

OUT OF HOME

Porsche takes hybrids around the bend to reassert heritage

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Porsche Cayenne S E-Hybrid

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

German automaker Porsche is showcasing a pair of hybrids in Canada to recover forgotten heritage.

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On Nov. 20, Porsche Cars Canada launched an E-Performance mobile display at Yorkdale Mall in Toronto that will travel around the country to show off a racing and a road-built hybrid. Having vehicles and product specialists on-site will help consumers understand Porsche's environmental ties and assuage any potential worries about too-strong a shift in brand identity.

Up around the bend

The display will spend just shy of a month in malls in Toronto, Ottawa, Quebec City, Edmonton, Vancouver and Montreal between now and July. It will include a replica of the 919 Hybrid, which won a prize at this year's World Endurance Championship, as well as a 2016 Cayenne S E-Hybrid.



Porsche E-Performance display

Although Porsche is widely known for its sports cars, its history of hybrids extends much further than that of most brands. Ferdinand Porsche built a battery-powered electric vehicle, the Lohner-Porsche, in 1900.

Emphasizing this history positions the new hybrid vehicles as extensions of the Porsche brand that are true to the heritage rather than a betrayal of it. As with any sector, automotive enthusiasts are often drawn to a brand's story as

much as its products, and positioning the hybrid as a part of that story will help retain loyal consumers and win over new ones.



Porsche 919 race car

Similarly, showcasing the prize-winning racing hybrid will show consumers that making a vehicle environmentally friendly does not need to mean compromising speed, handling and other aspects of performance.

Additionally, the price of the 2016 Panamera S E-Hybrid has been lowered by \$3,400 compared to the 2015 model, aligning it with the non-hybrid model. In theory, pricing the cars equally will sway some consumers to purchase the hybrid model, which in turn will help Porsche reposition itself as an environmentally responsible automaker.



Porsche GTS Cayenne

Young consumers are particularly sensitive to a brand's values, so pushing hybrid vehicles could be an attempt to reach younger consumers. Having product specialists on-site will also help Porsche emphasize its history of hybrids, providing authenticity to the pivot.

Drive my car

Other automakers are grappling with how electric and low-emissions cars can fit into a fleet known for style.

For example, British automaker Aston Martin is speeding into both the future and China with the announcement of an electric RapidE concept vehicle.

The concept model is being developed in conjunction with investors ChinaEquity and collaborators Williams Advanced Engineering and marks the first step in Aston Martin's move toward zero-emission sports cars. The growth of electric vehicles is nearly irreversible at this point, and any automaker hoping to compete in the future will likely need to have at least one in its fleet ([see story](#)).

For Porsche, advertising hybrid vehicles could help assuage bad publicity stemming from Volkswagen's recent emissions scandal.

Earlier this month, it was revealed that German automaker Volkswagen's emission cheating scandal might now include Porsche-made models.

On Nov. 2, United States regulators said 10,000 Porsche vehicles contained software that allowed the Volkswagen-owned automaker to give false reading during emissions testing. With 10,000 vehicles added to the approximately 500,000 U.S. automobiles cited by the Environmental Protection Agency and California regulators, the increase will

continue to hurt Volkswagen's credibility ([see story](#)).

Final Take

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