







Mercury

Mercury



Type	division
Founded	1939, by Edsel Ford
Headquarters	Dearborn, Michigan, United States
Key people	Edsel Ford, founder
Industry	Automobile
Products	Luxury vehicles
Parent	Ford Motor Company
Website	mercuryvehicles.com

Mercury is an automobile marque of the Ford Motor Company founded in 1939 by Edsel Ford, son of Henry Ford, to market entry-level-luxury cars slotted between Ford-branded regular models and Lincoln-branded luxury vehicles, similar to General Motors' Buick (and former Oldsmobile) brand and Chrysler's Chrysler brand. Today, all Mercury models are based on Ford platforms. The name "Mercury" is derived from the "messenger of the gods" of Roman mythology, and during its early years, the Mercury brand was known for performance, which was briefly revived in 2003 with the Mercury Marauder. The Mercury brand is used in the United States, Mexico, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Middle East. In 1999 the Mercury brand was dropped in Canada, although the Grand Marquis was still marketed there wearing a Mercury badge through 2007.

History of Mercury

Mercury was its own division at Ford until 1945 when it was combined with Lincoln into the Lincoln-Mercury Division, with Ford hoping the brand would be known as a "junior Lincoln", rather than an upmarket Ford. In 1949, Mercury introduced the first of its "new look", integrated bodies, at the same time that Ford and Lincoln also changed styling radically. Again in 1952, Mercury offered a further modernization in its look. In 1958, the Lincoln-Mercury Division and the ill-fated Edsel brand were joined into the Mercury-Edsel-Lincoln Division; with the demise of Edsel in 1960, it has been in the Lincoln-Mercury Division ever since.

Mercury, like the defunct Edsel, was created from scratch, rather than being a takeover of an existing company like Lincoln. Mercury's heyday was in the 1950s, when its formula of stretching and lowering existing Ford platforms was very successful. The marque has changed several times throughout its history. During the 1940s and 1950s, the make moved between as a "gussied up" Ford, to a "junior Lincoln" and even to having its own body designs. From the late 1950s, through the 1960s and early 1970s, Mercury began to distance itself from Ford and offered several different looking models such as the Turnpike Cruiser, Park Lane, Cougar and Marquis. During Ford Division's "Total Performance" era in the early 1960s, Mercury produced some equivalent models, such as the full-size S-55 Marauders, which shared the same body styles and mechanics as the Ford Galaxie 500/XL sports models. These big Mercurys were somewhat successful in racing. But in the late 1970s to the early 1980s the brand was joined at the hip with Ford again and its image suffered as a result.

Mercury sales peaked in 1978 at 580,000 and again in 1993 at over 480,000. Since then, sales have declined by more than half to roughly 200,000 annually. In the mid-1990s the Mercury car brand received some very good free PR when country music star Alan Jackson scored a hit with a cover of K. C. Douglas' "Mercury Blues", a song which heaps complimentary praise on their vehicle range.

Mercury has had a few unique models not shared with domestic Fords, but usually related to other vehicles sold domestically or world wide. These include the Capri convertible (which shared some parts with the Mazda 323 but wasn't nearly as popular, ending production in Australia in 1993), Mercury Tracer (later shared with the Escort, but was a Mexican-built version of the Mazda 323 hatchback in the late 1980s and in '90), Mercury Villager (a name used earlier as a luxury station wagon, but from 1993-2003, it was a minivan shared with Nissan, which sold its version as the Quest and built the drivetrain for both versions), Mercury Cougar (1999-2002, based on the Ford Contour/Mercury Mystique/Ford Mondeo platform but sporting a 2-door, hatchback only bodystyle with sharp styling not shared with the more mundane sedan versions), and the German built Mercury Capri in the '70s (before that model moved to the Ford Fox platform as a twin to Ford Mustang). In 1971, dealers also sold the De Tomaso Pantera, an exotic sports car, with a Ford V-8.



Mercury (Lincoln-Mercury Division), Ford Motor Company, 1975-1990

Mercury's ride through the seventies and eighties wasn't gentle, but it fared better than some. Mercury continued its historical role of dressing up plainer Ford vehicles and selling them at a higher price, as "near luxury" cars. This type of car was the bread and butter of the 1970s car market. Unfortunately for Mercury, there were too many "near luxury" cars on the market. Only Mercury's niche products, like the Cougar XR-7 specialty coupe, seemed to find real success with buyers. Much of this might really have had to do with Ford's topsy-turvy financial situation in the seventies. Lincoln-Mercury dealers had plenty of good selling cars, they just weren't the right cars. The Cougar and Lincoln Mk V shattered sales records, but the staples of Mercury's business, the mid-size and full-size sedans and wagons, moved out of showrooms at a snail's pace. The small Bobcat didn't lure economy minded buyers, instead bringing only bad press from its close ties to the ill-fated Ford Pinto. The recession year of 1980 saw Cougar sales fall by more than 50%.

Ford's product planners were busy reworking Ford and Lincoln's images, trying to prop up those lines, so they couldn't devote much time to Mercury. As a result, Mercury had few unique cars in the eighties, and even less of an identity. The company entered 1975 with a distinct Buick-like character, but left 1990 with no image at all. The lack of a distinct personality showed through in the cars (many are closely related to Fords), although there were some unique twists to Mercurys in the eighties, like the controversial roofline of the '83 Cougar, the light bar and slick looks of the '86 Sable, and the very existence of the Japanese built '88 Tracer.

Mercury experimented with importing what were for the American market some advanced European Fords under the Merkur nameplate, such as the XR4ti with biplane spoiler. But these quickly faded as buyers continued to flock to more conventional cars such as the Mustang and Sable. The Capri, which was a rebadged Mustang was briefly revived with an Australian 2 door convertible. The new Cougar was an innovatively styled Mystique-based coupe which was not given to Ford. Traditionally Mercury was given a counterpart to most Ford platforms. But when the mid-size Mystique and compact Tracer, and later Cougar were withdrawn without replacements, only the Sable and Grand Marquis automobiles were left. These targeted mostly grown families and retirees when Mercury had offered compacts since the Comet, and subcompacts since the Bobcat. By the time Mercury got the Monterey, Ford minivans were no longer competitive. While Ford Five-Hundred sales nose-dived from a moderately successful start, the Mercury Montego large sedan has sold only a fraction of the Ford, in contrast to the Dodge Charger selling nearly as well as its platform-mate, the Chrysler 300.

Future

For 2008, Mercury re-christened the facelifted Montego as the Sable for better brand recognition.

As of 2008, Mercury's range is quite small and very similar to those sold under the Ford brand. Many industry observers have questioned whether Mercury will survive in the long term, but Ford insists that there is no intention of letting the brand die. The introduction of new models, such as the Milan, and the Mariner, as well as the revival of the Sable would seem to bear that out. Its alliance with Lincoln has helped keep the brand alive; all Lincoln dealers also sell Mercury vehicles, as they desire some lower-priced vehicles in their showrooms.

As part of their effort to re-assert the brand, Mercury has also begun implementing design elements common to all of their vehicles to create a more "unified" marque. These include an update of the signature "waterfall" front grille and badge lettering based on that of the last generation Cougar.

This effort also includes an advertising campaign featuring actress and model Jill Wagner. Ford designer Patrick Schiavone commented on the debut of the 2008 Mariner Hybrid that Mercury would move from being an in-between marque to having a special stylish identity apart from others, competing more with Saturn than its traditional rival, Buick. He compared the marque's image to that of fashionable discount retailer, Target. There have also been reports that Mercury is trying to appeal (perhaps even exclusively) to female drivers.

However as of October 2006, the Mercury brand was being examined for possible elimination, according to Alan Mulally, who succeeded Bill Ford, Jr. as CEO of Ford, largely on hopes that he would be able to restructure Ford's operations back into profitability after a \$5.8 billion quarterly loss in Q4 of 2006. J.D. Power and Associates announced in August 2007 that the Mercury line of vehicles had placed fifth in Overall Dependability Ratings, fifth in Powertrain Dependability Ratings, and sixth in Body & Interior Dependability Ratings.

However, the brand's future is in doubt. Currently, Mercury is selling fewer than 200,000 units a year, which is less than both Plymouth and Oldsmobile right before they were phased out. Many blogs & online sites have stated that Mercury can be gone as soon as 2012, including edmunds.com. However, Ford claims that they have no plans to discontinue the brand. In July, 2008 Ford ended speculation about the future of Mercury by making the brand part of its new small-car strategy. According to the current strategy, larger Mercurys will be phased out in favor of Lincoln vehicles. The current Milan will remain as the largest Mercury. The brand will instead offer Lincoln/Mercury dealers a line of upscale small vehicles that are not appropriate for the Lincoln product portfolio.

Logo

Mercury's signature "waterfall" grille and logo on the front of a 2000-2005 Sable. The first logo of the Mercury brand was its namesake, the Roman god Mercury. The side profile of his head, complete with the signature bowl hat with wings was used during the early years. In the 1950s, the logo became a simple "M" with horizontal bars extending outward from the bottom of its vertical elements in each direction. This was described in advertising as "The Big M" - probably most notably as the prime sponsor of The Ed Sullivan Show.

During the late 1960s and up to the mid-1980s, the Mercury used the "Sign of the Cat" ad campaign based on its popular Cougar model. Many of the cars during this time carried cat related names such as the Lynx and Bobcat. On some of the upper-tier models, such as the Marquis and Grand Marquis, Mercury used a shield or cross, sometimes surrounded by a wreath, which was shared by some de luxe Ford models as well. Some iterations bore a resemblance to Lincoln's diamond logo.

During the mid 1980s, the logo changed from the Cougar to a highly stylized letter M (nicknamed 'the Waterfall' by some, and the "Winding Road" by others). This logo was introduced on the all new 1984 Mercury Topaz, and continued on the new-for-1986 Sable, new 1988 Tracer, and the 1988 Grand Marquis. The reason behind this new logo has never been fully explained, but it is still being used today. Another possible explanation is that it is a stylized foot with a small horizontal wing at the top, an allusion to Mercury, Roman messenger of the gods. Since 1999, the Mercury logo has "Mercury" written on the top part of the logo. Mercury sponsored a professional cycling team from 2000 until 2002.















