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## Kia shows concepts, Panoz showcases roadster

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DETROIT — Three limited- to small-production vehicles and one concept were the subject of the last afternoon of media previews at the North American International Auto Show. Among the more interesting events was the 2000 Panoz Esperante intro, which featured company founder Dan Panoz and his father Don, who serves as chief executive officer. There were also two drivers for Panoz Motor Sports — Johnny O'Connell and Jan Magnussen — on hand to autograph posters. Most of the action this afternoon was in Michigan Hall, which houses all the exotic manufacturers.

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### Kia Sportage concept

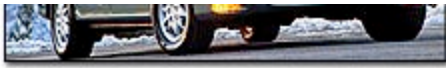
Kia's Wednesday afternoon conference was light on product news and heavy on company history and organization. The event marked the first public appearance of B. M. Ahn in his new role as president and CEO. Ahn comes to Kia from Hyundai, which recently purchased the financially troubled automaker after it fell into receivership. Ahn said it was too early to comment on how the two brands would be maintained or if there would be any platform consolidations. He did point out that Kia enjoyed its best sales year ever in 1998, coming close to selling as many units in the United States as Hyundai. Next month also marks the fifth anniversary of Kia's entrance into the U.S. market.



Kia Sportage 4x4



In the background sat a concept version of the [Kia Sportage 4x4](#) with special off-road gear and a targa top. The two-door concept has a Day-Glo green exterior with purple accents. Coming down the pipeline are a stretched V-6 Sportage, the Sedona



Kia Sedona

minivan and the tentatively named B-Car. The Sedona will be introduced in June 2000 as a 2001 model year. Both

the V-6 Sportage utility vehicle and B-Car subcompact are expected in 2000, but no launch dates have been set.

## 2000 Panoz Esperante

Featuring more curves than Jessica Rabbit and boasting high performance, the [2000 Panoz Esperante](#) was introduced at the Detroit auto show Wednesday.



Panoz Esperante

Anywhere from several hundred up to 1,000 Esperantes will be built, contingent on demand. It will go on sale in the second quarter of 1999 and will be distributed through a 25-dealer national network. This model is designed to be sold in the international market, although Dan Panoz, founder of Panoz Auto Development, told a German journalist that the company is seeking European distributors and that any interested parties should contact him.

Although a price has yet to be set, Panoz said the Esperante would be more expensive than a production vehicle and less expensive than other hand-built, coach cars. The vehicle meets all federal emissions and safety standards.

The display model, which is a pre-production prototype, is an electric blue, two-seater with a soft top. The aluminum body panels feature prominent side vents behind the front-wheel arches. The vehicle's lines bear a strong resemblance to Jaguar's XK8, a display model of which was next to the Panoz booth, although the Esperante is sportier.

Inside, the Esperante is clad in black leather and gauges are located in the center of the dash — just above and to the right of the steering wheel. Other nice touches include wood trim, chrome foot pedals and high-back contoured bucket seats.

The aluminum 4.6-liter, V-8 engine is developed by Ford's SVT group and produces 320 horsepower. Dan Panoz praised the SVT power plant, of which only 10,000 are hand-built each year by two-person teams. Initial production models will be equipped with five-speed manual transmissions, while a five-speed sequential/automatic will be available as an option in 2001. Visteon Automotive Systems, an enterprise of Ford, is providing current production components as well as developing all new technologies for the Esperante.

*Reported by [Mary S. Butler](#), [cars.com](#)*

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