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54th Annual International Auto Show
 Presented by **AutoTrader.com**

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54TH ANNUAL SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE|SFGATE.COM INTERNATIONAL AUTO SHOW TO EXHIBIT AUTO DESIGNS FOR EVERY STAGE OF LIFE

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (November 8, 2011) – Cars tell a lot about their drivers: Soccer moms usually don't haul teams in a pricy, two-seat sports car -- which is more likely to be owned by a well-to-do single urbanite or empty nesters ready for a fling.

Drivers from high school students to senior citizens will find cars for every stage in life among the hundreds of vehicles exhibited at the 54th Annual San Francisco Chronicle|SFGate.com International Auto Show presented by AutoTrader.com, November 19 – 27, at Moscone Center.

Toyota expects the Scion IQ, the new Lexus GS series and the all-new Camry hybrid to be the company's hottest models in 2012, each geared for different buyers. The Scion IQ was engineered and manufactured by Toyota for the upscale, young urban professional. "It is not for families with more than 1.2 kids," said spokesman Michael Dobrin.

On the other hand, drivers behind the wheel of a Lexus are generally in the 40 to 60-year age group---successful executives, male and female, or the parents of grown children no longer living in the family home, according to Dobrin.

Camry, Toyota's best seller for the past 13 years, appeals to families, according to Dobrin said.

Ford's United States sales analyst Erick Merkle said the company is looking at two segments of the population as buyers of the Explorer and the Escape. "The Explorer is a remake for people who want utility and fuel efficiency," Merkle said. "It appeals to folks in their 40s and 50s, who like the outdoors and like to travel with family, friends, a dog." "Millenials," the children of the Baby Boomers, and their parents will both be attracted to the Ford Escape, but for different reasons, Merkle said. "Baby boomers have passed their peak earning period---which is 48 according to the Department of Labor, and they are looking to downsize both homes and vehicles," Merkle said. "Their children are now starting families of their own and they need more space in their homes and vehicles."

However, Merkle said, the trend is toward smaller, more fuel-efficient vehicles and he expects that to continue, led by California drivers, who represent about 10 percent of all vehicle registrations in the country. "Almost 30 percent of those purchases are small cars, compared to 20 percent nationally."

Volvo's hot S60 sports sedan and the XC 60 crossover appeal to very different buyers, said James Hope, product communications manager. "The S60 is a sports sedan that can seat five and do it in a Volvo, which is the safest car on the road," Hope said. "It works perfectly for the driver who loves cars and has a family."

Hope said hundreds of people are involved in developing Volvo models. "We look at the market and determine where we think we can be a player."

Merkle said designers have to anticipate what the market will be years ahead when a concept rolls off the production line. "It generally takes from 36 to 48 months from concept to production, but it could be longer," said Tom Matano, director of the Industrial Design Department of San Francisco's Academy of Art University. Matano, who is teaching the creators of the cars of tomorrow, was a designer for Mazda for 20 years before joining the university faculty. "Designers have sensitivity," Matano said. "We are early adapter of new trends, which we transfer into design. That is our innate ability."

A concept might start in a studio with a group sitting around sketching, or in the head of a single designer, but sooner or later, they need to think about who will buy the cars, Matano said. Designers must look ahead of current trends to the drivers five or even 10 years down the road. Being on trend is way behind the curve. "The final decision on a concept rests in the board room, but design must have marketing support," Matano said. "However, if the company president supports a concept, like Lee Iococca did with the Mustang, he or she can make it happen and that process can come up with exciting new concepts."

Matano believes the better knowledge of engineering, the better chance designers have of seeing their concepts go into production. "Creativity and engineering have to be balanced for a design to be producible," Matano said. "Designers can be inspired by airplane developments, the magical mechanisms of nature, by sculpture." They can be engineers or art school graduates like Freeman Thomas. Thomas is Ford's strategic design director. He runs the advanced design studios in California and Dearborn, Mich., collaborating with engineers and product experts to create new production vehicles. "I have been designing my dream cars all of my life," he said. "It's my passion."

He considers design essentially an act of rebellion. "It's about taking risks---and winning," he said.

Matano takes a more calculated approach to design. "I have a mechanical engineering background, so I look at the purest dynamic," Matano said. "How can I bring to the street what is happening on the race track?"

Bottom line...who will be behind the wheel? And that is what drives design.

The San Francisco Chronicle|SFGate.com 54th Annual International Auto Show, presented by AutoTrader.com and supported by the California Motor Car Dealers Association, will run for nine days, November 19-27, 2011 at the Moscone Convention Center and promises to be the most spectacular ever.

This year's show will fill Moscone Center with exhibits in the north and south halls and the Gateway plus the north and south lobby areas. Vehicles representing the work of 38 manufacturers for the year 2012 and beyond will all be on display including several new introductions, exotic sports cars, alternative fuel, hybrid and high-mileage vehicles plus special exhibits including the Academy of Art University Classic Car Collection, the Aftermarket Alley, hot rods from Dominator Street Rods and an auto accessory area.

Show hours are:

Saturday, November 19 – Saturday, November 26: 10:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.

Sunday, November 27: 10:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Admission is \$9 for adults with children 12-years and under free when accompanied by an adult. Tickets can be purchased at the door. For more information visit www.sfautoshow.com.

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