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FIRST GLANCE

Mercury Crossover Hints at the Future Now and Then



Phot

Mercury Meta One concept

By **NICK KURCZEWSKI**

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Introduced on Monday: Mercury Meta One, a crossover design study.

What's the point? The Meta One concept has a dual mission: to showcase future Ford technology, including diesel hybrids and warning systems that buzz the driver when the car is off course, while hinting at the shape of Mercury's crossover.

Is it Real? Minor stylistic flourishes aside, the design of the Meta One is close to that of the soon-to-arrive Mercury crossover. However, the Meta One is strictly a concept vehicle.

The company line: "It's a showcase of technology we're developing to meet demand for vehicles that are environmentally friendly and also affordable" -- Phil

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Martens, Ford's group vice president of product creation.

The view from here: As with any potential environmentally friendly vehicle, the de rigueur images of trees and waterfalls were displayed on jumbo screens as the Meta One climbed on to the stage. Company execs touted the concept as proof that Ford is taking hybrid and safety technology seriously. A lane-departure warning system and 'Collision Mitigation by Braking' - which senses an impending accident and applies the brakes - are interesting safety features that might appear on the 2007 Mercury crossover.

What makes it tick? Ford chose to combine diesel power and an electric motor. The result is a hybrid 2.7-liter twin-turbo V-6 that produces 238-horsepower and whopping 431 pounds-feet of torque.

How much? How soon? The Meta One is a show car, but chances are good that some of its safety features and hybrid technology will eventually make it into production.

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