

Disney Links with Chevrolet To Develop Epcot Track Ride

by Irena Granaas

Thanks to a collaborative effort between Chevrolet and Disney, guests at Walt Disney World in Florida can experience the thrill and excitement of designing their own automobile.

Chevrolet engineers and Walt Disney Imagineers have teamed up to revamp and enhance the Chevrolet Test Track ride at EPCOT, which has been closed since April while the changes were implemented.

The result is a highly interactive, virtual experience in the world of automotive design for resort guests.

Design talent from Chevrolet and Disney began their collaborative effort 18 months ago, combining the talents of people with a variety of relevant skills including architecture, animation, industrial and automotive design.

Teams went to work on the ambitious project both at GM's Design Studios in Warren, and at Test Track Epcot in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. While allowing for the maximum level of innovation, Disney and GM team members made sure that the core values of both brands would be accurately represented throughout the Test Track experience.

"At Chevrolet, the diversity of talent on our team allows us to consistently produce sophisticated, refined and detailed design – but we don't typically design through the eyes of a 12-year-old," said Jeff Mylenek, GM Design manager, Global Exhibit and Merchandising Design.

"Working with Walt Disney Imagineering, we were inspired to see our brand story from a more youthful perspective and really opened the parameters on how to approach this design challenge."

Efforts were focused on creating a future-focused experience, while giving guests an authentic look at the actual automotive design process and a chance to create their own designs.

"The re-imagined Test Track portrays an optimistic view of the future, and reflects the deep collaboration between Disney and Chevrolet on both the design and the overall experience," said Eric Jacobson, senior vice president, Walt Disney Imagineering.

"It's a thrilling attraction supported by rich exhibit displays and interactive elements that bring guests directly into the design process."

General Motors spokesman David Barnas discussed the guest



Chevrolet and Disney inspire design and innovation on Epcot test track.

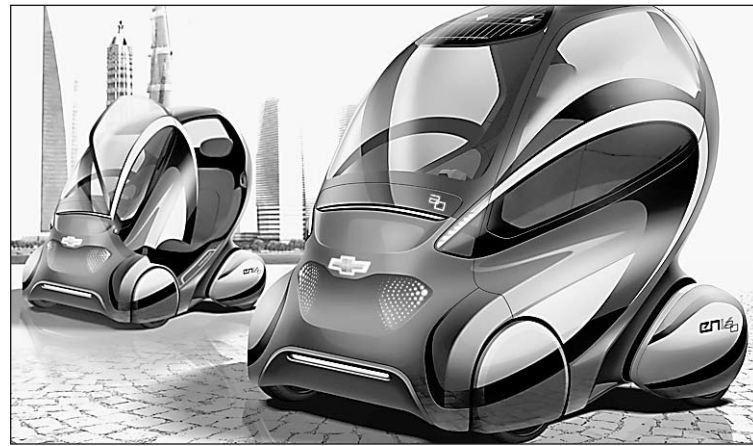
experience at the "re-imagined" attraction in a little more detail. Asked if the redeveloped Test Track really gives guests the experience of being an automotive designer, he affirmed that it does.

"It really takes into consideration that a guest is really immersed in what it's like to be an automotive designer, including while you're waiting in line to get into the experience," Barnas explained.

"At the old GM Test Track (which Barnas said has been a Disney World attraction for about 15 years) . . . you were a little bit more of an observer. This time, on the new Chevrolet Test Track, you are very much a participant, all the way through from sketching your own car and being able to interact with it."

The upgraded Test Track experience allows the whole family, including children, to participate in the design experience, he noted.

And while the aim of the Chevrolet Test Track, which opened Dec. 6, is largely to entertain, could the experience inspire the next generation of auto designers?



The EN-V 2.0 (Electric Networked Vehicle)

GM Pursues Global Auto Innovations At China Advanced Technical Center

General Motors China held its second annual "Tech Day" event recently to coincide with the launch of the second phase of the GM China Advanced Technical Center.

The theme of the event was "Ignite! The Spark of Innovation," and organizers lived up to the headline with displays of the automaker's technical achievements, while demonstrating how China is key to GM's global vehicle development initiatives.

"The completion of the ATC is an important milestone for GM in China," said Bob Socia, president, GM China, and chief Country Operations officer, China, India and ASEAN.

"It gives us the most comprehensive automotive technical center in our largest market. The center will serve not just China but also GM's operations around the world."

The ATC houses an Advanced Design Center, vehicle and powertrain engineering facilities, research and development labs and an OnStar telematics lab. Up to 250 designers, engineers and researchers are pooling their talents to bring forward new products in advanced vehicle design, state-of-the-art powertrain, connectivity and safety systems.

With its congested cities and air quality issues, China is a strong market for vehicles that align with GM's vision for sustainable urban mobility. The automaker showed a life-sized clay model of the EN-V 2.0, based on the EN-V concept introduced at Expo 2010 in Shanghai.

The EN-V 2.0 is a two-seat electric vehicle designed to help alleviate traffic congestion and parking issues.

"EN-V 2.0 is being developed and will be tested first right here in China," Socia noted. "This is a further testament to the important role that China is playing in GM's product development strategy."

Along with existing products such as the Buick LaCrosse with eAssist, Cadillac Escalade Hybrid and Chevrolet Volt, the EN-V 2.0 project is part of GM's overall vehicle electrification strategy.

Sustainability is another key factor, and the ATC's R&D team is working to create battery cells, come up with newer, stronger lightweight materials, more efficient and greener manufacturing processes, advanced engines

and transmissions, and leading-edge mobile apps to keep the urban customer connected while driving, said Jon Lauckner, GM chief technology officer, vice president of Global Research & Development, and president of GM Ventures.

One such sustainability breakthrough GM China can cite with pride is the lightweight magnesium alloy that will help improve its vehicles' fuel economy. GM has also had successes in developing batteries in China to power the next generation of electric vehicles.

Just like GM customers here in North America, buyers in China and around the world are interested in the latest connectivity and infotainment features.

The Advanced Technology Center is also forging new paths in these areas. For example, China customers will be able to use a Shanghai OnStar mobile app for the Sail SPRINGO EV, which will let owners monitor the car's battery charge and the vehicle's remaining EV range by using their smartphones.

Also, Cadillac plans to add one new model each year to its China lineup, starting with the XTS in early 2013.

The ATC's new Advanced Design Center gives designers the state-of-the-art tools and equipment to enable them to explore future mobility solutions and technology integration.

"Our new Advanced Design Center in Shanghai is part of the GM Global Design Center network, which webs from California to Germany to India and Korea and points beyond," said Wulin Gaowa, design director of the GM China Advanced Design Center.

"We are building a team of talented local designers and modelers that will enable us to deliver world-class work for China and other markets."

GM completed the ATC's first phase, which included a battery cell testing lab, battery material lab, metallography and electrochemical lab, cell fabrication lab, and micro-foundry and formability lab, in September 2011.

The automaker broke ground on the facility, which is adjacent to the GM International Operations and GM China Headquarters, in July 2010 as a joint venture with SAIC (Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation).

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