

# Portland Observer Auto Review

News and reviews on new motor vehicles

## 2008 Ford Escape Hybrid FWD The Tough Lil' Loveable Hybrid

BY KATHLEEN CARR

The Ford Escape Hybrid is still the cleanest and most fuel-efficient SUV in the world, combining the fuel economy and emissions benefits of a full hybrid with the go-anywhere capability, toughness and spaciousness of the Ford Escape - America's favorite small SUV.

For 2008, The Ford Escape Hybrid combines a fresh new look, inside and out, with infotainment and safety features, a choice of two hybrid-specific upgrade packages and four new exterior colors.

The Ford Escape Hybrid is a "full" hybrid, meaning it automatically switches between pure electric power, pure gasoline engine power or combined operation to maximize efficiency and performance. Its gasoline engine and electric motor work in concert, providing performance similar to that of a V-6 engine. In less demanding situations, the Escape Hybrid can run on its electric motor alone (at speeds up to 25 mph), its gasoline engine alone or the most efficient combi-

nation of the two. The combined output of both the gas and electric motors is 155 horsepower, and the powertrain provides 0-60 acceleration performance similar to the conventional Escape with a 200-horsepower V-6 engine.

A new Electric Power Assist Steering (EPAS) system allowed Ford engineers to easily tune the amount of steering assist independent of engine and vehicle speed, giving the Escape Hybrid a very easy steering effort at parking lot speeds, while retaining Escape's hallmark crisp steering feel while driving.

Few drivers will notice any significant difference between the Hybrid and a conventional Escape, except when the Hybrid shuts itself off at stop lights or glides quietly through a parking lot on electric power. Indeed, the Hybrid is a bit quieter, probably smoother, in all circumstances. In order to minimize the power lost as it transfers to the drive wheels, Ford equips the Escape Hybrid with a continuously variable transmission, which has



Specifications: 2.3-Liter 133-hp @ 124 lb-ft. torque 4-Cylinder Atkinson-Cycle Gas Engine, 70-kilowatts Electric Drive Motor; 330V Hybrid Battery; ECVT Automatic Transmission; 34-City 30-Highway MPG; Green Rating 77; \$29,825. MSRP

no conventional gears. Instead, it has metal bands that adjust to best match the engine's revolutions. The CVT does offer a low-range setting for increased traction. There's just smooth, even acceleration.

The 2008 Escape Hybrid has an entirely revised restraint system that consists of new air bags, safety belts, steering column and a new steering wheel. Standard safety

content includes: Ford's Safety Canopy side air curtains, seat-mounted side air bags, Ford's Personal Safety System, which includes dual-stage driver and front passenger air bags, safety belt pretensioners, seat weight sensing system for the passenger seat and crash severity sensing and Belt-Minder safety belt reminder for driver and front passenger.

This is one of Ford's best interiors in years in terms of the look and feel of materials used. It looks sporty and suited to a more expensive car. The 2008 Ford Escape interior is all new, and we like it. It's not significantly roomier or a leap forward in design, but it's well thought out and well executed. It's a definite improvement in ergonomic function and overall visual appeal, and

it makes a nicer place to spend time.

The Escape features upholstery cloth made from 100-percent recycled material. You'd never know by its look or feel, and Ford claims that compared to upholstery made from virgin fiber, production will conserve about 600,000 gallons of water and 7 million kilowatt hours of electricity annually, reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 1.8 million pounds.

Options include a six-CD Audiodisc stereo, a 110-volt outlet in the front center console and a navigation system with a 6.5-inch screen. That screen can also show hybrid power flow and fuel economy for the past 15 minutes in a bar graph. Many options are bundled together in the Hybrid Premium Package, including the 110-volt outlet; powered, heated leather front seats; leather-trimmed rear seats; heated side mirrors; a cargo cover; and Ford's Reverse Sensing System.

The 2008 Ford Escape remains one of the best vehicles in Ford's lineup, and competitive in a crowded field of small sport-utilities, regardless of price. The Escape Hybrid is a different beast entirely from gasoline-only models.



## Family Theater Fun

Tears of Joy puppets and ComedySportz actors present Puppetz vs. People this weekend at the Winningstand Theatre in the Portland Center for the Performing Arts.

Two of Portland's most beloved family theatres team up this weekend for Puppetz vs. People on Friday, Nov. 23 and Saturday, Nov. 24 at the Winningstand Theatre in the Portland Center for the Performing Arts, 1111 S.W. Broadway. Both performances are at 8 p.m.

The drama will have you out of your seat, working off Thanksgiving Day calories as you laugh, cheer and shout, rallying the battle between Tears of Joy puppets and ComedySportz actors.

It's a dish of wits, humor and quick-thinking, served with a generous slice of imagination and flavored with the wild, artful presence of puppets.

Tickets are \$13 for children and \$16 for adults. For more information call 503-248-0557 or visit tojt.com.

## Struggling with Hunger

continued ▲ from Front

don't realize the minimum benefit of \$10 has not changed since the program started in 1977."

Food stamps serve more than 430,000 Oregonians each month.

Along with food stamps, commodities from the federal food program are critical to the emergency food supply and serve as the core of the more than 750,000 emergency food boxes that the Oregon Food Bank Network distributes throughout Oregon and Clark County, Wash.

Since 2004, the federal commodities to Oregon Food Bank have dropped nearly 60 percent, from 11.2-million pounds of food in 2004 to about 5-1/2-million pounds in 2007.

Currently, the U.S. Senate is debating reauthorization of the farm bill and will set funding for

both food stamps and The Emergency Food Assistance Program for the next five years.

"This is a critical time for Oregon," says Whitney-Wise. "We have made strides in combating hunger, but we still need federal programs to ensure all of our children have enough to eat. Making sure our federal programs are effective and reach people who need them is something tangible we can do today."

Bristol and Whitney-Wise encourage Oregonians to call Senators Smith and Wyden and to ask them to continue their work as Senate leaders in the fight against hunger and to pass a farm bill that improves food stamps and the federally supported commodities.

"It's so easy to get overwhelmed by the complexity of hunger and its causes, but this is a simple action we can take today that will help many people," says Whitney-Wise.

### ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

**Godspell at Interstate Firehouse** -- Godspell, one of the biggest off-Broadway successes of all time, is reborn in a production by Stumptown Stages at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, 5340 N. Interstate Ave. Shows run on weekends through Saturday, Dec. 1. For tickets, call 503-381-8686.

**A Fairy Tale Christmas** -- Currently through Monday, Dec. 31, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, the Pittock Mansion, 3229 N.W. Pittock Drive, transforms 23 rooms into enchanted fairy tales that come to life before your child's eyes. Call 503-823-3622 for more information.

**Norman Sylvester Band** -- The Norman Sylvester Band will be performing at M & M's in Gresham, on Friday and Saturday, Nov. 23 & 24, at 9:30 p.m.; at Tillicum's in Beaverton on Tuesday, Nov. 27, at 8 p.m., and in Portland at Halibut's on Saturday, Nov. 30 at 8 p.m.; for more information contact 503-286-6474.

**Zydeco Dancing** -- The Zydeco Flames from San Francisco play Friday, Nov. 23, starting with a dance lesson at 7 p.m. and dancing from 8 to 11 p.m. at the Norse Hall, northeast 11th and Couch. On Wednesday, Nov. 28, Leroy Thomas and the Zydeco Roadrunners start with a dance lesson at 6:30 p.m. and play from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. at 618 S.E. Alder.

**The Dinner Party** -- Neil Simon's Dinner Party, a bittersweet comedy about marriage, fidelity and missed opportunities, plays through Dec. 9 at the Lakewood Center for the

Performing Arts in Lake Oswego. For tickets, visit Lakewood-center.org.

**Tree Lighting Sing-A-Long** -- Friday, Nov. 23 at 5:30 p.m., the Portland Jazz Orchestra will lead the city in a classic holiday sing-a-long at Pioneer Courthouse Square at the "Tree Lighting Ceremony."

**Jimmy Mak's** -- Presents Portland jazz singers "The Revue" live on stage Friday, Nov. 23, from 8 p.m. to midnight; for more information visit mitzizilka.com.



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