

Henrik Fisker Is Starting a Namesake Car Company Again

According to the legendary automotive designer, the new brand will come out with a technologically advanced, premium electric car sometime in 2017.

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■ A Fisker Karma electric hybrid car at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. Photographer: Andrew Harrer/Bloomberg

Henrik Fisker has relaunched his namesake company, he told Bloomberg.

The charismatic Dane said his newly minted Fisker, Inc. will showcase a premium, all-electric vehicle in the second half of 2017. In a private phone call on Monday, he called it a “spiritual successor” to the Fisker Karma electric car he launched in 2012.

“We have really been working in stealth mode,” Fisker said. “For the last two years, I have been looking at battery technologies and wanted to see if there was something that could really give us a new paradigm. We had the strategy of developing the

technology as fast as possible without getting tied down to a large organization, which would hold us back. Now we have the technology that nobody else has. And there is nobody even close to what we are doing out there.”

The designer credited with creating the BMW Z8, Aston Martin V8 Vantage, and Aston Martin DB9 saw his Fisker Automotive Inc. go through a structured bankruptcy auction in February 2014, where Wanxiang Group bought certain assets, excluding the Fisker brand. Fisker, Inc. is Henrik Fisker’s new entity and Fisker Nanotech is its battery division, a new private corporation based in northern California. Fisker is the chairman and chief executive officer of Fisker Inc; Jack Kavanaugh is the chairman of Fisker Nanotech.



■ A Fisker Karma electric sports sedan from Karma Automotive LLC stands on display in the showroom of Wanxiang Group Corp. in Hangzhou, China, on Sept. 3, 2016. Photographer: Qilai Shen/Bloomberg

Details about the new car—and specifically, the new technology—remain scarce. Kavanaugh said he hopes they will achieve unparalleled range and battery life, thanks in part to a new packaging method and to lightweight materials in the battery pack.

“The technology emanates from several professors from UCLA who have been working on energy storage,” Kavanaugh said, noting that the batteries will contain some lithium but not be the conventional lithium-ion batteries found in such things as the Tesla Model S. “We have already developed prototypes that you won’t see anywhere else.”

The team claims that the new Fisker model, which has yet to be named, will deliver more than 400 miles in driving range and possess an industry-leading battery life that will potentially match the life of the vehicle. The plan is to develop it at Fisker Nanotech’s prototype-and-manufacturing facilities in California, Kavanaugh said. It will feature more rear legroom and headroom than any of its closest competitors.

Fisker declined to say much about how it will look; expect to see images by mid-2017.

“It will definitely be something that when you see it, it will look completely different,” Fisker said. He did not specify whether it will use the chassis or other components from the Fisker Karma or VLF Force 1. “It will be sporty and spacious. And you’ve got to make something look beautiful—there is no excuse for making an ugly car, even with new technology—so it will definitely have some of my signature elements.”



■ Danish designer Henrik Fisker speaks during the Automotive News World Congress in Detroit.
Photographer: Jeff Kowalsky/Bloomberg

If all goes according to plan, the car will also lead the way for Fisker Inc. to develop and produce a second, mass-market, affordable electric vehicle in the years following the initial car’s launch. That one will retail for less than \$40,000 but still have a longer electric range than competitors, Fisker said.

Fisker, who lives in Los Angeles, said the ultimate goal of creating the new battery technology is to sell it to an OEM (original equipment manufacturer). The idea is to move the entire auto industry, as it were, from VHS to DVD mode, he said.

“Fisker will be doing all of the testing, and that gives us a huge advantage, but that doesn’t mean we will be sitting on [the technology] alone,” he said. “We will also be looking at selling this

technology to other OEMs because if you want to reach true mass-market potential, we need probably, eventually, an OEM. We are having very superficial discussions right now with a couple of them.”

Meanwhile, Fisker is maintaining imposing production schedule in many fields, including roles as head of design and product strategy at VLF Automotive, the company he founded with Bob Lutz and Gilbert Villarreal in January 2016, and as CEO of HF Design, a design-and-innovation company that makes products for automotive, lifestyle, home, education, and smart devices. The company launched a 164-foot super-yacht series with Benetti Yachts earlier this year.