

MOBILE

Ferrari, Mercedes-Benz leap ahead of the pack with Apple car technology

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By SARAH JONES

Luxury automakers are beginning to pair up with technology giant Apple to make their automobiles' user interfaces easier for iPhone owners to operate and more engaging.

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Italy's Ferrari and Germany's Mercedes-Benz are early adopters of Apple's new CarPlay infotainment system that syncs up dashboard and wheel controls to the consumer's Apple device. Until other automakers incorporate this system, Apple's technology is going to give these two brands an advantage in the luxury market due to the proliferation of iPhone owners.

"Apple has been carving its place in the automotive arena for quite some time, so it's no surprise that car manufacturers have warmed to the idea of leveraging the tech giant's latest and greatest," said Ryan Martin, associate analyst at [Yankee Group](#), Boston.

"However, it's unlikely that auto original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) will remain exclusive to Apple/iOS solutions in the end since it would polarize their addressable market," he said. "Rather, it's more likely we'll see interoperability drive the conversation, and it's the backend systems that will enable such flexibility."

Mr. Martin is not affiliated with Ferrari or Mercedes-Benz but agreed to comment as an

industry expert.

Ferrari did not respond before press deadline, and **Mercedes-Benz** was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

Apple dashboard

At the Geneva International Motor Show, Ferrari unveiled its FF model and Mercedes-Benz introduced its C-Class, which both include CarPlay.

CarPlay enabled cars have a connector so consumers can plug their iPhones into the car. The Apple interface then takes over the native dashboard screen.



Apple CarPlay in Mercedes-Benz C-Class

Using CarPlay, consumers can make calls, use the Maps application, listen to music and access their messages.

These features can be accessed from the car's interface or by pushing and holding the voice control button on the steering wheel, which will activate Siri.

CarPlay also anticipates destinations based on contacts and recent searches in Maps.

For entertainment, consumers can listen to iTunes Radio or music, podcasts and audiobooks they have stored on their device. CarPlay also works with third-party apps such as Spotify and iHeartRadio.

In a statement, Apple said that this system will enable consumers to focus more on driving, since interacting with their device will be simplified.

"Content delivery is one of the primary assets mobile and connected car technologies bring to the table," Mr. Martin said. "For consumers, it means both untethered access to information and the opportunity to capitalize on a highly-personalized in-vehicle experience.

"For car companies, mobile technologies provide an opportunity to augment their brand, layer additional services and deliver bespoke end-user functionality," he said. "Vehicles equipped with embedded connectivity take this a step further, giving the ability to monitor,

manage and maintain their fleets remotely."

Consumers will be able to get CarPlay as an update to iOS 7. The system only works with the most recent iPhones, the 5, 5S and 5C, because it requires the Lightning connector.

Ferrari will be the first car company to commercialize its Apple Car Play-enabled vehicle.

Coming soon will be cars by Jaguar, Land Rover and BMW that integrate with CarPlay.

Forbes columnist Mark Rogowsky [notes](#) that Apple users scoop up whatever new device the company offers, so they are likely to seek out a car that has this technology. For automakers not intending to work with Apple on this system, their sales are likely to be hurt if they do not change their minds.

New features

In addition to this technological advancement, the convention has been the breeding ground for a bevy of new models.

Luxury automakers jostled for the spotlight during the opening days of the Geneva Motor Show with a host of releases that will likely set the tone for the year.

Rolls-Royce unveiled a new Ghost series, Jaguar refreshed plans for a mid-sized sports sedan and Maserati boasted a founder-inspired concept car that propels its centenary celebrations. The lengthy motor show also provided automakers with an occasion to showcase new technologies, particularly on the mobile integration and wireless fronts ([see story](#)).

Other automakers are finding ways to integrate mobile into the driving experience.

For instance, German automaker BMW announced that it is extending its BMW i Remote Application to the Samsung Galaxy Gear smartwatch Jan. 10 at the International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

The Galaxy Gear synchronizes with an owner's smartphone to display essential functions in a more accessible manner. The Remote App provides drivers with accurate assessments of their BMW i3's status and allows for communication between the two ([see story](#)).

Ferrari and Mercedes-Benz may be first, but a number of automakers are certain to follow.

"Luxury brands such as Mercedes-Benz and Ferrari are often at the epicenter of automotive innovation and, quite frankly, they need to be for end-users to find value in a premium-pricing model," Mr. Martin said.

"That said, integrating Apple's CarPlay strikes me as more of an initiative to stay current with technology trends rather than use it as a strategic differentiator," he said. "The herd of auto OEMs that follow will further illustrate this point."

Final Take

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