

NEWSLETTER

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QUOTABLE QUOTE

"I never believed in Santa Claus because I knew no white man would be coming into my neighbourhood after dark."

- Dick Gregory

THE BRAND-NEW AUDI A6



The new Audi A6 was shown recently and visually, there is precious little to become excited about. The (optional) LED headlights look smart but the rest is a trifle tedious.

Under the skin, it is a different story and while the new A6 is of similar size as the outgoing car, it

is lighter, thanks to the extensive use of aluminium. Engines are mostly improved versions of existing units and there will be a hybrid in the range, making use of the 2.0T FSI engine and an electric motor for a combined system output of about 180 kW.

Among the options is a satellite navigation system that gets information from Google



Maps to adapt cruise control, transmission and headlight behaviour to anticipated conditions and prepare for potentially hazardous or difficult scenarios. Night vision and a thermal imaging camera will also be available. The new A6 reaches us in the middle of 2011.

Our opinion: Nothing wrong the tech at all, but it is all a little dreary. At least the interior seems to be a class act again, virtually lifted from the stunning A7 Sportback. •

SEASON'S GREETINGS!



From all of us at Fintec Solutions, may you have a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year!



WILL BALLADE BE IN TUNE?

The Honda Ballade is back! No, this is not the new Civic, which is why they could not call it



that. In fact, Honda South Africa has decided to bring in the Honda City instead and rename it Ballade locally, so we basically lose the Civic sedan. Presumably, it will be affordable but sadly, the interior is devoid of any flair, unlike the Starship Enterprise interior of the Civic.



The new Ballade launches

locally early next year.

Our opinion: Hopefully this is not some "developing country" special built to a price. The dull interior is a real shame. Should be Honda reliable. •



GAWKY MAZDA5



Oh dear. We are fans of the Mazda5, but the new one would have to prove that it is a better car, because visually, it flatters to deceive. The jury is still out on the "Nagare" styling lines on the flanks and the Peugeot-like gape is a bit unnerving. The rear lights look like they come from a '90s Mazda 626 and the dash fails to inspire.



Our opinion: It's here, so go for a test drive. The old one was a brilliant drive; the new one would do well just to match it. We're not buying the odd styling quirks. •

"M" IS 1 SERIES SWANSONG



The 1 Series is just right at last, with the launch of the 1 Series M Coupé, even if it's a bit late. The engine is certainly right, being a 250 kW (and 500 N.m) version of the familiar turbo inline six. The M people would

surely have fixed the 130i's terrible understeer and it seems the cheaper cabin bits are covered in leather at last. It no longer looks like a frightened hamster either. It now looks like an enraged



one. Spy pictures of the new 1 Series is already out, so this is a run-out special, much like the Ford Focus RS. We hope it runs out to us.



Our opinion: The fastest, prettiest and meanest 1 Series ever, just as the range sails into the sunset. Should still be a hoot to drive. Could have had a bit more power..? •

NEXT MERC SLK SPIED

Grainy screen grabs of an "accidental" YouTube video placement of the new Mercedes SLK has made it onto the Internet before the video was swiftly removed. The pictures show frontal styling that bor-



rows from the SLS and CLS and the rear is a slightly more subtle reworking of the current theme. A "Magic Sky Control" glass roof will be optional, whereby the glass can be made dark or transparent at the touch of a button. The new SLK lands next year.



Our opinion: Striking new model continues folding hard-top tradition and adds nifty glass roof. CLS look seems to work very well on the small roadster. •

JAZZ UPDATE, CR-Z TURBO



More changes are afoot at Honda and the revised Jazz you see here (↗) will reach us in the first quarter of the New Year. Jazz gets new bumpers and lights and the suspension has been reworked to offer a better ride/handling compromise. Inside, the dashboard is made of a darker material and other changes conspire to create a more "premium" feel; leather upholstery becomes available for the first time. Engines remain largely the same but the exciting news is the hybrid model (↘), which is differentiated by its special grille and wheels. It uses the same 1.3-litre petrol engine and electric motor combination found in the Honda Insight. Automatic models' 5-speed torque converter autobox is replaced with a continuously variable transmission.



Honda is keen to capitalise on the CR-Z Hybrid's sporty image too and their CR-Z Hybrid R Concept (↘) has a 1600 turbo engine with either 117 or 147 kW, ready for a new range of sporty Hondas. The latter version is set to replace the Civic Type R 2-litre engine.

Our opinion: Brilliant little Jazz now even better and the efficient CVT is a step in the right direction; success of the hybrid will depend on its pricing. Turbo Hondas exciting, but will they still rev with a will? •



GANGSTA 300C DONS A SUIT



Not everybody was enamoured with the American gangster styling of the old one, but this rather anonymous revamp of the Chrysler 300C is arguably a bit bland and has detracted from the very thing that had made it unique. Be that as it may, it benefits from Chrysler's new 218 kW 3.6-litre V6 and a thirsty 5.7-litre Hemi V8 remains an option.

Our opinion: Less obviously a drug lord's car, but that is where it appeal lied. Where's the soul, man? •



JEEP COMPASS FINDS NORTH



Continuing Chrysler's frantic revamping of all their models before new ones start to emerge under Fiat's rule is the "new" Jeep Compass. The mini-Grand Cherokee template works rather well on the small SUV and transforms it from an ugly duckling to a rather handsome car. Off-road ability is said to be better (it wasn't needed), as is interior quality (it was). Initial engines are a 117 kW 2-litre and 128 kW 2.4 petrol. It is due here in the second half of 2011.

Our opinion: New Jeep style works well on the Compass, but it won't give the CR-V, X-Trail and Forester fraternity sleepless nights. •

