle lineup over the past few years, a new Explorer was in the works. It was revealed July 26 in Toronto at the Kool Haus,

the only Canadian premier among several that took place simultaneously across North America.

According to Chief Nameplate Engineer Jim Holland, two key objectives were targeted in developing the 2011 Explorer. First was an interior and exterior design that was modern and contemporary — yet instantly recognizable as an Explorer.

Next, the team had to deliver improved fuel economy, without sacrificing performance and the capability that consumers demand in this segment.

My first impression of this all-new, mid-size SUV was that it is much curvier than its predecessor, but in a way that preserves its SUV proportions.

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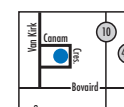


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