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2011 Ford Fiesta

Ford will bring its sixth-generation Fiesta subcompact to the U.S. in the first half of 2010, the first time since the first-generation Fiesta landed here 30 years ago. We expect it to be priced in the mid-teens alongside the Chevy Aveo, Honda Fit, Nissan Versa, Smart ForTwo, and Toyota Yaris, and be very competitive.

One of the best-selling cars in Europe, this latest-generation Ford Fiesta has earned product awards from European journalists and European engineers.

We're expecting to see both the four-door sedan and five-door hatchback here in the North American market.

The 2011 Ford Fiesta come with 1.4-liter (95 hp) and 1.6-liter (118 hp) four-cylinder engines and five-speed manual, automatic or dual-clutch transmissions. We've found these engines smooth and flexible, never thrashing and deliver good performance and mileage; home market diesels, rated up to 65 mpg, are cost prohibitive here, so we're not expecting them.

Driving characteristics of the Fiesta are excellent and quite refined; we suspect the Honda Fit is the only car in the class that could give it a run around a winding road and wouldn't feel so polished doing so. Steering is nicely weighted and precise, the ride an ideal blend of comfort and control, the brakes quick to act yet easy to modulate.

The shape mimics Ford's recent Verve show car, very sleek and aerodynamic without being bland or boxy; it looks considerably better than the average \$14,000 car. Despite the rakish roof line we put four six-footers in one simultaneously without looking like a circus act. There's also decent space behind the folding rear seat, with a deep trunk well and easy access.

While other markets have myriad trim choices we anticipate only the top tier stateside. Figure seven airbags, central locking, pushbutton start, projector headlamps and trip computer as standard, power windows and air conditioning probable, and options likely to include leather upholstery and navigation. The cabin layout is contemporary and functional, with good fit and finish to the materials.

Fiestas will be built for the electronically mobile generation and sport audio input and USB ports. The only nit we could find was the location of the USB port: right where cupholder contents will empty in a hard stop

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