



Merkur Club of America

A metallic, three-dimensional badge with the letters 'XR4Ti' in a bold, sans-serif font.



From the Sierra projects inception, there were plans to introduce a variant to North America. This was nothing new to Ford, which had successfully imported tens of thousands of Capris and Fiestas to the North American market. Ford invested \$50M in Federalizing the Sierra to meet the safety and emissions requirements of the North American marketplace.

This necessitated a very different car to its European cousins and over 500 new unique parts were made. As a result of these differences, it was decided to entrust the manufacture of the car to the Karmann coachworks in Osnabruck, Germany. Karmann was supplied with the bodywork from Fords Genk plant and completed the entire car in Germany for shipment out of Rotterdam into the North American ports of Houston, Baltimore, Portland and Los Angeles.

"The Merkur XR4Ti, Lincoln-Mercurys antidote for the BMW syndrome"

Motor Trend 1984

The structural and mechanical changes added nearly 300Lbs to the Euro XR4i, and this, coupled with the need to meet Federal emissions regulations, necessitated a different engine. Ford chose the 2.3L Lima engine, which has its roots back in the early 1970s when it was known as

the Pinto engine. This powerplant was turbocharged with a Garrett turbo producing 14Lbs of boost, and was already established in North America as the engine which powered the SVO Mustangs and Thunderbird TC. The engine produced 175bhp compared to the 150bhp of the Cologne V-6, and was produced at Fords engine plant in Taubate, Brazil.



The new car was given the name the XR4Ti, the T designating Turbo. Ford made the decision to market the car through 800 of their Lincoln-Mercury dealerships. In retrospect, it is widely thought that this was one of the reasons why the cars sales did not live up to Fords expectations. The salesmen were far more versed at selling Town Cars than complex high performance German imports.

The salesmans margins were also a lot higher! In fact in 1986, a year after the car was introduced, Ford sold nine times the number of Town Cars than XR4Ti.

"We left quite a bit of body roll on purpose. Jackie Stewart even recommended it"

Ron Reume, Car import specialist, Ford Motor Company

From the start, the car suffered from in identity crisis. Bob Lutz, who was chairman of Ford Europe at the time (and who went on to become the President of Chrysler), wanted to differentiate the new German import from its established Mustang and Tempo product lines. The decision was made to market the car under a unique name Merkur, German for Mercury. The name didnt exactly roll off the tongue and Ford needed the educate its sales personnel, and the public in how to pronounce the name Mare-coor. One early embarrassment was that the name was mispronounced in several TV advertising campaigns! Anyone who knows anything about marketing knows that to make a product successful, the name has to be catchy, easy to remember, and above all roll off the tongue. This name, while clever, had none of these qualities.

"The fleet-footed Merkur dusts the Bimmer in straight-line performance"

Motor Trend

The automotive press was full of reviews and comparisons between other cars in its class the BMW 318, Saab 900, Audi 4000. A TV advertising campaign featuring respected Formula 1 race car driver Jackie Stewart was aired to support the January 85 launch on the West coast, and three months later in the rest of North

America. The Merkur XR4Ti was expensive at \$16,503, considering the buyer wasn't buying a well-established name such as BMW, Audi or Saab. Four years later, in 1989, buyers were awarded cash incentives of up to \$4,000, although by then the list price had risen to \$19,039.

"The XR4Ti started out as an unknown and remains one"

Car & Driver 1988

Ford had predicted sales of around 15,000/year, and that the XR4Ti would be the first of a complete family of quality European imports. Unfortunately due to the reasons mentioned, and a love-hate relationship with the large rear spoiler, sales struggled to break the 12,000 mark. For the 1988 model year, the rear spoiler was redesigned to a more subtle single wing and the lower gray body cladding was color keyed to that of the car. In addition, the number of dealerships was cut back to 600 nationwide. These changes were not enough to turn sales around, and despite favorable reviews, it was too late. Ford cancelled the program in 1989 after a total of only 42,464 cars had been produced.

"[the XR4Ti] looks like a geothermal event bulging up through the tarmac"

Unattributed

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