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Chrysler Plans to Include 49 New Vehicles

by Jim Stickford

On Jan. 30 Chrysler released, along with its 2012 profit statement, the company's most recent product plan for the future and it got people talking.

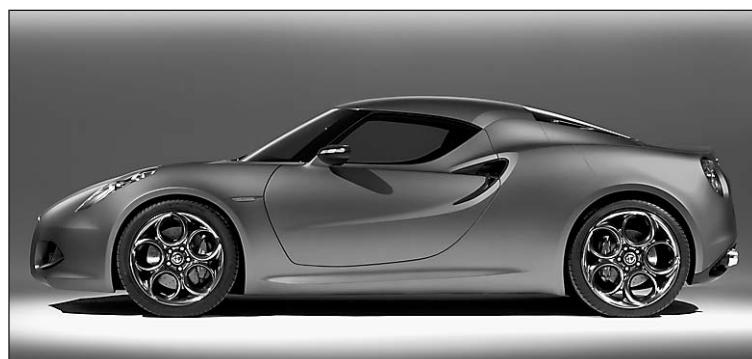
The *Detroit News* noted that the new plan calls for the introduction of 47 new or significantly refreshed models over the next four years – including six Alfa Romeos.

That is, *The News* noted, more than a dozen more than the company had planned to bring to market, according to the last product plan unveiled after Fiat SpA took over Chrysler in 2009 as part of a bailout brokered by the U.S. government.

Dale Buss, a contributor to *Forbes.com*, on the other hand, stated that Chrysler needs to refresh its product line to keep up with competition, but resources are being sent to Fiat to help that company in the European economic downturn.

He went on to write that in 2009, Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne ambitiously outlined a variety of new products for the Chrysler-owned brands, many of them derived from Fiat platforms, that would be filling out the sparse portfolios especially of Chrysler and Dodge right about now.

But under the drastic new scalebacks, three Chrysler vehicles



Alfa Romeo 4C

that were to be built by Fiat for introduction this year and next year instead have been dropped. It looks, Buss wrote, like a refreshing of the Chrysler 200 won't happen until 2014. If the brand can hang on with its threadbare lineup until 2015, three new Chrysler vehicles are to arrive then.

Rick Deneau, head of brands - Chrysler brand, sales, network development and fleet communication, said he read the *Forbes* story and had two comments. First the 2009 plan was always meant to be fluid and it only made sense that Chrysler reacted to market conditions in the updated version. Second, that while Chrysler made some cuts to the 2009 plan, the 2013 plan shows that they've added more vehicles to be refreshed or built.

"I would say there's been a net gain from the 2009 plan to the 2013 plan," Deneau said. "I also will say that there will probably continue to be changes to the product plan as market conditions continue to change."

Deneau said it was far too soon to talk about production information concerning where the new Chrysler and Fiats will be made. He said that's something that will happen two or three years down the road.

Dave Cutting, senior manager of North American forecasting for the Troy forecasting company LMC Automotive, said that he's reviewed the new product plan.

"A lot of people are referencing the product plan that originally came out in 2009," Cutting said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Buick January Retail Sales Soar to Best in Nine Years

Buick's adding technology to their vehicles as part of an effort to get younger buyers interested in the brand is paying off, as evidenced by the most recent monthly sales figures.

Buick's January retail sales were the highest in nine years and were up 30 percent year over year. Total sales, including those sold to executive fleets and other commercial customers, were up 32 percent, ending the month at a level unmatched since 2006.

January also saw the first deliveries of Buick's new luxury small crossover, the Encore. Kelleigh Sheehy, a bank underwriter from Marietta, Ga., was among the first owners to drive one home. After building her ideal Encore on *Buick.com*, she went to Carl Black Buick in Kennesaw, Ga., and learned that an exact match would be the first vehicle delivered.

"It was meant to be," Sheehy said. "But that only came after a lot of research and test drives. Every other vehicle had some compromise, but the Encore had everything on my wish list. I traded in a Volkswagen Jetta and the luxury, quietness and amenities of the Encore are beyond comparison."

It's been Encore's quietness



2013 Buick Enclave

that's made the biggest impression on Sheehy. "The one thing I tell my friends about most is how quiet my car is. It's uncanny."

Autotrader.com recently named Encore to its list of "Top 10 Must Test Drive Vehicles for 2013," calling it a "nimble crossover SUV with an exceptionally quiet ride, a high-tech interior and estimated highway fuel economy of 33 mpg." Encore is also on the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy's list of "Greener Choices 2013."

The brand's second crossover and fifth model in the lineup arrives as Buick crossover sales are surging.

Enclave sales had their best January ever, in terms of both retail and total sales.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

'Chrysler is as American as It Was When It Was Founded' – Marchionne

Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne, in an interview with WJR radio personality Paul W. Smith, talked about the company's Super Bowl commercials the day after they aired.

Smith began the interview by praising Chrysler in getting Oprah Winfrey to narrate the Jeep commercial about troops returning home and using a speech by the late Paul Harvey about the American farmer for Ram.

"That was just unbelievable, and again Chrysler was able to

ascend above the fray of ordinary Super Bowl advertising as it did with Eminem and 'Imported from Detroit,' as it did in last year's half-time spot, Clint Eastwood – only this time, Sergio Marchionne, you did it twice," Smith said. "I am stunned because I was kind of reducing my expectations because I couldn't believe you could do it three times in a row."

Marchionne said that doing this year's commercials weren't easy and he is worried about

coming up with something better for 2014. Smith then said the commercials touched upon Americana and that it was interesting that a company that is now Italian and American seems to understand the American psyche as well as it does.

"Look, the important thing, from our standpoint, is that we have never been ethically confused about what Chrysler is," Marchionne said. "Chrysler is as American as it was when it was founded and it will stay that way

forever, I mean as long as we're involved, and I think we need to be very, very careful that we don't start playing this sort of international card."

Smith then transitioned to Chrysler's improving financial status, pointing out that Moody's had just raised the company's rating. Marchionne said the fact that the financial markets are beginning to recognize what Chrysler is doing is great.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Sergio Marchionne

Lincoln Motor Company Internet Search Soars 350% After Super Bowl Commercial

Super Bowl Sunday was a big day for the Baltimore Ravens and for the advertisers of America, including the newly named Lincoln Motor Company.

So the question is how did Lincoln do?

Michael Stelmaszek, group creative director at Campbell Ewald in Warren, said the Lincoln commercial, which featured a story line determined by viewers of "The Jimmy Fallon Show" who used social media to "write" a script for images provided by Lincoln.

"What we saw from Lincoln is in direct contrast from how the other automakers advertised," Stelmaszek said. "Ram did a two-minute commercial that was a love letter to the American farmer. Jeep honored our soldiers. Audi's commercial was about bravery. They were about people or values and they honored the audience with a laugh or a story."

Lincoln, on the other hand,

talked about themselves, Stelmaszek said. And in his mind that ended up being just another car commercial.

"I'll leave it up to others to say whether or not that choice of how to go was successful," Stelmaszek said. "I will say that on Super Bowl Sunday people tune in to see the game played at its highest level, and I think that ap-

plies equally to the ads."

Stelmaszek said Super Bowl ads work best if they embrace the day, and the goal of any Super Bowl ad is to take advantage of the largest TV audience of the year. And if a company is successful doing that, they "can strike gold."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



2013 Lincoln MKZ

Joe Flacco (right) is presented with the keys to a 2014 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray from Chevrolet Dealer Rick Flick for being named MVP.

Flacco Wins Super Bowl and Stingray

Super Bowl XLVII MVP Joe Flacco had more than his football victory to celebrate. The Baltimore Ravens' star quarterback got a handshake and keys to a 2014 Corvette Stingray from Chevy Dealer Rick Flick of New Orleans' Banner Chevrolet for being the team's MVP.

Banner Chevrolet, which has been a part of Flick's family for 40 years, was wiped out by Hurricane Katrina but bounced back to become the first business to reopen in New Orleans East after the devastating 2005 storm.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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