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Kia Thinks 'Inside' the Design Box

First there was the POP, now Kia Motors has stretched the design envelope even further with the funky KV7 concept vehicle unveiled at the Detroit Motor Show.

Letting their imaginations run wild, Kia designers decided to think 'inside the box' with their radical idea for a lifestyle vehicle that would stand out from the crowd, just as the unique electric POP concept mini car did at the Paris Motor Show a few months earlier.

The dare-to-be-different design concept of the KV7 takes the distinctive styling of the Soul urban crossover to a new level, in doing so Kia designers have rejected the pseudo 'sporty' descriptions that many manufacturers use to describe People Movers or Minivans.

"Everyone seems so desperate to attach the word 'sporty' to their minivan, even though vans, at their very core are simply a box," says Tom Kearns, Chief Designer, Kia Motors America.

"Rather than reject the box we chose to celebrate it, just like we did with the Soul, and the result is a vehicle that is meeting the needs and functionality of the modern generation of consumers."

The KV7 concept's most striking feature is its passenger-side gullwing door, in place of the usual sliding door, which creates a massive point-of-entry to the lounge-like interior when opened in conjunction with the pillar-less front passenger door. There's also a new interpretation of the Tiger Nose grille, which incorporates vertical LED headlamps, plus a continuous line of LED fog lights that spans the entire width of the front bumper lower lip - Kia is evaluating this unique lighting design for possible use in future vehicles.

The interior of the KV7 also pushes conventional thinking, with four individual swiveling seats (including the driver's) that can turn to face the three-person, rear-corner mini lounge seating. Kia describes it as

comparable with modern social networking environment, Kia has also moved to be innovative by linking the vehicle to media technology with Wi Fi internet connections on the move and the rear passengers have their own, separate interface in the form of a floating tabletop touch-screen computer display.

When the KV7 concept's push button start is engaged, the entire front dash moves more than 10cm towards the driver, bringing all controls within easy reach, innovative technology includes the large multi-use display that integrates infotainment, climate and navigation systems in one simple-to-use interface controlled by a trackball mouse mounted in the dash.

Reflecting the experimental use of LED lighting on the exterior, the KV7's concept's interior also features multiple flush-to-the-floor accent illumination points and standout green LED lighting throughout the front dash, instrument panel and rear display area to compliment the vehicle's color palette.

The final element that distinguishes the KV7 concept from the traditional minivan crowd can be found under the bonnet – the concept is powered by Kia's latest Theta II 2.0-litre GDI 4 cylinder turbocharged engine, which is capable of delivering up to 213 kW that is mated to a six-speed automatic transmission to deliver V6-type power and performance from a smaller more efficient powerplant, further evidence of Kia's move to more environmentally friendly vehicles.

Todd McDonald, General Manager of Kia Motors New Zealand describes the KV7 as a "unique showcase of the flair and design talent that is driving design, technology and eco-friendliness at Kia Motors" and he is keen to see which of the interesting technologies seen in the concept will find their way into production vehicles.

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Photo caption: The Kia KV7 concept is unlike any other people mover.

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