



KIA MOTORS

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Kia Wins Top Concept Award

Kia's open-air Sou'ster concept has won the 2009 Concept Truck of the Year, marking a first in this contest for Kia Motors.

The Soul'ster, which appeared at the Detroit Motor Show in January, went up against a number of other concepts at the 2009 North American Concept Vehicle of the Year Awards just held at the Automotive Hall of Fame in Dearborn, Michigan.

The Soul'ster is part-cabriolet and part-ute and it caused such a stir at the Detroit Show Kia Motors is now seriously considering putting the vehicle into production. It is based on the five-door Soul crossover, which recently went on sale in New Zealand

The eighth annual North American Concept Vehicle of the Year Awards recognise those vehicles most likely to shape the future of the automobile industry, with a jury of more than two dozen US automotive journalists selecting the winners from 23 Concept Vehicles and 11 Production Preview Vehicles that appeared during the 2009 auto show season.

According to juror Lou Ann Hammond: "The Kia Soul'ster shows the playfulness of the designers from the initial design of the Soul."

Tom Kearns, Chief Designer Kia Design Centre America says the award is a great honour and is "further proof that Kia's global commitment to design is dramatically altering the brand's image and consumer's opinion of our company and our vehicles."

Meanwhile, the Soul production car is also grabbing numerous awards for itself. The latest comes from the American car dealer bible Kelley Blue Book, which selected the Soul for its 2009 Top 10 Coolest New Cars Under US\$18,000 list.

The Soul was lauded for being a cool, affordable ride with a growing emphasis on personality, versatility and technology.

Kelley Blue Book editors use the same set of criteria that many consumers use in examining this category: safety, fuel economy, interior size, comfort, technology, the vehicle's fun-to-drive-factor, as well as the decidedly subjective "cool" factor.

They said: "You don't have to drop the big bucks to get a car with kickin' style and all the techie gadgets required to get by in the world today. Every Kia Soul comes with standout styling, Bluetooth phone connectivity, an auxiliary audio input and iPod integration. But the pulsing speaker lights are the first things you'll show your friends."



The Kia Soul urban has also been named as having the 'Grooviest Interior' on the Ward's AutoWorld magazine 'Interior of the Year' list.

Ward's AutoWorld editors evaluated a field of 35 new vehicles, divided into six car and truck segments based on price, with one winner being named for each of the six categories. Vehicles were awarded points for design, material selection, fit-and-finish, ergonomics, driver information, safety, value and comfort.

Soul offers consumers a highly customisable vehicle with an equally "groovy" yet user-friendly and practical interior space, say the Ward's editors. With design elements influenced by the car's audio system, Soul offers an uncluttered dashboard with a three-dial instrument cluster, LCD illumination and floating center stack design that provides access to the AM/FM/CD/MP3 audio system. Standard USB and auxiliary input jacks also are in the centre console with full iPod® and MP3 controllability via the audio head unit and steering wheel controls achieved with an optional accessory iPod cable. And on the top model (the Soul Burner) speaker lights pulse to the beat of the music or can just be set to create a 'mood'.

All Soul models offer funky upholstery design with "glowing" Soul logo inserts on one model and the Soul Burner presenting a bold red-black interior trim with red-trimmed cloth seats and metal-finish interior accents.

Todd McDonald, General Manager for Kia Motors New Zealand, says the awards show Kia is proving itself as a brand that can excite customers and win awards at the same time.

"Kia is increasingly seen as a trend-setter, a car maker that people increasingly associate with excitement, technology and fresh design ideas," he adds.

"And should Kia decide to put the Soul'ster into production we would be very keen to introduce it to the New Zealand market."

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Photo Caption: The Kia Soul'ster has been voted 2009 Concept Truck of the Year.

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