

Forte Koup 2014 a coup for Kia

Story and photos by Jim Robinson
Metroland Media

LOS ANGELES: Kia's slogan is "The Power To Surprise" and they've done it again with the 2014 Forte Koup.

The Kia Forte Koup was one of the first designs of Peter Schreyer whose styling acumen vaulted him to industry stardom, and most recently to president, the first non-Korean to head the company.

The idea was simple enough. Take the Forte sub-compact and make it a sporty car with the now famous signature "Tiger Mouth" grille, a swoopy coupe roofline and a ton of content.

The 2014 Forte Koup as it is officially known (we'll just call the Koup from here on) shares almost everything mechanically with the 2014 Forte5, five-door hatchback that was launched simultaneously with the Koup in California.

But they are really two different cars, thanks to what the engineers can do with suspension and drive trains, as I was to find out.

The Forte5 will be dealt with as a separate story because of the difference in temperament between the two, but also the vast array of content.

Looking at both cars sitting side by side during the Canadian press preview, you knew they were the same under the skin but they looked different, which is sure to make dealers happy when buyers come in and wander around the showroom. Obviously the Forte5 and Koup are aimed at divergent demographics.



The second generation 2014 Kia Forte Koup is the new boy on the compact sporty car segment block with a starting price of \$20,995 for the EX and \$23,695 for the SX (shown) both with a choice of six-speed manual or six-speed automatic transmissions.

Kia says it is one of the three brands (the other two being Mazda, Scion) attracting the youngest buyers in Canada. The average age of a Kia buyer is 46. The Koup buyer is 43.

Besides standout style, what's included on the car and price are dealmakers or breakers for this group.

There are two Koup trim levels beginning with the entry level EX that starts at \$20,995 and comes with standard amenities sure to attract this buyer profile.

Some of these include: UVO infotainment with rear camera display, dot-matrix type LCD cluster, leather-wrapped steering wheel, FlexSteer, auto folding outside

mirrors and LED front positioning headlights.

The SX that starts at \$23,695 includes everything on the EX then ups the ante with 18-inch wheels as opposed to 17-inch on the EX, aggressive front fascia with larger bumper and grille openings, black gloss grille inserts and outside mirrors, larger front brakes, alloy sport pedals, Smart key and LED taillight technology.

The EX uses Kia's latest direct injection 2.0-litre inline DOHC four-cylinder with 171 hp and 154 lb/ft of torque equipped with an in-house designed six-speed manual transmission. Opting for the six-speed automatic adds \$1,200 to the sticker price.

Before it was released for use, this engine was run for 300 hours at the redline followed by another 20 hours at 10 per cent above redline.

The SX pumps up the ponies with a 1.6-litre twin turbo inline four-cylinder with 201 hp and 195 lb/ft of torque. Again, a six-speed manual is standard with the six-speed automatic available for \$1,200 more.

Suspension is MacPherson struts up front and a rear twist beam with the Koup getting a sportier set up than the Forte5.

I am pleased Kia thinks a manual transmission is important. Yes, it is cheaper than an automatic but so much more fun.

It gives a sense of control you just can't get with an

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