

NEWSLETTER

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QUOTABLE QUOTE

"The minute one utters a certainty, the opposite comes to mind."

- May Sarton

NEW HYUNDAI "TUCSON" HERE

Hyundai's new "Tucson" will be called the ix35, in line with the company's other products' "i" prefixes. ix35 is a little bigger than Tucson and sports Hyundai's new "fluidic sculpture" styling language. Alloys are standard across the range, along with air conditioning, multifunction steering wheel, a reversing camera (with



its display in the rear-view mirror), trip computer, central locking and electric windows. Ride height is 10mm lower to enhance on-road handling and the engines are substantially upgraded. The 2-litre petrol now packs an impressive 122kW and 197N.m and is offered with 4x2 only in GL and GLS. An automatic GLS 4x2 is offered too. The

Sonata-sourced 2.4 petrol produces 130kW/227N.m in GLS 4x4 AT only and the impressive new 2.0 "R" diesel engine packs a full 130kW and 392N.m and is offered in 4x2 manual and 4x4 AT. Pricing is aggressive and ranges from R239,900 (2.0 GL 4x2) to R369,900 (2.0 R (diesel) 4x4 AT).

Our opinion: ix35 a class act in terms of value, looks and mechanical specification. Will be a smash hit. •



THIS IS THE NEW JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE



Jeep's next grand Cherokee is out and about in the US of A and actually does look rather grand, especially inside. Based on the present Mercedes ML's platform, it should drive better too. The 4.7-litre V8 has been replaced with a potent Pentastar 3.6-litre V6 with 213kW; however, the fuel saving over the V8 is claimed to be a disappointing 11%. Air suspension is fitted and

ability. A 265kW Hemi 5.7-litre V8 engine new Grand can tow over 3.3 tons. Torsional improved and the interior is far roomier, with 10cm more rear legroom.



Jeep's "Selec-Terrain" 4x4 system is one of three systems offered for improved off-road will be offered too and the rigidity has been significantly

Our opinion: A lot rides on the new Grand, since the other new Chrysler Group models are still some way off. Looks far better built and air suspension offered! 3.6 V6 strong but economy lags competitors'. •



BMW 5 HERE, NOT TOO DEAR



BMW's new 5 Series is here and, feature-for-feature, it is actually cheaper than the old model. The technical specification now includes an 8-speed automatic transmission as standard and three spec levels are offered:

Standard, Exclusive and Innovations. There are 18 different models in the range; the petrol derivatives are the 523i (3.0 with 150kW/270N.m), 528i (3.0 with 190kW/310N.m), 535i (3.0 turbo with 225kW/400N.m) and 550i (4.4 twin-turbo with 300kW/600N.m). There are two diesel models, the 520d (2.0 turbodiesel with 135kW/380N.m) and 530d (3.0 turbodiesel with 180kW/540N.m). Prices range from R479,000 for the 523i Standard to R869,200 for the 550i Innovations.

Our opinion: It seems the E-Class' reign at the top of the class was short-lived. New 5' just looks a bit ordinary. •



STRIKING NEW ELANTRA



This could be the most striking interpretation of Hyundai's new "fluidic sculpture" design language yet. The new Elantra is striking indeed and was officially shown at the Busan Motor Show recently. HID headlights and LED taillights form part of the hi-tech package. Little engine information was divulged, except that the new 1.6 petrol offers a full 103kW/167N.m and a 6-speed transmission is standard. Heated rear seats and a TFT LCD information display is available too.

Our opinion: With this stunning effort, Hyundai could finally crack the Corolla class. •



FORD WILDTRAK & FIGO

Only 400 Ford Ranger 3.0 TDCi Wildtrak Double Cab models will be made. The Wildtrak boasts special trim and features; an Armadillo load



box cover is standard, as are rear parking sensors, 18-inch diamond-cut alloys and a whole host of Wildtrak add-ons and badging. Inside, an extra bank of instruments atop the dashboard includes gauges for tilt angles, compass heading and outside temperature. Door and seat trim is in Alcantara. The 4x2 costs R375,990 and the 4x4, R421,870.

The Ford Figo will be available to local buyers shortly and was first shown on South African soil at the recent Nampo agricultural show. 1.4-litre petrol and diesel engines will be offered. The Figo is based on the previous generation Ford Fiesta and its main rival is VW's Polo Vivo.



Our opinion: Some Wildtrak styling trinkets a bit OTT, engine superb and wheels stunning. Eagerly awaited Figo offers a rare diesel in this class. •

AUDI S5 SPORTBACK HERE



Audi has finally launched an S version of its stunning A5 Sportback. The S5 Sportback uses the 3-litre supercharged petrol V6 engine from the S4, with 245kW and 440N.m, good enough for a 0-100km/h sprint in under 5.5 seconds. A 7-speed twin-clutch S-Tronic gearbox is

standard, as well as the 18-inch alloys from the S4. It costs R636,500 excluding options.



Our opinion: Far better looking than the S4, it combines S5 coupé looks and 5-door practicality. •



CHEV LUMINA CSV R8

GMSA has brought a few Chev Lumina CSV Club Sport R8 models to South Africa "for evaluation purposes only"; that could mean they are seriously considering selling it here. If they do, it will offer a performance bargain, with a 6.2-litre V8 packing 317kW and 550N.m for under R500,000. The styling package is rather garish, but you get 7 Series space with a 5-second 0-100 for 335i money... so who's to argue with the figures?



Our opinion: Hound your GM dealer and they might bring it in. The M3 driver will stop laughing at your wing when he can't outrun you! •

FORTHCOMING MODELS



Hyundai's new Accent (left) makes a far better impression than the old one. Porsche's new Cayenne (below) is due locally shortly and prices

start at R645,000; there will be a petrol hybrid too. Renault's Mégane CC (below and bottom) is said to offer genu-



ine seating for four, features an all-glass folding roof, LED taillights and the front visage from the Coupé. It should be here by October, 2010.

Our opinion: Accent pretty at last; Cayenne pointless but better. Mégane CC perhaps too glassy for sunny SA? •



HARDCORE AUDI R8 GT



Audi has trimmed the R8 V10's weight by 100kg and massaged the 5.2-litre V10 to improve its output from 386 to 412kW to create the R8 GT. Claimed 0-100km/h is now 3.6 seconds and top speed, 320km/h. It will only be offered with the R-Tronic automated manual gearbox and the Quattro system is 85% rear-biased and includes a locking rear diff.

Our opinion: A more practical and comfortable alternative to a Gallardo, with mostly the same hardware. The most hardcore R8 ever. •



HIGH-VALUE FIATS

Ok, it might feature the asthmatic 1.2-litre engine with a paltry 49kW, but the new Fiat Punto 1.2 Active



brings Punto style to the sub-R100,000 price class (R99,900) and still offers power steering, electric windows and air conditioning. Introductory pricing will rise to a still-competitive R106,900 shortly after.

A brand-new Fiat Uno (that might never actually come here) has been launched and goes on sale in Brazil as we write this, powered by 1.1- and 1.4-litre engines. Initial production will be left-hand drive only, which is why it will not be available locally for the foreseeable future.



Our opinion: High-value Punto brings some style to the baseline class. Odd-looking Uno might succeed here, but only if it is really cheap. •

COMMENT: HERITAGE

What is heritage? Of course, it is what Mercedes-Benz has, that Kia doesn't. But what is it? Time, perhaps; Mercedes has been making cars since 1886 and Kia since 1944. Does that mean Mercedes is 58 years better at making cars than Kia? Patently not, especially where Kia's latest products are concerned.

The question is, how far can heritage take a brand? How many mistakes can it cover and how forgiving and resilient is it? One has to wonder how many Cayennes Porsche can survive, or how many R-Class Mercedes can survive. Arguably, a misplaced product does not necessarily harm a brand, as long as it adheres to the brand values.

A Cayenne may be an SUV, which is sacrilege in terms of concept, but at least it is well-made and sporty, as a Porsche should be. The R-Class may be pointless and ugly, but it wafts like a Mercedes should and feels all of a piece. The previous 7 Series might have been pig ugly, but it was a BMW: sporty, solid and properly engineered.

What then, if you fall into Mercedes' trap and let slip core values such as engineering integrity and quality, as they did from the mid-'90s? The plasticky, top-heavy first A-Class is a case in point. It degraded the

three-pointed star. It should have born a Smart badge instead. Even worse was the first ML—extremely poor build quality did much harm.

Of course, many things have changed and nobody has worked harder to restore customer confidence than Mercedes. Witness their latest products and see the improvement in quality. Useless relics that are past their sell-by date survive, like the CLC, but by all accounts, those are getting fewer, too.

Still, there are the nagging doubts that Mercedes might struggle to get back what they once had. Do yourself a favour and scrutinise the detail finish in the boot areas of a VW Polo and a new Mercedes C-Class. The Merc is all crass, exposed springs and roughly cut, bare, catches and fittings. The Polo is all discreet flap-covered catches and chrome fittings with plush trim covering all the oily bits. Like Mercedes once did.

Mercedes approaches quality the way Kia used to. Kia doesn't do it that way anymore. They now approach it the way Mercedes is supposed to. How much can the Mercedes brand survive? It has already lost the top sales spot globally to BMW and now Audi has overtaken them. Time to re-assess those brand values... - Cobus Potgieter •

NEWS SNIPPETS * NEWS SNIPPETS * NEWS SNIPPETS

- Recalls, recalls... This month, it's Volvo recalling many D5 diesel models for unintended acceleration, following spontaneous combustion of engine oil overflowing into the combustion chamber. Don't overfill your D5's oil.
- Renault has launched an automatic Clio 3 1.6 Dynamique. Standard TomTom satnav is great, 4-speed auto isn't.
- The Nissan/Renault V9X 3-litre V6 turbodiesel

- engine (170kW/550N.m) is shortly making it to the Navara and Pathfinder ranges.
- The new VW Polo sedan might be called the Vento and will be launched in 2011. It has a longer wheelbase than the hatchback.
- Both GM and Chrysler have turned the corner, are making money and are paying back their bail-out loans. Ford is back in the black too.
- VW has reclaimed its No. 1 European sales

- spot from Ford, helped by the Golf VI.
- VW has confirmed there will be a 199kW Jetta R and a 136kW Audi S1. Sadly, no Polo R.
- Test mules of the Golf VII, disguised as Golf VIs, have been spotted on the Nürburgring. Golf VII is due in 2013 and will be all-new, based on VW's new MQB platform.
- VW is giving loss-making SEAT one last chance and may shut the brand. •

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NEXT BMW X3




BMW has teased us with these to images of the upcoming X3. It will be launched internationally in the next few months and should be slightly bigger to distance itself from the new X1.

Our opinion: Anything is prettier than the ugly old one. Even a hedgehog. •